

# 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*.<sup>{2}</sup>

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.”<sup>{3}</sup>

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.”<sup>{4}</sup> 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 we 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*.

## Notes

1. Jerry Adler, “Decoding The Secret,” *Newsweek*, 5 March 2007, 53.
2. Wallace Wattles, *The Science of Getting Rich*, 1910, [www.scienceofgettingrich.net](http://www.scienceofgettingrich.net).
3. Adler, Decoding, 53-54.
4. Home page of The Secret,



[www.theseecret.tv/home-synopsis.html](http://www.theseecret.tv/home-synopsis.html).

5. Adler, *Decoding*, 55.
6. Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* (New York: Atria Books, 2006), 28.
7. *Ibid.*, 156.
8. Jeffrey Ressler, "The Secret of Success," *Time*, 28 December 2006.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Byrne, *The Secret*, 162.
12. *Ibid.*, 164.
13. Adler, *Decoding*, 57.
14. Karin Klein, "Self-help gone nutty," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 2007.

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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.

## Notes

1. Dennis Cauchon, Marriage gap could sway elections, *USA Today*, 27 September 2006.
2. Dennis Cauchon, Fertility gap helps explain political divide, *USA Today*, 27 September 2006.
3. Arthur Brooks, The Fertility Gap, *Wall Street Journal*, 22 August 2006.

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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](http://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>

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# **"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

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## **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.”<sup>{1}</sup> 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.<sup>{2}</sup>

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.<sup>{3}</sup>

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.”<sup>{4}</sup>

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.<sup>{5}</sup>

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.<sup>{14}</sup> 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.<sup>{1}</sup> 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](http://www.probe.org).

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# High Tech Witchcraft

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Mention witchcraft and most people will think of Harry Potter. And while these books and movies have certainly been incredibly successful in promoting witchcraft, they represent only part of a larger campaign to spread the ideas of Wicca, witchcraft, and Neopaganism throughout our society.

In a recent article in *SCP Newsletter*, Marcia Montenegro talked about how witchcraft has gone "high tech." Parents should not only pay attention to books and movies. They should also pay attention to the impact that computers and the Internet are having in the promoting of witchcraft. Here are just a few examples.

**1. [Dungeons and Dragons](#)** – has been a popular fantasy role playing game for many years. Now kids can play it on the Internet or in video or computer games. The player begins by choosing a character to role-play. Each of these characters have different traits and abilities. The game is supervised by an experienced player known as the Dungeon Master. The game uses a number of occult terms. These include: spell casting, invocation, evocation, and summon. And there are spells such as the death spell and the finger of death.

There are several books about Dungeons and Dragons that also

give information and suggestions for spell casting. In one book, there is a warning of "The Cost of Magic." It says, "Wizards may have to make terrible pacts with dark powers for the knowledge they seek, priests may have to sacrifice something dear to them to invoke their deity's favor, or the spell-caster may pay an immediate price in terms of fatigue, illness, or even a loss of sanity."

**2. Magic: The Gathering** – is a fantasy trading card game created in the early 1990s. The cards are linked to one of five kinds of paranormal magic: red, blue, green, white or black. Players assume the role of wizards or mages (magicians) and use their cards to defeat other players in the game. A key term that shows up in this game as well as in movies like "The Craft" is the term *mana*. It refers to a magical force or power which is essentially a vital life force.

This card game is challenging and requires intricate strategy. It also introduces the players to scary and repulsive images. There is the Bone Shaman or the Necrite (shown licking blood off a dagger) or the Soul Drinker or the Sorceress Queen. Parents should be concerned about the occult and macabre images that players in the game will see as well as the desensitization towards the occult and witchcraft.

**3. Yu Gi Oh** – was originally a comic created in Japan about a boy playing a card game called "Dueling Monsters." This comic eventually gave rise to a card game, movies, and video games.

The story centers around Yugi who is possessed by a 5000-year-old pharaoh, Yama Yugi, who is trying to solve an ancient puzzle. One Internet site suggests that Yugi is taken over by "dark Yugi" when it needs to work on the puzzle. Others point out that during duels, Yugi seems possessed by the spirit which deepens his voice and shadows him.

