

Stem Cell Wars

December 17, 2005

The political war over stem cell research is heating up as evidenced by two recent events in the media. For the last few weeks, Senate Democrats have blocked action on a bill that would allow the use of umbilical cord blood in stem cell research. Although the bill passed the House by a remarkable vote of 431-1, the democratic leadership in the Senate would not allow a vote on the measure. The bill was even endorsed by the Congressional Black Caucus due to the positive appeal from former basketball star Julius (Dr. J.) Erving.

Also in the news was the decision by University of Pittsburgh's Gerald Schatten to quit the human cloning project of South Korean scientist Dr. Hwang Woo Suk. Dr. Schatten cited ethical concerns about possible coercion in obtaining eggs from female project staffers. Dr. Schatten also demanded that his name be removed from an article he co-wrote with Dr. Hwang for the journal *Science* because he believes it used fraudulent photographs in the article.

Background

Stem cells are the basic cells in our body. They get their name from their similarity to the stem of a plant which gives rise to branches, bark, and every other part of a plant. Embryonic stem cells are the cells from which all 210 different kinds of tissue in the human body originate. As an embryo develops into a blastocyst, a few layers of cells surround a mass of stem cells. If these stem cells are removed from the blastocyst, they cannot develop as an embryo but can be cultured and grown into these different tissues.

Stem cells are undifferentiated and self-replicating cells that have the potential to become the other differentiated

cells in our body. And that is why there is so much scientific and political attention being paid to stem cells.

The potential for stem cell research is enormous and intoxicating. Nearly 100 million Americans have serious diseases that eventually may be treated or even cured by stem cell research. Many diseases (like Parkinson's, heart disease, diabetes) result from the death or dysfunction of a single cell type. Scientists hope that the introduction of healthy cells of this type will restore lost or compromised function.

Moral Perspective

The moral problem with the research is that to obtain human embryonic stem cells, the embryo is destroyed. Embryos needed for human embryonic stem cell research can be obtained from three sources: (1) in-vitro fertilization used to produce embryos, (2) frozen embryos which are spare embryos left over from in-vitro fertilization, or (3) human cloning of embryos.

In addition to the moral problem is the scientific reality that embryonic stem cell research has not been successful. Although human embryonic stem cells have the potential to become any type of human cell, no one has yet mastered the ability to direct these embryonic cells in a way that can provide possible therapy for humans afflicted with various diseases.

Numerous stories are surfacing of the problems with human embryonic stem cells. One example took place in China where scientists implanted human embryonic stem cells into a patient suffering from Parkinson's only to have them transform into a powerful tumor that eventually killed him.

Often the media has not been telling the truth about embryonic stem cell research. So why hasn't the media accurately covered this issue? "To start with, people need a fairy tale," said Ronald D.G. McKay, a stem cell researcher at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Maybe that's

unfair, but they need a story line that's relatively simple to understand."

What has been lost in all of this discussion is the humanity of the unborn. Proponents of embryonic stem cell research argue that an embryo or fetus is a "potential" human life. Yet at every stage in human development (embryo, fetus, child, adult), we retain our identity as human beings. We are humans from the moment of conception. We do not have the right to dismember a human embryo because it's unwanted or located in a test tube in a fertility clinic.

Also lost in this discussion is the success of using stem cells from sources other than embryos. Successful clinical trials have shown that adult stem cells as well as umbilical cord blood have been very effective. These sources may provide cures for such diseases as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, systematic lupus, etc. Some studies seem to indicate that adult stem cells create "fewer biological problems" than embryonic ones.

No moral concerns surround the use of human adult stem cells since they can be obtained from the individual requiring therapy. And using blood from umbilical cords of newborns does not raise any significant concerns because the newborn is not harmed in any way.

In the last few years, stem cells have also been found in tissues previously thought to be devoid of them (e.g., neural tissue, nasal passages). And human adult stem cells are also more malleable than previously thought. For example, bone marrow stem cells can produce skeletal muscle, neural, cardiac muscle, and liver cells. Bone marrow cells can even migrate to these tissues via the circulatory system in response to tissue damage and begin producing cells of the appropriate tissue type.

Human adult stem cell research is already effective and raises

none of the moral questions of human embryonic stem cell research. Even biotech industry proponents of embryonic stem cell research believe that we may be twenty years away from developing commercially available treatments using embryonic stem cells.

All of this, however, seems lost on some in Congress who continue to push for additional funding of embryonic stem cell research. When democratic leaders in the Senate hold up a cord blood bill that will help people just to get a vote on an embryonic stem cell bill, they clearly have the wrong priorities. Adult stem cell research is already effective. Embryonic stem cell research is not.

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Is the World Flat? How Should Christians Respond in Today's Global World

Drawing from Thomas Friedman's book, The World is Flat, Kerby Anderson looks at some of the major new factors in our world which cause not only countries and companies, but also individuals to think and act globally. Most of the factors discussed are givens against which Kerby helps us to consider their impact on Christianity and the spread of the gospel on a global basis.

Introduction

Is the world flat? The question is not as crazy as it might sound in light of the book by Thomas Friedman entitled *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. His contention is that the global playing field has been leveled or flattened by new technologies.

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two when Columbus sailed the ocean blue, he used rudimentary navigational equipment to prove that the earth was *round*. More than 500 years later, Friedman discovered in a conversation with one of the smartest engineers in India that essentially the world was *flat*. Friedman argues that we have entered into a third era of globalization, which he calls Globalization 3.0 that has flattened the world.

The first era of globalization (he calls Globalization 1.0) lasted from when Columbus set sail until around 1800. "It shrank the world from a size large to a size medium. Globalization 1.0 was about countries and muscles."[\[1\]](#) The key change agent in this era was how much muscle your country had (horsepower, wind power, etc.). Driven by such factors as imperialism and even religion, countries broke down walls and began the process of global integration.

The second era (he calls Globalization 2.0) lasted from 1800 to 2000 with interruptions during the Great Depression and World Wars I and II. "This era shrank the world from size medium to a size small. In Globalization 2.0, the key agent of change, the dynamic force driving global integration, was multinational companies."[\[2\]](#) At first these were Dutch and English joint-stock companies, and later was the growth of a global economy due to computers, satellites, and even the Internet.

The dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was *countries* globalizing, while the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was

companies globalizing. Friedman contends that Globalization 3.0 will be different because it provides “the newfound power for *individuals* to collaborate and compete globally.”[\[3\]](#)

The players in this new world of commerce will also be different. “Globalization 1.0 and 2.0 were driven primarily by European and American individuals and businesses. . . . Because it is flattening and shrinking the world, Globalization 3.0 is going to be more and more driven not only by individuals but also by a much more diverse—non-Western, non-white—group of individuals. Individuals from every corner of the flat world are being empowered.”[\[4\]](#)

The Flatteners

Friedman argues in his book that the global playing field has been flattened by new technologies.

The first flattener occurred on November 9, 1989. “The fall of the Berlin Wall on 11/9/89 unleashed forces that ultimately liberated all the captive peoples of the Soviet Empire. But it actually did so much more. It tipped the balance of power across the world toward those advocating democratic, consensual, free-market-oriented governance, and away from those advocating authoritarian rule with centrally planned economies.”[\[5\]](#)

The economic change was even more important. The fall of the Berlin Wall encouraged the free movement of ideas, goods, and services. “When an economic or technological standard emerged and proved itself on the world stage, it was much more quickly adopted after the wall was out of the way.”[\[6\]](#)

Thomas Friedman also makes a connection between the two dates 11/9 and 9/11. He noted that in “a world away, in Muslim lands, many thought [Osama] bin Laden and his comrades brought down the Soviet Empire and the wall with religious zeal, and millions of them were inspired to upload the past. In short,

while we were celebrating 11/9, the seeds of another memorable date—9/11—were being sown.”[\[7\]](#)

A second flattener was Netscape. This new software played a huge role in flattening the world by making the Internet truly interoperable. Until then, there were disconnected islands of information.

