

Islam in the Modern World: A Christian Perspective

Islam is a global threat unlike anything ever seen before in the history of the world. Its frighteningly different paradigm of conquest and disrespect for any non-Muslim people and cultures needs to be grasped in order to deal with it. When contrasted with the biblical worldview of Christianity, Islam presents a radically different view of God and mankind. Kerby Anderson highlights some of the radical differences between the Christianity of the Bible and the Islam of the Koran.

Islam and the Clash of Civilizations

Islam is a seventh century religion. For a moment, think about that statement. I doubt anyone would consider Christianity a first century religion. You might acknowledge that it began in the first century, but you wouldn't probably describe it as a religion of the first century because the timeless principles of the gospel have adapted to the times in which they are communicated.

In many ways, Islam has remained stuck in the century in which it developed. One of the great questions of the twenty-first century is whether it will adapt to the modern era. Certainly many Muslims have done so, but radical Muslims have not.

Perhaps the leading scholar on Islam in this country is the emeritus professor from Princeton University, Bernard Lewis. This is what he had to say about Islam and the modern world:

Islam has brought comfort and peace of mind to countless millions of men and women. It has given dignity and meaning to drab and impoverished lives. It has taught people of different races to live in brotherhood and people of different creeds to live side by side in reasonable

tolerance. It inspired a great civilization in which others besides Muslims lived creative and useful lives and which, by its achievement, enriched the whole world. But Islam, like other religions, has also known periods when it inspired in some of its followers a mood of hatred and violence. It is our misfortune that part, though by no means all or even most, of the Muslim world is now going through such a period, and that much, though again not all, of that hatred is directed against us.{1}

This certainly does not mean that all Muslims want to engage in jihad warfare against America and the West. But it does mean that there is a growing clash of civilizations.{2}

Bernard Lewis continues:

In the classical Islamic view, to which many Muslims are beginning to return, the world and all mankind are divided into two: the House of Islam, where the Muslim law and faith prevail, and the rest, known as the House of Unbelief or the House of War, which it is the duty of Muslims ultimately to bring to Islam.

It should by now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against the rival.{3}

This is the challenge for the twenty-first century. Will Islam adapt to the modern world, or will there continue to be a clash of civilizations?

Muslim Intelligentsia

Not everyone accepts the clash of civilizations analysis. William Tucker, writing in the *American Spectator*, believes that the actual conflict results from what he calls the Muslim Intelligentsia.

He says that “we are not facing a clash of civilizations so much as a conflict with an educated segment of a civilization that produces some very weird, sexually disoriented men. Poverty has nothing to do with it. It is stunning to meet the al Qaeda roster—one highly accomplished scholar after another with advanced degrees in chemistry, biology, medicine, engineering, a large percentage of them educated in the United States.”[\[4\]](#)

This analysis is contrary to the many statements that have been made in the past that poverty breeds terrorism. While it is certainly true that many recruits for jihad come from impoverished situations, it is also true that the leadership comes from those who are well-educated and highly accomplished.

William Tucker believes that those who wish to engage in jihad warfare against the U.S. and the West bear a striking resemblance to the student revolutionaries during the 1960s on American universities. He calls them “overprivileged children” who he believes need to prove themselves (and their manhood) in the world. He also believes that “this is confounded by a polygamous society where fathers are often distant from their sons and where men and women barely encounter each other as young adults.”

Tucker says that our current conflict with Islam is not a war against a whole civilization. He point out that the jihad warriors are despised as much in their own countries as they are in the West. “Egyptians are sick to death of the Muslim Brotherhood and its casual slaughter. The war between

Fundamentalists and secular authorities in Algeria cost 100,000 lives.”[\[5\]](#)

He concludes that we are effectively at war with a Muslim intelligentsia. These are essentially “the same people who brought us the horrors of the French Revolution and 20th century Communism. With their obsession for moral purity and their rational hatred that goes beyond all irrationality, these warrior-intellectuals are wreaking the same havoc in the Middle East as they did in Jacobin France and Mao Tse-tung’s China.”

Certainly we are facing a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West. But it is helpful to understand Tucker’s analysis. In any war it is important to know who you are fighting and what their motives might be. This understanding is one more important piece of the puzzle in the war on terrorism.

Extent of the Radical Muslim Threat

What is the extent of the threat from radical Muslims? This is hard to guess, but there are some commentators who have tried to provide a reasonable estimate. Dennis Prager provides an overview of the extent of the threat:

Anyone else sees the contemporary reality—the genocidal Islamic regime in Sudan; the widespread Muslim theological and emotional support for the killing of a Muslim who converts to another religion; the absence of freedom in Muslim-majority countries; the widespread support for Palestinians who randomly murder Israelis; the primitive state in which women are kept in many Muslim countries; the celebration of death; the honor killings of daughters, and so much else that is terrible in significant parts of the Muslim world—knows that civilized humanity has a new evil to fight.[\[6\]](#)

He argues that just as previous generations had to fight the Nazis and the communists, so this generation has to confront militant Islam. But he also notes something is dramatically different about the present Muslim threat. He says:

Far fewer people believed in Nazism or in communism than believe in Islam generally or in authoritarian Islam specifically. There are one billion Muslims in the world. If just 10 percent believe in the Islam of Hamas, the Taliban, the Sudanese regime, Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism, bin Laden, Islamic Jihad, the Finley Park Mosque in London or Hizbollah—and it is inconceivable that only one of 10 Muslims supports any of these groups' ideologies—that means a true believing enemy of at least 100 million people.[\[7\]](#)

This very large number of people poses a threat that is unprecedented. Never has civilization has to confront such large numbers of those would wish to destroy civilization.

So what is the threat in the United States? Columnist Douglas MacKinnon has some chilling statistics. While he recognizes that most Muslims in the U.S. are peace-loving, he begins to break down the percentages. He says:

[I]f we accept the estimate that there are 6 million Muslim-Americans in our country, and 99% of them are law abiding citizens who are loyal to our nation, then that means that there may be—may be—1% who might put a twisted version of Islamic extremism before the wellbeing of their fellow Americans. When you stop to think that 1% of 6 million is 60,000 individuals, that then seems like a very intimidating one percent. Let's go to the good side of extreme and say that 99.9 percent of all Muslim-Americans would never turn on their own government. That would still leave a questionable 1/10th one percent—or 6,000 potential terrorist sympathizers.[\[8\]](#)

You can see that even the most conservative estimate of

possible jihad warriors in this country results in a scary scenario for the future.

Women in Islam

One of the areas where Islam has had difficulty in adapting to the modern world has been in its treatment of women. While some Muslim leaders actually claim that Islam actually liberates women, contemporary examples prove otherwise. Women who lived under Taliban rule in Afghanistan or who live under Sharia law in many Muslim countries today do not enjoy equal rights.

While it is true that many Muslims do respect and honor women, it is not true that those ideas can be found in the Qur'an. Here are just a few passages that illustrate the way women are to be treated. According to the Qur'an, women are considered inferior to men: "Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other" (Sura 4:34). The Qur'an also restricts a woman's testimony in court. According to Sura 2:282, her testimony is worth half as much as that of a man.

Polygamy is sanctioned in Islam, and practiced in many Muslim countries. Sura 4:3 says, "If we fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if we fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one, or a captive that your hand possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice."

Women in many Muslim countries cover their faces. The justification for that can be found in the Qur'an that teaches that women must "lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof: that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty

except to their husbands, their fathers" (Sura 24:31).

Women in many Muslim countries cannot leave their house alone. Again, this is part of Islamic law. It states that a "husband may forbid his wife to leave the home."[{9}](#) It also places other requirements. For example, "a woman may not leave the city without her husband or a member of her unmarriageable kin accompanying her, unless the journey is obligatory, like the hajj. It is unlawful for her to travel otherwise, and unlawful for her husband to allow her to."[{10}](#)

Not only was this practiced in Afghanistan under the Taliban, it is found in countries like Saudi Arabia. In that country, women cannot drive nor can they leave their home without being accompanied by a male family member. Amnesty International reports that women in Saudi Arabia "who walk unaccompanied, or are in the company of a man who is neither their husband nor close relative, are at risk of arrest on suspicion of prostitution" or other moral offenses.[{11}](#)

Church and State in Islam

Islam and the West differ on many fundamental issues, but one of the most significant is whether the institutions of church and state should be separated. Hundreds of years of Western tradition have demonstrated the wisdom of keeping these institutions separated and the danger that ensues when the ecclesiastical and civil institutions are melded into one.

Bernard Lewis explains that no such separation exists in Islam:

In [the Islamic] world, religion embraces far more than it does in the Christian or post-Christian world. We are accustomed to talking of church and state and a whole series of pairs of words that go with them—lay and ecclesiastical, secular and religious, spiritual and temporal, and so on. These pairs of words simply do not exist in classical

Islamic terminology because the dichotomy that these words express is unknown.{12}

Since the words (and the concepts) do not exist in Islam, it becomes difficult to see how to form democracies in the Muslim world. Essential to the functioning of these governments is a belief in the separation of powers. This would not only include a horizontal separation of powers (executive, legislative, and judicial), but a religious separations of powers (ecclesiastical and civil).

Chuck Colson says that "Islam is a theocratic belief system. It believes in not just a state church, but a church state. And so, it doesn't advance like Christianity does. These are radically different views of reality."{13}

This leads to another fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity. As we have discussed in previous articles,{14} Islam historically has advanced by force or compulsion. Chuck Colson puts it this way: "Christianity advances by love, it advances by winning people over, it advances by the grace of God; radical Islam advances by force."{15}

Even within Muslim countries, Islam advances by compulsion. But it is important to point out that the Qur'an (2:256) says "there is no compulsion in religion." But that really depends upon your definition of compulsion.

A closer look at Islamic law demonstrates a veiled threat that many believe is tantamount to compulsion. For example, Muhammad instructed his followers to invite non-Muslims to accept Islam before waging war against them. If they refused, warfare would follow or second class status. They would be inferiors in the Muslim social order and pay a special tax. This tax (known as the jizya) is required in Sura 9:29. If they pay it, they may live, but if they refuse to pay it, warfare will ensue.

While those of us in the West would consider this compulsion,

the traditional Muslim interpretation of this would be that this would fit into the category of "no compulsion."

