

## Review

# Ethical Knowledge: The Good Book Confronts A Changing World

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### Abstract

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The ethical knowledge of how the Good Book confronts the changing world facilitates knowledge processes, supports purposive moral action, and possesses ethical dissent. Ethicality, fair behavior, and trust are the essence of the knowledge culture of an organization, the church inclusive. The success of ethical knowledge in a religious setting which has observed the ever-increasing confrontation of the changing world by the Holy Writ may to a large extent depend on knowledge management initiatives and its features, but its sustainability depends on following adequate ethical practices. The churches managed by leaders who value ethical principles and have ethical orientations create an opportunity for congregants and other stakeholders to contribute to knowledge creation and knowledge acquisition. An ecclesiastical ethical leadership also creates trust, fairness, and transparency which encourages knowledge sharing and transfer. The church's top management led by an ethical leader plays a pivotal role in knowledge creation by encouraging all parties involved to contribute to knowledge creation. Consequently, this paper seeks to integrate ethical knowledge and the non-changeability of the Good Book in a world-changing on a fast lane through an assessment of teleological and deontological ethical views.

**Keywords:** Ethical Knowledge, The Good Book, A Changing World

## INTRODUCTION

Ethical knowledge, also identified as professional ethics, addresses areas of integrity, confidentiality, behavior, privacy, professionalism, and timeliness, whereas ethical knowing in a clinical sense, clinical ethics, addresses care decisions, stakeholder involvement, and personal philosophies. In terms of where ethics come from, they are from society and the collective beliefs and values of its citizens. More specifically, ethics also come from those individuals willing to make difficult choices and think about big questions: good and bad, right and wrong.

Ethical knowledge is an intrinsic feature of awareness between moral and ethical principles. A teacher's possession of these principles will allow them to display moral and ethical values, which include a sense of right and wrong, treating others with respect, being objective,

patient, and compassionate.

Knowledge culture experiences manipulation and monitoring of knowledge at the sourcing, acquisition, storage, and dissemination phases. Knowledge can be created, acquired, omitted, hoarded, suppressed, amplified, distorted, diminished, misappropriated, and suppressed. Employee's resistance and reluctance to share knowledge is one of the major problems faced by the organizations.

Employees are more inclined to hoard knowledge instead of sharing because of competition. The hoarding of knowledge may create obstacles to organizations' survival. This seems to be a very unethical practice on the part of employees. On the other hand, if the knowledge of employees is captured in data warehouses and expert systems, knowledge workers become less

valuable and more prone to layoff or retrenchment.

The downsizing is an unethical practice on the part of the employer. The ethical consideration is to maintain a balance between the rights of an organization to use employee's knowledge and the right of an employee to job security and rewards for knowledge sharing.

Knowledge is possessed by employees and resides in their memory. The "knowledge is power" influences the knowledge-sharing and knowledge-processing behavior of individuals. Fairness is observed when employees are treated equally and both organizational and individual needs are given equal priority. Justice is a moral obligation between an organization and employees so that ethical and effective processing of knowledge can be done.

Trust is also an essential factor in knowledge culture as it reflects the care and reliability of the organization towards employees. Top management should initiate providing company support by tolerance to mistakes and providing rewards for knowledge creation and sharing. To avoid, reduce, and manage the tension between organizations and employees, the foundation of knowledge culture should be laid on ethics, deriving a moral contract between both parties (Gaur and Gupta, 2021).

The paucity of ethical knowledge is the bane of most church denominations, hence the trending unethical practices in some of them which have dragged themselves to the court, both traditional and new media, thereby neo content creators are using them to smile to the bank as they upload for the populace to download their creations in diverse platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and so on.

Some of these unwholesome ethical knowledge-possessed practices are not limited to the diversion of project funds, tribal/ethnic-oriented transfers of gospel ministers, destruction of archival records, and selection of incompetent loyalists for promotional appointments; discriminative disciplinary actions, sexual indiscipline of the leaders and the led, self-centered policies and decisions, employment of unqualified non-ministerial staff members among others.

On the other hand, insubordination of the followers, campaign of calumny, disregard for organizational instructions, doctrinal deracination, lobbying for offices, undermining of superiors by lieutenants and subordinates, gospel merchandising and talent commercialization, resentment of other races, colors, languages, cultures, tribes and ethnic groups. Further, there are unhealthy competitions, rivalry among ministerial mates or equals, hatred and acrimony, jealousy and envy, ungodly sexual relationships both in the pulpit and the pew, trap setting for ministerial colleagues (Chukwudebelu, 2013).

The list is endless as the church is speedily becoming worldly and the world is becoming churchy consequent upon poor ethical knowledge of the Good Book which

confronts the changing world.

