

---

## Chapter 5.15

# Moral Relativism & Insanity

---

### Table of Topics

#### A) Moral Relativism Among Cultures

#### B) Moral Insanity Among Non-Christians

B.1) Moral Depravity Perverts Moral Reasoning

B.2) The Vice of "Toleration" Distorts the Virtue of Moral Standards

*Extras & Endnotes*

### Primary Points

- if love and righteousness are either unrecognizable, unimportant, or defined differently by a particular culture, then virtue ceases to be an apologetic basis for a religion's superiority over others.
- As is the case in many arenas, it would seem that the popularity of *moral relativism* differs between the academy and the man on the street.
- Contrary to *moral relativism*, humanity possesses a sufficiently universal & objective sense of morality for *virtue apologetics* to be effective.
- Universal moral standards are in human culture because they are recognized as beneficial and humans have consciences.
- While moral relativist may claim to deny universal morals, they themselves are consistent in condemning certain behaviors.
- Accordingly, God is not even interested in proving anything to such people and God's intentions for *virtue apologetics* do not include people whose "**consciences are corrupted**" (Tit 1:16) such that their minds are morally depraved.
- As the "toleration" of immorality increasingly becomes a virtue in our culture, the Christian's real virtuous stand for biblical morality (e.g. homosexuality) will be perceived as a vice.

Part of the reason for the neglect and even denial of a biblical approach to Christian apologetics is the perceived philosophical and historical difficulties of claiming the moral superiority of those uniquely having God the Holy Spirit live in them. We will address these in the next three chapters, and find that by and large, the biblical mandate for *virtue apologetics* remains the ultimate and universal approach God has ordained to prove the exclusivity of Christianity in this world.

## A) The Challenge of Moral Relativism Among Cultures

Many question whether morality is understood universally and objectively enough to be the means to prove anything. In other words, if love and righteousness are either unrecognizable, unimportant, or defined differently by a particular culture, then virtue ceases to be an apologetic basis for a religion's superiority over others. The position we are describing can be labeled *moral relativism*.

Accordingly, Louis Pojman writes in his excellent book on ethics:

Ethical relativism holds that there are no universally valid moral principles, but rather that all moral principles are valid relative to culture or individual choice. It is to be distinguished from moral skepticism—the view that there are no valid moral principles at all (or at least we cannot know whether there are any).<sup>1</sup>

As is the case in many arenas, it would seem that the popularity of *moral relativism* differs between the academy and the man on the street. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland claim that, "The majority of moral philosophers and theologians do not embrace normative [moral] relativism because of the seriousness of the criticisms raised against it."<sup>2</sup> However, Dr. Pojman believes that such an attitude is fairly popular among non-academics and comments:

[I]n polls taken in my ethics and introduction to philosophy classes over the past several years (in three different universities in three areas of the country) students affirmed by a two to one ratio, a version of moral relativism over moral absolutism with barely three percent seeing something in between these two polar opposites.<sup>3</sup>

The most common objection to the universality of morality is the differences that actually exist in some cultures. For example, Dr. Pojman observes:

Eskimos allow their elderly to die by starvation, whereas we [Americans] believe that this practice is morally wrong. The Spartans of ancient Greece believed, and Dobu of New Guinea

believe today, that stealing is morally right, but we believe that it is wrong. The Nuer of East Africa throw deformed infants to the hippopotamus, but we abhor infanticide.

Ruth Benedict describes a tribe in Melanesia that views cooperation and kindness as vices, and Colin Turnbull had documented that the Ik in Northern Uganda have no sense of duty toward their children or parents. [Pojman shares elsewhere that the Ik culture actually “enjoys watching its own children fall into fires”<sup>4</sup> - their name seems to fit them well].

Some societies make it a duty for children to kill (sometimes strangle) their aging parents. Eskimos sometimes abandon their elderly as they move on to new locations. Sexual practices vary over time and climate. Some cultures permit homosexual behavior, whereas others condemn it. Some cultures practice cannibalism, whereas we detest it.<sup>5</sup>

While it is admitted by most that such moral aberrations are relatively rare, they obviously do exist. Still, their presence does nothing to change the fact that God intends for virtue to be the ultimate and universal apologetic for the superiority of the Christian faith.

