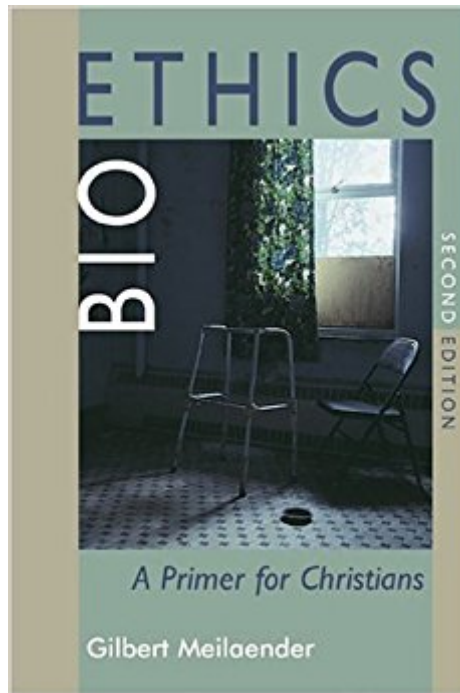




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# Bioethics: A Primer For Christians



## Synopsis

In the face of rapid advances in medical research and treatment, bioethics has become a serious social concern. Originally published in 1996 and later chosen by *World* magazine as one of the top 100 books of the twentieth century, Gilbert Meilaender's *Bioethics* covers a wide range of pressing bioethical issues and offers discerning guidance on how Christians ought to think about them. In admirably clear language Meilaender discusses abortion, assisted reproduction, genetic advance and prenatal screening, care for the dying and euthanasia, human experimentation, and more. This new edition of his *Bioethics* features updated information throughout, a fuller discussion of human embryos — including stem cell research — and a thorough rewrite of the chapter on organ donation.

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## Customer Reviews

Writing as a Christian for Christians, Meilaender (religion, Oberlin Coll.) ponders the ramifications of contemporary biotechnology. He offers "reasons of concern" rather than a full-blown attack, based on the Christian conception of the human being and the traditional respect for the body. He seeks to examine the implications of different technologies and capabilities of the medical profession that raise, for him, grave questions. While directed to Christians, the points he raises have a wider validity, and his style is pleasing and generally accessible. In reflections tinged with a traditional Judeo-Christian viewpoint, Fiedler (English, SUNY-Buffalo) writes more as a humanist. The author of over 20 books of essays in the humanities, he rebels against the demystification and desacralization

that has governed medical sciences. In his idiosyncratic style, which will not appeal to all, Fiedler berates the prejudice against the disabled and those not seen as normal and abhors euphemisms such as "nonviable terata," said of infants so malformed they are unlikely to survive. In essays addressed mostly to specialists, Fiedler ponders such points as why organ transplant programs do not succeed, the image of the doctor and the nurse in literature and popular culture, the obsession with "normal" children, and the abnormal fear of abnormality. Both authors ponder the mystery of human life; both have a healthy respect for science but also a healthy disdain for technology as an end in itself. Theirs are clarion calls for a more circumspect examination of current medical procedures that allow us to prolong life, end the life of the unwanted, and cure the problems of those who are not "normal." For pertinent collections. ?Augustine J. Curley, Newark Abbey, N.J. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Meilaender comes to the point early: "I have tried to say what we Christians ought to say in order to be faithful to the truth that has claimed us in Jesus." The permission of the law, he asserts, does not supersede Christian teachings, which he sees requiring that abortion be countenanced only to save the life of the mother and in cases of rape and incest, that genetic engineering be tried on somatic but not germ cells, that medical treatment be refused only if useless or excessively burdensome, and that death never be induced by painkillers or disconnecting feeding tubes. Living wills are not acceptable, he says, although health care powers of attorney are, and if the family disapproves of a member's desire to donate organs, its wishes must prevail. Meilaender gives his reasoning, carefully worked out from Christian writings, for each of these major conclusions. Some Christians may demur, especially from his regard for suffering as part of God's unchallengeable design, but, concise and definite, his primer does its duty well. William Beatty --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

### An excellent Primer of Christians and Biblical Counsellors

I was very impressed with the condition of this book as well as the timeliness of it's arrival. I procrastinated on ordering the books necessary for my classes and was worried I wouldn't have them in time. Thanks to the quick turn around of delivery from my orders, my books all arrived in me.

