

Reflective Christian Communication in Moral Controversies

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Introduction

Intractable disagreement over moral issues is a familiar feature of the public policy landscape in Australia. Controversies in biomedicine (abortion, euthanasia and access to assisted reproductive technologies), in social policy (legalizing and normalizing of homosexuality, mandatory sentencing and the control of illicit drug use) and in environmental policy (the exploitation of forests, the disposal of hazardous wastes, and the use of gene technologies in food production)—to name a few—show a similar pattern. Such disputes are rarely fully resolved. They may recede from center stage for a time, either because of general public exhaustion or the successful brokering of short term legislative solutions. However, they typically return sooner or later, with the disagreement between parties just as intense as it was before.

Not surprisingly, Christian church agencies, Christian activist groups and individual Christians are often prominent participants in such disputes. Most Christian "mainstream" church agencies¹ have been active in debates over abortion, euthanasia and the various issues surrounding reproductive technology and genetic medicine. Christians are not only in disagreement with those outside the faith. As the continuing controversy surrounding the moral meaning of homosexuality indicates, intense moral conflict is a familiar problem within the Christian community as well.

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