**4. The Vampire Games** – is another role playing game that introduces the players to the world of vampires. This includes

the live action role playing games such as *Vampire: The Masquerade* and *Vampire: the Requiem*.

As you might imagine, these games involve dark and macabre situations, including drinking blood and killing innocent people. The vampires are predators on humans and described as killing machines who struggle with their baser instincts. The vampires also have certain powers such as telepathy, psychic projection, and bodily possession.

Players often form clubs in order to play the game. Some players even imitate vampires in real life by wearing razor-sharp artificial fangs. The popularity of these games have spawned others: *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, *Mage: The Awakening*, and *Sword & Sorcery*.

**5. World of Warcraft** – is an online computer war game. It includes the typical action games strategies but also adds elements of the occult and New Age. There are four main races of beings: humans (one of the youngest races), Orcs (part of a Shamanistic society), Night Elves (who misuse magic), and the Undead Scourge (thousands of walking corpses and extra-dimensional entities).

As with many of the other games already mentioned, strategy and the use of the occult and paranormal magic are key to success in this game. Powers are summoned and spells are cast.

These various forms of “high tech” spell casting are a doorway into the occult and witchcraft. The Bible warns of the dangers of divination, sorcery, and witchcraft (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19-20; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Kings 23:24; 1 Chronicles 10:13; Isaiah 2:6; 8:19-20; 47:13-14; Ezekiel 13:20-23; Daniel 2:27-28; 5:15-17; Acts 13:7-10; 16:16-18; Galatians 5:19-20; Revelation 22:15). We should not focus our minds and attention on what is dark and dangerous. We are called to let our minds dwell on what is true, honorable, pure, and lovely (Philippians 4:8).

## Global Warming: Cool the Hype

Al Gore's film, "An Inconvenient Truth," won an Academy Award for best documentary. And Al Gore is being treated like a rock star at Hollywood parties and when he testified in front of Congress. But has Al Gore's hype and hysteria gone too far?

That's what many scientists and supporters are beginning to say. They are alarmed at his alarmism. "I don't want to pick on Al Gore," Don Easterbrook (emeritus professor of geology at Western Washington University) told hundred of experts at the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America. "But there are a lot of inaccuracies in the statements we are seeing, and we have to temper that with real data."[\[1\]](#)

Kevin Vranes (climatologist at the Center for Science and Technology Policy Research at the University of Colorado) has praised Gore for "getting the message out" but also questioned whether his presentations were "overselling our certainty about knowing the future."[\[2\]](#)

Global warming is the observed increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and oceans in recent decades. The argument made in many science journals and in Al Gore's film is that most of the observed warming over the last fifty years is attributable to human activities. Political activists argue we must act now to prevent a global catastrophe.

These claims bring us back to the hype that many see in Al Gore's film. He argues "Humanity is sitting on a ticking time

bomb” and that “we have just ten years to avert a major catastrophe that could send our entire planet into a tail-spin of epic destruction involving extreme weather, droughts, epidemics and killer heat waves beyond anything we have ever experienced.”[\[3\]](#)

Throughout the film, Al Gore invariably will pick the most extreme estimate to prove that we are on the edge of a catastrophe. For example, if global warming really is taking place, how much will the sea level rise? Gore says 20 feet, and then shows a dramatic animation of what it would look like if various locations on earth were flooded by a sea level rise of 20 feet.

Yet the most recent summary of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change doesn't say anything like this.[\[4\]](#) Even though this panel is full of policy makers who believe in global warming and argue for major policy changes, they conclude that sea levels might rise 7 to 17 inches over the course of a century. There is a vast difference between sea levels rising about one foot versus 20 feet!