We used to go to the post office to send mail; now most of us send digitized mail over the Internet known as *e-mail*. We used to go to bookstores to browse and buy books, now we browse digitally. We used to buy a CD to listen to music, now many of us obtain our digitized music off the Internet and download it to a MP3 player.

A third flattener was work flow software. As the Internet developed, people wanted to do more than browse books and send e-mail. “They wanted to shape things, design things, create things, sell things, buy things, keep track of inventories, do somebody else’s taxes, and read somebody else’s X-rays from half a world away. And they wanted to be able to do any of these things from anywhere to anywhere and from any computer to any computer—seamlessly.”[\[8\]](#)

All the computers needed to be interoperable not only between departments within a company but between the systems of any other company. Work flow software made this possible.

Where will this lead? Consider this likely scenario. When you want to make a dentist appointment, your computer translates your voice into a digital instruction. Then it will check your calendar against the available dates on the dentist’s calendar. It will offer you three choices, and you will click on the preferred date and hour. Then a week before your appointment, the dentist’s calendar will send you an e-mail reminding you of the appointment. The night before your appointment, a computer-generated voice message will remind you.

The fourth flattener is open-sourcing. Open-source comes from the idea that groups would make available online the source code for software and then let anyone who has something to contribute improve it and let millions of others download it for free.

One example of open-source software is Apache which currently powers about two-thirds of the websites in the world. Another example of open-sourcing is blogging. Bloggers are often one-person online commentators linked to others by their common commitments. They have created essentially an open-source newsroom.

News bloggers were responsible for exposing the bogus documents use by CBS and Dan Rather in a report about President Bush's Air National Guard service. Howard Kurtz of *The Washington Post* wrote (Sept 20, 2004): "It was like throwing a match on kerosene-soaked wood. The ensuing blaze ripped through the media establishment as previously obscure bloggers managed to put the network of Murrow and Cronkite on the defensive."

Another example of open-sourcing is the Wikipedia project which has become perhaps the most popular online encyclopedia in the world. Linux is another example. It offers a family of operating systems that can be adapted to small desktop computers or laptops all the way up to large supercomputers.

A fifth flattener is outsourcing. In many ways, this was made possible when American companies laid fiber-optic cable to India. Ultimately, India became the beneficiary.

India has become very good at producing brain power, especially in the sciences, engineering, and medicine. There are a limited number of Indian Institutes within a population of one billion people. The resulting competition produces a phenomenal knowledge meritocracy. Until India was connected, many of the graduates would come to America. "It was as if

someone installed a brain drain that filled up in New Delhi and emptied in Palo Alto.”[{9}](#)

Fiber-optic cable became the ocean crosser. You no longer need to leave India to be a professional because you can plug into the world from India.

A sixth flattener was offshoring. Offshoring is when a company takes one of its factories that is operating in Canton, Ohio and moves the whole factory to Canton, China.

When China joined the World Trade Organization, it took Beijing and the rest of the world to a new level of offshoring. Companies began to shift production offshore and integrate their products and services into their global supply chains.

The more attractive China makes itself offshoring, the more attractive other developed and developing countries have to make themselves. This created a process of competitive flattening and a scramble to give companies the best tax breaks and subsidies.

How does this affect the United States? “According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, nearly 90 percent of the output from U.S.-owned offshore factories is sold to foreign consumers. But this actually stimulates American exports. There is a variety of studies indicating that every dollar a company invests overseas in an offshore factory yields additional exports for its home country, because roughly one-third of global trade today is within multi-national companies.”[{10}](#)

The seventh flattener is supply chaining. “No company has been more efficient at improving its supply chain (and thereby flattening the world) than Wal-Mart; and no company epitomizes the tension the supply chains evoke between the consumer in us and the worker in us than Wal-Mart.”[{11}](#)

Thomas Friedman calls Wal-Mart “the China of companies” because it can use its leverage to grind down any supplier to the last halfpenny. And speaking of China, if Wal-Mart were an individual economy, it would rank as China’s eighth-biggest trading partner, ahead of Russia, Australia and Canada.

An eighth flattener is what Friedman calls *insourcing*. A good example of this is UPS. UPS is not just delivering packages, the company is doing logistics. Their slogan is Your World Synchronized. The company is synchronizing global supply chains.

For example, if you own a Toshiba laptop computer under warranty that you need fixed, you call Toshiba. What you probably don’t know is that UPS will pick up your laptop and repair it at their own UPS-run workshop dedicated to computer and printer repair. They fix it and return it in much less time than it would take to send it all the way to Toshiba.

A ninth flattener is in-forming. A good example of that is Google. Google has been the ultimate equalizer. Whether you are a university professor with a high speed Internet connection or a poor kid in Asia with access to an Internet café, you have the same basic access to research information.

Google puts an enormous amount of information at our fingertips. Essentially, all of the information on the Internet is available to anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

Friedman says that, “In-forming is the ability to build and deploy your own personal supply chain—a supply chain of information, knowledge, and entertainment. In-forming is about self-collaboration—becoming your own self-directed and self-empowered researcher, editor, and selector of entertainment, without having to go to the library or movie theater or through network television.”[\[12\]](#)

A tenth flattener is what he calls “the steroids.” These are all the things that speed the process (computer speed,

wireless).

For example, the increased speed of computers is dazzling. The Intel 4004 microprocessor (in 1971) produced 60,000 instructions per second. Today's Intel Pentium 4 Extreme has a maximum of 10.8 billion instructions per second.

The wireless revolution allows anyone portable access to everything that has been digitized anywhere in the world. When I was at graduate school at Yale University, all of us were tied to a single mainframe computer. In order to use the computer, I had to hand computer cards to someone in the computer lab in order to input data or extract information. Now thanks to digitization, miniaturization, and wireless I can do all of that and much more from my home, office, coffee shop, airport—you name it.

Biblical Perspective

Although futurists have long talked about globalization and a global village, many of these forces have made that a reality. At this point it might be valuable to distinguish between *globalization* and *globalism*. Although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, I want to draw some important distinctions. Globalization is used to describe the changes taking place in society and the world due to economic and technological forces. Essentially, we have a global economy and live in the global village.

Globalism is the attempt to draw us together into a new world order with a one world government and one world economy. Sometimes this even involves a desire to develop a one world religion. In a previous article ([“Globalism and Foreign Policy”](#)), I addressed many of the legitimate concerns about this push towards global government. We should be concerned about political attempts to form a new world order.

On the other hand, we should also recognize that globalization

is already taking place. *The World is Flat* focuses on many of the positive aspects of this phenomenon, even though there are many critics would believe it may be harmful.

Some believe that it will benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. Some believe it will diminish the role of nations in deference to world government. These are important issues that we will attempt to address in future articles.

For now, let's look at some important implications of a flat world. First, we should prepare our children and grandchild for global competition. Thomas Friedman says that when he was growing up his parents would tell him "Finish your dinner. People in China and India are starving." Today he tells his daughters, "Girls, finish your homework—people in China and India are starving for your jobs."[13](#)

Another implication is the growing influence of the two countries with the largest populations: China and India. Major companies are looking to these countries for research and development. The twentieth century was called "the American Century." It is likely that the twenty-first century will be "the Asian Century."

These two countries represent one-third of the world's population. They will no doubt transform the entire global economy and political landscape.

Students of biblical prophecy wonder if these two countries represent the "Kings of the East" (Rev. 16:12). In the past, most of the focus was only on China. Perhaps the Kings (plural) represent both China and India.

