

The structures of Exodus chapter twenty and Matthew chapter five are sought to be analysed as to underpin their ethical reasoning through seeking understanding via common ethical principles and theological principles in Christianity. Justifications through biblical will be provided to support the views provided and demonstrate the lack of bias in the view given. The principle's meaning is "the fundamental truth or proposition that serves as foundation for a system of belief or behaviour or for a chain of reasoning"¹. Theological means to God and the nature of belief. This proves the importance of theological principles for Christianity as it lays down the fundamentals to being a Christian. Ethical meaning moral principles result in ethical principles meaning the fundamentals of right and wrong and lessons derived from past experiences protecting the here and now.

To ensure all understanding, this essay will be structured by analysing the structure of Matthew chapter five and analysing Exodus chapter twenty in an amalgamated manner. The topics chosen from both passages are as follows; adultery, idolatry, murder, honouring your father and mother and loving God. These chosen topics will be discussed comparatively focusing on the principles theologically and ethically that the passages contain. Some theological and ethical principles of Christianity that are included in these passages will be identified and assessed with a following justification through biblical evidence of why these specific principles were chosen to be discussed in this essay. This will be done to conclude the ethical reasoning behind the chosen biblically sound topics.

The structure for Matthew chapter five begins by explaining where Jesus was when He was going to provide His sermon, as well as demonstrating how He held such authority that He can walk and sit down, and His disciples would follow Him along like sheep (verse 1). Jesus begins 'the sermon on the mount' by stating who are the blessed ones. What we learn from verses 2-12 is that God favours the less fortunate and those who are looked down on. Verses 13-16 reveals to us that the less fortunate outcasts, us believers in Christ are children of God, and these verses demonstrate who we are in Christ and what we are to do as God's children. Verses 17-20 explain to us how, although we are favoured by God, we still were sinners and needed fulfillment of the ten commandments to be made right with God. Thus, explaining why God Himself came down into the world in human form through Jesus, He lived a sinless life and bore our sins as though they were His own and He rose again. Jesus bore the repercussions of our sins that separated us from God, so we didn't have to and that we may have a personal relationship with God here on earth. Verses 21-48 address specific sins, most likely sins which were rampant in that region at the time the sermon was spoken and provides metaphors and parables to dramatically explain the seriousness of these sins and how we need to fight against them. Jesus closes the sermon in

¹ Jitendra Pal, *Principle, Technique and Protocol in Orthopaedics*. 7th edition.
[10.13107/jocr.2020.v10.i07.1890](https://doi.org/10.13107/jocr.2020.v10.i07.1890). (2020).

verse 48 by saying “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (ESV). This closing statement awakens us to the aim we are to strive for in fighting sin, meanwhile applying God’s grace to our downfalls.

The structure for Exodus 20 begins by God declaring His majesty. He then follows on by providing the ‘Ten Commandments’. The commandments are essentially split into two sections. Firstly, love God, then love others, implying when we first love God our love consequently flows out onto others, and we can love them unconditionally, to resemble how He loves us. Commandments one to four are principles on how to love God which, in short, are remaining obedient and reverent to God resulting in you loving Him correctly. Commandments five to ten teach us how to love others which, in short, explains that we are to respect one another, aim to uplift others and do to others as we would like to have done to us. Lastly, verses 18-26 teaches us to remain in a healthy reverent fear of God and to maintain this reverence throughout our lives so it flows into and through all we do.

Speaking of reverencing God, adultery is a definite way to do this adversely. In the period of which Jesus gave the ‘Sermon on the Mount’, it is evident adultery was rampant as it was one of the few topics discussed in the sermon. Matthew 5:27-32 is the passage in which the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ discusses adultery as well as Exodus 20:14-17 discussing this also. God looks at the heart, therefore if one is looking lustfully at another, it shows their hearts desires. If one acts lustfully, it shows their heart's desire. If one does lustfully, it shows their heart's desire. God says "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" in Proverbs 23:7, therefore what we show is only a reflection of what is in our hearts. When Jesus says to gouge out your eye, etc. It is a metaphorical gouging out of the eye. A theological principle regarding these metaphors and parables is to seek to understand God’s nature and keep that in mind always to see if what has been spoken will be a literal or figurative action. This is done through comparing scripture with scripture which enables less inaccuracy in our performances of God’s Word. Wisdom and non-maleficence are two ethical principles that apply profoundly here as without wisdom many would gouge out their eyes, but remembering the non-maleficent nature of God will enable to be wise and have discernment about the fact that God desires good health for us, not to be missing an eye.