Notes

1. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990, www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/199009/muslim-rage.
2. See my article "The Clash of Civilizations," Probe Ministries, 2002, probe.org/the-clash-of-civilizations/.
3. Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage."
4. William Tucker, "Overprivileged Children," *American Spectator*, 12 Sept. 2006, spectator.org/46473_overprivileged-children/.
5. Ibid.
6. Dennis Prager, "The Islamic Threat is Greater than German and Soviets Threats Were," 29 May 2006, <http://tinyurl.com/yy7jcg>.
7. Ibid.
8. Douglas MacKinnon, "Home grown terrorists," 25 Aug. 2006, townhall.com/columnists/douglasmackinnon/2006/08/25/home-grown-terrorists-n1239612.
9. "Umdat al-Salik, (manual of Islamic law), m 10.4
10. Ibid., m 10.3
11. Amnesty International, "Saudi Arabia: End Secrecy End Suffering: Women," www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE23/016/2000/en/.
12. Bernard Lewis, "Window on Islam," *Dallas Morning News*, 9 July 2006, 4P.
13. Interview with Chuck Colson, "Worldviews in Conflict: Christianity & Islam," *Intercessors for America Newsletter*, September 2006, Vol. 33, No. 9.
14. See Don Closson, "[Islam and the Sword](http://probe.org/islam-and-the-sword/)," Probe Ministries, 2002. probe.org/islam-and-the-sword/.
15. Colson, "Worldviews."

Christian Worldview and Social Issues

Biblical Principles

How can we apply a Christian worldview to social and political issues? I would like to set forth some key biblical principles that we can apply to these issues.

A key biblical principle that applies to the area of bioethics is the sanctity of human life. Such verses as Psalm 139:13-16 show that God's care and concern extends to the womb. Other verses such as Jeremiah 1:5, Judges 13:7-8, Psalm 51:5 and Exodus 21:22-25 give additional perspective and framework to this principle. These principles can be applied to issues ranging from [abortion](#) to [stem cell research](#) to [infanticide](#).

A related biblical principle involves the equality of human beings. The Bible teaches that God has made "of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:26). The Bible also teaches that it is wrong for a Christian to have feelings of superiority (Phil. 2). Believers are told not to make class distinctions between various people (James 2). Paul teaches the spiritual equality of all people in Christ (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). These principles apply to [racial relations](#) and [our view of government](#).

A third principle is a biblical perspective on marriage. Marriage is God's plan and provides intimate companionship for life (Gen. 2:18). Marriage provides a context for the procreation and nurture of children (Eph. 6:1-2). And finally, marriage provides a godly outlet for sexual desire (1 Cor. 7:2). These principles can be applied to such diverse issues

as artificial reproduction (which often introduces a third party into the pregnancy) and [cohabitation](#) (living together).

Another biblical principle involves sexual ethics. The Bible teaches that sex is to be within the bounds of marriage, as a man and the woman become one flesh (Eph. 5:31). Paul teaches that we should “avoid sexual immorality” and learn to control our own body in a way that is “holy and honorable” (1 Thess. 4:3-5). He admonishes us to flee sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18). These principles apply to such issues as [premarital sex](#), [adultery](#), and [homosexuality](#).

A final principle concerns government and our obedience to civil authority. Government is ordained by God (Rom.13:1-7). We are to render service and obedience to the government (Matt. 22:21) and submit to civil authority (1 Pet. 2:13-17). Even though we are to obey government, there may be certain times when we might be forced to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). These principles apply to issues such as [war](#), [civil disobedience](#), [politics](#), and [government](#).

Communicating in a Secular Culture

How can we communicate biblical morality effectively to a secular culture? Here are a few principles.

First, we must interpret Scripture properly. Too often, Christians have passed off their sociological preferences (on issues like abortion or homosexual behavior) instead of doing proper biblical exegesis. The result has often been *a priori* conclusions buttressed with improper proof-texting.

In areas where the Bible clearly speaks, we should exercise our prophetic voice as we seek to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16). In other areas, concessions should be allowed.

The apostle Paul recognized that the first priority of Christians is to preach the gospel. He refused to allow

various distinctions to hamper his effectiveness, and he tried to “become all things to all men” that he might save some (1 Cor. 9:22). Christians must stand firm for biblical truth, yet also recognize the greater need for the unsaved person to hear a loving presentation of the gospel.

Second, Christians should carefully develop biblical principles which can be applied to contemporary social and medical issues. Christians often jump immediately from biblical passages into political and social programs. They wrongly neglect the important intermediate step of applying biblical principles within a particular social and cultural situation.

Third, Christians should articulate the moral teachings of Scripture in ways that are meaningful in a pluralistic society. Philosophical principles like the “right to life” or “the dangers of promiscuity” can be appealed to as part of common grace. Scientific, social, legal, and ethical considerations can be useful in arguing for biblical principles in a secular culture.

Christians can argue in a public arena against abortion on the basis of scientific and legal evidence. Medical advances in embryology and fetology show that human life exists in the womb. A legal analysis of the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision shows the justices violated a standard principle of jurisprudence. The burden of proof is placed on the life-taker and the benefit of the doubt is given to the life-saver.

This does not mean we should sublimate the biblical message. But our effectiveness in the public arena will be improved if we elaborate the scientific, social, legal, and ethical aspects of a particular issue instead of trying to articulate our case on Scripture alone.

Christians should develop effective ways to communicate biblical morality to our secular culture. Law and public

policy should be based upon biblical morality which results from an accurate interpretation of Scripture and a careful application to society.

Christian Principles in Social Action

How should Christians be involved in the social and political arena? Here are a few key principles.

First, Christians must remember that they have a dual citizenship. On the one hand, their citizenship is in heaven and not on earth (Phil. 3:17–21). Christians must remind themselves that God is sovereign over human affairs even when circumstances look dark and discouraging. On the other hand, the Bible also teaches that Christians are citizens of this earth (Matt. 22:15–22). They are to obey government (Rom. 13:1–7) and work within the social and political circumstances to affect change. Christians are to pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1–4) and to obey those in authority.

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to leaven hidden in three pecks of meal (Matt. 13:33). The meal represents the world, and the leaven represents the Christian presence in it. We are to exercise our influence within society, seeking to bring about change that way. Though the Christian presence may seem as insignificant as leaven in meal, nevertheless we are to bring about the same profound change.

Second, Christians must remember that God is sovereign. As the Sovereign over the nations, He bestows power on whom He wishes (Dan. 4:17), and He can turn the heart of a king wherever He wishes (Prov. 21:1).

Third, Christians must use their specific gifts within the social and political arenas. Christians have different gifts and ministries (1 Cor. 12:4–6). Some may be called to a higher level of political participation than others (e.g., a

candidate for school board or for Congress). All have a responsibility to be involved in society, but some are called to a higher level of social service, such as a social worker or crisis pregnancy center worker. Christians must recognize the diversity of gifts and encourage fellow believers to use their individual gifts for the greatest impact.

Fourth, Christians should channel their social and political activity through the church. Christians need to be accountable to each other, especially as they seek to make an impact on society. Wise leadership can prevent zealous evangelical Christians from repeating mistakes made in previous decades by other Christians.

The local church should also provide a context for compassionate social service. In the New Testament, the local church became a training ground for social action (Acts 2:45; 4:34). Meeting the needs of the poor, the infirm, the elderly, and widows is a responsibility of the church. Ministries to these groups can provide a foundation and a catalyst for further outreach and ministry to the community at large.

Christians are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13–16). In our needy society, we have abundant opportunities to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet significant social needs. By combining these two areas of preaching and ministry, Christians can make a strategic difference in society.

Fallacies and Tactics

Let's now focus on some [logical fallacies and tactics](#) used against Christians. We need to exercise discernment and be on alert for these attempts to sidetrack moral and biblical reflection on some of the key issues of our day.

The first tactic is *equivocation*. This is the use of vague terms. Someone can start off using language we think we

understand and then veer off into a new meaning. If you have been listening to the Probe radio program for any time, you are well aware of the fact that religious cults are often guilty of this. A cult member might say that he believes in salvation by grace. But what he really means is that you have to join his cult and work your way toward salvation. Make people define the vague terms they use.

This tactic is used frequently in bioethics. Proponents of embryonic stem cell research often will not acknowledge the distinction between adult stem cells and embryonic stem cells. Those trying to legalize cloning will refer to it as "somatic cell nuclear transfer." Unless you have a scientific background, you will not know that it is essentially the same thing.

A second tactic is what is often called "*card stacking*." That is when an opponent has a selective use of evidence. Don't jump on the latest bandwagon and intellectual fad without checking the evidence. Many advocates are guilty of listing all the points in their favor while ignoring the serious points against it.

For example, the major biology textbooks used in high school and college never provide students with evidence against evolution. Jonathan Wells, in his book [*Icons of Evolution*](#), shows that the examples that are used in most textbooks are either wrong or misleading. Some of the examples are known frauds (such as the Haeckel embryos) and continue to show up in textbooks decades after they were shown to be fraudulent.

A third tactic is "*appeal to authority*." That means a person is relying on authority to the exclusion of logic and evidence. Just because an expert says it doesn't necessarily make it true. We live in a culture that worships experts, but not all experts are right. Hiram's Law says, "If you consult enough experts, you can confirm any opinion."

Those who argue that global warming is caused solely by human activity often say that “the debate in the scientific community is over.” But an Internet search of critics of the theories behind global warming will show that there are many scientists with credentials in climatology or meteorology who have questions about the theory. It is not accurate to say that the debate is over when the debate still seems to be taking place.

A fourth tactic often used against Christians is known as an *ad hominem* attack. This is Latin for “against the man.” People using this tactic attack the person instead of dealing with the validity of their argument. Often the soundness of an argument is inversely proportional to the amount of *ad hominem* rhetoric. If there is evidence for the position, proponents usually argue the merits of the position. When evidence is lacking, they attack the critics.

Christians who want public libraries to filter pornography from minors are accused of censorship. Citizens who want to define marriage as between one man and one woman are called bigots. Scientists who criticize evolution are subjected to withering attacks on their character and scientific credentials. Scientists who question global warming are compared to holocaust deniers.

Another tactic is the *straw man argument*. This is done by making your opponent’s argument seem so ridiculous that it is easy to attack and knock down. Liberal commentators say that evangelical Christians want to implement a religious theocracy in America. That’s not true. But the hyperbole works to marginalize Christian activists who believe they have a responsibility to speak to social and political issues within society.

