

William Barclay on Situation Ethics

- 1. **Who** was William Barclay and what are his key ideas on situation ethics?
- 2. **How** do William Barclay's key ideas on situation ethics work?
- 3. **Why** are William Barclay's key ideas on situation ethics important?

1. **Who** was William Barclay and what are his key ideas on situation ethics?

William Barclay (1907-1978) was a British academic, popular author, and priest in the Church of Scotland. He was most famous for writing The Daily Study Bible, a set of bestselling commentaries on the New Testament based on his translation of the Greek text. In 1947, he was appointed lecturer on the New Testament, and later Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism, at the University of Glasgow. In 1971, William Barclay was invited to deliver the Baird Lecture, which became the book, Ethics in a Permissive Society. Make a note about who he was and what he did.

William Barclay (1907-1978)

William Barclay introduced three key ideas about situation ethics (or, more specifically, criticisms of the new morality) in his book, Ethics in a Permissive Society. Make a note about these three key ideas.

Key Ideas of William Barclay on Situation Ethics

1

2

3

2. **How** do William Barclay's key ideas on situation ethics work?

William Barclay's key ideas on situation ethics form a major but only moderately successful challenge to the new morality. They form a direct response to Joseph Fletcher and John Robinson, which warns Christians against embracing situation ethics instead of law-based ethics. Explain how each of William Barclay's key ideas works.

How the Key Ideas of William Barclay on Situation Ethics Work		
Situation ethics promotes social disorder and lawlessness.	There are no real problems with law-based Christian ethics.	Situation ethics is unable to solve the apparent problems it identifies.

3. **Why** are William Barclay's key ideas on situation ethics important?

The key ideas of William Barclay are important for three reasons in particular (although there are several others). Make a note about why his key ideas are important.

Why the Key Ideas of William Barclay on Situation Ethics Are Important	
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2	
3	