A final implication is that this flattened world has opened up ministry through the Internet and subsequent travel to these countries. Probe Ministries, for example, now has a global ministry. In the past, it was the occasional letter we received from a foreign country. We now interact daily with people from countries around the world.

Last month the Probe website had nearly a quarter of a million visitors from over 140 countries. These online contacts open up additional opportunities for speaking and ministry overseas.

The flattening of the world may have its downsides, but it has also opened up ministry in ways that were unimaginable just a few years ago. Welcome to the flat world.

Notes

1. Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 9.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 10.
4. Ibid., 11.
5. Ibid., 49.
6. Ibid., 52.
7. Ibid., 55.
8. Ibid., 73.
9. Ibid., 105.
10. Ibid., 123.
11. Ibid., 129.
12. Ibid., 153.
13. Ibid, 237.

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“What’s Dominionism?”

Mr. Anderson:

I heard you say on Point of View that your guest, Craig

Parshall, can speak on many issues. You were talking about that PBS person, Bill Moyers.

What's this "dominionism" thing? I went to [Wikipedia](#) and it doesn't sound like anything a true follower of Christ Jesus would want to be involved with.

I noticed that the May 2005 issue of *Harpers* magazine that Craig Parshall was talking about on the program actually used the term dominionism. I really think the authors in that magazine article and in the Wikipedia entry are misusing the term.

Dominion theology defines a small group of postmillennial Christians who are part of the [Christian Reconstruction](#) movement. They are trying to bring about God's kingdom on earth through government, societies, and cultures. That would not describe the theology or agenda of the members of the National Religious Broadcasters or the National Association of Evangelicals.

In fact, I can't think of a single prominent leader in either of these organizations that would hold to that theological position. Perhaps there is one that I don't know about, but it certainly does not describe the theology of NRB or NAE.

To put it simply, I don't think the term "dominionist" in the magazine or even in the Wikipedia entry is a fair description of the evangelical leadership in America.

Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson

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“I Have Some Questions on the Separation of Church and State”

Mr. Anderson,

I read your article on the [Separation of Church and State](#) and have a few questions for you. At the end of your article you wrote of an “‘open public square’ (where government neither censors nor sponsors religion but accommodates religion).” First of all, I’m curious as to whether you feel that the architects of the First Amendment intended for the protection of religion in general (as in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.), or for the protection of strictly Christianity, as many of them were Christians, or at least claimed to be Christians? In addition to the latter part of that question, do you feel it was added more to prevent the rights, morals, etc. of Christians from being infringed on by a future non-Christian president, or do you feel it was added in order that a Christian president did not infringe on the beliefs of those of other faiths? Secondly, I am wondering as to the purpose of an “open public square” in the context of religions other than Christianity. Ideally, how would you see something like that functioning?

Thank you for your questions about the separation of church and state. Let me try to answer them in order.

1. Did the architects of the First Amendment intend to protect religion in general?

Although the primary religious faith in the 18th century was Christianity, it certainly appears that the framers intended the First Amendment to be inclusive of all religious faiths. For example, in James Madison’s *Memorial and Remonstrance*, he says:

Because we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, that religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.

He seems to be defining religion as the duty we owe to our Creator. I would take that to apply to nearly any religion, not just the Christian religion.

2. Was it added to prevent the rights and moral of Christians from being infringed?

Some who ratified the Constitution did not even want a Bill of Rights, but others would not ratify the Constitution unless there were specific protections to prevent the encroachment of the newly formed federal government. The framers clearly stated that Congress shall make no law meaning that the federal government can't tell citizens what to pray, what to read, what to think, or even where to assemble. These protections apply to all citizens, not just to Christians.

3. What is the purpose of an open public square?

As I mentioned in my article, I believe that this would be a world in which all religious perspectives would be given an opportunity to express themselves in the public square. Although we supposedly live in a society dedicated to tolerance and [civility \(see my article on this topic\)](#), religious values are often stripped from the public square. This naked public square only seems to permit secular ideas and values rather than all ideas and values.

A good example of an open public square would be the Equal Access Act passed by Congress in 1984. Religious students should have the same equal access to school facilities as non-religious students. If a school allows the debate club or the Spanish club to utilize the school facilities after school, they should also allow students who want to start a Bible club

to have the same privileges.

Kerby Anderson

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Video Games – Evaluating Them From a Christian Perspective

Grand Theft Auto

The best-selling video game in America last year was “Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas.” The recent controversy over this popular video game is just another reminder of the deception of ratings and the need for parental direction and discernment when it comes to buying video games.

The game in question already has a bad reputation. The National Institute on Media and the Family described it this way: “Raunchy, violent and portraying just about every deviant act that a criminal could think of in full, living 3D graphics. Grand Theft Auto takes the cake again as one of the year’s worst games for kids. The premise—restore respect to your neighborhood as you take on equally corrupt San Andreas police.”[\[1\]](#)

Ironically what caused the controversy over the game was not its overt violence and sexuality. What caused a national stir was what was hidden within the game. Those playing the game (known as gamers) could download a modification of “Grand Theft Auto” that would allow them to see graphic sex scenes on screen.

Initially the distributor distanced itself from what hackers could do with their product once it was on the market. But that argument fell flat when it was found that the downloaded modification merely unlocked pornographic material already within the game. It now turns out that skilled players can unlock the pornographic content without downloading the key from the Internet. The game initially had a "Mature" rating. The Entertainment Software Ratings Board now requires that it be labeled "Adults Only."

"Grand Theft Auto" has already been a lightning rod for controversy because it rewards players for committing crimes and engaging in dangerous and immoral behavior. Gamers can buy and sell drugs, steal cars, run down pedestrians, even feed people into a wood chipper. Nevertheless, the game has sold more than five million copies in the United States.

Who is buying this game? Some are adults buying the game for themselves, but a large percentage of the people buying this game are parents or grandparents buying the game for their kids or grandkids.

Columnist Mona Charen points out that the original concerns about this game surfaced when a Manhattan grandmother bought the game for her fourteen-year-old grandson. Then she was shocked to find out that he could modify the game by downloading material from the Internet. Charen asks, "So, a kindly eighty-five-year-old lady has no qualms about purchasing a gang-glorifying, violence-soaked, sick entertainment for her teenage grandson, but is shocked when it turns out to contain explicit sex? Wasn't the rest enough?"[\[2\]](#)

In most cases, parents and grandparents are buying these games and need to exercise discernment. Many games are harmless and even can help stimulate the mind. Some are questionable. And others are violent and sexually explicit. We need to use discernment in selecting these games.

Benefits of Video Games

A recent article in *Discover* magazine talked about the perception most people have of video game players. It said this is “the classic stereotype of gamers as attention-deficit-crazed stimulus junkies, easily distracted by flashy graphics and on-screen carnage.”^{3} Yet new research shows that gaming can be mentally enriching with such cognitive benefits as: pattern recognition, system thinking, and even patience.^{4}

One of the best-known studies (done by Shawn Green and Daphne Bavelier) found that playing an action video game markedly improved performance on a range of visual skills related to detecting objects in briefly flashed displays. They found that gamers exhibit superior performance relative to non-gamers on a set of benchmark visual tasks.^{5}

What they found was the action video gamers tend to be more attuned to their surroundings. While this occurs while performing within the video game, it also transfers to such things as driving down a residential street where they are more likely than a non-gamer to pick out a child running into the street after a ball.

They found that gamers can process visual information more quickly and can track 30 percent more objects than non-gamers. These conclusions came from testing both gamers and non-gamers with a series of three tests.

The first test flashed a small object on a screen for 1/160 of a second and the participant would indicate where it flashed. Gamers tended to notice the object far more often than non-gamers.