First, even if it could be proven that the fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22-23) would be unimpressive in a certain culture, it can still be true that such virtue is God’s intended apologetic. It could likewise be argued that the apologetic message God intends to send through His Creation is thwarted if an individual is blind. Nonetheless, Creation remains God’s ultimate and universal apologetic for His existence.

Likewise, would we dismiss all the value of *intellectual apologetics* simply because there are mentally handicapped or insane people who do not have the mental capacity to appreciate and evaluate such evidence? In the same vein, the presence of a morally blind or insane culture, (like the Ik of Uganda?), would not change the fact that Christian virtue remains God’s ultimate and universal apologetic for His Gospel. The morally blind and insane would be those whose consciences are so hardened by sin that no apologetic for the real God will work, and even God Himself makes sure it won’t work as a part of His judgment on them (cf. Rom 1:18-32; 9:17-18). It is not those whom the Bible says have morally crossed the “point of no return” that *virtue apologetics* or any other Christian apologetic is, or needs to be concerned with. As we have discussed elsewhere, such people are only increasingly damned by any evidence for Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, we would maintain that even if a culture has some moral aberrations, that plenty of moral absolutes would remain among them that would coincide with Christian virtues. If there is an isolated culture somewhere in which stealing is even praiseworthy (which could be true of an American inner city gang as much as an Amazonian inner

jungle tribe), we would still expect there to be some virtues that are highly regarded (such as courage, working hard, etc.) and that a Christian's superiority could be recognized in.

Thirdly, differences in morality between cultures can be exaggerated. Accordingly, Dr. Pojman concludes after a detailed analysis of the topic that: "[I]n every morality a certain core will remain, though we apply it somewhat differently because of differences in environment, belief, tradition, and the like."<sup>7</sup> For example, in several cultures where euthanasia is practiced, it is considered an act of love and mercy, not murder. The moral principal of the sanctity of human life still exists, but is simply applied differently, and such an example would not strongly support *moral relativism*.

As Christian apologist Norm Geisler puts it:

Moral absolutes are unavoidable. Even those who deny them use them. The reasons for rejecting them are often based on a misunderstanding or misapplication of the moral absolute, not on a real rejection of it. That is, moral values are absolute, even if our understanding of them or the circumstances in which they are applied are not.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, David Stewart remarks:

[T]he alleged differences in morality among different cultures is probably greatly exaggerated. A truly different moral system would be one in which, for example, murder is approved and cowardice considered a virtue, where honesty is considered vile and loyalty is looked upon as stupid.<sup>9</sup>

Along these lines, C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) noted in his well known apologetic *Mere Christianity* that:

I know that some people say the idea of a Law of Nature or decent behaviour known to all men is unsound, because different civilizations and different ages have had quite different moralities. But this is not true. There have been differences between their moralities, but these have never amounted to anything like a total difference.

If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teaching of, say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks and Romans, what will really strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own. Some of the evidence for this I have put together in the appendix of another book called *The Abolition of Man*.<sup>10</sup>

A summary of Lewis's argument for a universally objective moral understanding includes:

There must be a universal moral law, or else: (a) Moral disagreements would make no sense, as we all assume they do. (b) All moral criticisms would be meaningless (e.g., "The Nazis were wrong."). (c) It is unnecessary to keep promises or treaties, as we all assume that it is. (d) We would not make excuses for breaking the moral law, as we all do.<sup>11</sup>

A fourth response to *moral relativism* is that one of the reasons that there will always be universal moral standards in any human culture is because they are universally recognized as being beneficial. As discussed elsewhere, the motives behind such *moral utilitarianism* make it inferior to Christian virtue, but, nonetheless, create a universal foundation for the world's morality.<sup>12</sup> The virtues that cause individuals, families, villages, cities, cultures, countries, and the world to flourish are universal enough throughout all these realms that these "successful" virtues will emerge as superior with any people, or those people will simply be miserable or even dead. For example, murder is not only morally wrong, but obviously detrimental to any human society and therefore laws against it are universally enforced. As we have written elsewhere:

History itself has revealed to humanity certain virtues that prosper society, therefore, there is a continual preservation and pursuit of these morals in all human cultures. Some refer to these as *natural laws*, which are the moral laws that all humans gain from both moral reasoning (conscience) and logical reasoning (utilitarianism).<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Pojman suggests that the following moral rules would be among these *natural laws* of human morality:

- Do not kill innocent people.
- Do not cause unnecessary pain or suffering.
- Do not steal or cheat.
- Keep your promises and honor your contracts.
- Do not deprive another person of his or her freedom.
- Do justice, treating equals equally and unequals unequally.
- Reciprocate: Show gratitude for services rendered.
- Tell the truth or, at least, do not lie.
- Help other people, at least when the cost to oneself is minimal.
- Obey just laws.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Pojman adds:

These ten principles are examples of the core morality, principles necessary for the good life. They are not arbitrary, for we can give reasons that explain why they are necessary to social cohesion and human flourishing. Principles like the Golden Rule, not killing innocent people, treating equals equally, truth-telling,

promise-keeping, and the like are central to the fluid progression of social interaction and the resolution of conflicts that ethics bears on. . . . These values are not good because we desire them; rather, we desire them because they are good—they are absolutely necessary for human flourishing.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Pojmans's application of these morals to relationships reminds us of Thomas Aquinas' (1225–1274) suggestion that, "the leading purpose of human law is to bring about friendship of men among themselves."<sup>16</sup> All properly functioning humans greatly desire fulfilling relationships with others, and virtue, even if it is the *utilitarian* type, is necessary to fulfilling those desires. We only have satisfying relationships with those who are good to us and who we are good to as well.

Accordingly, Dr. Pojman concludes his analysis of the question regarding *moral relativism* when he writes:

Are moral principles absolute, or are they simply relative to social groups or individual decision? It would seem that moral principles have universal and objective validity, since similar rules are needed in any cultures to promote human flourishing. So moral rules are not justified by cultural acceptance and are not relative.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Pojman suggests that the case for moral *universalism* can be made in the following way:

- Human nature is relatively similar in essential respects, having a common set of needs and interests.
- Moral principles are functions of human needs and interests, instituted by reason in order to promote the most significant needs and interests of rational beings (and perhaps of others).
- Some moral principles will meet human needs and promote human interests better than other principles will.
- Principles that will meet essential human needs and promote the most significant human interests in optimal ways can be said to be objectively valid moral principles.
- Therefore, since there is a common human nature, there is an objectively valid set of moral principles, applicable to all humanity.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, anyone wanting to significantly diminish the God-ordained value of *virtue apologetics* because of a belief in *moral relativism* has to completely ignore the God-ordained purpose of the human conscience. In Romans 1 the Apostle says humanity is without excuse for their disbelief in God because of Creation (1:18-20). Likewise, in Romans 2 he says humanity is without excuse for their immorality because of conscience:

**[W]hen Gentiles, who do not have the [biblical] law, do by [universal human] nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. (Rom 2:14-15)**

Obviously it is the human conscience that helps to produce the universal morality we have been describing. While moral relativist may claim to deny any universal morals, they themselves are quite consistent in condemning certain behaviors. Along these lines we read of two founders of postmodern philosophy and recognize how silly they are:

Leading postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida . . . doesn't believe that there is any "transcendent signifier" or infinite reference point (as Sartre called it) or any sense to the world coming from outside the world (as Wittgenstein called it). For Derrida, there is no fixed point by which we can judge what is right or wrong, just or unjust. Yet-inconsistently-he maintains that the reason for deconstructing texts is that "deconstruction is justice." But we can know what is just only if we have a fixed and transcendent standard to identify it. Derrida is committed to uncovering injustice, but he has no basis in his philosophy to define justice. . . .

