

The Second Half of Marriage

*When children begin leaving the nest, marriages change and often couples are unprepared for those changes. Kerby Anderson looks at the book *The Second Half of Marriage* by David and Claudia Arp and describes the eight challenges of second-half marriages.*

When children begin leaving the nest, marriages change and often couples are unprepared for those changes. In this article we are going to be looking at the book *The Second Half of Marriage* (Zondervan, 1998) by David and Claudia Arp. Suddenly marriages that were child-centered once again become couple-centered. Many marriages do not survive the transition. According to the National Center of Health Statistics, while divorce generally declined, divorces among couples married thirty years or more increased significantly.

In their book, the Arps describe eight themes within a second-half marriage. One is the need to transition from a child-focused marriage to a more partner-centered marriage. Without children as buffers, couples face the challenge of redefining their marriage. Either it becomes more intimate or it slowly disintegrates. A husband married for nineteen years said, "I'm fearful that when our children leave home, we will go our separate ways, because our priorities and interests are so different."

Couples must learn how to communicate and effectively deal with conflict and anger. Couples often lose the ability to communicate in marriage because there is such an urgent focus on the kids and their needs and problems. One wife said, "The greatest stress in my marriage is lack of communication—just being able to converse at the end of the day. I always feel as if I'm competing with the computer, the newspaper, or CNN news."

Couples in the second half of marriage must also learn to adjust to changing roles with aging parents and adult children. Your parents may have placed certain expectations on you and your marriage that you are still feeling in midlife. A wife married thirty-one years said, "Whatever I do for my parents, I can never meet all of their expectations. Yet I keep trying. I'd have to say unmet expectations are the hardest to deal with. I need to add that my expectations are the hardest to deal with."

Reconnecting with your adult children is also a challenge. As children leave the nest, they leave behind certain requirements and expectations. Our relationship with them changes, and couples in the second half of marriage must reconnect with children who are now adults on a different level. Often we must learn to resist giving advice unless it is requested. And even when we give advice, we should mentally prepare ourselves for the possibility that our grown children may not act on it.

Here we will be looking at these eight themes of second half marriages and discuss the challenges of each of them. We will view them from the kaleidoscope of over five hundred survey responses used by the Arps in writing their book. We pray that this look at second half marriages will help strengthen your marriage no matter how long you have been married.

Expectations and Companionship

The first challenge is to learn to let go of past marital disappointment, forgive each other, and commit to making the rest of your marriage the best. All of us go into marriage with certain dreams and expectations. Some of these will never be realized. Are you willing to let go of unmet expectations and unrealistic dreams? You may never build your dream house or go on that exotic vacation. Are you willing to let it go? Can you accept those extra pounds or that gray hair or even no hair at all? Giving up lost dreams and dealing with each

other's imperfections is a positive step toward forgiving past hurts and moving on in your marriage.

A wife married for twenty-five years said, "After twenty years of marriage, I finally realized my husband will never be home at 5 p.m. While this is disappointing to me, I simply had to let that expectation go." Another wife said, "During times of testing and disappointment, we kept working on our relationship. We learned how to forgive each other and how to work things out. We are committed to our marriage and we never give up. That's our secret."

The second challenge is to create a marriage that is partner-focused rather than child-focused. When children leave the nest, couples often move from a child-focused marriage to an activity-focused marriage. Community or church activities may now take up the time and energy formerly devoted to children. As valuable as these activities might be, they still serve as buffers to a mutual, partnership marriage. In the second half of marriage, couples need to redefine their roles and functions. What previously worked may no longer be relevant. Marriage can be more personal and more fulfilling as you focus on the couple's relationship rather than the children.

A wife married for thirty-three years said, "It's important to build a good relationship with your spouse so that when the children leave, you have the underlying joy of focusing on each other and not on your adult children."

Key to this is to develop what is called a "companionship marriage." This has been defined as a socially registered commitment between a man and a woman where they seek to know themselves and each other as far as they are capable of being known. It also involves mutual affection and affirmation where they help each other grow and change in order to become the loving and creative persons they are capable of becoming.

These then are the first two of eight challenges in the second

half of marriage. Next we will look at two more challenges.

Communication and Conflict

The third challenge is to maintain an effective communication system that allows you to express your deepest feelings, joys, and concerns. Communication is the lifeblood of a good marriage. But what do you do when the communication patterns that seemed to work in the first half of marriage seem inadequate for the second half? When children are gone, there are more spaces of silence, and there is often less to say to each other. Couples may wonder how they made it this far only to end up as quiet strangers in front of each other. Couples in the second half of marriage need to develop intimate and honest communication that focuses on their needs, wants, and dreams at midlife.

A wife married for eighteen years said, "My greatest fear is that when the kids are gone, we won't communicate or have anything in common. I'm afraid of being left alone with someone who never speaks, pays attention, or ever touches me." Another wife said, "The greatest frustration for me in my marriage is simply not being understood."

The fourth challenge is to use anger and conflict in a creative way to build your relationship. Anger and conflict are part of any marriage. Mature couples need to learn how to process anger. Marriage must become a safe place to express your concerns in the context of a loving relationship. This challenge is critical because often the real problem isn't the facts but the strong negative feelings we harbor. Once those feelings are dealt with, it's easier to move on and resolve the conflict.

A wife of eighteen years said, "We had the divorce papers ready to sign a couple of times a number of years ago, but both times we looked at each other and said, 'But I haven't stopped loving you.' Even when we couldn't agree on virtually

anything else, we have always agreed on that. Nothing we've been through was bad enough to kill the love we have for each other."

Often the key to dealing with anger is to objectively state the problem and then begin to set forward the solutions. In the process, the couple can also identify what is at stake and what each partner has invested. Finding a solution to the problem is easier when both partners are committed to each other and committed to a mutually satisfying solution. Sometimes this will involve compromise and in other cases, it will involve showing love to your partner by accepting his or her perspective.

These then are the first four of eight challenges in the second half of marriage. In the next section we will look at two more challenges.

Friendship and Romance

The fifth challenge is to build a deeper friendship and enjoy your spouse. In the second half of marriage, we can deepen our friendship and become close companions. When we are in a long-term marriage, we become more familiar and comfortable with each other. When we acknowledge that we aren't perfect, we can relax and enjoy each other. What are you doing to build your friendship with your spouse? Are you working to expand your boundaries and prevent boredom? Are you trying to put more fun back into your marriage? Fun and friendship are two key ingredients in the second half of marriage.

One wife married for twenty years said, "This year has been a time of growth for us as a couple. It started with lots of stress—overcommitment and relationship problems—but God helped us through it. We just celebrated our twentieth anniversary with a romantic getaway. We've become best friends again. Hope can be restored!"

In their book, the Arps provide some concrete tips for making the second half more enjoyable. First, take care of yourself. Sometimes our back muscles can give us a midlife wake-up call, so exercise and physical therapy should become a way of life. Second, pace yourself. Third, build relationships and maintain them. This is the time of life to beef up your friendships and develop a support system. Fourth, stretch your boundaries. Fifth, stay involved with life. Sixth, hang in there. When you are discouraged, don't throw your life away.

The sixth challenge is to renew romance and restore a pleasurable, sexual relationship. Contrary to popular belief, interest in sex does not have to diminish as we grow older. Actually the research done by the Arps tends to indicate that sexual satisfaction increases rather than decreases with the number of years married. Couples in the second half of marriage need to do three things: protect privacy, cherish the love relationship, and renew romance. These are important priorities.

The Arps list six secrets to rekindle romance. These are: be affectionate, be a listener, be adventuresome, be playful, be in shape, and be a little wacky. As we grow older, the pace of life changes and there is a greater need to stay in shape by eating well, working out, and watching our weight. This is not only good for your marriage. It is good for your health.