Add to this the number of factual errors in many of the presentations heralding a looming catastrophe from global warming. Iain Murray documents “25 inconvenient truths for Al Gore” in his column that analyzes the scientific statements in “An Inconvenient Truth.”[\[5\]](#) Bjorn Lomborg, author of the *Skeptical Environmentalist*, shows how the report on climate change by Nicholas Stern and the U.K. government makes sloppy errors and cherry-picks statistics.[\[6\]](#)

We should also mention that many scientists believe that the current warming is due to factors other than human activity. Sami Solanki (Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research, Germany) has quantitatively reconstructed the sun's activity since the last Ice Age and says the sun “is brighter than it was a few hundred years ago and this brightening started

relatively recently.”{7} Scientists have observed that the ice caps on Mars are melting, and Jupiter is developing a second giant red spot due to the sudden warming of our solar system’s largest planet.{8}

Those who dare to criticize the global warming scenario are often compared to being the moral equivalent of a holocaust denier.{9} In the film, Al Gore compares scientists who criticize his theory to scientists at the tobacco companies who tried to tell us that smoking was not harmful. Gore and others also say that many who are skeptical about global warming are being paid by the oil companies they say are running a disinformation campaign.

This last charge infuriated Dr. Easterbrook who told the geologists, “I’ve never been paid a nickel by an oil company.” He went on to add, “And I’m not a Republican.”

Al Gore argues that the global warming issue isn’t a political issue but rather a moral issue. Yet in his film, Al Gore argues we need the political will to confront and solve the issue. It doesn’t take much insight to realize there is a political agenda here.

The first step, say the activists, is to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. This treaty calls for the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in the United States, the European Union, Japan, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. When Al Gore was Vice President, it was brought before the U.S. Senate and defeated 95-0. It won’t pass if put up for a vote once again.

But even if it did pass, it would only be a start. Estimates are that it would cost \$200 billion to \$1 trillion every year. But other Kyotos treaties would have to be ratified by the developing countries. After all, there are a billion people in China and a billion people in India, and China plans on building an additional 2,200 coal plants by 2030.{10} One scientist speculated that “it might take another 30 Kyotos” to

deal with global warming.{11} And what would be the impact? Critics say that even if adhered to by every signatory, it would only reduce surface temperature by 0.13° F.{12}

Even if we assume that global warming is occurring and assume that it is due only to human activity, the cost-benefit is enormous. Bjorn Lomborg established a program known as the Copenhagen Consensus.{13} This panel (that included three Nobel Laureates in economics) evaluated strategies to deal with major problems facing humanity. When they listed these alternatives in descending order of effectiveness, things like treating communicable disease and hunger were at the top of the list while dealing with climate change were at the bottom of the list.

This suggests that *adaptation* to climate change will be more effective and less costly than *mitigation*. We need to cool the hype and let cooler heads make wise decisions.

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## Truth Decay

*We live in a world that has dramatically changed its view of truth. What is the impact of the worldview of postmodernism and the ethical system of relativism in our society and inside the church?*

### Three Views of Truth

We live in a world that has dramatically changed its view of truth, and thus have inherited an ethical system that denies the existence of truth. The worldview of the twenty-first century is postmodernism, and the dominant ethical system of the last two centuries has been relativism.

To understand this changed view of truth, we need to consider the story of three baseball umpires.<sup>{1}</sup> One said, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em the way they are." Another said, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em the way I see 'em." And the third umpire said, "There's balls and



there's strikes, and they ain't nothing until I call them."

Their three different views of balls and strikes correspond with three different views of truth. The first is what we might call *premodernism*. This is a God-centered view of the universe that believes in divine revelation. Most of the ancient world had this view of true and believed that truth is absolute ("I call 'em the way they are"). By the time of the Enlightenment, Western culture was moving into a time of *modernism*. This view was influenced by the scientific revolution, and began to reject a belief in God. In this period, truth is relative ("I call 'em the way I see 'em"). Today we live in what many call *postmodernism*. In this view, there is a complete loss of hope for truth. Truth is not discovered; truth is created ("they ain't nothing until I call them").

Postmodernism is built upon the belief that truth doesn't exist except as the individual wants it to exist. Truth isn't objective or absolute. Truth is personal and relative. Postmodernism isn't really a set of doctrines or truth claims. It is a completely new way of dealing with the world of ideas. It has had a profound influence in nearly every academic area: literature, history, politics, education, law, sociology, linguistics, even the sciences.