Another postmodern philosopher, Richard Rorty, gives up on belief in God and comes to the conclusion that there is "no neutral ground" by which we can judge that the Holocaust was evil. He maintains that the basis for ethics is "sentiment." But what makes one person's sentiment-say, that of a Nazi or a terrorist-better than another person's sentiment? In Rorty's system, there is no objective way to make that judgment.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Pojman speaks at length concerning both the absurdity and the horrific consequences of *moral relativism*. For example, he notes:

If we can establish or show that it is reasonable to believe that there is, in some ideal sense, at least one objective moral principle that is binding on all people everywhere, then we shall have shown that relativism probably is false and that a limited objectivism is true. Actually, I believe that many qualified general ethical principles are binding on all rational beings, but one principle will suffice to refute relativism: It is morally wrong to torture people for the fun of it.<sup>20</sup>

Any sane human would agree with this, and as noted above, it is only morally sane people we are concerned with. And, as Dr. Pojman

puts it, it is the morally insane who would claim "Adolf Hitler and the serial murderer Ted Bundy could be considered as moral as Gandhi, so long as each lived by his own standards, whatever those might be." <sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately in our day of making toleration a fundamental moral law itself, many people are not honest about their own lack of toleration. For example, Dr. Pojman writes:

In the opening days of my philosophy classes, I often find students vehemently defending subjective relativism-"Who are you to judge?" they ask. I then give them their first test. In the next class period, I return all the tests, marked "F," even though my comments show that most of them are a very high caliber. When the students express outrage at this (some have never before seen that letter on their papers and inquire about its meaning), I answer that I have accepted subjectivism for marking the exams. "But that's unjust" they typically insist-and then they realize that they are no longer being merely subjectivist about ethics. <sup>22</sup>

Dr. Pojman goes on to demonstrate the universal repulsion that the human conscience produces by sharing a tape-recorded conversation that Ted Bundy had with one of his victims as he attempts to justify his cruelty to them just before he raped and murdered her. Mr. Bundy tells his innocent, helpless victim:

I learned that all moral judgments are "value judgments," that all value judgments are subjective, and that none can be proved to be either 'right' or 'wrong.' . . . Nor is there any 'reason' to obey the law for anyone, like myself, who has the boldness and daring, the strength of character, to throw off its shackles. . . .

I discovered that to become truly free, truly unfettered, I had to become truly uninhibited. And I quickly discovered that the greatest obstacle to my freedom, the greatest block and limitation to it, consists in the insupportable 'value judgment' that I was bound to respect the rights of others. . . .

Surely, you [the victim] would not, in this age of scientific enlightenment, declare that God or nature has marked some pleasures as 'moral' or 'good' and others as 'immoral' or 'bad'? In any case, let me assure you, my dear young lady, that there is absolutely no comparison between the pleasure I might take in eating ham and the pleasure I anticipate in raping and murdering you. That is the honest conclusion to which my education has led me-after the most conscientious examination of my spontaneous and uninhibited self.

If you can read that and still claim that morality is relative to the individual than you are just as morally insane as Bundy, and according to the mass of your own species, disqualified to offer any opinions

about moral issues at all. However, if it is true that such a testimony will morally offend all but morally dysfunctional humans, then we have evidence for a universal morality, and the value of *virtue apologetics*. In spite of how fashionable it is to claim that morals are relative and therefore *virtue apologetics* is worthless, it becomes clear that God has actually created humanity and its environment so that *virtue* works as the ultimate and universal apologetic.

## B) The Challenge of Moral Insanity Among Non-Christians:

### B.1) Moral Depravity Perverts Moral Reasoning

Obviously, God's desire to prove that Christianity is the only way to gain His acceptance, through the superior virtue of His uniquely Holy Spirit-indwelted people, is significantly challenged if the unregenerate have become so depraved that they have lost the ability to recognize true virtue. We have written elsewhere of this moral "insanity of humanity" and noted:

The Apostle writes: "**Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God** [and rejected reason], **He gave them over to a depraved mind**" (Rom 1:28), and the result is that humans become for all practical purposes no better than beasts, "**senseless . . . heartless, ruthless**" (Rom 1:31). Or as we read in 2 Peter, "**like unreasoning animals**" (2:12 NASB). All of this because their God-given ability for moral reasoning is not properly functioning. . . .