These then are the first six of eight challenges in the second half of marriage. Let's look at the last two challenges.

Adapted Relationships and Spiritual Growth

The seventh challenge is to adjust to changing roles with aging parents and adult children. As children leave the nest, we release them into adulthood. But it is also important to reconnect with them on an adult level. At the same time, you need to balance relationships with your own parents. This will

be difficult, especially if your parents did not successfully meet this challenge in their marriage. Whatever your situation, your relationship with your adult children and your elderly parents will affect your marriage. Accepting the circumstances can be key in building a strong second half of marriage. You can't go back and change your family history, but you can make wise choices for the future based upon past circumstances.

The drain of family commitments can take its toll on a second half marriage. One wife of twenty-eight years said, "For me, the emotional drain of trying to be everything to everybody is affecting my relationship with my husband. There is no energy left at the end of the day for me to invest in our marriage."

The challenge of rearing children and sending them into a world also affects one of the other challenges we have discussed: the challenge of communication. One husband of thirty years said, "We don't have an empty nest yet, although two out of three are gone. We've tried to push our children out of the nest but leave the lines of communication open to advise and assist when needed."

The final challenge is to evaluate where you are on your spiritual pilgrimage, grow closer to each other and to God, and together serve others. Our faith in God should make a difference in our marriage. The relationship of a husband and wife to God provides the foundation for a good marriage that will be tested by the changing circumstances of the second half of marriage. Couples should evaluate their spiritual pilgrimage and seek to grow closer spiritually to each other and to God.

A husband married for thirty-two years said, "The best aspects of our marriage are companionship, our faith in God, and our love for each other. We try to add to the other's happiness by surprising each other with little gifts, a hug, a kiss, or giving a compliment—or just being thoughtful."

We trust that this has been helpful to you as you seek to strengthen your marriage and grow closer to God. We believe you will grow closer to each other as you grow closer to God. May God bless you.

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The Bill of Rights

Introduction

The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments to the Constitution. It establishes the basic civil liberties that the federal government cannot violate.

When the Constitution was drafted some were fearful that a federal government would usurp the rights and powers of the states and the people. Critics were fearful that the federal government would exceed its enumerated powers—a fear that in hindsight seems most reasonable. The Bill of Rights was designed to address those apprehensions. The states ratified the Bill of Rights in 1791, three years after the Constitution was ratified.

In this article we are going to provide a brief look at the ten amendments that comprise the Bill of Rights.

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The First Amendment begins by preventing Congress from establishing religion or prohibiting the free exercise of religion. Originally the religion clause of the First Amendment was intended to prevent the federal government from establishing a national church. Some New England states maintained established state-churches until the 1830s.

In the last century, the Supreme Court has extended the First Amendment to any religious activity by any governmental body. The establishment clause originally prohibited the establishment of a national church by Congress, but now has been broadened to prohibit anything that appears like a government endorsement of religious practice. The free exercise clause supposedly prohibits government from placing any burden on religious practice.

The second part of the First Amendment provides freedom of political participation. This includes freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly with the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. This quartet of freedoms allows citizens to be actively involved in electing representatives and influencing legislation.

Second Amendment

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

The Second Amendment gives Americans the right to keep and bear arms. Although the amendment clearly provides such rights, proponents of limiting a citizen's right to arms attempt to argue that the amendment only applies to a militia like the National Guard.

Before the drafting of the Constitution, citizen-militias existed to guarantee order and domestic security. The framers envisioned an armed citizenry that was separate from a federal

military that could be controlled by government authorities. They were well aware of the abuses that came when a King or Prime Minister could control a standing army. Armed citizens provided an important check and balance of power. The framers well understood the threat to freedom when gun ownership was a government monopoly.

Third Amendment

No Soldier shall, in time of peace, be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

The Third Amendment guarantees that no soldier may be quartered in any house without the consent of the owner. At its face, this would seem to be an obsolete amendment since the federal government has never placed soldiers in private homes.

Unfortunately this amendment has been used to make the case for a right to privacy in the U.S. Constitution. The Supreme Court cited this amendment in 1965 in the case of *Griswold v. Connecticut* involving the issue of contraceptives. This case provided the foundation for the infamous abortion case of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973.

Many legal scholars question whether the Constitution has an implicit right to privacy. Obviously the Third Amendment provides homeowners with protection against unreasonable military intrusion. But it is quite a stretch to manipulate this amendment into a justification for a right to privacy with regard to contraception or abortion.

Fourth Amendment

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall

issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

The Fourth Amendment requires that a specific warrant be obtained before a search is made of a person, their house, their papers, or personal effects. The framers wanted to ban the British practice of obtaining a general warrant which allowed the seizure of anything in the suspect's home. A search requires a specific warrant issued by a neutral magistrate.

In the last century, the Supreme Court has refined the amendment through what is called "the exclusionary rule." Evidence obtained outside the specific requirements of the warrant is inadmissible in a court of law. Cases in court often swing on whether evidence was obtained legally and whether the law enforcement officer acted in "good faith" in the securing of that evidence.

Fifth Amendment

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

The Fifth Amendment is best known for guaranteeing a citizen's right to refrain from answering a question that might be incriminating. Actually there is more to this amendment than "taking the fifth." The amendment also provides for due

process, a grand jury, and freedom from double jeopardy.

Many citizens believe that the amendment guarantees your right to remain silent. Actually the amendment states that no person should be compelled to be a witness against himself. The right to remain silent comes from the so-called Miranda warnings read by a police officer before questioning. The Supreme Court mandated these phrases in an attempt to further protect the rights of the accused.

Sixth Amendment

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defense.

The Sixth Amendment provides additional rights in a criminal trial. These include the right to an attorney, the right to a trial by jury, and the right to confront one's accusers.

The right to an attorney implies the right to "competent" counsel. Appeal courts have had to decide what constitutes competent or incompetent counsel. Usually a guilty verdict is allowed to stand if it seems that an attorney's actions did not significantly affect the judicial outcome.

The right to confront your accusers was a deliberate attempt to prevent the possibility of the U.S. some day having a Star Chamber as occurred previously in England. Witnesses must testify in open court and thus are available for cross-examination. The only cases where this is not done are in child abuse cases where child-victim testimony is allowed by

videotape.

Seventh Amendment

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

The Seventh Amendment addresses civil cases. It provides for a jury trial (in cases involving more than \$20) that involves suits at common law. Although this seems like a logical right that would already be assumed, it reflects the concerns of the framers that a federal judiciary would set aside jury verdicts and perhaps even eliminate juries altogether.

Eighth Amendment

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

The Eighth Amendment protects citizens against excessive actions. These include excessive bail, excessive fines, and cruel and unusual punishment. These were all provisions found in English law used to restrict the excesses of the English kings.

The Supreme Court on many occasions has been called upon to consider whether a particular punishment was proportional to the crime. This has also included a number of controversial rulings over the last few decades about whether long prison terms or capital punishment constitutes cruel and unusual punishment.

Ninth Amendment

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

The Ninth Amendment prevents the courts from thinking that the rights listed in the first eight amendments are exclusive and exhaustive. In other words, just because the Constitution does not specifically list a right does not mean that right is not retained by the people.

Judicial activists have used this amendment to justify their expansion of additional rights. The Supreme Court reasoned in this way concerning the so-called right to privacy. The Court argued that the First, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Amendments all protect privacy in some way. Therefore, they argued that the right to privacy does exist and should be protected by the Constitution.