The second test flashed a number of small objects on a screen at once. The subjects had to type the number of objects they saw. Gamers saw the correct number more often than non-gamers.

The third test flashed black letters and one white letter on a screen in fast succession. The one white letter was sometimes followed by a black "X." Gamers were able to pick out the white letter more often than non-gamers and could more accurately say whether it was followed by a black "X."

The researchers also wanted to know whether the superior performance of gamers was acquired or self-selected. In other words, do video games actually improve visual attention skills or is it possible that visually attentive people choose to play video games?

Green and Bavelier trained a selection of non-gamers on one of two video games. One group played the World War II action video game "Medal of Honor." The other group served as the control group and played the puzzle game "Tetris." The researchers found that after two weeks, the group trained on the World War II game showed a marked increase in performance over the control group.

The researchers therefore concluded: "By forcing players to simultaneously juggle a number of varied tasks (detect new enemies, track existing enemies and avoid getting hurt, among others), action-video-game playing pushed the limits of three rather different aspects of visual attention."[\[6\]](#)

Video games can also train our brain to be more efficient. In the early 1990s, Richard Haier (University of California at Irving's Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior), scanned the brains of "Tetris" players. He found that in first-time users, the brain requires lots of energy. In fact, cerebral glucose metabolic rates actually soar. But after a few weeks, these rates sink to normal as performance increases seven-fold.[\[7\]](#) In essence, "Tetris" trains your brain to stop using inefficient gray matter.

Types of Video Games

Let's now focus on the rating of video games and the major video game categories. As we mentioned earlier, the video game industry is self-regulated, so we need to exercise discernment.

EC – Early Childhood (age 3 and older) – These games are appropriate for anyone who can play a video game and contains no inappropriate material.

E – Everyone (age 6 and older) – These games are designed for younger players and are the equivalent of a PG movie.

T – Teen (age 13 and older) – Generally these games are not appropriate for younger ages and are equivalent of a PG-13 movie.

M – Mature (age 17 and older) – These games are not appropriate for children. They may be rated as such because of overt violence, sexual content, and profanity.

AO – Adults Only (ages 18 and older) – These games involve excessive violence, sexual content, and explicit language.

There are a number of different types of video games.

Puzzles – Puzzle games are usually acceptable for all ages and generally are rated “E.” These games involve logic and spatial arrangements. The best known puzzle game is “Tetris.”

Strategy – These games may be as straightforward as “Chessmaster” or involve the use of tactical moves of troops or players such as “Advanced Wars.”

Simulation games – Some games like “SimCity” require creativity and advanced problem-solving skills. Others involve driving or flying simulations that can be relatively tame or highly offensive such as the “Grand Theft Auto” series of video games.

Arcade games – The classic arcade games include such favorites as “Pacman” or “Frogger.” However, the newer arcade games may include games like the violent “Street Fighter.”

Role playing games – This is a type of game where players assume the roles of via role-playing. Although these games may be less graphic, they often involve fantasy and even the occult.

Action games – These games most often have an “M” rating. Many of these action games involve point-and-shoot games that are especially dangerous.

Violent Video Games

There is cause for concern about violent video games. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, playing violent video games increases the likelihood of adolescent violent behavior by as much as 13 percent to 22 percent.[{8}](#)

A 2005 meta-analysis of over thirty-five research studies (that included 4000 participants) found that “playing violent video games significantly increases physiological arousal and feelings of anger or hostility, and significantly decreases pro-social helping behavior.”[{9}](#) Another study has shown a relationship between playing violent video games and being involved in violent acts.[{10}](#)

Testimony before the United States Senate documents the following: (1) that violent video games increase violent adolescent behavior, (2) that heavy game players become desensitized to aggression and violence, (3) that nearly 90 percent of all African-American females in these games are victims of violence, and (4) that the most common role for women in violent video games is as prostitutes.[{11}](#)

One of the people speaking out against violent video games is Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, whom I have interviewed on a number of

occasions. He is a former West Point professor and has written books on the subject of killing.[{12}](#) He has also testified that these violent video games are essentially “killing simulators.”

Grossman testified on the shooting in Paducah, Kentucky. Michael Carneal, a fourteen-year-old boy who had never fired a handgun before, stole a pistol and fired a few practice shots the night before. The next morning he fired eight shots and had eight hits (four of them head shots, one neck, and three upper torso). This is unprecedented marksmanship for a boy who only fired a .22 caliber rifle once at a summer camp.

The typical response in firing a gun is to fire at the target until it drops. Carneal instead moved from victim to victim just like he had learned in the violent video games he played.

The goal in these games is to rack up the “highest score” by moving quickly. Grossman points out that many of the games (such as “House of the Dead” or “Goldeneye” or “Turok”) give bonus points for head shots.[{13}](#)

Does that mean that anyone who plays these games will be a killer? Of course not. But Grossman says that the kind of training we give to soldiers (operant conditioning, desensitization, etc.) is what we are also giving to our kids through many of these violent video games.

Ironically, the U.S. Marine Corps licensed one of these popular video games (“Doom”) to train their combat fire teams in tactics and to rehearse combat actions of killing.[{14}](#) The video game manufacturers certainly know these are killing simulators. In fact the advertising for one game (“Quake II” that is produced by the same manufacturer as “Doom”), says: “We took what was killer, and made it mass murder.”

Biblical Discernment

If we look back at the list of different types of video games, it is pretty easy to see that it is possible to find acceptable games as well as questionable and even dangerous video games in just about any category. That is why parental direction and discernment are so important.

The latest controversy over “Grand Theft Auto” demonstrates that the video game industry has not been effective at self-regulation. And children cannot be expected to exercise good judgment unless parents use discernment and teach it to their kids.

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8, “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.” We should focus on what is positive and helpful to our Christian walk.

As Christians, we should develop discernment in our lives. See my article on “Media and Discernment” (www.probe.org/faith-and-culture/culture/media-and-discernment.html) for suggestions on how to develop discernment in your life and the life of your child.

Parents need to determine the possible benefits to playing videos and whether those benefits outweigh the negatives. Many of the games available today raise little or no concern. As one commentator put it, “The majority of video games on the best-seller list contain no more bloodshed than a game of Risk.”^{15}

But even good, constructive games played for long periods of time can be detrimental. Over the last few years I have been compiling statistics for my teen talk on media use. The number of hours young people spend watching TV, listening to music, surfing the Internet, going to movies, etc. is huge and

increasing every year. Young people spend entirely too much time in front of a screen (TV screen, computer screen, movie screen).

So even good video games can be bad if young people are staying indoors and not going outdoors for exercise. Obesity is already a problem among many young people. And good video games can be bad if they take priority over responsibilities at home and schoolwork.

Parents should understand the potential dangers of video games and make sure they approve of the video games that come into their home. They may conclude that the drawbacks outweigh the benefits. If their children do play video games, they should also set time limits and monitor attitudes and behaviors that appear. They should also watch for signs of addiction. The dangers of video games are real, and parents need to exercise discernment.

Notes

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"Is It True That Whites Have a Higher IQ Than Blacks, Per The Bell Curve?"

In *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, the authors maintain that whites have a higher IQ than blacks, but I would not label the authors racist. What do you think?

Thank you for your question. You deserve a longer answer than I can give you in an e-mail, but perhaps I can give you some perspective and let you read further if you are interested.

The Bell Curve (by Herrnstein and Murray) derives its conclusions about IQ scores from the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). Other researchers (e.g., *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*) question whether that test and the assumptions made from developing a bell-shaped curve are valid. The AFQT probably best provides a test of the level of schooling not necessarily IQ. And the authors of *Inequality* believe there has been a good deal of statistical mashing and stretching in order to form the bell-shaped curve you find in the book.