A sixth tactic is *sidestepping*. This is done when someone dodges the issue by changing the subject. Ask a proponent of

abortion whether the fetus is human and you are likely to see this technique in action. He or she might start talking about a woman's right to choose or the right of women to control their own bodies. Perhaps you will hear a discourse on the need to tolerate various viewpoints in a pluralistic society. But you probably won't get a straight answer to an important question.

A final tactic is the "*red herring*." That means to go off on a tangent (and is taken from the practice of luring hunting dogs off the trail with the scent of a herring). Proponents of embryonic stem cell research rarely will talk about the morality of destroying human embryos. Instead they will go off on a tangent and talk about the various diseases that could be treated and the thousands of people who could be helped with the research.

Be on the alert when someone in a debate changes the subject. They may want to argue their points on more familiar ground, or they may know they cannot win their argument on the relevant issue at hand.

A person with discernment will recognize these tactics and beware. We are called to develop discernment as we tear down false arguments raised up against the knowledge of God. By doing this we will learn to take every thought captive to the obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

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Origin Science

There is a fundamental distinction between operation science and origin science. The founders of modern science had a

Christian view of creation.

Origin Science versus Operation Science

Recently Probe produced a DVD based small group curriculum entitled *Redeeming Darwin: The Intelligent Design Controversy*. It has been a great way to inform Christians about Intelligent Design and show them how to use a conversation about this topic to share the gospel.

This year also marks the twentieth anniversary of a book Norman Geisler and I published entitled *Origin Science*.[\[1\]](#) In light of the current controversy concerning intelligent design, I want to revisit some of the points we made in this book because they help us better understand some of the key elements in the debate about origins.

The foundational concept in the book was that there is a fundamental difference between operation science and origin science. Operation science is what most of us think of when we talk about science. It deals with regularities. In other words, there are regular recurring patterns that we can observe, and we can do experiments on those patterns. Observation and repeatability are two foundational tools of operation science.

Origin science differs from operation science because it does not deal with present regularities. Instead it focuses on a singular action in the past. As we say in the book, "The great events of origin were singularities. The origin of the universe is not recurring. Nor is the origin of life, or the origin of major new forms of life."[\[2\]](#)

We argued that "a science which deals with origin events does not fall within the category of empirical science, which deals with observed regularities in the present. Rather, it is more like forensic science."[\[3\]](#) In many ways, origin science is more like the scientific investigations done by crime scene

investigators. The crime was a singular event and often there was no observer. But CSI investigators can use the available evidence to reconstruct the crime.

Likewise, research into origin science must use the available evidence (the bones and the stones) to try to reconstruct a past event. We therefore concluded that:

In origin science it is necessary to find analogies in the present to these events in the past. Thus, for example, if evidence is forthcoming that life can now be synthesized from chemicals (without intelligent manipulation) under conditions similar to those reasonably assumed to have once existed on the primitive earth, then a naturalistic (secondary-cause) explanation of the origin of life is plausible. If, on the other hand, it can be shown that the kind of complex information found in a living cell is similar to that which can be regularly produced by an intelligent (primary) cause, then it can be plausibly argued that there was an intelligent cause of the first living organism.[{4}](#)

Rise of Modern Science

When we discuss the differences between origin science and operation science, it is important to point out that evolutionists and creationist differ in what they believe caused the origin of the universe, the origin of life, and the origin of major life forms. "Evolutionists posit a secondary natural cause for them; creationists argue for a supernatural primary cause."[{5}](#)

Evolutionists argue that a naturalistic explanation is all that is necessary to explain these origin events. There is no need for the supernatural. Julian Huxley, speaking at the Darwin centennial celebration in Chicago, declared: "In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer need or

room for the supernatural. The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion.”{6}

Although most scientists today make no room for the supernatural, that was not always the case. In fact, it can be argued that it was a Christian view of reality that essentially gave rise to modern science.

In a landmark article on this topic M.B. Foster asked: “What is the source of the un-Greek elements which were imported into philosophy by the post-Reformation philosophers, and which constitute the modernity of modern philosophy? And . . . what is the source of those un-Greek elements in the modern theory of nature by which the peculiar character of the modern science of nature was to be determined?” These are two important questions. He said: “The answer to the first question is: The Christian revelation, and the answer to the second: The Christian doctrine of creation.”{7}

Foster argued that modern empirical science did not emerge from a Greek view of nature. Instead it arose because the founders of modern science had a Christian view of nature. They “were the first to take seriously in their science the Christian doctrine that nature is created.”{8}

Foster argued that only when the Greek concept of necessary forms in nature had given way to the Judeo-Christian idea of a contingent creation did it become necessary to take an empirical route to finding scientific truth. Once these scientists came to view nature as contingent creation it became necessary to use observation and experimentation to understand it. From there, modern science arose.

Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon's belief in the concept of creation is well known. Bacon even confessed that his motivation to observe and experiment was based on the creation mandate in which God said to man: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over [it]." (Gen. 1:28).

Of this mandate to subdue creation Bacon wrote, "Only let the human race recover that right over nature which belongs to it by divine bequest, and let power be given it; the exercise thereof will be governed by sound reason and true religion."[{9}](#)

Speaking of the natural world, Bacon declared, "The beginning is from God: for the business which is at hand, having the character of good so strongly impressed upon it, appears manifestly to proceed from God who is the author of good, and Father of Lights."[{10}](#)

Bacon believed that a careful observer of nature could discover certain "fixed laws" which he could use in subduing the world and have dominion over creation. In fact, he believed that nature (like the Bible) is the revelation of God. So Christians need not fear that any discovery in God's world (science) will destroy their faith in God's Word (Scripture). For "if the matter be truly considered, natural philosophy is, after the word of God, at once the surest medicine against superstition and the most approved nourishment for faith, and therefore she is rightly given to religion as her most faithful handmaid, since the one displays the will of God, the other his power."[{11}](#)

Bacon believed he could discover the orderly laws by which God established in the creation. He described three approaches:

The men of experiment are like the ant, they only collect and use; the reasoners resemble spiders, who make cobwebs

out of their own substance. But the bee takes a middle course; it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and of the field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own.{12}

Therefore the modern scientist is neither a scholastic spider not an empirical ant but a Baconian bee who extracts from nature what is available for transformation.

Bacon's understanding of Scripture was shaped by the writings of John Calvin. Both Calvin and Bacon were trained in the methods of Renaissance law. Calvin had applied this new method to Scripture, the book of God's Word. Bacon adopted this legal method of inquiry and applied it to the book of God's world.{13}

Kepler and Galileo

Johannes Kepler's astronomical views were also bedded deeply in his theistic beliefs about creation and the Creator. He stated that we "will realize that God, who founded everything in the world according to the norm of quantity, also has endowed man with a mind which can comprehend these norms."{14}

Kepler viewed the universe as a great mathematical machine created by God. Thus he wrote,

My aim in this is to show that the celestial machine is to be likened not to a divine organism but rather to a clockwork . . . insofar as nearly all the manifold movements are carried out by means of a single, quite simple magnetic force, as in the case of a clockwork all motions [are caused] by a simple weight. Moreover I show how this physical conception is to be presented through calculation and geometry.{15}

Kepler assumed (as the Pythagoreans did) that the universe was mathematically analyzable. But unlike the Greeks, Kepler

believed that since the observable physical world was a creation of God, one could come to know God's thoughts by studying the physical laws of the universe.

Another great astronomer was Galileo. He believed "the Holy Scriptures and Nature are both produced by the Word of God; the former is the results of the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and the latter is the most obedient agent of the ordinances of God." Galileo also added: "I do not believe the same God who gave us our senses, our reason, and our intellect intended that we should neglect these gifts and the information they give us about nature, or that we should deny what our senses and our reason have observed by experiment or logical demonstration." [{16}](#)

Galileo believed that the observable laws of nature operate with unalterable regularity. Therefore scientific theories must fit nature. Nature cannot be changed to fit our scientific theories. God works in regular ways in the operation of his universe. He added that mere ignorance of natural causes of the operation of the world is not a sufficient justification for positing a supernatural cause. [{17}](#)

The supernatural is the source of the natural world, but the natural is the proper domain of science. Science deals with "natural phenomena" which supernatural realm is not subject to such test. [{18}](#) Thus, mere ignorance of natural causes of the operation of the world is not a sufficient justification for positing a supernatural cause.

By this distinction Galileo hoped to secure the domain of operation science from unjustified intrusions by religious dogma while retaining nonetheless his belief in a supernatural origin of the natural world.

Isaac Newton

Isaac Newton believed that God created the solar system. He held that the entire solar system was formed from a “common chaos” which is described in Genesis 1:2. From this chaos the “spirit of God,” by means of gravitational attraction, formed the separate planets.” In a letter to Thomas Burnet he insisted that “where natural causes are at hand God uses them as instruments in his works, but I do not think them alone sufficient for ye creation.”[{19}](#)

For Newton, “this Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all, and on account of his dominion he is wont to be called Lord God or Universal Ruler.” For “Deity is the dominion of God not over his own body, as those imagine who fancy God to be the soul of the world, but over servants. The Supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect.”[{20}](#)

Newton believed that God had dominion over all His creation:

And from his true dominion it follows that the true God is a living, intelligent, and powerful Being; and, from his other perfections, that he is supreme, or most perfect. He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient; that is, his duration reaches from eternity to eternity; his presence from infinity to infinity; he governs all things, and knows all things that are or can be done.[{21}](#)

This Christian concept of God was at the very center of Newton’s cosmology. It was the very foundation of his scientific investigation. According to Newton, the universe was God’s great machine, and scientists could discover the laws by which this machine operates because these are the laws of God.[{22}](#) Thus for Newton, God is the primary cause of the universe and natural laws are the secondary causes by which God operates in the natural world.

Sadly there is a bitter irony in all of this for creationists. The scientific method we employ today was built on the belief in a Creator and His creation. Now, a few centuries later, the science has been used to replace creationist beliefs about origins.