The Apostle speaks synonymously of the corruption of both logical and moral reasoning when he writes:

**To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds** [logical reasoning] **and consciences** [moral reasoning] **are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him.** (Titus 1:15-16)

. . . . [T]he Apostle suggests a downward spiral of immorality resulting from the improper functioning of moral reason. This is specifically a result of not heeding the conscience which results in a person becoming increasingly "**hardened by sin's deceitfulness**" (Heb 3:13).<sup>23</sup> Eventually, the person's inability to reason, particularly morally, results in a "point of no return" in which God gives "**them over to a depraved mind**" (Rom 1:28). God seems to have this same kind of depraved, dysfunctional

moral reasoning in mind when He says through the Prophet Isaiah:

**Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.** (Isa 5:20-21, 24)

At such a point, just as depicted in Romans 1, God is ready to “**give them over to a depraved mind**” (v. 28), and He therefore says again through Isaiah:

**Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.** (Isa 6:10).

People who have reached such a “point of no return” are both destined and prepared for God’s judgment.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, God is not even interested in proving anything to such people and God’s intentions for *virtue apologetics* do not include people whose “**consciences are corrupted**” (Tit 1:16) such that their minds are morally depraved.

## **B.2) The Vice of “Toleration” Distorts the Virtue of Moral Standards**

Such inability to distinguish right from wrong is additionally illustrated by the Apostle when he writes of those who “**have become filled with every kind of wickedness**” that “**they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them**” (Rom 1:29, 32). It is understandable, of course, that those who are wicked themselves, would be quite tolerant of the wickedness of others, in order not to condemn themselves. Unfortunately, such a wicked view of “tolerance” radically alters what such a person would consider to be virtuous.

Take, for example, the Christians’ biblical denouncement of sexual immorality, including homosexuality. God’s word condemns such things, and so should anyone professing to be a real Christian (cf. Lev 18:22; Rom 1:18, 22, 24, 26-27; 1 Cor 6:9-11). But because a growing portion of the unregenerated world does not view sexual immorality or homosexuality as wicked behavior, it views Christianity’s righteous condemnation of such things as “intolerant” and lacking virtue. Accordingly, when the tolerance of wickedness becomes a virtue in a culture, and the condemnation of wickedness is seen as a

vice, Christians will not appear to be virtuous. But again, it hardly matters, because God has most likely given such people “**over to a depraved mind**” (Rom 1:28) and they have reached a moral “point of no return.”<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, when “toleration” gets redefined in a wicked way, the perceived virtue of Christians is severely affected. Along these lines, William Watkins writes:

Such new cultural "virtues" [of tolerance] pervade nearly every aspect of our society, just as the old virtues did. And just as the virtue of self-sacrificial love bound together the older Christian virtues, so the "virtue" of tolerance is wed to the new secular "virtues" in an unholy alliance.

The tolerant person, so we're told, is broad-minded — open to other beliefs, truth claims, moral convictions, and lifestyles. He or she makes room for others to do as they wish, even if their behavior contradicts or even mocks his own. He believes in "live and let live."

During the '50s and '60s, being tolerant meant putting up with a slow salesclerk, restraining the desire to laugh at someone's bizarre dress, or holding one's tongue when a person made a harmless but erroneous comment. Being tolerant never meant condoning immoral behavior, letting harmful beliefs go unchallenged, or permitting a person's dangerous lifestyle to influence, much less be taught, to others. . . . We believed then that some beliefs and lifestyles promoted the common good while others undermined it.

Those of us who still believe these things are considered bigots, judgmental prudes, or moral fundamentalists by the new "tolerant" regime. Never mind that the new tolerance has led to the destruction of more than 30 million babies in America's abortuaries. Never mind that the new broad-mindedness concerning promiscuous and homosexual sex is perhaps the leading cause of the spread of HIV — one of the most deadly and elusive viruses yet known to humankind. Never mind that the new openness to "alternative lifestyles" is bringing about legislation that gives civil-rights status to immorality.

