



Van Til, Kent A.

The Moral Disciple: An Introduction to Christian Ethics

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

Kent A. Van Til's *The Moral Disciple* is a primer on ethics that could be used in undergraduate courses in Christian colleges, group studies at local churches, or by interested laypersons who want a solid introduction to this foundational aspect of the Christian worldview. I limit this volume's use to Christian colleges because Van Til unapologetically sets God and Scripture as the sources from which we derive our ethical imperatives and standards. I can't imagine secular institutions having much use for such truths.

This slim volume is divided chiastically into four parts: 1) Introducing Christian Ethics; 2) Character; 3) Norms; 4) Consequences. The first and fourth parts each contain two chapters while the second and third parts contain three chapters apiece. From vice and virtue to conscience and consequence, a variety of complex ideas are explained simply through a number of case studies and a bevy of summary sidebars, which allow the reader to see ethics in action. Each chapter is concluded with a list of several questions along with a list of works cited and recommended reading.

Van Til seems, as far as I can tell, to be an astute philosopher, which aids him in the task of making his explanations terse and practical. On the philosophical end there's not much to quibble with, if anything at all. On the theological/exegetical end there's a tiny matter or two that

one might take issue with. For example, the suggestion that the command to “love one another” is a metaphor or simile (7) is kind of weird but no big deal really.

Twice Van Til seems to disregard the context of a biblical passage in making a point. In one instance he says that the “point” of Peter’s vision in Acts 10 is the removal of dietary/ritual regulations under the law (115), but surely the “point” of Peter’s vision had to do with the gospel being preached to the Gentiles, not dietary laws as such. In the second instance he suggests that 2 Corinthians 6:14 refers to marriage (116), which is a common enough interpretation, but one that isn’t borne by the text.

These are obviously minor complaints. The only thing I would have liked to have seen included in this book that wasn’t is a concluding summary chapter. As it stands the sidebars contain all the summary the reader needs, but to have it all collated with some concluding thoughts would have been helpful. A Scripture index would have been nice as well. But in all I think that this is a fine resource for introducing thoughtful believers to Christian ethics.