These early scientists shifted their emphasis from a primary cause (God) to secondary causes (natural laws) through which He operates in the natural world. Over time, the subsequent preoccupation with these secondary causes caused scientists to reject the legitimacy of positing a primary cause for these origin events. "In short, natural science came to bite the supernatural hand that fed it."[\[23\]](#)

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The Changing American Family

Kerby Anderson looks at the latest data on the American family and highlights trends that are changing the nature of family in America as well as debunking some sensationalist headlines. From a biblical worldview perspective, Christians should be concerned about these trends which reflect an ongoing breakdown of family in America.

Introduction

Are we headed toward a post-marital society where marriage is rare and the traditional family is all but extinct? One would certainly think so by reading some of the stories that have appeared lately. A *New York Times* headline in 2003 warned of “marriage’s stormy future” and documented the rise in the number of nontraditional unions as well as the rising percentage of people living alone.[\[1\]](#) A 2006 *New York Times* article documented the declining percentage of married couples as a proportion of American households and thus declared that married households are now a minority.[\[2\]](#) And a 2007 headline proclaimed that “51% of women are now living without a spouse.”[\[3\]](#)

Well, let’s take a deep breath for a moment. To borrow a phrase from Mark Twain, rumors about the death of marriage and family are greatly exaggerated. But that doesn’t mean that marriage as an institution is doing well and will continue to do well in the twenty-first century.

Let's first take on a few of these headlines pronouncing the end of marriage. The October 2006 *New York Times* headline proclaimed that "To Be Married Means to Be Outnumbered." In other words, married households are now a minority in America and unmarried households are the majority. But the author had to manipulate the numbers in order to come to that conclusion. This so-called "new majority" of unmarried households includes lots of widows who were married. And this claim only works if you count households and not individuals. For example, if you have two households—one with two married people and three children and another with a single widow living alone—they would be split between one married household and one unmarried household. But one household has five people, and the other household has one person.

What about the January 2007 *New York Times* headline proclaiming that "51% of Women Are Now Living Without a Spouse"? Columnist and radio talk show host Michael Medved called this journalistic malpractice([{4}](#)) and the ombudsman for the *New York Times* took his own paper to task for the article.[{5}](#) The most recent available figures showed that a clear majority (56%) of all women over the age of twenty are currently married.

So how did the author come to the opposite conclusion? It turns out that the author chose to count more than ten million girls between the ages of fifteen and nineteen as "women." So these so-called "women" are counted as women living without a spouse (never mind that they are really teenage girls living at home with their parents). This caused the ombudsman for the *New York Times* to ask this question in his op-ed: "Can a 15-year-old be a 'Woman Without a Spouse'?"[{6}](#)

It is also worth mentioning, that even with this statistical sleight of hand, you still cannot get to the conclusion that a majority of women are living without a spouse. The article's author had to find a way to shave off an additional 2% of the married majority. He did this by including those women whose

“husbands are working out of town, are in the military, or are institutionalized.”[{7}](#)

Conflicting Attitudes about Marriage and Family

It is certainly premature to say that married couples are a minority and women living without a husband are a majority. But there has been a definite trend that we should not miss and will now address. The definition of marriage and the structure of family in the twenty-first century is very different from what existed in the recent past.

A few decades ago, marriages were the foundation of what many commentators referred to as “the traditional family.” Now marriages and families are taking some very unfamiliar shapes and orientations due to different views of marriage and family.

Americans are not exactly sure what to think about these dramatic changes in marriage and family. On the one hand, they believe that marriage and family are very important. A *Better Homes and Garden* survey found that their readers rated their relationship to their spouse as the single most important factor in their personal happiness.[{8}](#) And a MassMutual study on family values (taken many years ago) reported that eight out of ten Americans reported that their families were the greatest source of pleasure in their lives—more than friends, religion, recreation, or work.[{9}](#)

On the other hand, Americans are much less sanguine about other people’s marriages and families. I call this the “Lake Wobegon effect” where “all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are about average.” In other words, *their* marriage and family are fine, but the rest of the marriages and families are *not*. While the MassMutual Family Values Study found that a majority (81%) pointed to

their family as the greatest source of pleasure, it also found that a majority (56%) rated the family in the U.S. “only fair” or “poor.” And almost six in ten expected it to get worse in the next ten years. The survey concluded that “Americans seem to see the family in decline everywhere but in their own home.”[\[10\]](#)

Similar results can be found in many other nationwide polls. A Gallup poll found that Americans believe the family is worse off today than it was ten years ago. And they believed it would be worse off in the future as well.[\[11\]](#) Americans also demonstrated their ambivalence toward marriage and family not only in their attitudes but their actions. One trend watcher predicted more than a decade ago in an article in *American Demographics* that marriage would become in the 1990s and the twenty-first century “an optional lifestyle.”[\[12\]](#)

Changing Trends in Marriage

While it may be too early to put the institution of marriage on the endangered species list, there is good reason to believe that changing attitudes and actions have significantly transformed marriage in the twenty-first century. The current generations are marrying later, marrying less, and divorcing more than previous generations.

A major transition in attitudes toward marriage began with the baby boom generation. From 1946 to 1964, over seventy-six million babies were born. By the 1960s the leading edge of the baby boom generation was coming of age and entering into the years when previous generations would begin to marry. But baby boomers (as well as later generations) did not marry as early as previous generations. Instead, they postponed marriage until they established their careers. From the 1960s to the end of the twenty-first century, the median age of first marriage increased by nearly four years for men and four years for women.

Some of those who postponed marriage ended up postponing marriage indefinitely. An increasing proportion of the population adopted this “marriage is optional” perspective and never married. They may have had a number of live-in relationships, but they never joined the ranks of those who married. For them, singleness was not a transition but a lifestyle.

Over the last few decades, the U.S. Census Bureau has documented the increasing percentage of people who fit into the category of “adults living alone.” These are often lumped into a larger category of “non-family households.” Within this larger category are singles that are living alone as well as a growing number of unmarried, cohabiting couples who are “living together.” The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that in 2000 there were nearly ten million Americans living with an unmarried opposite-sex partner and another 1.2 million Americans living with a same-sex partner.

These numbers are unprecedented. It is estimated that during most of the 1960s and 1970s, only about a half a million Americans were living together. And by 1980, that number was just 1.5 million.[{13}](#) Now that number is more than twelve million.

[Cohabiting](#) couples are also changing the nature of marriage. Researchers estimate that half of Americans will cohabit at one time or another prior to marriage.[{14}](#) And this arrangement often includes children. The traditional stereotype of two young, childless people living together is not completely accurate; currently, some 40% of cohabiting relationships involve children.[{15}](#)

Couples often use cohabitation to delay or forego marriage. But not only are they postponing future marriage, they are increasing their chance of marriage failure. Sociologists David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, in their study for the National Marriage Project, wrote: “Cohabitation is

replacing marriage as the first living together experience for young men and women.” They conclude that those who live together before they get married are putting their future marriage in danger.[{16}](#)

Finally, we should note the impact of cohabitation on [divorce](#). When the divorce rate began to level off and even slightly decline in the 1980s, those concerned about the state of marriage in America began to cheer. But soon the cheers turned to groans when it became obvious that the leveling of the divorce rate was due primarily to an increase in cohabitation. Essentially the divorce rate was down because the marriage rate was down. Couples who break up before they marry don't show up as divorce statistics.

Many marriages today are less permanent than in previous decades. There have always been divorces in this country, but what used to be rare has now become routine. Changing attitudes toward marriage and divorce in this country are reflected in the changing divorce rate.

A graph of the divorce rate shows two significant trends. One is a sharp increase in divorces in the late 1960s that continued through the 1970s. The second is a leveling and even a slight decline in the 1980s. Both are related to the attitudes of the baby boom generation toward marriage and divorce.

The increasing divorce rate in the 1970s was due to both attitude and opportunity. Baby boomers did not stay married as long as their parents due to their different attitudes towards marriage and especially their attitude toward commitment in marriage. It is clear from the social research that the increase in the divorce rate in the 1970s did not come from empty nesters (e.g., builders) finally filing for divorce after sending their children into the world. Instead it came from young couples (e.g., baby boomers) divorcing even before

they had children. {17}

The opportunity for divorce was also significant. When increasing numbers of couples began seeking divorce, state legislatures responded by passing no-fault divorce laws. Essentially a married person could get a divorce for any reason or no reason at all.

Economic opportunity was also a significant factor in divorce. During this same period, women enjoyed greater economic opportunities in the job market. Women with paychecks are less likely to stay in a marriage that was not fulfilling to them and have less incentive to stay in a marriage. Sociologist David Popenoe surveying a number of studies on divorce concluded that “nearly all have reached the same general conclusion. It has typically been found that the probability of divorce goes up the higher the wife’s income and the closer that income is to her husband’s.”{18}

The second part of a graph on divorce shows a leveling and even a slight decline. The divorce rate peaked in 1981 and has been in decline ever since. The reasons are twofold. Initially, the decline had to do with the aging of the baby boom generation who were entering into those years that have traditionally had lower rates of divorce. But long term the reason is due to what we have already discussed in terms of the impact of cohabitation on divorce. Fewer couples are untying the knot because *fewer couples are tying the knot*.

Changing Trends in Family

We have already mentioned that starting with the baby boom generation and continuing on with subsequent generations, couples postponed marriage. But not only did these generations postpone marriage, they also postponed procreation. Unlike the generations that preceded them (e.g., the builder generation born before the end of World War II), these subsequent

generations waited longer to have children and also had few children. Lifestyle choice was certainly one factor. Another important factor was cost. The estimated cost of raising a child during this period of time rose to over six figures. Parents of a baby born in 1979 could expect to pay \$66,000 to rear a child to eighteen. For a baby born in 1988, parents could expect to pay \$150,000, and that did not include additional costs of piano lessons, summer camp, or a college education.[{19}](#)

When these generations did have children, often the family structure was very different than in previous generations. Consider the impact of divorce. Children in homes where a divorce has occurred are cut off from one of the parents and they suffer emotionally, educationally, and economically.

Judith Wallerstein in her research discovered long-term psychological devastation to the children.[{20}](#) For example, three out of five children felt rejected by at least one parent. And five years after their parents' divorce, more than one-third of the children were doing markedly worse than they had been before the divorce. Essentially she found that these emotional tremors register on the psychological Richter scale many years after the divorce.