We must stop this insanity. The new tolerance is not a virtue but a vice. We must expose it for what it is and replace it with the truth.<sup>26</sup>

As G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) put it even decades ago: “Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions,” especially moral ones. And as far as *virtue apologetics* is concerned, we are not concerned with people who don't have moral convictions, because as the Apostle points out in Romans 1, God is probably not interested in them either- except for judgment.

The propensity to value the opinion of those with depraved consciences regarding the morality of Christianity is a major flaw of the book, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity . . . and Why It Matters*, authored by David Kinnaman, President of the well-known Barna Research Group. Mr. Kinnaman states the obvious: "Christianity has an image problem."<sup>27</sup> But he then attempts to prove that this is because real Christians are not virtuous. He barely mentions, if not devalues other more likely reasons that sinful people would have a negative view of Christianity, including how they are slandered in the media, the immorality of fakes, and perhaps most importantly, a true Christian's stand *for morality*. In fact, Mr. Kinnaman admits the latter when he writes:

[T]hose outside of Christianity, especially younger adults . . . reject Jesus because they feel rejected by Christians. . . . One crucial insight kept popping up in our exploration. In studying thousands of outsiders' impressions, it is clear that Christians are primarily perceived for what they stand against. We have become famous for what we oppose, rather than who we are for. . . . In our national surveys we found the [two] most common perceptions of present-day Christianity are "antihomosexual" (an image held by 91 percent of young outsiders), [and] "judgmental" (87 percent).<sup>28</sup>

There is no doubt that the vast majority of such perceptions is the *virtuous* stand that Christians take against evils that people are practicing and even promoting. Of course sinful people are going to feel "rejected" because we reject their sin. And Mr. Kinnaman is off base to imply that people "reject Jesus because they feel rejected by Christians" as if their refusal to repent is our fault. Finally, why are we to assume that all of the 91% of those who said Christians were "antihomosexual" thought that was a bad thing?

Other results of Mr. Kinnaman's research that he thinks reveals "unchristian" behavior also merely reflect our *virtuous* stand against evil. These include his report that over 70% of unbelievers consider Christians as "out of touch with reality," (72%), "old-fashioned," (78%), and "insensitive to others" (70%).<sup>29</sup> Only 20% of professed unbelievers "describe Christian churches to be loving environments, places where people are unconditionally loved and accepted regardless of how they look or what they do."<sup>30</sup> 64% criticize Christians for being "not accepting of other faiths."<sup>31</sup>

Good. The same people would have thought all the same things about Jesus. Of course, neither He nor we "unconditionally" accept people "regardless of . . . what they do." And if unbelievers do not perceive such a stance as virtuous it is not because Christians are not virtuous but because the unregenerate are morally insane. And Mr. Kinnaman contributes to the distortion in his research when he himself

defines love in this same perverted way that unbelievers do. Not even **"God"** Who **"is love"** (1 John 4:8) "unconditionally" accepts people "regardless of . . . what they do."

Unfortunately, Mr. Kinnaman is so eager to disparage the morality of real Christians that he says, "Scripture never condones judgment and criticism aimed at those outside the church."<sup>32</sup> Has he read what Jesus said to the unbelieving Pharisees? He told them they were unforgivable, **"evil,"** unable to **"say anything good"** and **"condemned"** **"for every careless word they have spoken"** (Matt 12:31-37), **"hypocrites,"** **"blind guides,"** **"full of greed and self-indulgence,"** **"whitewashed tombs,"** **"full of dead men's bones and everything unclean,"** **"full of hypocrisy and wickedness."** And then He adds, **"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"** (Matt 23:13, 16, 25, 27-28, 33). Few Christians have ever spoken words so harsh and condemning.