Tenth Amendment

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

The Tenth Amendment protects the structure of federalism. Those powers not specifically delegated to the federal government are reserved to the States or the people. The framers intended that the people and the states would decide how power was to be delegated to the other levels of government (cities, towns, counties, etc.).

The Tenth Amendment was written to provide additional protection for federalism since many citizens were concerned with giving a national government too much power. Although the Tenth Amendment did provide some protection, its impact was

undercut by the Fourteenth Amendment that effectively made the federal government the ultimate protector of states rights and has lessened its importance. **For Further Reading**

David M. Wagner, *Freedom Forum: A Commentary on the Bill of Rights*, Washington, DC: Family Research Council, 2000.

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Marriage Test

Is your marriage in the danger zone? How would you know? This article provides a marriage test to help you evaluate your marriage and see if you might need to obtain information or counsel about improving your marriage.

A few years ago I addressed the issue in an article titled, "[Why Marriages Fail](#)." The material came from PREP, which stands for the "Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program" developed at the University of Denver. The material was originally published in a book entitled *Fighting for Your Marriage*, and has been featured on numerous TV newsmagazine programs like *20/20*. There is also a Christian version of this material found in a book written by Scott Stanley entitled *A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage*.

Marriage Test

I want to extend that discussion by providing a test you can apply to your marriage. It is loosely based on a questionnaire developed by Howard Markman at the Center for Marital and Family Studies. There are fifteen questions you answer by

giving your marriage points. At the end you total the points to see how your marriage is doing. If your total is positive, you are doing well. If it is negative, then you may need to do some work and perhaps seek counseling.

The first three questions have to do with your background. Many of us come into a marriage without considering our previous family and marital backgrounds. The truth is that we are not blank slates when we get married. Our background does have an influence on our marriage.

The first question is about cohabitation. Living together before marriage could signal a lack of commitment. In fact, numerous studies show that living together can have a detrimental effect on a marriage. Often poor communication patterns are developed in such a living arrangement that carry over into marriage. Here's how you score the first question. If you moved in before the wedding give your marriage a 1. If you waited until after marriage, give your marriage a +1.

The second question involves your parents' marriage. Poor communication and conflict-management skills can be inherited from parents. If your parents had a poor marriage, give your marriage a 1. If they had a strong marriage, give your marriage a +1.

The third question involves a previous marriage that ended in divorce. It turns out that one of the best predictors for divorce is a previous divorce. Divorcing once could mean a willingness to divorce again. If you had a previous marriage, give your marriage a 1. If this is your first marriage, give it a +1.

Religion and Finances

The fourth question involves religion which can be the source of strength or strain in a marriage. Religion provides support for marriage and usually discourages divorce. But practicing

separate ones can add strain. If you don't practice religion, give yourself a 2. If you practice different religions, give yourself a 1. If you both attend church regularly, give yourselves a +2.

Question five concerns finances. Money is the number one cause of fights in a marriage. Frequently these differences can lead to marital disharmony or disruption. If you and your spouse fight about money, give your marriage a 1. If you generally agree about spending, give your marriage a +1.

The sixth question also involves finances. In particular it deals with income. Some men aren't comfortable when the wife is the family breadwinner. If the wife earns more in your marriage, give yourself a 1. If the husband earns more, give yourself a +1.

The seventh question is about your current age. Simply put, older couples are less likely to divorce. If your current age is under 30, give yourself a 1. If you are over 40, then give yourself a +1. If you are over 60, give yourself a +2.

The eighth question is about the length of your marriage. The longer you are married, the less likely you are to split. If you are married less than five years, give yourself a 1. If you have been married five to ten years, give yourself a +1. If have been married more than ten years, give yourself a +2.

Well, that's the first eight questions. As you can see these questions focus on all sorts of issues that engaged couples rarely consider, but can be significant indicators of marital success. Keep track of your score and see how your marriage is doing. Although this is not an exhaustive questionnaire, the answers to these questions give you a quick look at how your marriage is doing.

Support and Family

The ninth question concerns support for your marriage. A lack of support from family or friends for your marriage creates tension and can cause a couple to question their relationship. Was your family supportive of this marriage? Did your friends support your choice in a marriage partner or were they concerned about your choice? If family and friends disapproved, give your marriage a 1. If family and friends approved, give your marriage a +1.

The tenth question revolves around changes in the family. Family additions or changes can impact a marriage. Having a baby, adjusting to an empty nest, or moving Grandma in adds stress. If you have had a recent family change, give your marriage 1. If there have been no big changes, then give your marriage a +1.

The eleventh question deals with conflicting attitudes. Opposing views on key issues in a marriage can cause division. Differences about commitment, beliefs, or expectations are just a few issues that can affect a marriage. If you mostly disagree with each other, give yourself a 2. If you are split about half-and-half, give yourself a 0. If you mostly agree, give yourself a +2.

The twelfth question concerns confidence. Feeling assured that relationships will survive anything can help couples through. If you are doubtful the marriage will last, give your marriage a 2. If you are pretty confident, give your marriage a 0. If you think your marriage will never fail, give yourself a +2.

Marital Communication

The thirteenth question involves marital communication. It's best if a couple can talk openly about problems without fighting or withdrawing. If you always fight rather than talk about problems, then give yourself a 2. If you sometimes

fight, give yourself a 0. If you mostly talk rather than fight, give yourself a +2.

The fourteenth question deals with happiness. Feeling fulfilled in marriage is critical. If you are unhappy in the relationship, give yourself a 3. If you are not consistently happy, give yourself a 0. If you are happy in a relationship, give yourself a +3.

The fifteenth question deals with sex. Being unsatisfied with frequency or quality can create tension in a marriage. If you are unsatisfied with your sex life, give your marriage a 1. If you are satisfied, give yourself a +1.

Well, that's the test. If you have kept track of your answers to these questions, you should have a score. If your score is positive, especially if it is +5 or higher then your marriage is doing well. If your score is negative, then you may want to work on your marriage. That might mean reading a book on marriage, attending a marriage conference, or seek out counseling. That might be helpful even if you had a positive score, but it would be essential if you did not have a positive score.

As I mentioned previously in the article on [“Why Marriages Fail,”](#) you should not be discouraged by a negative score. The research does show which marriages might have trouble, but that does not suggest that there is nothing we can do about it. As the book of James reminds us, it is not enough to just believe something, we must act upon it (James 1:25, 2:15-18, 3:13). So let's talk about what we can do.

Steps to Change

We have been talking about marriage and helped you to evaluate your marriage by taking a marriage test. The first few questions dealt with our marital background. Specifically the questions focused on cohabitation, your parents' marriage, and

previous divorce. We do not come into a marriage as a blank slate. Our previous experiences do influence the way we interact with our spouse. Obviously, we can change our behavior but we have to make a concerted effort to do so or else we will fall back into patterns that may adversely affect our marriage.

Many of our other questions dealt with the current status of your marriage. This included such issues as religious background, finances, age, the length of your marriage, support for your marriage, changes in your family, conflicting attitudes, confidence, marital communication, happiness, and sexual satisfaction. Again, many of these factors can be changed with a desire and plan to do so. But if we do not change our behavior then we will fall back into patterns that could be detrimental to our marriage.

I hope you will take the time to act on the results of this test. Most of us go through life and go through our marriages on auto-pilot. We set the controls and then fall back into a pattern that is the result of our background and current circumstances. Perhaps this marriage test will encourage you to work on your marriage. Perhaps this test will show your spouse that there are some issues you need to address.

The sad social statistics about divorce show that many marriages fall apart for lack of adequate attention. Every year a million couples end up in divorce court. Yet if you asked them if that would be how their marriage would end, very few would have predicted it on their wedding day.