Postmodernism, however, is based upon a set of self-defeating propositions. What is a self-defeating proposition? If I said that my brother is an only child, you would say that my statement is self-refuting. An only child would not have a brother. Likewise, postmodernism is self-refuting.

Postmodernists assert that all worldviews have an equal claim to the truth. In other words, they deny absolute truth. But the denial of absolute truth is self-defeating. The claim that all worldviews are relative is true for everyone, everywhere, at all times. But that claim itself is an absolute truth.

It's like the student who said there was no absolute truth. When asked if his statement was an absolute truth. He said, "Absolutely." So he essentially said that he absolutely believed there was no absolute truth, except the absolute truth that there is no absolute truth!

## **Postmodernism**

Postmodernism may seem tolerant, but in many ways it is not. For example, postmodernists tend to be skeptical of people (e.g., Christians) who claim to know truth. Now that doesn't mean that it is hostile to religion or spirituality. Postmodernists have no problem with religion unless it makes certain claims about its religion.

Postmodernists tolerate religion as long as it makes no claim to universal truth and has no authority. But they are very critical of those who believe there is one truth or an absolute truth. They are also critical of Christian missionaries because they believe they are "destroyers of culture." This is reminiscent of the TV show "Star Trek" that had "The Prime Directive" which prohibited those on the star ship from interfering with any culture. The assumption was that each culture must decide what is true for itself.

Related to this idea of cultural relativism is the belief in religious pluralism. This is the belief that every religion is true. While it is proper to show respect for people of different religious faiths, it is incorrect to assume that all religions are true.

Various religions and religious groups make competing truth claims, so they cannot all be true. For example, God is either personal or God is impersonal. If God is personal then Judaism, Christianity, and Islam could be true. But the eastern religions (Hinduism and Buddhism) are false. Either Jesus is the Messiah or He is not. If He is the Messiah then

Christianity is true, and Judaism is false.

Religious pluralism essentially violates the “Law of Non-contradiction.” This law states that A and the opposite of A cannot both be true (at the same time in the same way). You cannot have square circles. And you cannot have competing and contradictory religious truth claims all be true at the same time.

Jesus made this very clear in John 14:6 when He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” Jesus taught that salvation was through Him and no one else. This contradicts other religions.

Postmodernism has also changed the highest value in society. We used to live in a society that believed in “Truth” (with a capital T). This has now been replaced by a new word with a capital T. And that is the word “Tolerance.” We are told to tolerate every view and value. Essentially, all moral questions can be summed up with the phrase: Who are you to say?

## **Moral Relativism**

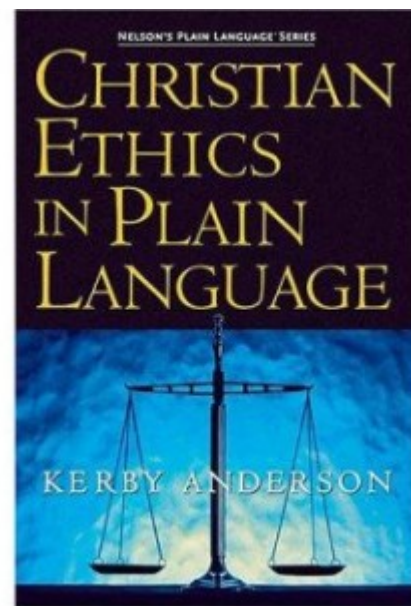
The worldview of postmodernism provides the foundation for moral relativism. Although a view of ethics as relative began in the era of modernism, it has reached full bloom in the era of postmodernism. If there is no absolute truth, then there is no absolute standard for ethical behavior. And if truth is merely personal preference, then certainly ethics is personal and situational.

Moral relativism is the belief that morality is relative to the person. In other words, there is no set of rules that universally applies to everyone. In a sense, moral relativism can be summed up with the phrase: “It all depends.” Is murder always wrong? Relativists would say, “It depends on the circumstances.” Is adultery wrong? They would say, “It just

depends on whether you are caught.”

Moral relativism is also self-defeating. People who say they believe in relativism cannot live consistently within their ethical system. Moral relativists make moral judgments all the time. They speak out against racism, exploitation, genocide, and much more. Christians have a consistent foundation to speak out against these social evils based upon God’s revelation. Moral relativists do not.