### **Practice ministerial ethics, and comparism with the teleological and deontological systems, and the divine command theory of ethics**

Ethics involves deciding on the principles of being right or wrong in human conduct. It explains the morality of good and bad, virtue and vice as well as justice and crime. Ministerial ethics, therefore, is seen as moral values, rules, and regulations that govern the behavior, performance, and engagements of congregants in the church, family, and society at large. "Christian ethics is based on God's will, but God never wills anything contrary to His unchanging moral character" (Geisler, 2010, 16).

The foundation therefore on which ministerial ethics is practiced is based on the truth of God's word. Put differently, the ministerial ethical practice aligns with what is obtainable in the scriptures, and whereby one can encounter such issues that are yet to be identified in the Bible, but prayerfully rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit. In the words of Graham (1978, 38), "It is the business of the Holy Spirit to lift the veil Satan has put over our minds and to eliminate them so that we can understand the things of God."

The teleological system thinks that duty or moral obligation stems from what is good or as an end to be achieved; that the morality or the goodness of an act is dependent on the outcome of such action, the original intent notwithstanding. Whatever choice or decision one makes in life has an outcome. Every action has a desired end in mind. In comparing the foundation on which the author practices ministerial ethics with this, they will not choose or apply teleology in any of our conducts because, to an extent, we find it contrary to the biblical truth. Phil. 4:8 states thus:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Invariably, one's good intent will form the basis of his behavior; the scripture (Pro. 14:23) acknowledges that as a man thinks in his heart so is he, just as a man speaks out of the abundance of his heart (Mt. 12:34).

Deontological ethics holds that the basic standards for an action's being morally right are independent of the good or evil generated. The action is what is important despite the consequences. The action becomes one's moral duty. Deontology follows principles regardless of the result.

A manual online by Gresham College titled, 'Commercial Ethics: Process or Outcome?' briefly discussed Terry and Dion, who are both senior managers working for a major international energy company; this gave a good description of teleological and deontological

ethics. Below is an excerpt:

Their company is bidding for a potential project in China; if the project goes ahead, they would be damming a river and producing hydroelectric power and water supply from the resulting water flow. The water and energy will be relatively clean and inexpensive. Most people local to the project would benefit from the jobs created and from having better energy provision. Their business will profit significantly if they go ahead. However, some people would need to be relocated and there are environmental concerns about changing the river's natural flow and the ecosystem of the lake. There are ethical as well as commercial concerns here. At that point, their views diverged markedly.

Terry summarized the ethical dilemmas as follows:

'We need to weigh up all of the good things that will happen to most of the local people, together with the healthy profits we can make, against the adverse consequences for a minority of people, the consequences for the local environment and the reputation risks that such concerns might bring to bear on our business. We should base our decision on an optimal outcome. 'Dion outlined the same ethical problems differently: 'The local people have a right to enjoy the benefits of clean energy and water. The minority who will be inconvenienced have the right not to be unreasonably disadvantaged by the project. We need to assess and prioritize the various rights, duties, principles, and obligations involved in this decision. We need to follow a proper process and do the right thing.'

Terry's view is a typical example of teleological ethics while Dion's portrays a deontological system of ethics. The author's foundation of Christian ethics aligns more closely with deontological ethics and is well distanced from teleological ethics but fits perfectly with divine command theory which is the closest to biblical teachings. Divine command theory perceives that determining the morality of an action is dependent on whether it is commanded by God. One can only be truly morally good if his actions portray God's command. God alone makes the rules, while we oblige every word that applies to us.

Mysteriously, the perfect will of God can mean that you should stay put and do nothing... By obeying God and doing nothing, to build a temple, he allowed his son to build the world's famous Solomon's Temple. Up until today, the building that David did not build forms part of the news and is a major focus of the world's history. Is it not amazing how great things you can accomplish by doing nothing when God says, 'do nothing'? (Mills 2011, 27).

### **The place of Christian doctrine and the authority of the Bible in my norms**

Christian doctrine is the manner in which focal point of

God's revealed and inspired word through His Holy Spirit is taught; from the Old through the New Testaments (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21). With the knowledge that the scriptures are not human but divine inspiration, one dares not toy with its directives in his or her ministry and as a matter of fact, in whatsoever one does. Secondly, one should take cognizance of his or her cultural background (1 Corinthians 6:12, 8:9, 10:23). Though faith in Christ is the same across the globe, cultures differ. One would accept every practice in his tradition that does not negate his faith or the scriptures. In African culture, Nigeria to be exact, differs greatly from what is obtainable in the West.

The Bible is actually a history, but an unusual one! The Bible goes beyond the secular history of the rise and fall of empires to showcase and demonstrate God's love; and how He blessed or punished individuals and nations for their behavior towards Him and His commands. According to Hendricks and Hendricks (1991, 27), 'There is nothing like the self-assurance that comes from the first-hand knowledge of the Bible. It gives you the confidence to think for yourself. Most people don't think – they merely rearrange their prejudices.' It is this unique interpretation and understanding behind the historical account of the moral and spiritual forces that make the Bible ever-relevant through the ages.