Meh, it's a textbook.

This is a simple read that brings clear awareness and discussion of some very serious issues found in life and cause one to think what they would do if in such a situation.

ok

In recent times, with the advances in human reproductive technologies, cloning, organ transplants, contraceptive technologies, and abortifacients, it is necessary to provide clear moral answers to these ethical questions that face medical science today. The author's book provides an ethic based on Christian principles. The author does this by looking at life as a gift from God. The first chapter of the book describes the basic elements in the Christian vision of the world. Christians in baptism are called to be members of the body of Christ. They are called to form a bond with each other; they are called into a community. Christians are created in freedom for communion with God. This freedom has its limits. In chapters two through four, he argues that parenthood does not mean a right to have a child. The child is begotten and not made. Parents must not seek to have a child at all cost, not even in adoption. On abortion, the author argues that the life of the child in the womb is God's creation and is part of the world God came to redeem. Chapters five and six discuss genetic advances and pre-natal screening. Gene type therapy makes children that come after us the products that we have molded. Pre-natal screening tends to separate the natural connection between mother and child and making parental commitment to offspring tentative and conditional. In chapters six through eight, the author says suicide and euthanasia are attempts at being creators rather than creatures. Creatures do not have the ultimate judgment about a person. Christians have the responsibility of standing with the suffering to give them care and not minimize suffering. However, refusing a useless and excessively burdensome treatment is not immoral. Patients need to know the truth and to participate in the decision making process. Living wills and health care power of the attorney are helpful where the patient is incapable of making a decision. Chapters nine and ten discuss two gifts of the body, organ donation and human experimentation. Every gift of the body can be well given if a person understands him or herself as a gift rather than creators. People must freely and voluntarily give their consent in order to participate in medical research. In the last chapter, the author discusses sickness and health. God is present in our illnesses and Christians must continue to live in this hope. Physicians ought not to see themselves as saviors but must cooperate with powers beyond theirs. The author made logical and consistent arguments throughout

the book. He supports his thesis with authoritative facts drawn from social events, medical advance and reputable authors. His style of writing is simple and devoid of words that will confuse the average reader. The major weakness with the book is the failure to give a more pastoral twist. The treatment of life's starting point is vague. I highly recommend this book to anyone who desires knowing more about biomedical ethics and especially to all students of the medical sciences.

No pretenses about this book, upfront and straightforward that this is a primer on bioethics from a conservative Christian perspective. He does a great job meeting his promises, providing intros to the topics of assisted reproduction, abortion, gene therapy, genetic research, prenatal screening, suicide and euthanasia, organ donation, and research sensitive issues to humans. He is unapologetic for not providing a survey of Christian opinions nor for trying to be faithful to his understanding (Lutheran) of Biblical truths. He is sensitive in providing not a minimalistic, common denominator, public policy view, but one that is sensitive to the pro-life, Creator God who sustains all and will judge us at the end. Possibly the only improvement I can see is the lack of a recommended reading list for those interested in pursuing topics further without reading journals, etc. This book shall bless the church both in individual Christians reading it and also for Bible study groups.

This book is an overview, from a Christian perspective, of some of the current issues in clinical ethics or bioethics. While Dr Meilanader's viewpoint may differ significantly from that of many evangelical Christians or Catholics, his application of Christian principles to bioethical questions is very well done. I would strongly recommend this book to those interested in beginning to learn about issues in bioethics with a particular emphasis on the Christian perspective. For those interested in a deeper look at the issues, this book would serve only as an introduction.

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