The argument of the authors in *The Bell Curve* is that IQ is a better predictor of life outcomes than the usual measure of socioeconomic status (SES). One concern is that Herrnstein and Murray define SES very narrowly (level of education, income, parents occupations). Each factor was given equal weight even though it is generally assumed that parental income has a much greater effect than parental education on a child's life outcome.

As I hope you can see, there is some question about the methodology and statistical analysis used in *The Bell Curve*.

So while we can perhaps agree that American blacks score lower than American whites on standard IQ tests, that may be due as much or more to SES.

This is the classic debate of nature versus nurture. I don't think *The Bell Curve* proves that most of life's outcomes are due to nature.

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Terrorist Attack in London

July 7, 2005

The recent terrorist attack in London once again reminds us that we are still engaged in a war on terrorism. For some reason we seem to forget this fundamental fact. The March 2004 bombing in Madrid was a reminder. The July terrorist attack in London was another. Yet there is abundant evidence that we still have not learned some fundamental lessons in our war on terrorism.

I was on two different talk shows (one as host, one as guest), and I was struck by the number of times I heard comments about bringing the terrorists to justice. But let me ask a basic question: is a terrorist a common criminal?

If terrorists are only common criminals, then biblically speaking, they should merely be dealt with by their host governments. In Romans 13, the Apostle Paul says, "he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil."

Paul's teaching on government shows that criminals are those who do evil and threaten the civil peace. Any outside threat to the existence of the state is not a criminal threat but an act of war which is also to be dealt with by the government.

In other words, criminals threaten the state from within, while foreign armies threaten the state from outside. In the case of seeking domestic peace, Paul outlines how governments will approve of good works, but that governments should bring fear to those who are wrongdoers.

When terrorists attack, we should not view them as criminals but as foreign soldiers who attempt to threaten the very existence of the American government or the British government. To borrow a phrase from President Bush, we should not try to "bring them to justice," we should "bring justice to them."

Another important lesson we must learn is the need to place our governments on a war footing. That is, there are certain steps governments must take if we are to truly win the war on terrorism. At the outset, we need to develop the mindset that we are fighting a war with radical Muslim terrorists (often called Islamofascists). We can't negotiate with them as some of the callers to my talk show suggested. They are enemy combatants willing to die for their perverted religious views.

Governments shouldn't negotiate with them or bring them to justice. Governments must fight a war on terrorism. This requires governments to press their advantages over terrorists in terms of military hardware, intelligence gathering, and technological applications. It also demands that our governmental leaders think clearly about what terrorism is and how it is being advanced by Muslim terrorists around the world.

The terrorist attack in London (as well as the bombing in Madrid) also reminds us of the role each of us can play in stopping terrorism. Each involved citizen multiplies the eyes and ears of the government. These attacks were not high tech attacks using nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. They used bombs and timers. An alert citizen might have discovered these bombs before they went off.

To prevent future attacks, we must pay attention to our surroundings and those around us. That doesn't mean we need to be paranoid of everything and suspicious of everyone. But it does mean that we need to be alert.

One terrorist expert I interviewed said that a successful terrorist attack occurs when all the pieces of the puzzle come together. Terrorism is like a jigsaw puzzle with lots of pieces that all must be present for success. This includes funding, organizers, explosives, location, a plan of operation, research, a dry run, trusted people, etc. Alert citizens who report suspicious activity can help law enforcement thwart the plans of terrorists.

Countering terrorism in the 21st century will not be easy, but understanding, resolve, and alertness are key ingredients in our success. This is our generation's challenge. We need to meet it with wisdom and boldness.

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The Roots of Freedom

What is freedom? What are the roots of freedom? Kerby Anderson looks at the Christian roots of freedom along with the writings of the key writers in the Western tradition.

What is freedom? What are the roots of freedom? Answering these questions is not as easy as it may seem. They require some thought and reflection, which for most of us, is a precious commodity.



Fortunately, some of the hard work has been done for us by professor John Danford in his book *Roots of Freedom: A Primer*

on *Modern Liberty*. The material in this book was originally material that was broadcast on Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in the late 1980s. Only later did some suggest that the material should be published so that citizens in a free society could also benefit by his work in describing the roots of freedom.

So how does John Danford describe a free society?

People would surely differ, but what is meant here is a society in which human beings are not “born into” a place—a caste or an occupation, for example—but are free to own property, to raise children, to earn a living, to think, to worship, to express political views, and even to emigrate if desired, and to do so without seeking permission from a master.[*{1}*](#)

Obviously we all have some constraints on us, but human freedom in a free society would certainly involve the freedom to be able to do the things mentioned above.

Once we define a free society, we can easily see something very disturbing. “Free societies have been rare in human history. They also seem to be fragile—more fragile than were the dynasties or empires of the ancient world.”[*{2}*](#)

In the past, freedom was rare often because of economic necessity. There is little or no freedom for a person who must work every waking hour just to survive. In the ancient world, a free man was free because another was enslaved. A free man was free because he did not need to work for a living.

By the end of the eighteenth century, economic necessity ceased to be the main obstacle to freedom in many places. Yet there were still very few free societies, because political power was often concentrated in the hands of a king or dictator (or perhaps in the hands of a few in the ruling class).

Today we have few kings, but we still have many dictators. Free societies also still somewhat rare today. Consider that there are nearly 200 countries in the United Nations, and yet it is probably fair to say that fewer than 50 could truly be called free societies (with functioning democracies).

If nothing else, this study of the roots of freedom should make us thankful we live in a free country. Free societies are rare in history, and they are still somewhat rare today. We should never take for granted the political and economic freedom we enjoy.

Christian Roots

Danford discusses the roots of liberty in his chapter on "Premodern Christianity." Although we take many of these assumptions (borrowed from Christianity) as basic and obvious, they are important contributions that provide the foundation for the political freedom we enjoy today.

The first contribution from Christianity was its teaching about the value of the individual. In the Greek and Roman empires, the individual counted for little. "A particular individual was of no consequence when measured against the glory and stability of the empire."[\[3\]](#)

Jesus and his followers taught men and women to think of themselves as significant in the eyes of God. This foundational principle of the dignity and sanctity of human beings was in stark contrast to the prevailing ideas of the day.

Another aspect of this principle was the belief that God was not just the god of a city, or a tribe, or even a nation. The God of the Bible is God over all human beings and savior of all individuals. The belief in the universality of God along with the emphasis on the individual provided an important foundation for liberty because it was "incompatible with the

ancient tendency to subordinate the individual entirely to the state or empire.”{4}

A second contribution of Christianity involves the linear idea of history. Ancient writers “understood the passage of time in terms of the seasonal rhythms of the natural world.”{5} Christianity brought a different perspective by teaching that history is linear. The story of the Bible is the story, after all, of the beginning of the world, human sinfulness, Christ coming to the world, and the eventual culmination of history.

The concept of linear history leads to the idea that circumstances can change over time. If the change is progressive, then over the course of human history there can be progress. “The notion of progress is itself a modern idea, but its roots can be discerned in the Christian doctrine that God enters historical time to save mankind.”{6}

A third contribution of Christianity is the principle of the separation of faith from the political realm. Today this is referred to as the separation of church and state.{7} Such an idea was unthinkable in the ancient world. In those cultures, kings and priests were closely connected.

When Jesus was asked by the Pharisees if it was lawful to pay the poll tax (Matt. 22:15-21), He responded by telling them “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Although it would be many centuries before the full implications of this doctrine were clear, the seeds of spiritual freedom can be found in this Christian teaching.

The fourth contribution of Christianity is the belief in objective truth. While it is true that other philosophers spoke of truth, a Christian perspective on truth is nevertheless an important, additional contribution.