The middle class in this country has been rocked by the one-two punch of divorce and illegitimacy, creating what has been called the "feminization of poverty." U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that single moms are five times more likely to be poor than are their married sisters.[{21}](#)

An increasing percentage of women give birth to children out of wedlock. This increase is due in large part to changing attitudes toward marriage and family. In a society that is already changing traditional patterns (by postponing marriage, divorcing more frequently, etc.), it is not surprising that many women are avoiding marriage altogether. Essentially, the current generation disconnects having children and getting

married. In their minds, they separate parenthood from marriage, thus creating an enormous increase in the number of single parent homes.

Greater social acceptance of out-of-wedlock births, divorce, and single parenting tends to reinforce the trends and suggests that these percentages will increase in the future. Young adults who contemplate marriage may be less inclined to do so because they were raised in a home where divorce occurred. A young woman raised by a single mom may be less inclined to marry when they are older, convinced that they can raise a child without the help of a husband. Better employment options for young women even encourage them to “go it alone.”

These changes in attitudes and changes in the structure of marriage and family have created a very different family in the twenty-first century. One writer imagined the confusion that children would feel in this futuristic scenario:

On a spring afternoon, half a century from today, the Joneses are gathered to sing “Happy Birthday” to Junior. There’s Dad and his third wife, Mom and her second husband, Junior’s two half brothers from his father’s first marriage, his six stepsisters from his mother’s spouse’s previous unions, 100-year-old Great Grandpa, all eight of Junior’s current “grandparents,” assorted aunts, uncles-in-law and stepcousins. While one robot scoops up the gift wrappings and another blows out the candles, Junior makes a wish . . . that he didn’t have so many relatives.[{22}](#)

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The False Teaching of "The Secret" – A Christian Evaluation

Kerby Anderson examines The Secret and The Law of Attraction from a biblical perspective and finds it teaches a dangerous mixture of half truths and outright lies.

Rhonda Byrne and *The Secret*

The book is called *The Secret*, but it didn't remain a secret for very long. Already the book has sold more than three million copies, and there are nearly two million DVDs of the teaching. There seems to be no end to the public's interest in this message presented by Rhonda Byrne.

Some call *The Secret* a transformative message. Others see it as a popular combination of marketing that parallels the success of *The DaVinci Code* with the message found in Eastern religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. Whatever it is, it has exploded in our culture ever since Rhonda Byrne's first appearance on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

The Secret has been promoted as "a feature length, historic

and factually based account of an age old secret" which is said to be four thousand years in the making and "known to only a fortunate few." The DVD and the book reveal "this great knowledge to the world." Supposedly it is the secret to wealth, the secret to health, the secret to love, relationships, happiness, and eternal youth.

The basic premise of *The Secret* was borne from the troubles that affected Rhonda Byrne. She is a television producer and mother in her fifties. A number of years ago she "hit a rocky patch in her business and personal lives."[\[1\]](#) Her father died suddenly and her relationships with her family and work colleagues were in turmoil. It was at that moment of despair when she "wept and wept and wept" that she discovered a long-neglected book entitled *The Science of Getting Rich*.[\[2\]](#)

In the book she discovered how to let your thoughts and feelings give you everything that you desire. She then dedicated herself to sharing these principles with the world in the form of *The Secret*.

Many have called it marketing genius. After all, all of us want to be in on a secret. So why wouldn't we all want to know *the* secret to life? That is what Rhonda Byrne promised in her DVD. "Torchlights flicker on the 90-minute DVD and the soundtrack throbs portentously before it gets down to giving you the secret for getting your hands on that new BMW."[\[3\]](#)

Its success shouldn't be too surprising. After all, many self-help authors have become celebrities and quite financially successful by addressing American's desperate need for happiness and significance.

Several show up as contributors to *The Secret*. For example, Wayne Dyer has written nearly thirty books on the subject of self-help. His 1976 book, *Your Erroneous Zones*, has sold over thirty million copies. Jack Canfield is best known for his *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series. There are currently

over 115 titles and 100 million copies in print.

The Law of Attraction

Rhonda Byrne's book and DVD on *The Secret* supposedly bring together "the oral traditions, in literature, in religions and philosophies throughout the centuries."[\[4\]](#) These pieces are brought together to produce this life-transforming message.

While it is passed off as new and exciting, there are many other teachers who preceded *The Secret* with a similar message. Charles Fillmore, who founded the Unity School of Christianity, talked about "The Twelve Powers of Man," arguing that the causes of all things are "essentially mental." Norman Vincent Peale is best known for his *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Deepak Chopra talks about "The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success." Motivational speaker Tony Robbins believes "it's our decisions, not the conditions of our lives, that determine our destiny."[\[5\]](#)

Rhonda Byrne not only relies on people she calls the guardians of *The Secret*, but also upon a documentary released a number of years ago called *What the Bleep Do We Know?* The film makes all sorts of metaphysical claims based upon their particular interpretation of quantum physics.

According to Rhonda Byrne, the key element of *The Secret* is what is called "The Law of Attraction."[\[6\]](#) You can summarize the law with three words: "Thoughts become things." In other words, if you think hard enough about something, it will take place. Think good thoughts, and you will reap good things. Think bad thoughts, and bad things will happen to you. You create your own circumstances, and you can change those circumstances with your thoughts.

A central teaching of "The Law of Attraction" is that nothing can come into your experience unless you summon it through persistent thoughts. Thus, everything that surrounds you right

now (both good and bad) has been attracted to you. As you focus on what you want, you are changing the vibration of atoms of that thing so that they begin to vibrate to you.[\[7\]](#) Ultimately, you determine the frequency or vibration so that you can best acquire wealth, health, and fulfillment.

Do you want something? Then you need to focus on it. In one segment in the DVD, a kid who wants a red BMX bicycle cuts out a picture of it from a catalog. He concentrates on it and even obsesses about it. He is rewarded with a bike.

Do you want to lose weight? Do the same thing. Rhonda Byrne talked about the weight she gained after her pregnancies. But once she applied “The Law of Attraction,” she realized her error: “Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your thought that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight.”

Do you want to get healthy? Visualize health. One woman in the DVD claims to have cured her breast cancer in three months without chemotherapy or radiation. She claims she did this by visualizing herself well and watching funny movies on television.

The Seductive Message

The incredible popularity of *The Secret* illustrates the spiritual hunger in our culture. But while people are hungry for spirituality, they are not willing to attend church to be fed spiritually. Instead they go to the bookstore and buy this book or DVD along with other books dealing with spirituality.

A buyer for West Hollywood’s popular metaphysical bookstore, The Bodhi Tree, said that DVD of *The Secret* had “become the biggest selling item in the 30-year history of our store.” Why has it become so successful? Here is what a writer for *Time* magazine concluded:

Mixing the ancient conspiracy hoodoo of *The DaVinci Code* with the psychic science of 2004's cult hit *What the Bleep Do We Know?*, it interweaves computer graphics, historical recreations and interviews with "experts" into a study of "intention-manifestation" – the philosophy that contends our emotions and thoughts can actually influence real-world events. In other words: if you really, truly believe you can beat the lottery and visualize scratching off a winning ticket, you can do exactly that.[\[8\]](#)

The appeal of *The Secret* is understandable. People want to be wealthy and healthy. But this false philosophy leads to death and destruction. In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns Christians: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of the world rather than on Christ."

There are countless examples that demonstrate that "The Law of Attraction" does not work. If you don't think so, try this simple experiment. Visualize that you have a million dollars in your checking account. Think lots of positive thoughts about all the money you assume is in your checking account. Then go to the bank and write a really big check. The cashier might even have positive thoughts about your account. But then you will come face-to-face with reality. The bank's computers don't have positive thoughts about your checking account, nor do they have negative thoughts about your checking account. They are just doing the math. Despite all the positive feelings you can muster, your check will bounce.

Even those who accept the metaphysical basis of *The Secret* are concerned with its seductive message that appeals to our materialism. After all, practitioners are using this supposed ancient wisdom to acquire material goods. One of the "experts" in the film says: "*The Secret* is like having the universe as your catalog."[\[9\]](#)

Many wonder if acquiring more possessions is what *The Secret*

should be all about. “The get-rich-quick parts really bothered me,” says the buyer at the Bodhi Tree. “It’s my hope that people won’t use creative visualization to obtain wealth for themselves, but in more positive, altruistic ways.”[\[10\]](#)

Spiritually Dangerous

We have already shown that the premise of *The Secret* is false. You cannot alter reality simply with your thoughts. “The Law of Attraction” can essentially be summarized with three words: “Thoughts become things.” That is not true.

But the teachings of *The Secret* are not only false; they are spiritually dangerous.

Rhonda Byrne makes this observation in her book: “So whatever way you look at it, the result is still the same. We are One. We are all connected, and we are all part of the One Energy Field, or the One Supreme Mind, or the One Consciousness, or the One Creative Source. Call it whatever you want, but we are all One.”[\[11\]](#)

Essentially she is teaching that we can become gods. We are God in a physical body. We are the creative source and the have the cosmic power to manipulate the universe according to our own desires. We are creating our own reality and thus can manipulate that reality to our own ends.[\[12\]](#)

Contrast that with the temptation in the Garden of Eden where Satan tells Eve “you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). Why is *The Secret* so popular? Because we are tempted to be “like God.”

It is one of the enemy’s oldest tricks in The Book. Satan knows that we are vulnerable to this desire to be “like God.” Satan tempted Eve in the Garden with this tactic, and he is tempting millions today with the same tactic.

John warned us of the temptations in the world: “Do not love

the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1 John 2:15-16).

We must choose that which we love and worship. Are we going to love the world and all that is in the world? Or are we going to love God? We must choose what we will love and which view of reality we will accept.

We are admonished “to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). The principles in *The Secret* are not biblical principles but pagan, worldly principles that have been around since the beginning.

The Secret calls upon us to use our thoughts for our own selfish desires. Paul, however, tells us in Romans 12:1-2 that we are to present our bodies as a sacrifice to the Lord. We are to be selfless, not selfish.

(For more information on the spiritual dangers of *The Secret*, see [Russ Wise’s in-depth analysis](#), which uncovers the occultic connection with several contributors to the project.)