God created all creatures, arrayed the firmament and weather, ordained times and seasons; He ultimately controls the universe. Therefore, one can rightly posit that authority emanates from God. Since God cannot be separated from His word, it is only right to say that the authority of God is same as that of His word, the Good Book. (John 1:1)

### **How the author's foundation incorporates absolutism, as opposed to situationism, and defense on a particular absolutist approach (unqualified, non-conflicting, conflicting, or graded)**

Absolutism is the belief that truth or morality is absolute for anybody, anywhere regardless of the context or situation. It is a belief in objective reality. It thinks that there exist things that are inherently right and others that are inherently wrong. They are static for all people anywhere, any time.

Unfortunately, there are some preachers who do not believe that the Bible is what God has made ... They neither believe the word of the Lord nor the Lord of the word... In a large Asian city, an astute layman lamented the absence of the Bible from his pastor's sermons, 'my pastor does not believe the Bible is sophisticated enough for his audience,' he said to me. 'My pastor does not feed sheep, he addresses giraffes.' (Richard 1995, 14)

Situationism is the view that situation is the cause for changes in human behavior rather than a person's innate trait. This suggests that behavior is influenced by outward, situational forces instead of inherent traits or

drives. The theory of situationism negates human volition. That a person is surrounded by negative choices does not mean he is compelled to succumb to any; it also applies when the table is turned. There are countless examples of individuals who did not let the situation they found themselves in determine their actions or conduct. Notably, one's environment contributes to molding him; however, one still has a choice to make on how he responds. The Bible story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife refutes situationism; likewise, Ben Carson would not have turned out a neurosurgeon considering his growing-up days.

The author would not endorse situationism as it disproves biblical truth while we embrace completely the absolute truth of God's word. Man discovers the right and wrong behavior through the word of God, not of his judgment. God's creation reflects His character. God has outlined certain standards, and to break those standards is sinful. He has exhibited the absolutes of our morality in His Word.

Clark and Rakestraw (1994, 114) stated "God never allows a person to encounter a situation where two divine requirements actually clash, in other words, apparent moral dilemmas are all in fact crises of knowledge. Moral dilemmas are cases where right choice is hard to identify." However, there is no denying the fact that we occasionally encounter morally ambiguous situations; in cases like that, we resort to the direction of the Holy Spirit, who is ever ready to lead any who is attentive enough to hear Him, the author continued.

### **How ministerial ethics can be effective in cross-cultural applications**

The place and importance of culture in ministry cannot be overemphasized. Winning a northern Fulani in Nigeria in ministry might be dependent on an ability to dress like them, speak their language, and eat their kind of dishes. Nevertheless, in a bid of trying to adapt to their way of life, one must not compromise his faith in Christ and stand on biblical truth. Since the scriptures is true and the same through the ages and for every culture, its standard is not to be compromised. Therefore, what one requires in cross-cultural ministerial practice is tact.

Clark and Rakestraw (1994, 136) claim,

It is clear that Christians are commanded of God to obey government. Hence, when disobedience to government is approved of God, it is clearly in view of a higher moral law... Further, if a government commands a believer not to preach the gospel, or if it decrees participation in idolatry or even murder of innocent victim, it should not be obeyed.

In cross-cultural applications, it emphasizes more on what unites the believers and deemphasize on what divides them. According to Plueddemann (2009, 64 & 65) "realize that others also hold values they naively assume

to be universal. Most likely, people are not trying to be rude when they do things differently from you... Cross cultural leaders face theological paradox, God is at work in every culture, but Satan is too."

### **CONCLUSION**

The criticality of the use of information technology infrastructure for teaching strategies in this age cannot be overemphasized for the ivory institution to meet up with the comity of nations in education innovative strides. Adult and distance learning information tools are the order of the day global-wise and Nigerian educators should engage them to better in our education system. Generally, people conduct their affairs based on their orientation, beliefs, and level of knowledge. Ethical issues are what we often have to deal with in life; and how people handle such would differ. Good and bad do exist; however, the changes happening in the globe seem to coopt bad reshaping it and presenting it as good. What the society would frown a few decades ago are celebrated today as good and acceptable. For instance, some years ago in Nigeria, it would be considered an anomaly for a young lady to give birth to a child outside marriage; unfortunately, the case is not the same today. Such persons will instead be celebrated to have achieved something great.

Nevertheless, for as many who stand as believers, what is wrong can never be passed as right, irrespective of how colorful it seems. The good book remains the basis for ethical knowledge and decisions. Thus, divine command theory should be the basis for judging right and wrong.

### **Recommendations**

1. For the fact that we have to make difficult choices at a point or another, right (ethical) knowledge is key and should be made available as people's actions are not far-fetched from their level of knowledge.
2. The society, institutions, families and individuals should not be so fast-paced in embracing change that core values erode entirely. If we consider the sanctity of life as contained in the holy book, the abortion bill should not be up for a debate.
3. It is important to practice and teach resilience as against situationism. Let none be swayed to act against 'right' as a result of the circumstances.

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