Idolatry is the second topic under discussion. All the sins possible are idolatry as they are a result of putting other things above our love for God (Exodus 20:1-7, 22-26). From worshipping metal to worshipping marriage, idolatry is much easier to fall into than one could imagine. Idolatry is exalting anything above God. Therefore, although work requires more hours in today's day and age, being a workaholic or placing work above time with God, or at the least not scheduling an honour in the day to be with God, reading the Bible, praying, or worshipping God, whatever it is, it enables you to keep idolatry away and keep the Father close. To worship anything other than God is foolish yet we have all done it. We have placed people’s emotions over God’s. We haven’t given

God our first fruits financially, spiritually, emotionally or physically. Therefore, the ethical principles regarding idolatry are morals being weakened due to lack of focusing on God, thus adopting worldly morals. Theological principles are once again loving God above all else. Keeping God in first place keeps the hierarchy in correct order, resulting in your working better in life.

Murder is the third topic under discussion, and it stems from Matthew 5:21-26 and Exodus 20:13, 16. Again looking at the heart, God sees the violence we hold in our hearts. Anger is powerful and can cause spiritual death to some via negativity being spoken over them or hostility or demeaning actions following hatred to put down the hated one. Ethical principles result in welcoming in all the fruits of the Holy Spirit to honour God in all our ways. To be gentle, kind, patient, and longsuffering as to remain loving inside one's heart so we do not come close to any form of murder is essential as a Christian. Theological principles apply here as we love God more than anger and rebuke anger away from us because we desire to live to please God, thus we love others unconditionally. Also, to give what God has given us is our call and blessing to do so, thus denying the desire to hate.

Numbers 35 discusses this hatred, physically and spiritually. The physical hatred is demonstrated via verse 16 which states, "If anyone strikes someone a fatal blow with an iron object, that person is a murderer; the murderer is to be put to death. Spiritual hatred is demonstrated through verse 20-21 of this passage which states, "If anyone with malice aforethought shoves another or throws something at them intentionally so that they die or if out of enmity one person hits another with their fist so that the other dies, that person is to be put to death; that person is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when they meet." This makes it clear to see how hating a person in one's own heart leads to murder. However, there are more spiritual implications to this such as wishing bad on others, mocking others, mistreating others potentially leading to the individual's spiritual death because they are hurt, thus they seek power and revenge out of anger. Potentially leading to the death of the one who first hated the individual.

Honouring your father and mother is the fourth topic under discussion which Exodus 20:12 speaks of. To honour your father and mother is to honour the Lord, to love, respect and cherish the Lord and all He has given you. Ethical principles regarding honouring your father and mother are respect, integrity, patience, understanding, wisdom, etc. Theological principles to honouring your father mother are to love them unconditionally and respect them unconditionally regardless of whether they are loveable or respectable at the time. An example in the Bible of one not honouring their father and mother is Ham, Noah's son which occurs in Genesis 9:18-29. Maintaining the hierarchal 'honouring your father and mother' principle resembles the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This brings glory to God and to do so pleases Him. Theologically speaking, being obedient to God is loving God and to deny one's own

flesh as we are called to do in Romans 12:2, as Christians, is pleasing to God as it enables Him to work in us to make us more like Him. His being holy, perfect, pure. God understands that submitting to our parents may be unpleasant to the flesh, however it maintains peace, hierarchy, love and respect. This also brings peace to the one who is honouring their parents as they can rest assured, they are being obedient to God. The obedient Christian can trust God will use all things to work together for the good as stated in Romans 8:28. As well as being reminded of our positions to submit to God's order, we are reminded that all persons are made equal in worth as God spoke in Genesis chapter two that male and female were made in His image.