Most people get married because they want their marriage to work. Unfortunately, many of those marriages fail. Some fail because of poor marital communication. If you identify that as a problem, then I encourage you to read my article on [“Why Marriages Fail.”](#) If you want to identify other potential problems, I encourage you to take this test with your spouse and then talk about the results. I pray that you will use this

test to alert you and your spouse to any danger signs and then begin to change your habits and actions so that your marriage will be successful.

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Christian Rumors

Madalyn Murray O'Hair

No doubt you've heard them and wondered if they were true. Stories about Madalyn Murray O'Hair's campaign against Christian radio, Janet Reno's definition of a cult or Charles Darwin's supposed deathbed conversion. Are they true or not?

Believe me—I see more than my share of these myths and rumors. Because of my public visibility and presence on various web pages, I probably get a lot more e-mail messages than most people do. So I probably see a higher percentage of myths and rumors than most. Yet, I am amazed at the number of rumors flying around the Internet.

And we get lots of phone calls at Probe from people wondering if various stories they have heard are true. Others forward e-mail messages they receive and ask if they are true, before they forward them to others.

Many of these messages are relatively harmless ones like the promise that you will get free M&Ms if you forward an e-mail message to someone. This apparently has mutated into the belief that IBM will send you a free computer if you forward a particular e-mail. Supposedly IBM is doing this because of a recent merger between Hewlett-Packard and Gateway. As my teenage daughter likes to say, "Yeah right!" Oh, and don't

forget about the GAP offering free clothing because of a supposed merger with Abercrombie and Fitch.

Some other rumors are harmful to companies. One example would be the false rumor that an executive with Proctor and Gamble announced he was a Satanist on the *Sally Jesse Raphael Show*. The original rumor had this happening on *The Donahue Show*. And then there's the rumor that the designer Liz Claiborne told the *Oprah* audience that she donates profits to the Church of Satan. None of these rumors are true, yet these e-mails still show up in Probe's inbox on a fairly regular basis.

In this article I want to address what I consider to be the major myths and rumors that are spread by the Christian community. With so many, I had to be selective; so I tried to focus on those persistent myths spread by Christians and some of the rumors which seem to nearly have a life of their own.

The most persistent rumor in the Christian community over the last few decades is the mistaken belief that atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair has been trying to ban religious broadcasting through petition RM 2493. Back in December 1974, there was a petition by Jeremy Lanaman and Lorenzo Milam to investigate radio stations with non-commercial educational licenses. The FCC unanimously rejected the petition in August 1975. But somehow the original information mutated into the current rumor that Madalyn Murray O'Hair was trying to remove Christian radio stations from the airwaves. The rumor wasn't true when she was alive, and certainly isn't true now. Nevertheless, the FCC has received millions and millions of bogus petitions. Let me state once again, the rumor isn't true and all of us should do what we can to stop the rumor.

Janet Reno, Enemy of Christians

I am trying to address what I consider to be the major myths and rumors that are spread by the Christian community. Many of these show up in e-mails, while others are repeated by

Christian speakers and believed to be true, even though they are false.

One persistent rumor has been attributed to former Attorney General Janet Reno, who supposedly defines Christians as belonging to a cult. Let me quote from one variation of the e-mail.

Are you a cultist, ACCORDING TO JANET RENO?? . . . I certainly HOPE SO!! Attorney General Janet Reno, "A cultist is one who has a strong belief in the Bible and the Second Coming of Christ; who frequently attends Bible studies; who has a high level of financial giving to a Christian cause; who home schools their children; who has accumulated survival foods and has a strong belief in the Second Amendment; and who distrusts big government. Any of these may qualify a person as a cultist but certainly more than one of these would cause us to look at this person as a threat, and his family as being in a risk situation that qualified for government interference." Janet Reno, Attorney General, USA Interview on 60 Minutes, June 26, 1994 Do you qualify? Are you (as defined by the U.S. Attorney General) a threat? If any of these apply to you then you are!! This worries me. Does it worry you? Let's impeach her too!!! Everyone in this country "The land of the free" with computer access should copy this and send to every man, woman and child who can read.

The quote is a hoax, but that didn't stop many Christians from trying to send this e-mail to nearly everyone they knew that had access to the Internet. Even now that Janet Reno is no longer Attorney General, this e-mail still circulates on a fairly regular basis.

Here are the facts. According to CBS, Janet Reno did not appear on *60 Minutes* in 1994. And it is doubtful that she would ever say something so inflammatory on this program or

any other program. If she had, certainly it would have made front-page news to define millions of Christians as “cultists” and a “threat” to society.

The Office of Legislative Affairs in the Justice Department says they believe the quote first appeared in the August 1993 edition of the “Paul Revere Newsletter” published by the Christian Defense League in Flora, Illinois. The group has been described by some as a “far right hate group” holding to racist and anti-Semitic views. The newsletter subsequently ran a retraction.

This is the unfortunate origin of this persistent e-mail message. Unknowingly, Christians circulated a rumor started by a group bent on attacking the Attorney General. They did so because Christians were attacked as being cultists, thus they spread a rumor that was not true.

Joshua’s Long Day

One story that has been around for quite a long time is the myth of NASA discovering Joshua’s long day. As the story goes, computers at the space agency discovered that as they went back in time the calculations did not work. Scientists doing orbital mechanics calculations to determine the positions of the planets in the future realized that they were off by a day. A biblical scholar in the group supposedly solved the question when he remembered the passage in Joshua 10:13 which says that “the sun stood still, and the moon stopped” for about a whole day.

Attempts to verify the story through the NASA Spaceflight Center in Maryland never materialized. But that didn’t stop the spreading of the story that NASA found computer evidence of a missing day, which thereby verified the story of Joshua’s long day.

As it turns out, the apparent origin of this story precedes

NASA by many years. Harry Rimmer wrote about astronomical calculations recorded by Professor C.A. Totten of Yale University in his 1936 book *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*.^{1} He quotes professor Totten, who said, “[A] fellow professor, an accomplished astronomer, made the strange discovery that the earth was twenty- four hours out of schedule!” He says that Professor Totten challenged this man to investigate the question of the inspiration of the Bible. Some time later, his colleague replied: “In the tenth chapter of Joshua, I found the missing twenty-four hours accounted for. Then I went back and checked up on my figures, and found that at the time of Joshua there were only 23 hours and 20 minutes lost.”

Researchers have gone back to Professor Totten’s book *Joshua’s Long Day and the Dial of Ahaz* (published in 1890) and have not been able to find the story of the astronomer. Instead they find his argument for the lost day based upon the chronology of Jesus Christ. He believed that Christ must have been born at the fall equinox and that the world was created four thousand years before Christ was born. He therefore calculates that the world was created on September 22, 4000 b.c. This day must be a Sunday, but using a calendar we find that this date was a Monday. Therefore, argues Professor Totten, Joshua’s long day accounts for this “missing day.”

As you can see, there is no story about NASA scientists, nor are there even skeptical astronomers. He makes a number of very questionable assumptions in order to supposedly “prove” Joshua’s long day.

The story of NASA verifying Joshua’s long day is a myth that has been passed down for decades and apparently has its origins from stories recorded even before NASA existed. The story is false.

Darwin's Deathbed Conversion

One of the most persistent stories is the *supposed* conversion of Charles Darwin and his *supposed* rejection of evolution on his deathbed. Christian speakers and writers retell this story with great regularity even though there is good evidence that Darwin remained an agnostic and an evolutionist to the day of his death. And even if the story was true (and it is not), its retelling is irrelevant to whether the theory of evolution is true. Darwin did not recant, and scientists would continue to teach the theory even if he had changed his mind.

