

Using the Old Testament in Christian ethics : the story of Judah and Tamar

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Abstract:

This study contributes to the available knowledge on the difficulty of using the Bible as a source in Christian ethics. In the study, the use of the Old Testament in Christian ethics is explored and analysed. The central research question is: What makes the use of the Old Testament in Christian ethics so difficult? The research findings reveal that the relationship between ethics and culture is problematic and contributes to the challenge of using the Old Testament in Christian ethics. The study is descriptive and is informed by research that has been done in the fields of Biblical Criticism and Christian ethics. The study focuses on methods and traditions of Biblical Criticism and Christian ethics that can play a role in interpreting biblical narratives in the Old Testament. It is important to look at the various tools and methods of Biblical Criticism to interpret biblical narratives and broaden our knowledge of biblical texts. Relevant approaches in Christian ethics can be useful in making pertinent contributions on moral issues since the focus is on character and community, and biblical texts can be used to shape moral identity. To demonstrate how a specific text in the Old Testament can be used in Christian ethics, the narrative of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 is discussed in terms of character and community. The objective of this part of the study is therefore to show how Biblical Criticism and Christian ethics can be used when interpreting a text. The main argument is that Christians often find it difficult to integrate ethics and culture because the relationship between ethics and culture is problematic. The challenge is how one should interpret ethics, in this case Christian, in a particular culture as it plays an integral part in identity and moral formation.

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