Lastly, yet most importantly is loving God. To love everyone regardless of your fleshly feelings is to love God. Desiring to love God as much as possible though not perfectly in the flesh and avoiding retaliating to hurtful things spoken and done to you, means you are sacrificing the flesh to demonstrate your love to God. Matthew 5:38-48 and Exodus 20:1-18,22-26 discuss loving the Lord revealing how we are to deny ourselves to love Him. We can give Him lots of time or no time. We can think of Him often or not at all. We can desire to please Him or seek to walk in a worldly way and follow the flesh to please the world. Whichever an individual's chose, loving God is a sacrificial act. We either sacrifice our flesh through Christ Jesus or sacrifice our relationship with God for the world. Due to this, ethical principles of love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control, gentleness, keeping eternal life by sacrificing the old and flesh for those who chose to love God. The theological principles remain the same that God should be first always, and we show this through how our love overflows onto others from the time we gave to God.

To give to others in love that which God has given us greatly blesses the Lord. Regardless of if one grows tired in well-doing, we continue to do well to show God that we love Him, thus making Him rejoice in our love for Him. 1 John 4 reveals God's love also and that He is love. Therefore, if God is love, it is fair to assume that He requires love from us also. Our loving others shows our love for Him. To love others when they are unlovable blesses God as Matthew 5:44 demonstrates that being a pleasing sacrifice of pride to God and offering up peace to Him blesses Him. Loving God is also shown through honouring God in all we do. Allowing the fruits of the Holy Spirit to be planted, watered, pruned and prepared to release a harvest of likeness to God brings God glory, thus demonstrating our love to Him by letting God be part of all areas of our lives and selves. When we act grotesquely, which is to sin in anyway, we profane the name of God, thus further explaining why we need Jesus so we can be forgiven. God exalts His name above Himself as Proverb 22:1 states, "A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold." Therefore, when we behave in respectful ways that are in accordance with His nature, we bring glory to His name, thus bringing Him our offering of love. Additionally, recognising and acknowledging God as the real source of all good gifts (Jas 1:17; 1 Cor 4:7) while

upholding His compassionate, gracious, patient, loving, faithful, forgiving and just ways exude our love for God to Him (Ex 34:6-7). Essentially, loving God is desiring to please Him in all your ways.

To simply clarify, the theological and ethical principles in each appropriately amalgamated topic enables easy analysis of the texts jointly. The theological principles are evident throughout each amalgamated topic which is extracted from Exodus chapter twenty and Matthew chapter five. As well as this, the ethical principles of autonomy and responsibility are demonstrated through Jesus providing the metaphors and parables to be understood with wisdom and discernment regarding adultery. This is to make the readers understand the severity of adultery, hopefully resulting in ending their adulterous ways. Beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and compassion are demonstrated through the passages concerning murder as to remedy hatred. Integrity, respect, wisdom and courage are all demonstrated through the passages concerning honouring your father and mother, loving God and idolatry to teach the readers the appropriate ways to love and honour God.

To summarise, the main theological principles of Christianity are firstly to love God, secondly to love others and, thirdly to give freely what God has given us which is forgiveness, love, mercy and grace. Though we may be unable to understand everyone's feelings, we can always remember what Jesus did for us and remain humbled by His work, allowing it to exude out of us into others, by reflecting Christ onto them. The main ethical principles in Christianity are remembering God is the source of all good things, the fruits of the Holy Spirit, autonomy, beneficence, justice, non-maleficence, integrity, respect, responsibility, fairness, compassion, courage, and wisdom. The theological principles and ethical principles suitable intertwine as the theological principles simplify what we as children of God are called to do and the ethical principles provide examples of how we are to carry out the theological principles in our ways.

Bibliography:

Pal, Jitendra, Principle, Technique and Protocol in Orthopaedics. 10(7):1-2. doi: 10.13107/jocr.2020.v10.i07.1890.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7857669/#:~:text=Principle%2C%20as%20defined%20in%20Lexicon,system%20of%20thought%20or%20belief>. Accessed on: [22/03/2024].