The origin of this story can be traced to one "Lady Hope" who started the story after the death of Charles Darwin. On one occasion, Lady Hope spoke to a group of young men and women at the school founded by the evangelist D. L. Moody at Northfield, Massachusetts. According to her, Darwin had been reading the book of Hebrews on his deathbed. She said he asked for the local Sunday school to sing in a summerhouse on the grounds, and had confessed: "How I wish I had not expressed my theory of evolution as I have done." She even said he would like her to gather a congregation since he "would like to speak to them of Christ Jesus and His salvation, being in a state where he was eagerly savouring the heavenly anticipation of bliss." [\[2\]](#)

D. L. Moody encouraged Lady Hope to publish her story, and it was printed in the Boston *Watchman Examiner*. The story spread, and the claims have been republished and restated ever since.

The claims were refuted at the time and were subsequently addressed by Darwin's son and daughter when they were revived years later. In 1918, Francis Darwin made this public statement:

Lady Hope's account of my father's views on religion is quite untrue. I have publicly accused her of falsehood, but have not seen any reply. My father's agnostic point of view is

given in my Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, Vol. I., pp. 304-317. You are at liberty to publish the above statement. Indeed, I shall be glad if you will do so.

Darwin's daughter, Henrietta, writing in the *Christian* for February 23, 1922, said she was present at her father's deathbed. "Lady Hope was not present during his last illness, or any illness. I believe he never even saw her, but in any case she had no influence over him in any department of thought or belief. He never recanted any of his scientific views, either then or earlier. We think the story of his conversion was fabricated in the U.S.A." She concluded by saying, "The whole story has no foundation whatever."

So that is the history of the story of Charles Darwin's deathbed conversion. It simply is not true.

Satanic Affiliations

Now I would like to conclude by looking at rumors linking various individuals and groups to Satan.

One individual linked to Satan is J. K. Rowling, the author of the best-selling *Harry Potter* series. Although we at Probe have expressed some concern over the books, we believe some of the criticism concerning her has been unfair. One purported quotation making the rounds comes from a satirical publication known as *The Onion*. Supposedly she says, "I think it's absolute rubbish to protest children's books on the grounds that they are luring children to Satan. People should be praising them for that! These books guide children to an understanding that the weak, idiotic Son of God is a living hoax who will be humiliated when the rain of fire comes." The quote goes on to use pornographic language.

Editors at *The Onion* made up the quote along with just about everything else in the article. The fictitious article includes mock quotes from blaspheming children planning

satanic rituals. It claimed that fourteen million American children have joined the Church of Satan because of the *Harry Potter* series. Unfortunately, many Christians did not understand that the magazine is a blatantly satirical tabloid attempting to lampoon Christians concerned about the *Harry Potter* series.

A similar rumor surfaced in the 1980s when chain letters and petitions supposedly documented that the Procter & Gamble symbol was really a satanic symbol. According to the story, the company's historic "man in the moon" symbol was the devil. And Procter & Gamble executives supposedly appeared on a TV talk show (Phil Donahue or Sally Jesse Raphael) to boast that their company gave some of their profits to the Church of Satan.

I think the lesson this week is that Christians should be more discerning. If you receive a letter or e-mail full of sensational information, you should ask yourself why this is the first you have heard about it. If Janet Reno or J.K. Rowling or an executive with Procter & Gamble said the things they allegedly said, wouldn't you have heard about it long before you received this letter or e-mail? If it sounds incredible, maybe that's because it isn't credible. If you have questions, feel free to write us or call us at Probe or check out the numerous Web sites dedicated to debunking myths, rumors, and urban legends. In the meantime, we should all learn to be more discerning.

Notes

1. Harry Rimmer, *The Harmony of Science and Scripture* (1936), 281-282.
2. Ronald W. Clark, *The Survival of Charles Darwin: a Biography of a Man and an Idea* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1985), 199.

Terrorism in America

Many are calling it one of the bloodiest days in American history. And now we face the prospect that terrorism has become a part of modern life. Crashing planes into buildings, hijackings, bombings, and assassinations on different continents of the world may seem like isolated attacks, but they reflect an easy reliance on violence as a way to promote social, political, and religious change. They are elements of a pervasive “end justifies the means” philosophy being followed to its most perverse conclusions.

Terrorism has become the scourge of democratic governments. According to Rand Corporation expert Brian Jenkins, nearly a third of all terrorists attacks involve Americans. Democratic governments, accustomed to dealing within a legal structure, often find it difficult to deal with criminals and terrorists who routinely operate outside of the law. Yet deterrence is just as much a part of justice as proper enforcement of the laws.

Democratic governments which do not deter criminals inevitably spawn vigilantism as normally law-abiding citizens, who have lost confidence in the criminal justice system, take the law into their own hands. A similar backlash is beginning to emerge as a result of the inability of Western democracies to defend themselves against terrorists.

But lack of governmental resolve is only part of the problem. Terrorists thrive on media exposure, and news organizations around the world have been all too willing to give terrorists what they crave: publicity. If the news media gave terrorists the minuscule coverage their numbers and influence demanded, terrorism would decline. But when hijackings and bombings are

given prominent media attention, governments start feeling pressure from their citizens to resolve the crisis and eventually capitulate to terrorists' demands. Encouraged by their latest success, terrorists usually try again. Appeasement, Churchill wisely noted, always whets the appetite, and recent successes have made terrorists hungry for more attacks.

Some news commentators have been unwilling to call terrorism what it is: wanton, criminal violence. They blunt the barbarism by arguing that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." But this simply is not true. Terrorists are not concerned about human rights and human dignity. In fact, they end up destroying human rights in their alleged fight for human rights.

Terrorism has been called the "new warfare." But terrorists turn the notion of war on its head. Innocent non-combatants become the target of terrorist attacks. Terrorist warfare holds innocent people hostage and makes soldier and civilian alike potential targets for their aggression.

Terrorist groups are not living in fear of their host governments. Instead, law-abiding citizens live in fear of terrorist groups. In one TV interview a Middle Eastern terrorist was quoted as saying, "We want the people of the United States to feel the terror."

The ability of these groups to carry out their agenda is not the issue. The fundamental issue is how U.S. government leaders should deal with this new type of military strategy. Terrorists have held American diplomats hostage for years, blown up military compounds, and hijacked airplanes and cruise ships. Although some hostages have been released, many others have been killed and the U.S. has been unsuccessful at punishing more than a small number of terrorists.

Although international diplomacy has been the primary means

used by the United States against terrorism, we should consider what other means may also be appropriate. In the past, American leaders have responded to military aggression in a variety of ways short of declaring war.

Military strategy must be deployed which can hunt down small groups of well-armed and well-funded men who hide within the territory of a host country. We must also develop a political strategy that will allow us to work within a host country. We must make it clear how serious the United States takes a terrorist threat. American citizens are tired of being military targets in an undeclared war.

Through diplomatic channels we must make two things very clear to the host country. First, they should catch and punish the terrorist groups themselves as civilian criminals. Or, second, they should extradite the enemy soldiers and give them up to an international court for trial.

If the host country fails to act on these two requests, we should make it clear that we see them in complicity with the terrorist groups. But failing to exercise their civil responsibility, they leave themselves open to the consequences of allowing hostile military forces within their borders.

In some cases, an American strike force of counterterrorists might be necessary when the threat is both real and imminent. This should be the option of last resort, but in certain instances it may be necessary. In 1989, for example, Israeli special forces captured Sheik Obeid and no doubt crippled the terrorist network by bringing one of their leaders to justice. Such acts should be done rarely and carefully, but they may be appropriate means to bring about justice.

