

World Religions in Greater Indianapolis Teaching Module

Teacher: Barry LeBlanc **Humanities Discipline:** Introduction to Ethics (PHIL 102) **Date:** March 28, 2016

World Religion: Christianity **Teaching Module Title:** Christian Ethics

- Note: This module is intended as one lesson in a multi-lesson, auto-instructional unit on Religion & Ethics. (The unit is one of several Term Assignment options; others include Term Paper, Presentation, and Ethics at the Movies.) All of the content is accessed and completed on Blackboard.

Teaching Module Goals:

Student will demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The sources, frameworks, and influences of Christian ethics.
2. Love as the central virtue of Christian ethics.
3. The contributions of Christian ethics to the development of natural law philosophy.
4. The issues of abortion and homosexuality and key biblical passages that address them.

Assigned Readings and Websites:

PHIL 102 Introduction to Ethics required textbook:

- Louis Pojman, *How Should We Live? An Introduction to Ethics*
 - pp 89-105 ("Religion and Ethics")

Other books / websites:

- "[Christian ethics](#)" in *Wikipedia* (Introductory paragraphs only)
- "[Christian ethics](#)" in *Encyclopedia of Ethics* (Must be logged in to Campus Connect)
- Scott Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (Zondervan, 2009)
- [The New International Version of the Bible on Biblica - The International Bible Society](#)
- "[Natural law](#)" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*
- "[Metropolitan Community Church](#)" in *Wikipedia*

Reading Quiz Questions:

To answer the questions 1-3 below, read the first two paragraphs of "[Christian ethics](#)" in *Wikipedia*:

1. What four distinguishable sources inform Christian ethics?
2. T/F? The Bible is the universal and fundamental source of specifically Christian ethics.
3. Besides divine command theory (DCT), name four other ethical frameworks used by Christian ethicists.
4. To answer the question below, read this excerpt from "Christian ethics" in *Encyclopedia of Ethics*:
Philosophical Influences on Christian Ethical Tradition. The Christian ethical tradition has absorbed various philosophical influences during different periods and in different regions. Stoic influences found in the New Testament clearly affected the ethical and theological development of early Christianity. Neo-Platonism provided the framework for Augustine's (354-430) theology and ethics ... Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) influenced not only Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), but Roman Catholicism generally ... Eastern Orthodox ethics has maintained a Platonic flavor through history; Protestant ethics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came to grips with Kant (1724-1804) in one way or another; in recent decades existentialism, phenomenology, linguistic analysis, process philosophy, Marxism, and hermeneutical theory have informed various authors.

Match the Christian figure / ethical tradition with its dominant philosophical influence:

- A. Early Christianity [Answer: Stoicism]
- B. Augustine [Answer: Plato/Neo-Platonism]

C. Thomas Aquinas / Roman Catholicism [Answer: Aristotle]

D. Protestant ethics [Answer: Kant]

5. To answer the question below, read this excerpt from Scott Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics: The New Testament Ethic of Love*. Any account of New Testament ethics that does not include love as the central virtue is surely incomplete. Jesus and the apostles take the central command of the Law, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5), and develop an ethic of love for God and one’s neighbor. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) defines one’s neighbor as anyone who has a need that person can meet, and applies the principle to those outside the church as well as to fellow believers. ... [The Apostle] Paul summarizes the entire Law under the heading of love, suggesting that love fulfills the Law (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). Similarly, Jesus insists that the world will know that he is who he claims to be by the way love is practiced in the community (John 13:35). ... Love is considered the ultimate expression of the virtues involved in following Jesus and the indicator of how substantial the commitment to one’s faith is. Summarize briefly your understanding of the virtue of love in the ethical teaching of the New Testament.
6. To answer the question below, read the first four paragraphs of “Natural law” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*: Explain how Romans 2:14–15 might be used to defend natural law from a Christian perspective.
7. Why would a Bible-believing Christian oppose abortion based on Psalm 139:13-16? (Note: In this passage, the writer is speaking directly to God in the language of prayer and worship.)
8. To answer the questions below, read the following content regarding Christianity and the Issue of Homosexuality:
- Research conducted 2004-2006¹ revealed that “anti-homosexual” / “gay-hater” was the top negative perception those outside the Christian religion had of those inside. In contrast, Metropolitan Community Church is a Protestant Christian denomination with over 200 congregations worldwide reaching out specifically to LGBT families and communities.
 - Read Romans 2:14-17; it is the primary New Testament passage that addresses homosexuality. Regarding this passage, Bible scholar Walter Kaiser explains, “The key offense in the homosexual act is that it is a direct front to God as it abandons his divinely appointed design and function for human sexuality.”²
 - In *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, Scott Rae offers these four interpretations of Romans 2:14-17:
 - *The reference to homosexuality in this passage has been interpreted in a variety of ways. First, it has been taken to refer to homosexual male religious prostitutes in idolatrous worship ceremonies. Therefore, idolatry, not homosexual relations, is condemned. This is parallel to the description of homosexuality in Deuteronomy 23: 17– 18, where religious prostitution of all types is condemned. Since idolatry is in the immediate context of the condemnation of homosexual sex, this adds strength to this view.*
 - *A second view is that [the Apostle] Paul is condemning true heterosexuals who are engaging in homosexual acts. This view comes out of Paul’s emphasis on homosexuality as being unnatural. Many homosexuals, however, argue that their orientation is natural for them. An example of homosexuality that is not natural would be true heterosexuals who perform homosexual acts. The debate is over the use of the term “natural,” whether that refers to what is natural subjectively, based on a person’s own individual orientation, or whether it refers to what is natural objectively, which is natural regardless of one’s orientation.*
 - *A third view is that Paul is condemning perverse expressions of homosexuality as opposed to the loving, committed relationships that are possible for homosexuals. Thus Paul’s condemnation would be parallel to the way he would condemn heterosexuals for perverse expressions of their sexual identity.*

¹ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity ... and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007).

² Walter C. Kaiser, *What Does the Lord Require?: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009)

- *A fourth view is that Paul intended to condemn all homosexual behavior. Paul's appeal to a universal truth about sexual relations linked to the order of creation prevents someone from seeing this passage limited to only certain kinds of homosexual behavior and from seeing Paul as culturally outdated in his teaching. Rather, it provides an appropriate context for a judgment on all homosexual relationships. The phrase "natural relations with women" (Rom. 1: 27, emphasis added) makes it clear that the natural sexual relationship is heterosexual and objective, and thus is not dependent on a person's individual orientation. This is the only view that does not read into the passage things that are not there.*

Based on these readings, which interpretation of Romans 2:14-17 would Metropolitan Community Church not accept?

- A. The passage condemns only true heterosexuals who are "unnaturally" engaging in homosexual acts.
- B. The passage condemns homosexual behavior generally since it defines "natural" (i.e. following the created order) as men having "natural relations with women." [CORRECT]
- C. The passage condemns the idolatry of homosexual male religious prostitutes, not homosexual relations.
- D. The passage condemns perverse expressions of homosexuality as opposed to loving, committed homosexuals relationships.