Does Mr. Kinnaman recall that the Apostle Peter told a crowd of unbelievers, **"you, with the help of wicked men, put Him [the Lord] to death by nailing Him to the cross"** (Acts 2:23). That sounds pretty critical and judgmental. And the crowd thought so too. Accordingly, they were afraid of God's judgment and 3000 of them repented. Likewise, the Apostle Paul could even be considered demeaning when he publicly told the Athenians that their religion was based on **"ignorance"** and God **"commands all people everywhere to repent"** of such ignorance. (Acts 17:30).

Mr. Kinnaman has unfortunately bought into the unbiblical culture or moral "toleration" in our day. Accordingly, he repeatedly describes being judgmental as an immoral thing, and then defines it as "to point out something that is wrong in someone else's life, making the person feel put down, excluded, and marginalized." Wouldn't it at times be our Christian duty "to point out something that is wrong in someone else's life"? And if they were offended by that would it always be our fault? Offending sinners is part of being the salt and light of the world (cf. Matt 5:13-16).

**This is the verdict: . . . men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.** (John 3:19-20)

Accordingly, the fact that **"Everyone who does evil hates the light"** is not the slur on Christians that Mr. Kinnaman would like to make it.

Even Mr. Kinnaman is willing to admit:

Keep in mind that part of the reason Christians possess a bad reputation is because our faith perspectives grate against a morally relativistic culture. Mosaics and Busters find that

Christian perspectives run counter to their anything-goes mindset.<sup>33</sup>

The all-important question is how big a “part” does the offense and guilt experienced by the unregenerate play in their negative attitude toward Christians who stand for biblical morality? Admittedly, it is difficult to know, as unbelievers certainly would not want to admit to such a thing. Nonetheless, we believe the warranted guilt and offense of unbelievers toward Christian moral standards *is the biggest reason* for any negative attitudes toward Christianity. At the least, if such self-centered bias plays any significant part in such attitudes, Mr. Kinnaman’s research and conclusions are severely compromised.

Accordingly, the author is at the very least exaggerating again when he states:

[W]e have to realize that if the enormous number of Christians in this country has not achieved the level of positive influence hoped for, it’s not the fault of a skeptical culture.<sup>34</sup>

We have biblical evidence to suggest it is. And how could Mr. Kinnaman possibly know otherwise?

Nonetheless, perhaps the greatest problem with trusting Mr. Kinnaman’s research is the woefully inadequate way in which he identifies “Christians.” This is hinted at in his allusion above to a supposed “enormous number of Christians in this country.” As discussed in the next section, better research suggests otherwise, and the approach that “Christian” pollsters like Mr. Kinnaman take to identify real Christians is so flawed that it suggests it is intentional on their part in order to give statistical support to their apparent agenda of slandering the morality of real Christians.

Finally, whatever genuinely arrogant and unkind condemnation that unbelievers may be able to legitimately accuse supposed Christians of, is most likely to come from modern unregenerate “Pharisees” who claim to be Christians but are not. Such people believe they are saved by their good works, and the way they evaluate their standing before God is to compare themselves with “sinners.” Accordingly, their assurance of salvation and a clear conscience *depend* on putting others down, and highly motivates them to do so. Real Christians have no such motivation. Which is why it is important to distinguish between regenerated Christians and unregenerated *Christendom*, a topic which we also take up in the next section.

---

## ***Extras & Endnotes***

---

### ***Gauging Your Grasp***

- 1) What is *moral relativism* and how might it negate *virtue apologetics* if it were true?
- 2) What are some reasons that we claim humanity possesses a sufficiently universal & objective sense of morality for *virtue apologetics* to be effective? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 3) Why do we claim that, especially in statistical studies, the moral failures of real born again Christians are exaggerated? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 4) How would the modern emphasis on “toleration” inhibit *virtue apologetics*?
- 5) Why does a lack of biblical Church discipline inhibit *virtue apologetics*?
- 6) How can a lost person’s experience with a Spirit-filled Christian friend overcome public criticisms of Christian morality in general?