The Secret and Science

To prove “The Law of Attraction,” the foundational principle in *The Secret*, Rhonda Byrne’s DVD presents physicists who imply that the latest scientific discoveries validate this metaphysical principle. One of the “experts” in the film is Fred Alan Wolf who apparently talked about the relationship between quantum mechanics and consciousness. Evidently, most of this wound up on the cutting room floor.[\[13\]](#)

The other “expert” on the film is John Hagelin, who is affiliated with Maharishi University. Both Wolf and Hagelin distanced themselves from the ideas in the DVD and

acknowledged that “The Law of Attraction” does not seem to work in reality the way it is described in *The Secret*.

Some of the ideas in *The Secret* can also be found in the film, *What the Bleep Do We Know?* The documentary combines interviews along with a fictional narrative to bring together thoughts about the possible connection between quantum physics and spirituality. The interviews and computer graphics imply that the latest scientific discoveries (in neuroscience, psychology, physics, etc.) suggest that we can manipulate the universe with our mind.

The film even sets forth the principle that the universe is actually constructed from thought or mental images rather than some substance. It goes on to suggest that “empty space” is anything but empty. And it teaches that our beliefs about who we are and what is reality are influenced by our own thoughts and mental perspective.

The film may be interesting fiction and metaphysics; it is very poor psychology and physics. Scientists have rejected the ideas in the film as nothing more than pseudoscience with no relation to reality.

The message of *The Secret* also bears no relation to reality. It says, “Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your thought that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight.” Science disagrees.

But the message is also dangerous. Karin Klein with the *Los Angeles Times* recounts the dangerous impact of *The Secret* on those who follow its prescription: “Therapists tell me they’re starting to see clients who are headed for real trouble, immersing themselves in a dream world in which good things just come.”[\[14\]](#)

It’s not surprising that *The Secret* is popular. People are spiritually hungry, and the book and DVD partially feed that hunger. The message is seductive, but as we have also seen it

is wrong, and more importantly, it is dangerous. It is one of the enemy's oldest tricks in *The Book*. We need to exercise spiritual discernment and realize the false teaching in *The Secret*.

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Marriage, Family, and

Political Views

Does our view of marriage and family affect our worldview? Obviously it does. But most people have probably never thought about the fact that marriage and family also affect voting patterns.

We are a year away from the November 2008 elections, but some trend watchers are starting to see interesting patterns that will affect elections in the next few decades. In particular, they are finding a marriage gap and a fertility gap.

Marriage Gap

An article in *USA Today* pointed out how a wedding band could be crucial in future elections. House districts held by Republicans are full of married people. Democratic districts are stacked with people who have never married.[\[1\]](#)

Consider that before the 2006 Congressional elections, Republicans controlled 49 of the 50 districts with the highest rates of married people. On the other hand, Democrats represented all 50 districts that had the highest rates of adults who have never married.

If you go back to the 2004 presidential election, you see a similar pattern. President George Bush beat Senator John Kerry by 15 percentage points among married people. However, Senator Kerry beat President Bush by 18 percentage points among unmarried people.

Married people not only vote differently from unmarried people, they tend to define words like family differently as well. And they tend to perceive government differently. But an even more significant gap in politics involves not just marriage but fertility.

Fertility Gap

When you look at the various congressional districts, you not only see a difference in marriage but in fertility. Consider these two extremes. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, a Catholic mother of five from San Francisco, has fewer children in her district than any other member of Congress: 87,727. Rep. Chris Cannon, R-Utah, a Mormon father of eight, represents the most children: 278,398.[\[2\]](#)

This stark demographic divide illustrates the difference in perspectives found in Congress. Republican members of Congress represented 39 million children younger than 18. This is 7 million more children than are represented in districts with Democratic members of Congress. And it is also true that children in Democratic districts are far more likely to live in poverty and more likely to have a single parent than children in Republican districts.

This fertility gap explains the differences in worldview and political perspective. When you consider the many political issues before Congress that affect children and families, you can begin to see why there are often stark differences in perspectives on topics ranging from education to welfare to childcare to child health insurance.

Future of the Fertility Gap

So far we have been looking at the past and the present. What about the future? Arthur Brooks wrote about the fertility gap last year in the *Wall Street Journal*. He concluded that liberals have a big baby problem: They're not having enough of them . . . and their pool of potential new voters is suffering as a result.[\[3\]](#)

He noted that, if you picked 100 unrelated politically liberal adults at random, you would find that they had, between them, 147 children. If you picked 100 conservatives, you would find

208 kids. That is a fertility gap of 41 percent.

We know that about 80 percent of people with an identifiable party preference grow up to vote essentially the same way as their parents. This fertility gap translates into lots more little conservatives than little liberals who will vote in future elections.

So what could this mean for future presidential elections? Consider the key swing state of Ohio which is currently split 50-50 between left and right. If current patterns continue, Brooks estimates that Ohio will swing to the right. By 2012 it will be 54 percent to 46 percent. And by 2020, it will be solidly conservative by a margin of 59 percent to 41 percent.

Now look at the state of California that tilts in favor of liberals by 55 percent to 45 percent. By the year 2020, it will swing conservative by a percentage of 54 percent to 46 percent. The reason is due to the fertility gap.

Of course most people vote for politicians, personalities, and issues not parties. But the general trend of the fertility gap cannot be ignored. I think we can see the impact that marriage and family have on worldview and political views. And as we can see from these numbers, they will have an even more profound impact in the future.

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Recommended Responses to The Golden Compass

The Golden Compass: Pointing In the Wrong Direction

Steve Cable

www.probe.org/the-golden-compass-pointing-in-the-wrong-direction

Probe staffer Steve Cable recommends Christian parents steer clear of The Golden Compass film based on Phillip Pullman's trilogy, His Dark Materials. It is openly anti-God from an avowed anti-Christian writer. Kids will not be able to handle it.

The Golden Compass: A Primer on Atheism

Russ Wise

<http://www.christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=117>

Former Probe staff member Russ Wise examines this anti-Christian book and movie.

Kerby Anderson also recommends:

The Golden Compass Fraud

L. Brent Bozell III

<http://www.cultureandmediainstitute.org/prINTER/2007/20071109161918.aspx>

The upside-down world of Pullman's "Golden Compass"

Berit Kjos

<http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/007/compass-pullman.htm>

“Should a Christian Radio Station Accept an Underwriting Grant from a Ford Dealership?”

I am on the board of a local Christian radio station. We have a man who is a franchise owner of a Ford Motor Company Dealership. He is a Christian and wants to support our radio station through his dealership. There is currently a national boycott against Ford for their support of homosexual agendas. Is it ethical to allow him to underwrite our station when we are in support of the national boycott of Ford products? We as a board want to do the right thing.

Thank you for your question. This is a good case of an ethical dilemma in which Christians may come to different conclusions.

1. The Bible clearly teaches that if someone believes a particular action to be wrong for them, then it is wrong. Paul says in Romans 14:4, I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. So if a station manager feels it would be wrong to receive support from a Ford dealership, then it is wrong. End of discussion.

2. However, if a station manager does NOT have an initial moral concern, then you might consider some other issues:

(a) Many people would see a distinction between the Ford Motor Company and a local dealership. While we may disagree with the policies of the national leadership of Ford toward homosexuality, that doesn't necessarily mean that the local

dealership agrees with those policies. In fact, one of the sad results of the boycott has been that many local Ford dealerships (run by godly Christians who disagree with Ford's policies) have been hurt by the boycott.

(b) This leads to my next point. Many Christians do not agree that a boycott of Ford Motor Company is the best way to send a signal to the company. They feel that it is too blunt an instrument. Some Christians may be led to follow the boycott, while others do not. Paul says in Romans 14:3 that the one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat nor should the one who does not eat . . . judge the one who eats. In other words, whether you participate in or refrain from a boycott is an individual decision that a station manager should be "fully convinced of" (Romans 14:5).

(c) Some might also point out that there is a difference between boycotting Ford and receiving a sponsorship from a local dealership. The station is not buying a Ford product but receiving an underwriting grant. Essentially, it is the difference between the station paying Ford and Ford paying the station. Obviously, this distinction is meaningless if one believes that anything Ford Motor Company does is tainted by their national policy. In that case, giving money to Ford or receiving money from Ford would be wrong.

So I would encourage you and your station manager to consider whether you feel it is wrong to receive a grant from the local Ford dealership as I describe in section #1. If you do, then the other points are meaningless. If you do NOT feel it would be wrong, then you might consider the three points I put under section #2.

Kerby Anderson

Sex and Violence on Television – A Christian Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson takes a reasoned look at the amount of sex and violence portrayed on television and comes away with a sobering understanding of the intensity of the problem. From a biblical perspective, this level of consumption of disturbing images will result in a deadening of even Christian hearts to the clear call of Scripture to a life of purity in mind and action.

The Extent of the Problem

Is there too much sex and violence on television? Most Americans seem to think so. One survey found that seventy-five percent of Americans felt that television had “too much sexually explicit material.” Moreover, eighty-six percent believed that television had contributed to “a decline in values.”[\[1\]](#) And no wonder. Channel surfing through the television reveals plots celebrating premarital sex, adultery, and even homosexuality. Sexual promiscuity in the media appears to be at an all-time high. A study of adolescents (ages twelve to seventeen) showed that watching sex on TV influences teens to have sex. Youths were more likely to initiate intercourse as well as other sexual activities.[\[2\]](#)

A study by the Parents Television Council found that prime time network television is more violent than ever before. In addition, they found that this increasing violence is also of a sexual nature. They found that portrayals of violence are up seventy-five percent since 1998.[\[3\]](#)

The study also provided expert commentary by Deborah Fisher, Ph.D. She states that children, on average, will be exposed to a thousand murders, rapes, and assaults per year through television. She goes on to warn that early exposure to television violence has “consistently emerged as a significant predictor of later aggression.”[\[4\]](#)

A previous study by the Parents Television Council compared the changes in sex, language, and violence between decades. The special report entitled *What a Difference a Decade Makes* found many shocking things.[\[5\]](#)

First, on a per-hour basis, sexual material more than tripled in the last decade. For example, while references to homosexuality were once rare, now they are mainstream. Second, the study found that foul language increased five-fold in just a decade. They also found that the intensity of violent incidents significantly increased.

These studies provide the best quantifiable measure of what has been taking place on television. No longer can defenders of television say that TV is “not that bad.” The evidence is in, and television is more offensive than ever.