In conclusion, I believe we must recognize terrorism as a new type of military aggression which requires governmental action. We are involved in an undeclared war and Congress and the President must take the same sorts of actions they would

if threatened by a hostile country. We must work to deter further terrorist aggression.

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A War of Words in Bioethics

Political battles are often won or lost with definitions. Proponents of abortion learned this lesson well. They didn't want to be described as those who were willing to kill innocent life. So they changed the focus from the baby to the woman and emphasized her personal choice. Those who are pro-abortion called themselves "pro-choice" and supported "a woman's right to choose." Changing the words and modifying the definitions allowed them to be more successful and more socially acceptable.

Homosexuals learned the same lesson. If the focus was on their sexual activity, the public would not be on their side. So they began to talk about sexual orientation and alternate lifestyles. Then they began to focus on attacks on homosexuals and argue that teaching tolerance of homosexuality was important to the safety of homosexuals. Again, changing the words and the debate made the issue more socially acceptable.

Now this same war of words is being waged over cloning and stem cell research. The recent debate in Congress about cloning introduced a new term: therapeutic cloning. Those who want to use cloning argued that there are really two kinds of cloning. One is reproductive cloning which involves the creation of a child. The other is called therapeutic cloning which involves cloning human embryos which are eventually

destroyed rather than implanted in a mother's womb.

Representative Jim Greenwood (R-PA) sponsored a bill that would permit this second form of human cloning for embryonic stem cell research while outlawing the first form of cloning to produce children. Although it was put forward as a compromise, pro-life advocates rightly called his legislation a "clone and kill bill." Fortunately, the Greenwood bill was defeated, and a bill banning all cloning sponsored by Representative Dave Weldon (R-FL) passed the House and was sent to the Senate.

Another example of this war of words can be seen in the floor debate over these two bills. The opponents of the "clone and kill bill" were subjected to harsh criticism and stereotypes. Both the debate on cloning and the debate on stem cells has often been presented as a battle between compassion and conservatives or between science and religion. Here are just a few of the statements made during the House debate on cloning:

Anna Eshoo (D-CA): "As we stand on the brink of finding the cures to diseases that have plagued so many millions of Americans, unfortunately, the Congress today in my view is on the brink of prohibiting this critical research."

Zoe Lofgren (D-CA): "If your religious beliefs will not let you accept a cure for your child's cancer, so be it. But do not expect the rest of America to let their loved ones suffer without cure."

Jerold Nadler (D-NY): "We must not say to millions of sick or injured human beings, 'go ahead and die, stay paralyzed, because we believe the blastocyst, the clump of cells, is more important than you are.' . . . It is a sentence of death to millions of Americans."

Notice too how a human embryo is merely called a blastocyst. Though a correct biological term, it is used to diminish the humanity of the unborn. In the stem cell debate, it was

disturbing to see how much attention was given to those who might potentially benefit from the research and how little attention was given to the reality that human beings would be destroyed to pursue the research.

Moreover, the claims of immediate success were mostly hype and hyperbole. Columnist Charles Krauthammer called it "The Great Stem Cell Hoax." He believes that any significant cures are decades away.

He also points out how it has become politically correct to "sugarcoat the news." The most notorious case was the article in the prestigious scientific journal *Science*. The authors' research showed that embryonic stem cells of mice were genetically unstable. Their article concluded by saying that this research might put into question the clinical applicability of stem cell research.

Well, such a critical statement just couldn't be allowed to be stated publicly. So in a highly unusual move, the authors withdrew the phrase that the genetic instability of stem cells "might limit their use in clinical applications" just days before publication.

Charles Krauthammer says, "This change in text represents a corruption of science that mirrors the corruption of language in the congressional debate. It is corrupting because this study might have helped to undermine the extravagant claims made by stem cell advocates that a cure for Parkinson's or spinal cord injury or Alzheimer's is in the laboratory and just around the corner, if only those right-wing, antiabortion nuts would let it go forward."

So the current debate in bioethics not only brings in Huxley's *Brave New World*, but also George Orwell's newspeak. The debate about cloning and stem cells is not only a debate about the issues but a war of words where words and concepts are redefined.

Civility

We are living in the midst of an epidemic of rudeness and desperately need civility. Kerby Anderson looks at the rise of incivility and documents its effects in society, education, and politics. He concludes by providing a biblical framework for civility.

The Rise of Incivility

We seem to be living in the midst of an epidemic of rudeness. Articles in the newspaper document the number of incidents of road rage. And if you doubt that, just try to merge onto a busy freeway and see how many drivers honk their horn or try to cut you off.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. A 1997 American Automobile Association report documents a sharp rise in the use of cars as weapons (people trying to run over other people on purpose). A Colorado funeral director complains about impatient drivers darting in and out of funeral processions. Instead of waiting for the procession to pass, they threaten life and limb while ignoring both law and tradition in their rush to get somewhere.

Rudeness seems to be at an all-time high in airports. There is the story of the man who was angry at missing a flight connection and threw his suitcase at an eight-month pregnant airline employee. Or there is the story of the woman who learned that there were no sandwiches on her flight and

punched the flight attendant and pushed her to the floor. And there is the tragic story of the man who rushed the cockpit and had to be restrained. In the process of stopping him, the passengers apparently used too much force and killed him.

Cursing and vulgar language are on the increase. Character assassination and negative political advertisements are up. Meanwhile, charitable giving seems to be on the decline along with volunteerism.

No wonder so many are talking about the need for civility. George W. Bush's inaugural speech talked about "a new commitment to live out our nation's promise through civility, courage, compassion and character. America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility."

Commentators are wringing their hands over our social distress. Former education secretary and virtues guru William Bennett has addressed the issue of civility. Gertrude Himmelfarb has written about *The Demoralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values*. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*, has devoted a book to the problem, as has Yale Law professor Stephen Carter.

Newspapers are running stories asking, "Why are we so rude?" *U.S. News and World Report* talks about "The American Uncivil Wars." [\[1\]](#) They conclude that "Crude, Rude and Obnoxious Behavior Has Replaced Good Manners."

So in this article I will be addressing this very important concept of civility. In a sense, it is a second installment on a previous article I wrote on [integrity](#). If integrity is the standard we use to judge our own moral development, then civility is the standard we use to judge our moral interaction with others.

As we will see, the rules of civility are ultimately the rules of morality, which are rooted in biblical morality.

The Moral Basis of Civility

The word *civilité * shares the same etymology with words like *civilized* and *civilization*. Quite simply, the root word means to be "a member of the household." Just as there are certain rules that allow family members to live peacefully within a household, so there are rules of civility that allow us to live peacefully within a society. We have certain moral responsibilities to one another.

While there have been many philosophical discussions on what civility is and how it should be practiced, I believe Jesus simply expressed the goal of civility when he taught that, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). If we truly love our neighbors, then we should be governed by moral standards that express concern for others and limit our own freedom.

Perhaps that is why civility is on the decline. More and more people live for themselves and do not feel they are morally accountable to anyone (even God) for their actions or behavior. We are told to "Look Out for #1," and not to let anyone limit our freedom to be ourselves.

Civility also acknowledges the value of another person. Politeness and manners are not merely to make social life easier. Stephen Carter, in his book on *Civility*, says that our actions and sacrifice are a

. . .[S]ignal of respect for our fellow citizens, marking them as full equals, both before the law and before God. Rules of civility are thus also rules of morality; it is morally proper to treat our fellow citizens with respect, and morally improper not to. Our crisis of civility is part of a larger crisis of morality.[\[2\]](#)

Again, this may help answer why civility is on the decline. An increasing majority in our society no longer believes in moral

absolutes. These deny that absolutes of any kind exist, much less moral absolutes. So as our crisis of morality unfolds, so does barbarism and decadence. Civility is what is lost from society.

