

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A Case Method Approach

FIFTH EDITION

Laura A. Stivers
James B. Martin-Schramm

ORBIS  BOOKS
Maryknoll, New York 10545

Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.orbisbooks.com.

Copyright © 2020 by Laura A. Stivers and James B. Martin-Schramm.

This is a substantially revised edition of *Christian Ethics: A Case Method Approach*, Fourth Edition, edited by Laura A. Stivers, Christine E. Gudorf, and James B. Martin-Schramm, Maryknoll: NY: Orbis Books, 2012.

Published by Orbis Books, Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to: Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

Manufactured in the United States of America
Manuscript editing and typesetting by Joan Weber Laflamme

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Stivers, Laura A., author. | Martin-Schramm, James B., author.

Title: *Christian ethics : a case method approach* / Laura A. Stivers, James B. Martin-Schramm.

Description: Fifth edition. | Maryknoll, NY : Orbis Books, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: The fifth edition of this classic introduction to Christian ethics via the case method approach, utilizing case studies of contemporary ethical issues.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020006710 (print) | LCCN 2020006711 (ebook) | ISBN 9781626983977 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9781608338610 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Christian ethics—Case studies.

Classification: LCC BJ1251 .C49 2020 (print) | LCC BJ1251 (ebook) | DDC 241—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020006710>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020006711>

Contents

Introduction: Christian Ethics and the Case Method 1

**PART I
FAMILY**

Case: Rigor and Responsibility 17

A professional couple active in church and community considers the implications of building a vacation cabin in a poor and environmentally degraded world.

Commentary 21

Case: What God Has Joined 33

Friends and professional counselors seek to assist a couple with marital problems stemming from child abuse, heavy drinking, physical violence, and differing reactions to sexual intimacy.

Commentary 39

**PART II
VIOLENCE/NONVIOLENCE**

Case: A Life for a Life? 53

A Florida state legislator is undecided about a bill to abolish the death penalty, wondering whether the problems with the death penalty system can be effectively reformed.

Commentary 59

Case: An American Idol? 69

A church in Iowa grapples with gun violence in the United States, both in terms of safety on Sunday mornings as well as how to address the issue through legislative advocacy.

Commentary 74

**PART III
POVERTY**

Case: Homelessness: The How and Why of Caring 93

A social worker who assists the homeless is undecided about her city's proposed anti-panhandling legislation and contemplates what approaches would best address homelessness.

Commentary 100

Case: Detain and Deport 111

A local sheriff must decide whether to cooperate with a request from a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent to detain an undocumented high schooler for forty-eight hours past his release date from jail.

Commentary 116

**PART IV
THE ENVIRONMENT**

Case: Oil and the Caribou People 131

A teacher visits a Native American clan gathering in Northeastern Alaska where options are being considered to protect the Porcupine Caribou Herd threatened by oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Commentary 138

Case: Whose Water? 151

A rural county commissioner is faced with the need to find millions to build an up-to-date county water plant, a bottling company willing to foot the cost in return for access to water reserves, and environmentalists and business owners opposing the bottling plant.

Commentary 159

**PART V
BUSINESS**

Case: Sustaining Dover 169

A city council representative and small business owner grapples with the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable

development when Walmart asks for a zoning change so that it can construct a Supercenter in the City of Dover.

Commentary 177

Case: Executive Pay: Reward or Excess? 191

A corporate board of directors struggles with approving an annual compensation package for the chief executive officer when the company's profits suffer due to the weakened economy and the wages of other employees are frozen.

Commentary 197

**PART VI
HEALTH**

Case: Cut It Out! 211

A research scientist engaged in cutting edge work in genetics has to discern where she stands on how and when to use a new technology that has both great potential to improve or to harm human health and ecological well-being.

Commentary 216

Case: Keeping the Doors Open 229

A newly hired public hospital CEO discovers a huge operating deficit and attempts to decide whose interests take priority in choosing what should be cut.

Commentary 236

**PART VII
SEXUALITY/GENDER**

Case: Drinking and Hooking Up? 249

A first-year college student grapples with drinking and hookup culture at her university as well as the issue of sexual assault.

Commentary 256

Case: Created in the Image of God 267

A family is struggling with how to support their transgender daughter who is ready to take steps to transition biologically to a female.

Commentary 272

**PART VIII
LIFE AND DEATH**

Case: A Matter of Life and Death 289

An eighteen-year-old single woman must come to a decision during her first year of college about an unwanted pregnancy in the early stages of gestation.

Commentary 292

Case: Death, Duty, and Dignity 309

A seminary professor invited to give a public address on care for the dying wrestles with what to say ethically about an upcoming state referendum that would legalize physician-assisted death.

Commentary 314

Appendix: Teaching Ethics by the Case Method 331

Authors and Contributors 341