For example, if there is no truth, then “there is no such thing as a just or proper foundation for political rule:

whoever gets the power is by definition able to determine what is just or unjust, right or wrong.”{8}

In our postmodern world that rejects the idea of objective or absolute truth, all history is merely the history of class struggle. “There is no escape from the endless quest for power, and no space, protected by walls of justice, where genuine freedom can be experienced.”{9}

This nation was founded on the principle (as articulated in the Declaration of Independence) that there are self-evident truths. As Jesus taught his disciples, “you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes was born in England in 1588, and was educated at Oxford in the early 1600s. He was influenced by such men as Francis Bacon (serving as Bacon’s secretary for a time) as well as events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A principal influence was the religious war and conflict of the time (e.g., the Thirty Years War, conflicts in England between Anglicans and Puritans). “Hobbes’s two great preoccupations [were]: peace as a goal of the civil order, and a new political science as the means to that goal.”{10}

He developed five key principles in his political science. The first is that individuals are more fundamental than any social order. To understand humans, he would argue, we must go back to a “state of nature” which would represent the condition human beings would be in if all the conventions and laws of political society were removed.

Hobbes also argued that humans are equal politically. “No one can be viewed as politically superior, because every human being is vulnerable to violent death at the hands of his fellows.”{11} The natural condition of mankind, he says, is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”{12}

Hobbes therefore argues in his second principle that the natural need for self-preservation is the only true reason people live in political communities. In other words, we live in political communities to satisfy individual needs of human nature such as life and security.

Third, Hobbes argues that because these needs are universal (and scientifically demonstrable), they provide a basis for agreement and a peaceful political order. He argues that we should “be willing, when others are so too, as far-forth as for peace, and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things, and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself.”[\[13\]](#)

Fourth, since political society exists for self-preservation, no one can ever give up the right to self-defense. A cardinal principle of a liberal society is that no man can be compelled to confess a crime or to testify against himself in court.

Finally, all legitimate government rests on a contract consented to (at least tacitly) by individuals. Hobbes calls this agreement a “covenant” because it is an open-ended contract, a promise that must be continually fulfilled in the future.

Hobbes also argued that a sovereign must enforce this covenant because “covenants without the sword are but words.”[\[14\]](#) But though he justified a powerful government or sovereign, it was a perspective that was challenged by others like John Locke who believed that even the sovereign must be limited.

John Locke

John Locke was the son of a Puritan who fought with Oliver Cromwell. Though he was not an orthodox Puritan like his father, he was nevertheless a sincere Christian who believed that the Bible was “infallibly true.”

Locke argued in his *Two Treatises of Government* that men form societies “for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties, and estates, which I call by the general name, property.”[{15}](#) On the one hand, he wrote that material things are not owned by anyone but exist in common for all men. “God, as King David says, (Psalm 115:16) has given the earth to the children of men, given it to mankind in common.”[{16}](#) But on the other hand, he also acknowledged that we do take possession of things and thus make them our property.

He that is nourished by the acorns he picked under an oak, or the apples he gathered from the trees in the wood, has certainly appropriated them to himself. Nobody can deny but the nourishment is his. I ask then, When did they begin to be his? When he digested? Or when he ate? Or when he boiled? Or when he brought them home? Or when he picked them up? And 'tis plain, if the first gathering made them not his, nothing else could. That labor put a distinction between them and common. That added something to them more than nature, the common mother of all, had done; and so they became his private property.[{17}](#)

Locke also argued that land is ultimately worthless until labor it added to it. He even goes on to argue that wealth is almost wholly the product of human labor (he says 999/1000 of the value of things is the result of labor).

He also argued that “Men being, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent.”[{18}](#) He acknowledged that each man or woman is born free and becomes a member of a commonwealth by agreeing to accept its protections, but most commonly this is done by what Locke call “tacit consent.”

Finally, Locke also focused his concern about the possibility of an oppressive government, so he insisted on the necessity

of limiting the sovereign power as much as possible. The legislature cannot “take from any man any part of his property without his own consent.”[\[19\]](#)

Locke also insisted on one final limitation of the power of government: the citizenry. He writes, “yet the legislative being only a fiduciary power to act for certain ends, there remains still in the people of supreme power to remove or alter the legislative, when they find the legislative to act contrary to the trust reposed in them.”[\[20\]](#)

American Liberty

The ideas of freedom found their way to the American shore as disruptions of the English civil war drove many English subjects to the New World. In their travels, “they took with them as much of the system of English liberty as would survive the Atlantic crossing.”[\[21\]](#)

Some of the settlers established civil compacts (or what Locke would later call social contracts). Perhaps the best known is the Mayflower Compact, which was a political covenant binding the pilgrims together into “a civil body politic.” Most of these American settlements involved self-government simply because the powers that originally granted them their charters were thousands of miles away.

America’s founding document is the Declaration of Independence. The ideas of John Locke can certainly be found within this document. The Declaration states the principle from Locke that “all men are created equal.” It also follows his thinking by stating “That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

All the writers during the founding period (Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton) were “deeply learned in English

history, political history generally, and the history of political thought back to Aristotle and Plato. References to Cicero, Tacitus, and Plutarch dot their pages, along with frequent allusions to republics as diverse as Venice, Holland, Geneva, Sparta, and Rome.”{22}

Alexander Hamilton, writing in *The Federalist Papers*, said that the American people would decide “whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.”{23}

James Madison, in *The Federalist Papers*, addressed two key issues in American government: factions and limiting governmental power. He suggested that the large federal republic made it more difficult for factions to gain power and oppress others.

Limiting the power of government was accomplished by separating power. “Ambition must counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place.”{24} The framers pursued “the policy of supplying, by opposite and rival interests” to these various branches of government.

As an extra precaution, the framers also divided the legislature (because it was expected to be the most powerful and dangerous branch) into two different houses. They also decided to “render them, by different modes of election and different principles of action, as little connected with each other as the nature of their common functions and their common dependence on the society will admit.”{25}

They further protected individual rights by adding the Bill of Rights. These amendments explicitly deny power to the government to interfere with specific individual freedoms.

As we can see, the rights and freedoms we enjoy today

developed over time through Christian influence and key writers in the Western tradition.

Notes

1. John W. Danford, *Roots of Freedom: A Primer on Modern Liberty* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2000), xiv.
2. Ibid., xiv-xv.
3. Ibid., 13.
4. Ibid., 14.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 15-16.
7. See my article, "The Separation of Church and State" on the Probe Web site at www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4218097/k.32BB/Separation_of_Church_and_State.htm.
8. Ibid, 18.
9. Ibid., 20.
10. Ibid., 77.
11. Ibid., 83.
12. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 76.
13. Ibid, 80.
14. Ibid., 106.
15. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), Second Treatise, Par. 123, 395.
16. Ibid., Par. 25, 327.
17. Ibid., Par 28, 329-330.
18. Ibid., Par. 95, 375.
19. Ibid., Par. 138, 406.
20. Ibid., Par. 149, 413.
21. Danford, 146.
22. Ibid., 149.
23. Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: New American Library, 1961), No. 1, 33.
24. Ibid., No. 51, 322.

25. Ibid.

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Ten Commandments in America

June 27, 2005

The Supreme Court has spoken and has essentially stuttered. How any sane person can make any sense of their two rulings on the Ten Commandments is beyond me. A divided court struck down displays in two Kentucky courthouses, but ruled a Ten Commandments monument on state government land in Texas was acceptable.

So why was a six foot granite monument on the grounds of the Texas Capitol constitutional? Perhaps they saw it acceptable because it is one of seventeen historical displays on the twenty-two-acre lot. So five justices determined it to be a constitutional tribute to the nation's legal and religious history.