If this is so, then the rise of rudeness and incivility cannot be easily altered. Miss Manners and others have written books about how our nation can regain its civility. But if the crisis is greater than a lack of manners (and I believe that it is), its solution must be found in a greater social change than merely teaching manners or character. Ultimately, an increase in civility must flow out of a moral and religious change. Spiritual revival and reformation are the ultimate solutions to the current problem of incivility. And I believe Christians should lead the way by exemplary behavior. In essence, Christians must be the best citizens and the best examples of civility in society.

Civility in the Schools

We have documented the rising incivility in our society. What is so tragic is to find that our children are mimicking the incivility of the adult world. A poll conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals found that 89 percent of grade school teachers and principals reported that they “regularly” face abusive language from students.[\[3\]](#)

Contrast this situation with the nature of public education just a few decades ago. It is likely that when you grew up, you were instructed in manners and etiquette. The day began with the pledge of allegiance to the flag, and throughout the day you were instructed to show respect to your country and to your teachers.

Today when schools try to teach manners, parents and civil libertarians often thwart those plans. And when a school does succeed in teaching civility, the story becomes headline news; as it was when *U.S. News and World Report* opened its account

on “The American Uncivil Wars” with a story of a school that was actually trying to teach manners.[{4}](#)

Consider what would have happened a few decades ago if you misbehaved at school. Your teacher or your principal would have disciplined you. And when you arrived home, your parents would have assumed you were disciplined for good reason. They probably would have punished you again. Now contrast that with today’s parents who are quick to challenge the teacher or principal and are often quick to threaten with a lawsuit.

When I was growing up there seemed to be a conspiracy of the adults against the kids. Every parent and every teacher had the same set of moral values. So if I misbehaved at Johnny’s house, I knew that Johnny’s mother had the same set of rules as my mother. If I misbehaved at school, I knew my teachers had the same set of rules as my parents.

Today that moral consensus is gone. If anything, we have a conspiracy of the kids against the adults. Most kids spend lots of time telling their parents what *other* parents let their kids do. We have sunk to the least common denominator in our morality.

To rebuild civility in our society, we need to begin with the next generation. Sadly they are not learning to respect authority. They are learning to disrespect authority and to play one set of parental values against another. And parents must begin to trust a teacher’s authority. My parents trusted the teachers and the school to enforce the rules appropriately. Trust and respect are two essential ingredients in rebuilding a foundation of civility.

Civility in Politics

Often when we talk about the need for civility, we focus on the political arena. Character assassination and negative political advertisements are on the increase. Many

commentators lament what they call the “politics of personal destruction.” And savvy candidates have tried to tap into this growing concern by calling for greater civility in our public discourse.

At the outset, we should acknowledge that politics has always been a dirty business. More than two centuries ago, the founders of this country often had harsh and critical things to say about each other during political campaigns. Yet we also have some very positive examples of civil discussions of major social ills.

According to Stephen Carter in his book *Civility*, one shining example of this is the Civil Rights Movement. “The leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) knew that the protests would be met with violence, because they were challenging a violently oppressive system. But they also knew that success would be found not through incivility, but through the display of moral courage.”

Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders trained their protestors to remain civil and even loving in the face of repression. He called this the “process of purification,” and it “involved both prayer and repeated reminders that the Biblical injunction to love our neighbors is not a command to love only the nice ones.” It’s instructive to remember that the stated purpose of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was “to save the soul of the nation.”

Those of us involved in social action today should be mindful of this as we fight against social ills in our society. I firmly believe that Christians should be good citizens and models of civility. That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be passionate about trying to rectify social problems. And we can disagree with those who do not hold to a biblical view of morality. But we should learn to disagree without being disagreeable. We should make our case with logic and compassion. And I believe we will be more successful if we do

so.

Consider the abortion debate. A majority of citizens have a great deal of ambivalence about abortion. They do not feel good about abortion on demand, but they also fear what might happen if abortion was totally banned in this country. Will we attract these millions of people by being angry, vociferous Bible-thumpers? Or will we attract them by being thoughtful, compassionate Christians who demonstrate our love for both mother and child at crisis pregnancy centers? I think the answer should be obvious, and that is the power of civility in the public arena.

Civility: A Biblical Framework

At the heart of civility is the biblical command to love your neighbor as yourself. While it is relatively easy to love people who are your friends or people who are nice to you, the real test of Christian love comes when we are with strangers or with people who are not civil to you. When we find ourselves in the presence of strangers, we should treat them with dignity and respect even if they are not civil to us. Even if they are not gracious toward us, we should not repay them with incivility. Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Our duty to be civil to others should not depend on whether we like them or agree with their moral or political perspectives. They may be disagreeable, and we are free to disagree with them, but we should do so by giving grace. Often such a gentle response can change a discussion or dialogue. Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that, "A gentle answer turns away wrath."

Civility also requires humility. A civil person acknowledges that he or she does not possess all wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, one should listen to others and consider the possibility that they might be right and that he is wrong. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty

conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.”

Civility also requires that we watch what we say. The Bible clearly warns us of the danger of the tongue (James 3:5-8). We should work to cleanse our language of harsh, critical, and condemning words. We should rid ourselves of nasty and vulgar language. Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

If Christians want to reform society and return to civility, one excellent model is William Wilberforce (1759-1833). Most people know Wilberforce as the man who brought an end to the British slave trade. He served for half a century in the House of Commons. And led by his Christian faith, he tirelessly worked for the abolition of slavery. But that was only one of the “two great objects” of his life. The other, even more daunting was his attempt to transform the civil and moral climate of his times. Although he is known as an abolitionist, the other great accomplishment of his life was in the reformation of manners.

I believe he provides a positive example of how Christians should engage the world. We should do so with courage, compassion, character, and civility.

Notes

1. John Marks, “The American Uncivil Wars: How Crude, Ruse and Obnoxious Behavior Has Replaced Good Manners and Why That Hurts Our Politics and Culture,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 22 April 1996, 66-72.
2. Stephen Carter, *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 11.
3. Antonia Barber, “Rough Language Plagues Schools, Educators

Say," *USA Today*, 11 March 1997, 6D.

4. Marks, "The American Uncivil Wars," 66.

5. Carter, *Civility*, 28.

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A Biblical View of Economics – A Christian Life Perspective

Kerby Anderson shows that economics is an important part of one's Christian worldview. Our view of economics is where many of Christ's teachings find their daily application.

In this article we are going to be developing a Christian view of economics. Although most of us do not think of economics in moral terms, there has (until the last century) always been a strong connection between economics and Christian thought.

✘ If you look at the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, you find whole sections of his theological work devoted to economic issues. He asked such questions as: "What is a just price?" or "How should we deal with poverty?"

Today, these questions, if they are even discussed at all, would be discussed in a class on economic theory. But in his time, these were theological questions that were a critical and integral part of the educational curricula.

In the Protestant Reformation, we find the same thing. In John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, whole sections

are devoted to government and economics. So Christians should not feel that economics is outside the domain of Christian thinking. If anything, we need to recapture this arena and bring a strong biblical message to it.

In reality, the Bible speaks to economic issues more than any other issue. Whole sections of the book of Proverbs and many of the parables of Jesus deal with economic matters. They tell us what our attitude should be toward wealth and how a Christian should handle his or her finances. The Bible also provides a description of human nature, which helps us evaluate the possible success of an economic system in society.

