



Altruism and Christian Ethics (New Studies in Christian Ethics)

Colin Grant

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Separated from its anchorage in religion, ethics has followed the social sciences in seeing human beings as fundamentally characterised by self-interest, so that altruism is either naively idealistic or arrogantly self-sufficient. Colin Grant contends that, as a modern secular concept, altruism is a parody on the self-giving love of Christianity, so that its dismissal represents a social levelling that loses the depths that theology makes intelligible and religion makes possible. The Christian affirmation is that God is characterised by self-giving love (agape), then expected of Christians. Lacking this theological background, the focus on self-interest in sociobiology and economics, and on human realism in the political focus of John Rawls or the feminist sociability of Carol Gilligan, finds altruism naive or a dangerous distraction from real possibilities of mutual support. This book argues that to dispense with altruism is to dispense with God and with the divine transformation of human possibilities.

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