On the other hand, what is unconstitutional are copies of the Ten Commandments in Kentucky courthouses hanging alongside documents such as the Bill of Rights, the Star-Spangled Banner, and a version of the Congressional Record declaring 1983 the Year of the Bible. Anyone looking for a clear line of constitutionality will not find it in this confused muddle of court cases.

And anyone who doesn't think the members of the court are openly hostile to religion need only read just a few lines of the opinion rendered by Justice John Paul Stevens. He couldn't even accept the Texas Ten Commandments monument placed there

over forty years ago by a secular institution. The monument is not a work of art and does not refer to any event in the history of the state, he wrote. The message transmitted by Texas chosen display is quite plain: This state endorses the divine code of the Judeo-Christian God.

Fortunately, other justices noted that one monument among many others is hardly an endorsement. You can stop to read it, you can ignore it, or you can walk around it. Chief Justice William Rehnquist argued that the monument's placement on the grounds among secular monuments was passive, rather than confrontational. But that logic seemed lost on many of the justices.

The Supreme Court's inconsistency in this case shows that many of the justices have clearly lost their way. Justice Antonin Scalia addressed the lack of any clear principle in this case in his scholarly dissent. He declared, "What distinguishes the rule of law from the dictatorship of a shifting Supreme Court majority is the absolutely indispensable requirement that judicial opinions be grounded in consistently applied principle."

In 1980, the Supreme Court ruled against the posting of the Ten Commandments in the public schools in the case of *Stone v. Graham*. They ruled that the preeminent purpose for posting the Ten Commandments on schoolroom walls is plainly religious in nature. At least in 1980 we knew where the court stood on posting religious symbols in public places. This time they confused an already complex issue. According to Justice David Souter, the liberal justices were trying to establish official religious neutrality.

Justice Scalia listed various ways in which higher beings are invoked in public life, from "so help me God" in inaugural oaths to the prayer that opens the Supreme Court's sessions. He asked, "With all of this reality (and much more) staring it in the face, how can the court possibly assert that the First

Amendment mandates governmental neutrality? Perhaps trying to mandate neutrality is the problem.”

When we look at the Founding Fathers we see they were anything but neutral when it came to addressing the influence of the Ten Commandments on our republic. For example, twelve of the original thirteen colonies incorporated the entire Ten Commandments into their civil and criminal codes.{1}

John Quincy Adams stated, “The law given from Sinai was a civil and municipal [code] as well as a moral and religious code. These are laws essential to the existence of men in society and most of which have been enacted by every nation which ever professed any code of laws.” He added that “Vain indeed would be the search among the writings of [secular history] . . . to find so broad, so complete and so solid a basis of morality as this decalogue lays down.”{2}

Notes

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2. John Quincy Adams, *Letters of John Quincy Adams, to His Son, on the Bible and Its Teachings* (Auburn: James M. Alden, 1850), 61.
3. George Washington, Farewell Address (Philadelphia), September 17, 1796.
4. William Holmes McGuffey, *Eclectic Reader* in D. James Kenney, Whats Happening to American Education in Robert Flood, *The Rebirth of America* (Philadelphia: Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation, 1986), 122.

On September 19, 1796, in his Farewell Address, President George Washington said, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports.”{3}

William Holmes McGuffey, considered the Schoolmaster of the Nation, once said, “The Ten Commandments and the teachings of

Jesus are not only basic but plenary.”[\[4\]](#)

It is more than just a little ironic that the Supreme Court that ruled against posting the Ten Commandments in public places actually has its own display of the Ten Commandments. Engraved in the stone above the head of the Chief Justice are the Ten Commandments with the great American eagle protecting them. Moses is included among the great lawgivers in the sculpture relief on the east portico. And sessions begin with the invocation, “God save the United States and this honorable court.”

So what can Christians do? First, we should be in prayer about this important issue and pray for future Supreme Court justices who will someday replace those who made these rulings.

Second, we should express our opinions by talking to friends, writing a letter to the editor, and educating people around us about the importance of the Ten Commandments in America.

Third, we should encourage Congress to pass the Constitutional Restoration Act which uses Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution to limit the appellate jurisdiction of the federal courts in areas like the Pledge of Allegiance and the Ten Commandments. Congress has the power to remove power from judges.

Judges who use their power to remove the Ten Commandments should have their power removed from them. Passing this legislation will accomplish that purpose.

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Separation of Church and State

Wall of Separation

When Thomas Jefferson first used the phrase “wall of separation,” it is certain that he never would have anticipated the controversy that surrounds that term two centuries later. The metaphor has become so powerful that more Americans are more familiar with Jefferson’s phrase than with the actual language of the Constitution.[\[1\]](#)

In one sense, the idea of separation of church and state is an accurate description of what must take place between the two institutions. History is full of examples (e.g., the Inquisition) of the dangers that arise when the institutions of church and state become too intertwined.

But the contemporary concept of separation of church and state goes far beyond the recognition that the two institutions must be separate. The current version of this phrase has come to mean that there should be a complete separation between religion and public life.

At the outset, we should state the obvious: the phrase “separation of church and state” is not in the Constitution. Although that should be an obvious statement, it is amazing how many citizens (including lawyers and politicians) do not know that simple fact.

Since the phrase is not in the Constitution and not even significantly discussed by the framers (e.g., *The Federalist Papers*), it is open to wide interpretation and misinterpretation. The only clear statement about religion in the Constitution can be found in the First Amendment and we will look at its legislative history later in this article.

Thomas Jefferson used the phrase “separation of church and state” when he wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802. Then the phrase slipped into obscurity. In 1947, Justice Hugo Black revived it in the case of *Everson v. Board of Education*. He wrote that the First Amendment “was intended to erect a wall of separation between church and State.” He added that this wall “must be kept high and impregnable.”[\[2\]](#)

The wall metaphor revived by Justice Black has been misused ever since. For example, the wall of separation has been used to argue that nearly any religious activity (prayer, Bible reading, moment of silence) and any religious symbol (cross, creche, Ten Commandments, etc.) is impermissible outside of church and home. Most of these activities and symbols have been stripped from public arenas. As we will see, it doesn’t appear that Jefferson intended anything of the sort with his metaphor.

It’s also worth noting that six of the thirteen original states had official, state-sponsored churches. Some states (Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and South Carolina) even refused to ratify the new Constitution unless it included a prohibition of federal involvement in the state churches.

History of the Phrase (part one)

So what was the meaning of “separation of church and state” and how has it changed? Some history is in order.

The presidential campaign of 1800 was one of the most bitterly contested presidential elections in American history. Republican Thomas Jefferson defeated Federalist John Adams (who served as Vice-President under George Washington). During the campaign, the Federalists attacked Jefferson’s religious beliefs, arguing that he was an “atheist” and an “infidel.” Some were so fearful of a Jefferson presidency, they buried

their family Bibles or hid them in wells fearing that President Jefferson would confiscate them.^{3} Timothy Dwight (President of Yale College) even warned a few years before that if Jefferson were elected, “we may see the Bible cast into a bonfire.”^{4} These concerns were unwarranted since Jefferson had written a great deal in the previous two decades about his support of religious liberty.

In the midst of these concerns, the loyal Republicans of the Danbury Baptist Association wrote to the president congratulating him on his election and his dedication to religious liberty. President Jefferson used the letter as an opportunity to explain why he did not declare days of public prayer and thanksgiving as Washington and Adams had done so before him.

In his letter to them on New Year’s Day 1802, Jefferson agreed with their desire for religious freedom saying that religious faith was a matter between God and man. Jefferson also affirmed his belief in the First Amendment and went on to say that he believed it denied Congress (or the President) the right to dictate religious beliefs. He argued that the First Amendment denied the Federal government this power, “thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.”

It appears that Jefferson’s phrase actually came from the 1800 election. Federalist ministers spoke against Jefferson “often from their pulpits, excoriating his infidelity and deism.”^{5} Republicans therefore argued that clergymen should not preach about politics but maintain a separation between the two.