There are two other problems with moral relativism. First, one cannot critique morality from the outside. In my book *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, I point out the problem with cultural relativism.<sup>{2}</sup> If ethics are relative to each culture, then anyone outside the culture loses the right to critique it. Essentially that was the



argument of the Nazi leaders during the Nuremberg Trials. What right do you have to criticize what we did within Nazi Germany? We had our own system of morality. Fortunately, the judges and Western society rejected such a notion.

Second, one cannot critique morality from the inside. Cultural relativism leaves no place for social reformers. The abolition movement, the suffrage movement, and the civil rights movement are all examples of social movements that ran counter to the social circumstances of the culture. Reformers like William Wilberforce or Martin Luther King Jr. stood up in the midst of society and pointed out immoral practices and called society to a moral solution. Abolishing slavery and fighting for civil rights were good things even if they were opposed by many people within society.

Not only is moral relativism self-defeating; it is dangerous. Moral relativism leads to moral anarchy. It is based upon the assumption that every person should be allowed to live according to his or her own moral standards. Consider how dangerous that would be in a society with such vastly different moral standards.

Some people think stealing is perfectly moral, at least in certain circumstances. Some people think murder can be justified. Society simply cannot allow everyone to do what they think is right in their own eyes.

Obviously, society allows a certain amount of moral anarchy when there is no threat to life, liberty, or property. Each year when I go to the state fair, I see lots of anarchy when I watch the people using the bumper cars. In that situation, we allow people to “do their own thing.” But if those same people started acting like that on the highway, we simply could not allow them to “do their own thing.” There is a threat to life, liberty, and property.

Moral relativism may sound nice and tolerant and liberating. But if ever implemented at a societal level, it would be dangerous. We simply cannot allow total moral anarchy without reverting to barbarism. That is the consequence of living in a world that has changed its view of truth and established an ethical system that denies the existence of truth.

## **Impact of Truth Decay**

What has been the impact of a loss of truth in society? There are many ways to measure this, and many ministries and organizations have done just that.

Each year the Nehemiah Institute gives the PEERS test to thousands of teenagers and adults. They have administered this test since 1988. The PEERS test measures understanding in five categories: Politics, Economics, Education, Religion, and

Social Issues.[{3}](#) It consists of a series of statements carefully structured to identify a person's worldview in those five categories.

Based upon the answers, the respondent is then classified under one of four major worldview categories: Christian Theism, Moderate Christian, Secular Humanism, or Socialism. In the mid-1980s, it was common for Christian youth to score in the Moderate Christian worldview category. Not anymore.

Currently, Christian students at public schools score in the lower half of secular humanism, headed toward a socialistic worldview. And seventy-five percent of students in Christian schools score as secular humanists.

Take this question from the PEERS test as an example: "Moral values are subjective and personal. They are the right of each individual. Individuals should be allowed to conduct life as they choose as long as it does not interfere with the lives of others." The Nehemiah Institute found that seventy-five percent of youth agreed with this statement.

Let's also consider the work of George Barna. He conducted a national survey of adults and concluded that only four percent of adults have a biblical worldview as the basis of their decision-making. The survey also discovered that nine percent of born again Christians have such a perspective on life.[{4}](#) And when you look at the questions, you can see that what is defined as a biblical worldview is really just basic Christian doctrine.

George Barna has also found that a minority of born again adults (forty-four percent) and an even smaller proportion of born again teenagers (nine percent) are certain of the existence of absolute moral truth.[{5}](#)

By a three-to-one margin, adults say truth is always relative to the person and their situation. This perspective is even more lopsided among teenagers who overwhelmingly believe moral

truth depends on the circumstances. [{6}](#)

Back in 1994, the Barna Research Group conducted a survey of church youth for Josh McDowell. Now remember, we are talking about young people who regularly attend church. They found that of these church youth, fifty-seven percent could not say that an objective standard of truth exists. They also found that eighty-five percent of these same church youth reason that “just because it’s wrong for you doesn’t mean it’s wrong for me.”

