

Trevor Delmore II

Dr. Louis DeCaro

TH604.OA

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“The Bible in Ethical Decisions” (5-3-1)

Questions

1. **What is wrong, says Hollinger, with seeing the Bible as a book of moral codes?**

Hollinger points out that the Bible is not primarily a book of moral codes nor an ethics textbook, as many of the ethical issues Christians face today are unaccounted for in Scripture.

2. **How does Hollinger say we should use biblical material for many ethical issues?** For

many ethical issues, we need to accentuate the broad array of Scripture, looking for frameworks and paradigms, over just employing commands and principles.

3. **What is required to discern the proper application of a text?** Discerning the proper

application of a text today requires “exegetical and historical/cultural analysis of the biblical text and a thorough understanding of the ethical quandary” at hand.

4. **What advice does Walter Kaiser offer for interpreting troubling incidences in the**

Old Testament? Kaiser says that one needs to distinguish between what is recorded in the Bible and what the Bible teaches.

5. **What is helpful to keep in mind when applying Scripture to Christian ethics?**

Hollinger reminds the reader that both testaments “do not assume an ideal social structure for all time.” Most of all, the commandments communicated to Israel or the church stressed the ways in which they were to be different from the surrounding culture.

Vocabulary

- **Casuistic Law:** the most specific form of direction in the Bible, typically using an if-then form
- **Apodictic Law:** straightforward regulations in the form of divine commands, containing some specificity of action, with the setting and behavior elicited being much broader than casuistic law
- **Principles:** general foundational perspectives and guidelines for human behavior. These are duties, ideals, responsibilities, and life orientations illustrated in broad terms

Summary

In this chapter on “The Bible in Ethical Decisions,” Hollinger outlines some of the different schools of thought on using the Bible for ethical decision-making. For example, Hollinger asserts that “the ethical materials of the Bible are rich and varied: casuistic law, apodictic law, principles, paragraphs, paradigms, and narratives.” Equally, Hollinger acknowledges the historical distance between the times in which the scriptures were formulated and the present day. He addresses worries about biblical relevance and questions regarding biblical authority. At the same time, he affirms the authoritative nature of the scriptures. Hollinger, in the end, supports a classical or high view of Scripture, stating, “The Bible is the inspired Word of God that though addressed to particular contexts, people, and issues of a given time, nonetheless speaks to contexts, people, and issues of another time.” From this vantage point, he contends Christians must approach the matter of ethical decision-making.