Christians should not be surprised by these findings. Sex and violence have always been part of the human condition because of our sin nature (Romans 3:23), but modern families are exposed to a level of sex and violence that is unprecedented. Obviously, this will have a detrimental effect. The Bible teaches that “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7, KJV). What we see and hear affects our actions. And while this is true for adults, it is especially true for children.

Television’s Impact on Behavior

What is the impact of watching television on subsequent behavior? There are abundant studies which document that what

you see, hear, and read does affect your perception of the world and your behavior.

The American Academy of Pediatrics in 2000 issued a “Joint Statement on the Impact of Entertainment Violence on Children.” They cited over one thousand studies, including reports from the Surgeon General’s office and the National Institute of Mental Health. They say that these studies “point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children.”[\[6\]](#)

In 1992, the American Psychological Association concluded that forty years of research on the link between TV violence and real-life violence has been ignored, stating that “the ‘scientific debate is over’ and calling for federal policy to protect society.”[\[7\]](#)

A 1995 poll of children ten to sixteen years of age showed that children recognize that “what they see on television encourages them to take part in sexual activity too soon, to show disrespect for their parents, [and] to lie and to engage in aggressive behavior.” More than two-thirds said they are influenced by television; seventy-seven percent said TV shows too much sex before marriage, and sixty-two percent said sex on television and in movies influences their peers to have sexual relations when they are too young. Two-thirds also cited certain programs featuring dysfunctional families as encouraging disrespect toward parents.

The report reminds us that television sets the baseline standard for the entire entertainment industry. Most homes (ninety-eight percent) have a television set. And according to recent statistics, that TV in the average household is on more than eight hours each day.[\[8\]](#)

By contrast, other forms of entertainment (such as movies, DVDs, CDs) must be sought out and purchased. Television is universally available, and thus has the most profound effect

on our culture.

As Christians we need to be aware of the impact television has on us and our families. The studies show us that sex and violence on TV can affect us in subtle yet profound ways. We can no longer ignore the growing body of data that suggests that televised imagery does affect our perceptions and behaviors. So we should be concerned about the impact television (as well as other forms of media) has on our neighbors and our society as a whole.

Sex on Television

Most Americans believe there is too much sex on television. A survey conducted in 1994 found that seventy-five percent of Americans felt that television had “too much sexually explicit material.” Moreover, eighty-six percent believed that television had contributed to “a decline in values.”[\[9\]](#) As we documented earlier, sexual promiscuity on television is at an all-time high.

I have previously written about the subject of pornography and talked about the dangerous effects of sex, especially when linked with violence.[\[10\]](#) Neil Malamuth and Edward Donnerstein document the volatile impact of sex and violence in the media. They say, “There can be relatively long-term, anti-social effects of movies that portray sexual violence as having positive consequences.”[\[11\]](#)

In a message given by Donnerstein, he concluded with this warning and observation: “If you take normal males and expose them to graphic violence against women in R-rated films, the research doesn’t show that they’ll commit acts of violence against women. It doesn’t say they will go out and commit rape. But it does demonstrate that they become less sensitized to violence against women, they have less sympathy for rape victims, and their perceptions and attitudes and values about

violence change.”[{12}](#)

It is important to remember that these studies are applicable not just to hard-core pornography. Many of the studies used films that are readily shown on television (especially cable television) any night of the week. And many of the movies shown today in theaters are much more explicit than those shown just a few years ago.

Social commentator Irving Kristol asked this question in a *Wall Street Journal* column: “Can anyone really believe that soft porn in our Hollywood movies, hard porn in our cable movies and violent porn in our ‘rap’ music is without effect? Here the average, overall impact is quite discernible to the naked eye. And at the margin, the effects, in terms most notably of illegitimacy and rape, are shockingly visible.”[{13}](#)

Christians must be careful that sexual images on television don’t conform us to the world (Rom. 12:2). Instead we should use discernment. Philippians 4:8 says, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.”

Sex on television is at an all-time high, so we should be even more careful to screen what we and our families see. Christians should be concerned about the images we see on television.

Violence on Television

Children’s greatest exposure to violence comes from television. TV shows, movies edited for television, and video games expose young children to a level of violence unimaginable just a few years ago. The American Psychological Association says the average child watches eight thousand televised murders and one hundred thousand acts of violence

before finishing elementary school.{14} That number more than doubles by the time he or she reaches age eighteen.

At a very young age, children are seeing a level of violence and mayhem that in the past may have been seen only by a few police officers and military personnel. TV brings hitting, kicking, stabbings, shootings, and dismemberment right into homes on a daily basis.

The impact on behavior is predictable. Two prominent Surgeon General reports in the last two decades link violence on television and aggressive behavior in children and teenagers. In addition, the National Institute of Mental Health issued a ninety-four page report, *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties*. They found “overwhelming” scientific evidence that “excessive” violence on television spills over into the playground and the streets.{15} In one five-year study of 732 children, “several kinds of aggression, conflicts with parents, fighting and delinquency, were all positively correlated with the total amount of television viewing.”{16}

Long-term studies are even more disturbing. University of Illinois psychologist Leonard Eron studied children at age eight and then again at eighteen. He found that television habits established at the age of eight influenced aggressive behavior throughout childhood and adolescent years. The more violent the programs preferred by boys in the third grade, the more aggressive their behavior, both at that time and ten years later. He therefore concluded that “the effect of television violence on aggression is cumulative.”{17}

Twenty years later Eron and Rowell Huesmann found the pattern continued. He and his researchers found that children who watched significant amounts of TV violence at the age of eight were consistently more likely to commit violent crimes or engage in child or spouse abuse at thirty.{18} They concluded that “heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the

causes of aggressive behavior, crime and violence in society. Television violence affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socioeconomic levels and all levels of intelligence.”[\[19\]](#)

Violent images on television affect children in adverse ways and Christians should be concerned about the impact.

Biblical Perspective

Television is such a part of our lives that we often are unaware of its subtle and insidious influence. Nearly every home has a television set, so we tend to take it for granted and are often oblivious to its influence.

I’ve had many people tell me that they watch television, and that it has no impact at all on their worldview or behavior. However the Bible teaches that “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). What we view and what we think about affects our actions. And there is abundant psychological evidence that television viewing affects our worldview.

George Gerbner and Larry Gross, working at the Annenberg School of Communications in the 1970s, found that heavy television viewers live in a scary world. “We have found that people who watch a lot of TV see the real world as more dangerous and frightening than those who watch very little. Heavy viewers are less trustful of their fellow citizens, and more fearful of the real world.”[\[20\]](#) Heavy viewers also tended to overestimate their likelihood of being involved in a violent crime. They defined heavy viewers as those adults who watch an average of four or more hours of television a day. Approximately one-third of all American adults fit that category.

And if this is true of adults, imagine how television violence affects children’s perceptions of the world. Gerbner and Gross say, “Imagine spending six hours a day at the local movie

house when you were twelve years old. No parent would have permitted it. Yet, in our sample of children, nearly half of the twelve-year-olds watch an average of six or more hours of television per day.” This would mean that a large portion of young people fit into the category of heavy viewers. Their view of the world must be profoundly shaped by TV. Gerbner and Gross therefore conclude, “If adults can be so accepting of the reality of television, imagine its effect on children. By the time the average American child reaches public school, he has already spent several years in an electronic nursery school.”[\[21\]](#)

Television viewing affects both adults and children in subtle ways. We must not ignore the growing body of data that suggests that televised imagery does affect our perceptions and behaviors. Our worldview and our subsequent actions are affected by what we see on television. Christians, therefore, must be careful not to let television conform us to the world (Romans 12:2), but instead should develop a Christian worldview.

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Darwinism and Truth

Darwinism and the Fact/Value Split

Nancy Pearcey writes in her book *Total Truth* that Christians must counter the effects of our secular culture and mindset by developing a consistent and comprehensive biblical worldview.[{1}](#) In the middle chapters of her book, she demonstrates how Christians should do this with the question of origins.

Earlier in her book she notes that our society has divided truth into two categories. She calls this the sacred /secular split or the private/public split or the fact/value split. They are different ways of saying the same thing. Religion and moral values are subjective and shoved into the upper story where private opinions and values reside. And in the lower story are hard, verifiable facts and scientific knowledge.

There is another key point to this split. The two spheres should not intersect. In other words, it would be bad manners and a violation of logic to allow your personal and private choices and values to intersect with your public life. As the popular saying goes, that would be “shoving your religion down someone’s throat.”

Ray Bohlin’s [review](#) of Pearcey’s book provides further explanation for how this idea plays out in society.[{2}](#)

Darwinists accept this split and have even tried to convince Christians that in this way religion is safe from the claims and conclusions of Darwinian evolution. But a brief glance at the best seller list shows that evolutionists regularly invade this upper story of values with their harsh criticism.

In *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins says that religious belief is psychotic, and arguments for the existence of God

are nonsense. Sam Harris echoes that sentiment in his bestselling book, *Letter to a Christian Nation*. Daniel Dennett, in his book *Breaking the Spell*, believes that religion must be subjected to scientific evaluation.

Nancy Pearcey shows that Darwinism leads to naturalism. And this is a naturalistic view of knowledge where “theological dogmas and philosophical absolutes were at worst totally fraudulent and at best merely symbolic of deep human aspirations.”^{3} In other words, if Darwinian evolution is true, then religion and philosophical absolutes are not true. Truth, honesty, integrity, morality are not true but actually fraudulent concepts and ideas. If we hold to them at all, they were merely symbolic but not really true in any sense.

Daniel Dennett, in his book *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, says that Darwinism is a “universal acid” which is his allusion to a children's riddle about an acid that is so corrosive that it eats through everything including the flask that holds it. In other words, Darwinism is too corrosive to be contained. It eats through every academic field of study and destroys ethics, morality, truth, and absolutes. When it is finished, Darwinism “eats through just about every traditional concept and leaves in its wake a revolutionized world-view.”^{4}

Darwinism and Naturalism

Pearcey writes that “Darwinism functions as the scientific support for an overarching naturalistic worldview.”^{5} Today scientists usually assume that scientific investigation requires naturalism. But that was not always the case.

When the scientific revolution began (and for the next three hundred years), science and Christianity were considered to be compatible with one another. In fact, most scientists had some form of Christian faith, and they perceived the world of diversity and complexity through a theistic framework. Pearcey

points out that Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, and others sought to understand the world and use their gifts to honor God and serve humanity.