We might add that a century and a half before Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptists, Roger Williams erected a “hedge or wall of separation” in a tract he wrote in 1644. Williams used the metaphor to illustrate the need to protect the church from the world, otherwise the garden of the church would turn into a wilderness.^{6} While it might be possible that Jefferson borrowed the metaphor from Roger Williams, it appears that

Jefferson was not familiar with Williams' use of the metaphor.[{7}](#)

Jefferson used his letter to the Danbury Baptists to make a key point about his executive power. In the letter, he argued that the president had no authority to proclaim a religious holiday. He believed that governmental authority belonged only to individual states. Essentially, Jefferson's wall of separation applied only to the national government.

History of the Phrase (part two)

Although the Danbury letter was published in newspapers, the "wall of separation" metaphor never gained much attention and essentially slipped into obscurity. In 1879 the metaphor entered the lexicon of American constitutional law in the case of *Reynolds v. United States*. The court stated that Jefferson's Danbury letter "may be accepted almost as an authoritative declaration of the scope and effects of the [First] Amendment thus secured."[{8}](#) Although it was mentioned in this opinion, there is good evidence to believe that Jefferson's metaphor "played no role" in the Supreme Court's decision.[{9}](#)

In 1947, Justice Hugo L. Black revived Jefferson's wall metaphor in the case of *Everson v. Board of Education*. He applied this phrase in a different way from Thomas Jefferson. Black said that the First Amendment "was intended to erect a wall of separation between church and State." He added that this wall "must be kept high and impregnable."[{10}](#)

Daniel Dreisbach, author of *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State*, shows that Black's wall differs from Jefferson's wall. "Although Justice Black credited the third president with building the 'wall of separation,' the barrier raised in *Everson* differs from Jefferson's in function and location."[{11}](#)

The wall erected by Justice Black is “high and impregnable.” On the other hand, Jefferson “occasionally lowered the ‘wall’ if there were extenuating circumstances. For example, he approved treaties with Indian tribes which underwrote the ‘propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen.’”[\[12\]](#)

There is also a difference in the location of the two walls. Whereas Jefferson’s “wall” explicitly separated the institutions of church and state, Black’s wall, more expansively, separates religion and all civil government. Moreover, Jefferson’s “wall” separated church and the federal government only. By incorporating the First Amendment nonestablishment provision into the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, Black’s wall separates religion and civil government at all levels—federal, state, and local.[\[13\]](#)

Jefferson’s metaphor was a statement about federalism (the relationship between the federal government and the states). But Black turned it into a wall between religion and government (which because of the incorporation of the Fourteenth Amendment could also be applied to state and local governments).

First Amendment

How did we get the wording of the First Amendment? Once we understand its legislative history, we can understand the perspective of those who drafted the Bill of Rights.[\[14\]](#)

James Madison (architect of the Constitution) is the one who first proposed the wording of what became the First Amendment. On June 8, 1789 Madison proposed the following:

“The civil rights of none shall be abridged on account of religious belief or worship, nor shall any national religion be established, nor shall the full and equal rights of conscience be in any manner, or on any pretext, infringed.”

The representatives debated this wording and then turned the task over to a committee consisting of Madison and ten other House members. They proposed a new version that read:

"No religion shall be established by law, nor shall the equal rights of conscience be infringed."

This wording was debated. During the debate, Madison explained "he apprehended the meaning of the words to be, that Congress should not establish a religion, and enforce the legal observation of it by law, nor compel men to worship God in any manner contrary to their conscience."

Representative Benjamin Huntington complained that the proposed wording might "be taken in such latitude as to be extremely hurtful to the cause of religion." So Madison suggested inserting the word "national" before the word "religion." He believed that this would reduce the fears of those concerned over the establishment of a national religion. After all, some were concerned America might drift in the direction of Europe where countries have a state-sponsored religion that citizens were often compelled to accept and even fund.

Representative Gerry balked at the word "national," because, he argued, the Constitution created a federal government, not a national one. So Madison withdrew his latest proposal, but assured Congress his reference to a "national religion" had to do with a national religious establishment, not a national government.

A week later, the House again altered the wording to this:

"Congress shall make no law establishing religion, or to prevent the free exercise thereof, or to infringe the rights of conscience."

Meanwhile, the Senate debated other versions of the same amendment and on Sept. 3, 1789, came up with this wording:

“Congress shall make no law establishing articles of faith or a mode of worship, or prohibiting the free exercise of religion.”

The House didn't like the Senate's changes and called for a conference, from which emerged the wording ultimately included in the Bill of Rights:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

As we can see, Congress was attempting to prevent the establishment of a national religion or a national church with their drafting of the First Amendment.

Separation, Sponsorship and Accommodation

How should the government relate to the church? Should there be a separation of church and state? Essentially there are three answers to these questions: separation, sponsorship, and accommodation.

At one end of the spectrum of opinion is strict separation of church and state. Proponents of this position advocate the complete separation of any religious activity (prayer, Bible reading) and any religious symbol (cross, Ten Commandments) from government settings. Richard John Neuhaus called this “the naked public square” because religious values are stripped from the public arena.[\[15\]](#)

Proponents of this view would oppose any direct or indirect benefit to religion or religious organizations from the government. This would include opposition to tuition tax credits, education vouchers, and government funding of faith-based organizations.

At the other end of the spectrum would be sponsorship of religious organizations. Proponents would support school

prayer, Bible reading in public schools, and the posting of the Ten Commandments in classrooms and public places. Proponents would also support tuition tax credits, education vouchers, and funding of faith-based organizations.

Between these two views is accommodation. Proponents argue that government should not sponsor religion but neither should it be hostile to religion. Government can accommodate religious activities. Government should provide protection for the church and provide for the free expression of religion. But government should not favor a particular group or religion over another.

Proponents would oppose direct governmental support of religious schools but would support education vouchers since the parents would be free to use the voucher at a public, private school, or Christian school. Proponents would oppose mandated school prayer but support programs that provide equal access to students. Equal access argues that if students are allowed to start a debate club or chess club on campus, they should also be allowed to start a Bible club.

We should reject the idea of a “naked public square” (where religious values have been stripped from the public arena). And we should also reject the idea of a “sacred public square” (where religious ideas are sponsored by government). We should seek an “open public square” (where government neither censors nor sponsors religion but accommodates religion).

Government should not be hostile toward religion, but neither should it sponsor religion or favor a particular faith over another. Government should maintain a benevolent neutrality toward religion and accommodate religious activities and symbols.

Notes

1. Barbara Perry, “Justice Hugo Black and the Wall of Separation between Church and State,” *Journal of Church and*

State 31(1989): 55.

2. *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S., 16, 18.

3. Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, vol. 3, *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), 481.

4. Timothy Dwight, *The Duty of Americans, at the Present Crisis*, reprinted in Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1991), 1382.

5. Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) 111.

6. Roger Williams, "Mr. Cotton's Letter Lately Printed, Examined and Answered," in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams* (Providence, RI: Providence Press, 1866), 1:392.

7. Edwin Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B Eerdmans, 1996), 72.

8. *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145, 164.

9. Robert M. Hutchins, "The Future of the Wall," in *The Wall between Church and State*, ed. Dallin H. Oaks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 17.

10. *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S., 16, 18.

11. Daniel Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 125.

12. Derek H. Davis, "Wall of Separation Metaphor," *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 45(1), Winter 2003.

13. Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson*, 125.

14. The details of the debate on the First Amendment can be found in the Annals of Congress. *The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States*. "History of Congress." 42 vols. Washington, D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1834-1856.

15. Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984).

See Also:

- ["I Have Some Questions on the Separation of Church and State"](#)