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TH604: Christian Ethics: OA

Week 7: 5-3-1-Chapter 7

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the nature of Biblical Authority for Christian Ethics?
2. What are the hermeneutical issues in ethical decisions?
3. What are some of the many contemporary issues that the Bible does not address?
4. What is an example of issues addressed in the Bible that are not identical to today?
5. What is the relationship of the particularity of the text and universality?

ANSWERS:

1. The nature of Biblical Authority for Christian Ethics are, that some see the Bible as a book of moral codes of conducts and ethics, but others see it as God's Word that is here to bring guidance to believers in Jesus Christ, for everyday living (p150).

2. The hermeneutical issues in ethical decisions are, that some believe when one is seeking guidance from some of the scriptures, because of the biblical inspiration and authority does not apply to the Christian ethics of today. Some claim that when seeking interpretation of scripture, it lacks the remedy of the complexity of today's situations people face. Hollinger says that, scripture requires an honest look into the text and also when one is even engaging with the text when facing today's complexities (p153).

3. Some of the many contemporary issues that the Bible does not address are, "genetic engineering, treatment termination, nuclear war, human rights, corporate ethics, the allocation of scarce medical resources, contraception and abortion, to name a few" (p154).

4. An example of issues addressed in the Bible that are not identical to today is, charging interest to loans and obeying governing authorities. Hollinger uses the example for obeying governing authorities in respect to, were people supposed to honor and obey the likes of Hitler or Stalin (p156)?

5. The relationship of the particularity of the text and universality are, that universalism searches for what is deemed systemic and then will try to impose the rules, regulations, laws and norms on everyone so that things can run smoothly and efficiently. Particularism is the opposite. It searches for what is deemed different and unique in order to create something special and of exceptional quality. The relationship between the two is that they both tend to create patterns of thoughts which encompasses philosophy, art, science, politics and ethics (p160-161).

TERMS:

Casuistic Law: Another word for Casuistic law is case law and it is based on precedents. They are moral principles to determine what is right and what is wrong in particular situations.

According to Hollinger, it is the most specific directives given in the Bible. It usually uses “if... then” statements that are conditional (p162-163).

Apodictic Law: According to Hollinger are “straightforward regulations in the form of the Divine commands. An example of this are the Ten Commandments (p164-166).

Principles: These are foundational guidelines and perspectives of how a person is supposed to conduct themselves. This entails, “duties, ideals, responsibilities and life orientations” that are expected to be followed (p166-169).

SUMMARY:

When Christians look for answers, the one true source they turn to is the Bible, which is God’s Holy Word. The thought is that if you want to know what God thinks about something, seek His Word because He tells us. When one is seeking morality and how God sees it, seek God’s Word because He will show you. Finally, if one seeks guidance and want God to guide them as He promised, you seek and search out the Bible, for it is God’s clear direction.

It’s important for all who engage and try to understand the scriptures, it was written in at a specific time in history, during a particular culture, to a particular people and for very specific purposes. Hollinger explains that Bible scholars took the time to use a variety of genres in order to deal with and address the issues of that particular day and time period in history. The task of today’s Christian is to study the scriptures, using a variety of methods, such as the historical background, so that they can interpret the scriptures for today’s living all the while preserving the integrity of the scriptures, by not taking it out of its proper context.

The ethical methods of casuistic law, apodictic law, principles, paradigms and narratives are some of the methods used when studying God’s Holy Word. As they are used to bring the scriptures to light as one tries to live them and are guided by them in today’s world and culture.