George Barna says that the younger generation tends to be composed of non-linear thinkers. In other words, they often cut and paste their beliefs and values from a variety of sources, even if they are contradictory.

More to the point, they hold these contradictory ideas because they do not have a firm belief in absolute truth. If truth is personal and not objective, then there is no right decision and each person should do what is right for him or her.

## **Biblical Perspective**

What is a biblical perspective on postmodernism? One of the problems with the postmodern worldview is that it affects the way we read the Bible.

Because of the popularity of postmodernism, people are reading literature (including the Bible) differently than before. Literary interpretation uses what is called “postmodern deconstruction.” Not only is this used in English classes on high school and college campuses, it is being applied to biblical interpretation.

Many Christians no longer interpret the Bible by what it says. Instead, they interpret the Bible by asking what the passage means to them. While biblical application is important, we must first begin by understanding the intent of the author.



Once that principle goes out the window, proper biblical interpretation is in jeopardy.

So what should we do? First we must be prepared for the intellectual and philosophical battle we face in the twenty-first century. Colossians 2:8 says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

We must also be studying the Scriptures on a daily basis. Paul says the Bereans were "noble-minded" because "they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Studies of born again Christians say that they are not reading their Bibles on a regular basis. An important antidote to postmodernism and relativism is daily Scripture study so that we make sure that we are not being conformed to the culture (Romans 12:2).

We should also develop discernment, especially when we are considering the worldviews that are promoted in the media. Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."

The average student in America watches 22,000 hours of television before graduation. That same student also listens to 11,000 hours of music during their teenage years. Add to this time spent on a computer, on the Internet, and absorbing the culture through books and magazines.

Postmodernism is having a profound impact on our society. This erosion of truth is affecting the way we view the world. And the rejection of absolutes leads naturally to a rejection of absolute moral standards and the promotion of moral

relativism.

Christians must wisely discern these trends and apply proper biblical instruction to combat these views.

## Notes

1. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 31.
2. Kerby Anderson, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 11-15.
3. [www.nehemiahinstitute.com/peers.php](http://www.nehemiahinstitute.com/peers.php).
4. "A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person's Life," *The Barna Update* (Ventura, CA), 1 Dec. 2003.
5. "The Year's Most Intriguing Findings, From Barna Research Studies," *The Barna Update* (Ventura, CA), 12 Dec. 2000.
6. "Americans Are Most Likely to Base Truth on Feelings," *The Barna Update* (Ventura, CA), 12 Feb. 2002.

## Suggested Reading:

Francis Beckwith and Gregory Koukl, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998).

Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000).

Dennis McCallum, *The Death of Truth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1996).

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# Candidates and Religion

October 9, 2007

Should we know more about a political candidate's religion before we vote? That is a question that will certainly surface in this election cycle.

When John Kennedy ran for the presidency he said: "I believe in a President whose religious views are his own private affair." While that may have satisfied some back in 1960, I doubt it will be sufficient in this election.

Michael Kinsley recently wrote about this important topic in *Time* magazine as he discussed Governor Mitt Romney. Although I would probably disagree with Kinsley on many political and theological issues, I think he rightly points out that the religious faith of a candidate cannot be kept private because it affects his or her worldview.

He says it is important for three reasons. First, we need to know the details of a candidate's faith and the extent to which those details are accepted. He notes that Catholic liberal politicians since Mario Cuomo have said they accept the doctrine of the church but nevertheless believe in a woman's right to choose. He concludes that either these politicians are lying to their church, or they are lying to us.

Second, since some doctrines of various religions may be offensive to the general public, they have a right to know if a candidate agrees with those doctrines. Michael Kinsley applies this only to Mitt Romney's Mormonism, but it should also be applied to the religious faith of every candidate.

Third, candidates' religious faith also will affect their character. Voters should take character into account before they cast their vote for a particular candidate.

This election season it has been popular for candidates to talk about their faith. But how does that faith affect his or her views on social and political issues? So far, the media has been content to let them talk about their faith in a vague way, but voters deserve to know more. Back in 1960, John Kennedy dodged the question of how his faith affected his decision-making. We cannot allow candidates to dodge the question now.

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