

# Introduction to Christian Ethics

# Why does it all seem so complicated??!

Tragedy: no win situations

God's will is good, perfect and pleasing

Bible doesn't mention modern issues!

Sufficiency and clarity of Scripture

Church can't agree on the answers

It's us who are fallen and messy, not the truth

# ethics and real life: pastoral care

“Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is **holy ground**.” (Exodus 3:5)

## Gregory the Great, d. 604

- How Jesus interacted with people:
  - Diversity
  - same moral standard behind it
- Jesus the physician of the soul
- Goal is transformation!

**ethics and real life: discipleship**

# **Grace: Church History**

**Against self help**

**(pelagianism)**

**Against cheap grace**

**(antinomianism)**

# Christian Ethics

## ‘Moral Soundtracks’ Today

**What’s going on?**

Soundtracks in our culture

self awareness

analysis of strengths and weaknesses

# the soundtracks...

## The Enlightenment: late 1600s onwards

- **The triumph of human knowledge**

- Massive increase in knowledge - applied to ethics
- Religion seemed dangerous, irrational etc.
- Basic moral sense all reasonable people share

- **My will be done**

- Freedom from arbitrary rules
- Human will as *source* of morality

Immanuel Kant  
1724-1804

- Choice (will) and reason = truly human
- No need for revelation

the soundtracks...

## The Politics of Enlightenment

- **I can make it on my own (Contractarianism)**

No absolute moral standards, only by agreement

Humans aren't naturally social

Thomas Hobbes  
1588-1679

- **Live and let live (Liberalism)**

Freedom of conscience, tolerance

Limits on freedom only to ensure freedom of others

Society/government neutral in moral  
and religious matters

John Locke  
1632-1704

the soundtracks...

## The economics of the Enlightenment

- *laissez-faire* capitalism

Markets determine prices and wages

Dissolution of social bonds (family, local safety nets)

Tendency to commodify:  
everything has a price



## the soundtracks...

# Recovering ethics in a world without God

- **Utilitarianism**

- Maximising satisfaction i.e. outcomes
- Responsibility to shape history
- Not following rules but producing good consequences
- Cf. situation ethics
- “Pick the lesser of two evils” / “the end justifies the means”

**the soundtracks...**

## **Making progress**

- **Bacon and medicine**
  - Opposition of weak body and strong mind
  - Suffering can and so must be overcome
- **Politics and progress (Hegel and Marx)**
  - Perfection can/will arise *from* human history by human action

- Summarise one of these themes
- To what extent are you influenced by it?
- Strengths, weaknesses etc. from a **theological** perspective
  - Draw on Scripture and your theological learning
  - What true insights do these ideas have?
  - Where do they go wrong?
  - Did I mention try to do this  
*on theological grounds?*