By the nineteenth century, secular trends began to change their perspective. This culminated with the publication of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. His theory of evolution provided the needed foundation for naturalism to explain the world without God. From that point on, social commentators began to talk about the “war between science and religion.”

By the twentieth century, G. K. Chesterton was warning that Darwinian evolution and naturalism was becoming the dominant “creed” in education and the other public arenas of Western culture. He said it “began with Evolution and has ended in Eugenics.” Ultimately, it “is really our established Church.”[\[6\]](#)

Today, it is easy to see how scientists believe that naturalism and science are essentially the same thing. They often slip from physics to metaphysics. In other words, they leave the boundaries of science and begin to make philosophical statements about the nature of the universe. While scientists can tell us how the universe operates, they cannot tell us if there is anything outside of the universe.

But that didn’t stop astronomer Carl Sagan in the PBS program “Cosmos.” The first words you hear from him are: “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”[\[7\]](#) In other words, the universe (or Cosmos) is all there is: no God, no heaven.

Now, Carl Sagan’s comment is not a scientific statement. It’s a philosophical statement. And it set the ground rules for the rest of the program. Nature is all there is. In many ways it sounds like a creed. It is as if Carl Sagan was attempting to modify the *Gloria Patri*: “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever will be.”

Do those ideas end up in our children's books? Nancy Pearcey tells the story of picking up a science book for her son, *The Bears' Nature Guide*, which featured the Berenstain Bears. The Bear family goes on a nature walk. Turn a few pages in the book and you will see a sunrise with these words in capital letters: "Nature . . . is all that IS, or WAS, or EVER WILL BE!"[\[8\]](#) Sounds like a heavy dose of Carl Sagan's naturalism packaged for young children courtesy of the Berenstain Bears.

If you are looking for a resource to counter this Darwinian and naturalistic indoctrination, let me recommend Probe's DVD series on "Redeeming Darwin." It will give you the intellectual ammunition you need.

In *Total Truth*, Nancy Pearcey discusses many of the so-called "icons of evolution" that Jonathan Wells documents in his book by that title.[\[9\]](#) These examples show up in nearly every high school and college biology textbook. But these examples which are used to "prove" evolution are either fraudulent or fail to prove evolution.

Let's start with a piece of evidence for evolution that was found where Charles Darwin first got his inspiration for his theory of evolution: the [Galapagos Islands](#). The islands can be found off the coast of South America. On those islands are finches, which have come to be known as Darwin's finches. It's hard to find a biology textbook that doesn't tell the story of these finches.

One study found that during a period of drought, the average beak size of these finches increased slightly. The reason cited for this is that during these dry periods, the most available seeds are larger and tougher to crack than at other times. So birds with larger beaks do better in conditions of drought.

I spent an afternoon looking at specimens of Darwin's finches when I was in graduate school at Yale University and should

point out that the changes in beak thickness is minimal and thus measured in tens of millimeters (thickness of a thumbnail). Moreover, the changes seem to be cyclical. When the rains returns, the original size seeds appear and the average beak size returns to normal.

This is not evolution. It is an interesting cyclical pattern in natural history. But it's not evolution. Nevertheless, one science writer enthusiastically proclaimed that this is evolution happening "before [our] very eyes."[\[10\]](#)

If this is evolution occurring then we should be seeing macro changes that would allow these finches to evolve into another species. But this cyclical pattern shows just the opposite. These minor changes in beak size and thickness actually allow them to remain finches under changing environmental conditions. It does not show them evolving into another species.

So what has been the response from the scientific establishment? The National Academy of Sciences put out a booklet on evolution for teachers. The booklet did not even mention that the average beak size returned to normal after drought. Instead the booklet makes unwarranted speculation about what might happen if these changes were to continue indefinitely for a few hundred years. "If droughts occur about once every ten years on the islands, a new species of finch might arise in only 200 years."[\[11\]](#)

Is this an accurate conclusion based upon the facts of natural history? It seems to be a clear example of misleading teachers (who in turn will unintentionally mislead their students). The booklet teaches that the beak sizes in Darwin's finches are directional and evolutionary rather than cyclical and reversible.

A column in the *Wall Street Journal* made this point. "When our leading scientists have to resort to the sort of distortion

that would land a stock promoter in jail,” Phillip Johnson said, “you know they are in trouble.”[{12}](#)

Ray Bohlin’s [review](#) of Jonathan Well’s book, *Icons of Evolution*, provides further detail on some of these examples.[{13}](#)

Peppered Moths

One example that appears in most biology textbooks is the story of the peppered moths in England. The moths appear in two forms: dark gray and light gray. During the Industrial Revolution, the factories produced pollution that darkened the tree trunks. This made it easier for birds to catch and eat the lighter colored moths. Later, when pollution was cleaned up, the tree trunks were lighter and it made it easier for the birds to catch the darker colored moths.

On its face, all this example proves is that the ratio of dark colored and light colored moths changed over time. In many ways, this is nothing more than another example of cyclical changes that we just discussed concerning Darwin’s finches.

But there is much more to the story. Peppered moths don’t actually perch on tree trunks. Actually they are quite torpid during the daylight hours and rest in the upper canopy of the trees.

If you have ever been in a biology class you have seen pictures of these moths on the tree trunks. You might even have seen a film that was made decades ago of birds landing on the trees and catching moths. It turns out that in order to create the photos and the film scientists put the moths in a freezer to immobilize them and then glued them to the tree trunks.

How did this example become such an enduring icon of evolution? Scientists accepted it for many years uncritically

because they wanted to believe it and needed a visual example to show evolution. The peppered moth story fit the bill and quickly became “an irrefutable article of faith.”[\[14\]](#)

Now there are journal articles, and even books, that document the scientific scandal surrounding the story of the peppered moths. One leading evolutionist noted that the story was a “prize horse in our stable of examples.” He goes on to say that when he learned the truth, it was like learning “that it was my father and not Santa Claus who brought the presents on Christmas Eve.”[\[15\]](#)

But what is so amazing is that this example still shows up with regularity in biology textbooks, even though most scientists and textbook writers know the story is untrue. One reporter even interviewed a textbook writer who admitted that he knew the photos were faked but used them in the biology textbook anyway. “The advantage of this example,” he argued, “is that it is extremely visual.” He went on to add that “we want to get across the idea of selective adaptation. Later on, they can look at the work critically.”[\[16\]](#)

The examples of the falsified “icons of evolution” demonstrate the extremes to which many Darwinists will go to “prove” the theory of evolution. They keep an incorrect example in the textbooks simply because it is visual and supports the theory of evolution and worldview of naturalism.

Fraudulent Embryos

Nearly every textbook has pictures of developing vertebrate embryos lined up across the page to demonstrate an evolutionary history being replayed in the womb. These pictures are placed there to show common ancestry and thus prove evolution. During this day, Charles Darwin called the similarity of vertebrate embryos “by far the strongest single class of facts in favor of” his theory of evolution.[\[17\]](#)

In biology class many of us learned the phrase “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.” That means that these developing embryos go through similar stages that replay the stages of evolution. So this supposedly was embryological proof of evolution.

But it turns out that the pictures were and are an elaborate hoax. German scientist Ernst Haeckel drew them in order to prove evolution. He deliberately drew the embryos more similar than they really are.

What is so incredible about this hoax is that it was known more than a century ago. Scientists knew the drawings were incorrect, and his colleagues accused him of fraud. An embryologist, writing in the journal *Science*, called Haeckel’s drawings “one of the most famous fakes in biology.”[\[18\]](#)

Now you would think that a hoax uncovered more than a hundred years ago would certainly not make it into high school and college biology textbooks. But if you assumed that, you would be wrong. Many textbooks continue to reprint drawings labeled as a hoax a century ago.

So why do Darwinists continue to believe in the theory of evolution and even use examples to “prove” evolution that are not true. It may be due to a bias in their worldview. The only theories that they believe are acceptable are those that are developed within a naturalistic framework.

Richard Dawkins noted: *“Even if there were no actual evidence in favor of the Darwinian theory . . . we would still be justified in preferring it over rival theories.”*[\[19\]](#) Think about that statement for a moment. Even if there were no evidence for evolution, Darwinists would still believe it because it is naturalistic.

Another professor made an even more incredible statement. He said: “Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such an hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not

naturalistic.”{20} Now think about that. Even if the evidence points to intelligent design rather than to evolution, it is excluded from consideration because it is not naturalistic.

As you can see from these two quotes (as well as from some of the other material presented here), the commitment to evolution is more philosophical than scientific. Nancy Pearcey concludes that “the issue is not fundamentally a matter of evidence at all, but of a prior philosophical commitment.”{21}

Again, let me also recommend Probe’s DVD series on “Redeeming Darwin” that is available through Probe’s website www.probe.org.

Notes

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3. Edward Purcell, *The Crisis of Democracy* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), 8.
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6. G. K. Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils* (NY: Dodd, Mead, 1927), 98.
7. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (NY: Random House, 1980), 4.
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9. Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2000).
10. Jonathan Weiner, “Kansas anti-evolution vote denies students a full spiritual journey,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 August 1999.
11. *Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science*, National Academy of Sciences, chapter 2, page 19, www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/evolution98.
12. Phillip Johnson, “The Church of Darwin,” *Wall Street*

Journal, 16 August 1999.

13. Ray Bohlin, "Icons of Evolution," Probe, 2001, www.probe.org/icons-of-evolution.

14. Peter Smith, "Darwinism in a flutter," book review of: *Of Moths and Men: Intrigue, Tragedy, and the Peppered Moth*, *The Guardian*, 11 May 2002.

15. Jerry Coyne, "Not black and white," book review of: *Melanism: Evolution in Action*, *Nature* 396(5 November 1998), 35.

16. Bob Ritter quoted in "Moth-eaten Darwinism: A disproven textbook case of natural selection refuses to die," *Alberta Report Newsmagazine*, 5 April 1999.

18. Michael Richardson, quoted in Pennisi, "Haeckel's Embryos: Fraud rediscovered," *Science* 277 (5 September 1997), 1435.

19. Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (NY: Norton, 1986), 287, emphasis in original.

20. S.C. Todd, "A view from Kansas on that evolution debate," *Nature*, 30 September 1999, 423.

21. Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 169.

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