



Ethics of Everyday Life: Moral Theology, Social Anthropology, and the Imagination of the Human

Michael Banner

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Why do we have children and what do we raise them for? Does the proliferation of depictions of suffering in the media enhance, or endanger, compassion? How do we live and die well in the extended periods of debility which old age now threatens? Why and how should we grieve for the dead? And how should we properly remember other grief and grievances?

In addressing such questions, the Christian imagination of human life has been powerfully shaped by the imagination of Christ's life. Christ's conception, birth, suffering, death, and burial have been subjects of profound attention in Christian thought, just as they are moments of special interest and concern in each and every human life. However, they are also sites of contention and controversy, where what it is to be human is discovered, constructed, and contested. Conception, birth, suffering, burial, and death are occasions, in other words, for profound and continuing questioning regarding the meaning of human life, as controversies to do with IVF, abortion, euthanasia, and the use of bodies and body parts post mortem, indicate.

In *The Ethics of Everyday Life*, Michael Banner argues that moral theology must reconceive its nature and tasks if it is not only to articulate its own account of human being, but also to enter into constructive contention with other accounts--in particular, it must be willing to learn from and engage with social anthropology if it is to offer powerful and plausible portrayals of the moral life and answers to the questions which trouble modernity. Drawing in wide-ranging fashion from social anthropology and from Christian thought and practice from many periods, and influenced especially by his engagement in public policy matters including as a member of the UK's Human Tissue Authority, Banner develops the outlines of an everyday ethics, stretching from before the cradle to after the grave.

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