

What makes ethics "Christian"—or, assuming Marxsen's use of terms, "Christian"?

According to Marxsen, an ethics is "Christian" if, and only if, the action it calls for is the action of an actor who is "Christian," i.e., one who, existing eschatologically, acts accordingly. Since, however, it is quite impossible to determine whether or not an actor is a "Christian" in this sense, there cannot be any such thing as a "Christian" concrete material ethics.

In my view, by contrast, the question of whether one is a "Christian" is distinct from the question of what one would do, and how one would do it, if one were. And only the second question is properly the question of "Christian' ethics." Therefore, I should say that an ethics is "Christian" if, and only if, the action it calls for is the action that a "Christian" would perform, given both an understanding of what it means to be and to act as a "Christian" and a reading of the ^{relevant} circumstances, the possibilities and the limitations, of the particular situation in which the action must be performed.

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