### ***Publications & Particulars***

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Louis P. Pojman, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong* (Wadsworth, 1990), 28.
  - <sup>2</sup> William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (InterVarsity, 2002), 410.
  - <sup>3</sup> Pojman, 27.
  - <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.
  - <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.
  - <sup>6</sup> For further discussion regarding those with an irreversibly ruined conscience see section 4.13.C
  - <sup>7</sup> Pojman, 53.
  - <sup>8</sup> Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics (BECA)* (Baker, 1999), 502. An additional defense of the objectivity and universality of morality across cultures can be found in Pojman. Also see J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (InterVarsity, 1997); *The*

---

*Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim* by Stuart Hackett, (Baker, 1984), 152-161; C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Harper Collins, 2001), 3-34, 207-227; Craig and Moreland, 409-416; Peter Kreeft, *A Refutation of Moral Relativism: Interviews with an Absolutist* (Ignatius, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> David Stewart, *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, David Stewart, ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1998), 83.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> Geisler, 500

<sup>12</sup> For further discussion of the place of *moral utilitarianism* in forming human ethics see section 2.5.C.2.a.

<sup>13</sup> Excerpt from section 2.6.C.2.a

<sup>14</sup> Pojman, 52.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Timothy McDermott ed. (Christian Classics, 1989), 2a2ae.99, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Pojman, 47.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-4.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Lindsey, *Love the Ultimate Apologetic: The Heart of Christian Witness* (Intervarsity, 2008), 36

<sup>20</sup> Pojman, 51.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> The context of Hebrews 3:13 makes it clear that its primary application applies to unbelievers, not believers.

<sup>24</sup> Excerpt from section 4.13.C.1. See fuller discussion of the moral "insanity of humanity" in section 4.13.C.

<sup>25</sup> For further discussion regarding a moral "point of no return" see section 4.13.C

<sup>26</sup> William Watkins, "Is Tolerance a Virtue" online at <http://www.equip.org/articles/is-tolerance-a-virtue>.

<sup>27</sup> Kinnaman, 11. William Muehlenberg, theological lecturer and prolific Amazon.com reviewer responds to Kinnaman's statement that Christianity has an image problem:

Imagine if one could be free of all these negative traits, and present the good news of God in a totally loving and gracious manner. Would that mean everyone would flock to Christianity?

Well, we don't have to imagine very hard - it has already happened. Jesus came and lived among us, representing God perfectly, full of grace, love and beauty. And guess what? While many people flocked to

Christ, many people rejected Christ. The most perfect example of Christlike behaviour was met with mixed results.

That message almost never comes through in this book. It is all about how we fail to measure up in the eyes of non-Christians. . . . Jesus said, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18). . . .

[T]o speak the truth about a holy, just and righteous God who demands repentance and a changed life (with the help of Christ) will always cause an image problem, and will always lead many to want nothing to do with biblical Christianity.

I find the chapter on judgmentalism to also be problematic. Consider how the term is defined: "To be judgmental is to point out something that is wrong in someone else's life, making the person feel put down, excluded, and marginalized".

Is that bad? Is it unbiblical? To be honest, it seems to be a perfect description of just what we find in Scripture. Consider the story of Jesus and the rich man as found in Matt. 19:16-30. This seems to portray the very thing that Kinnaman is condemning.

In this pericope Jesus pointed "out something that is wrong in someone else's life" (the rich man), and what was the result? The rich man went away sad we are told, because Jesus was judging his love of riches. That sounds a lot like making the rich man "feel put down, excluded, and marginalized".

The truth is, whenever we proclaim that a person is alienated from God because of his sin and selfishness, and that he needs to repent and ask for forgiveness, that is going to result in such feelings. It cuts right across human pride to point out such things, and the first reaction many will have is, "you are being so judgmental; you are putting me down!" (Online at: [http://www.amazon.com/unChristian-Generation-Really-Christianity-Matters/productreviews/0801013003/ref=cm\\_cr\\_dp\\_hist\\_2?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0&filterBy=addTwoStar](http://www.amazon.com/unChristian-Generation-Really-Christianity-Matters/productreviews/0801013003/ref=cm_cr_dp_hist_2?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0&filterBy=addTwoStar))

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 11, 26-27.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 255 endnote.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 19.