The Bible teaches that there are two aspects to human nature. First, we are created in the image of God and thus able to control the economic system. But second, human beings are sinful and thus tend towards greed and exploitation. This points to the need to protect individuals from human sinfulness in the economic system. So Christians have a much more balanced view of economics and can therefore construct economic theories and analyze existing economic systems.

Christians should see the fallacy of such utopian economic theories because they fail to take seriously human sinfulness. Instead of changing people from the inside out as the gospel does, Marxists believe that people will be changed from the outside in. Change the economic base, they say, and you will change human beings. This is one of the reasons that Marxism was doomed to failure, because it did not take into account human sinfulness and our need for spiritual redemption.

It is important for Christians to think about the economic arena. It is a place where much of everyday life takes place, and we can evaluate economics from a biblical perspective. When we use the Bible as our framework, we can begin to construct a government and an economy that liberates human potentiality and limits human sinfulness.

Many Christians are surprised to find out how much the Bible says about economic issues. And one of the most important aspects of the biblical teaching is not the specific economic matters it explores, but the more general description of human nature.

Economics and Human Nature

When we are looking at either theories of government or theories of economics, an important starting point is our view of human nature. This helps us analyze these theories and predict their possible success in society. Therefore, we must go to the Scriptures to evaluate the very foundation of each economic theory.

First, the Bible says that human beings are created in the image of God. This implies that we have rationality and responsibility. Because we have rationality and volition, we can choose between various competing products and services. Furthermore, we can function within a market system in which people can exercise their power of choice. We are not like the animals that are governed by instinct. We are governed by rationality and can make meaningful choices within a market system.

We can also assume that private property can exist within this system because of the biblical idea of dominion. In Genesis 1:28, God says we are to subdue the earth and have dominion over the creation. Certainly one aspect of this is that humans can own property in which they can exercise their dominion.

Since we have both volition and private property rights, we can then assume that we should have the freedom to exchange these private property rights in a free market where goods and services can be exchanged.

The second part of human nature is also important. The Bible describes the fall of the world and the fall of mankind. We

are fallen creatures with a sin nature. This sinfulness manifests itself in selfishness, greed, and exploitation. Thus, we need some protection in an economic system from the sinful effects of human interaction.

Since the Bible teaches about the effects of sinful behavior on the world, we should be concerned about any system that would concentrate economic power and thereby unleash the ravages of sinful behavior on the society. Christians, therefore, should reject state-controlled or centrally controlled economies, which would concentrate power in the hands of a few sinful individuals. Instead, we should support an economic system that would disperse that power and protect us from greed and exploitation.

Finally, we should also recognize that not only is human nature fallen, but the world is fallen. The world has become a place of decay and scarcity. In a fallen world, we have to be good managers of the limited resources that can be made available in a market economy. God has given us dominion over His creation, and we must be good stewards of the resources at our disposal.

The free enterprise system has provided the greatest amount of freedom and the most effective economic gains of any economic system ever devised. Nevertheless, Christians often wonder if they can support capitalism. So the rest of this article, we are going to take a closer look at the free enterprise system.

Capitalism: Foundations

Capitalism had its beginning with the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*, written by Adam Smith in 1776. He argued that the mercantile economic system working at that time in Great Britain was not the best economic foundation. Instead, he argued that the wealth of nations could be increased by allowing the individual to seek his own self-interest and by removing governmental control over the economy.

His theory rested on three major premises. First, his system was based upon the observation that people are motivated by self-interest. He said, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." Smith went on to say that "neither intends to promote the public interest," yet each is "led by an invisible hand to promote an end that was not part of [his] intention."

A second premise of Adam Smith was the acceptance of private property. Property was not to be held in common but owned and freely traded in a market system. Profits generated from the use and exchange of private property rights provided incentive and became the mechanism that drives the capitalist system.

From a Christian perspective we can see that the basis of private property rests in our being created in God's image. We can make choices over property that we can exchange in a market system. The need for private property grows out of our sinfulness. Our sinful nature produces laziness, neglect, and slothfulness. Economic justice can best be achieved if each person is accountable for his own productivity.

A third premise of Adam Smith's theory was the minimization of the role of government. Borrowing a phrase from the French physiocrats, he called this *laissez-faire*. Smith argued that we should decrease the role of government and increase the role of a free market.

Historically, capitalism has had a number of advantages. It has liberated economic potential. It has also provided the foundation for a great deal of political and economic freedom. When government is not controlling markets, then there is economic freedom to be involved in a whole array of entrepreneurial activities.

Capitalism has also led to a great deal of political freedom, because once you limit the role of government in economics,

you limit the scope of government in other areas. It is no accident that most of the countries with the greatest political freedom usually have a great deal of economic freedom.

At the outset, let me say that Christians cannot and should not endorse every aspect of capitalism. For example, many proponents of capitalism hold a view known as utilitarianism, which is opposed to the notion of biblical absolutes. Certainly we must reject this philosophy. But here I would like to provide an economic critique.

Capitalism: Economic Criticisms

The first economic criticism is that capitalism leads to monopolies. These develop for two reasons: too little government and too much government. Monopolies have occurred in the past because government has not been willing to exercise its God-given authority. Government finally stepped in and broke up the big trusts that were not allowing the free enterprise system to function correctly.

But in recent decades, the reason for monopolies has often been too much government. Many of the largest monopolies today are government sanctioned or sponsored monopolies that prevent true competition from taking place. The solution is for government to allow a freer market where competition can take place.

Let me add that many people often call markets with limited competition monopolies when the term is not appropriate. For example, the three major U.S. car companies may seem like a monopoly or oligopoly until you realize that in the market of consumer durables the true market is the entire western world.

The second criticism of capitalism is that it leads to pollution. In a capitalistic system, pollutants are considered externalities. The producer will incur costs that are external

to the firm so often there is no incentive to clean up the pollution. Instead, it is dumped into areas held in common such as the air or water.

The solution in this case is governmental intervention. But I don't believe that this should be a justification for building a massive bureaucracy. We need to find creative ways to direct self-interest so that people work towards the common good.

For example, most communities use the water supply from a river and dump treated waste back into the water to flow downstream. Often there is a tendency to cut corners and leave the waste treatment problem for those downstream. But if you required that the water intake pipe be downstream and the waste pipe be upstream you could insure less pollution problems. It is now in the self-interest of the community to clean the wastewater being pumped back into the river. So while there is a need for governmental action, much less might be needed if we think of creative ways to constrain self-interest and make it work for the common good.

We can acknowledge that although there are some valid economic criticisms of capitalism, these can be controlled by limited governmental control. And when capitalism is wisely controlled, it generates significant economic prosperity and economic freedom for its citizens. Next, let us discuss some of the moral problems of capitalism.

Capitalism: Moral Critiques

One of the first moral arguments against capitalism involves the issue of greed. And this is why many Christians feel ambivalent towards the free enterprise system. After all, some critics of capitalism contend that this economic system makes people greedy.

To answer this question we need to resolve the following question. Does capitalism make people greedy or do we already

have greedy people who use the economic freedom of the capitalistic system to achieve their ends? In light of the biblical description of human nature, the latter seems more likely.

Because people are sinful and selfish, some are going to use the capitalist system to feed their greed. But that is not so much a criticism of capitalism as it is a realization of the human condition. The goal of capitalism is not to change people but to protect us from human sinfulness.

Capitalism is a system in which bad people can do the least harm, and good people have the freedom to do good works. Capitalism works well if you have completely moral individuals. But it also functions adequately when you have selfish and greedy people.

Important to this discussion is the realization that there is a difference between self-interest and selfishness. All people have self-interest and that can operate in ways that are not selfish. For example, it is in my self-interest to get a job and earn an income so that I can support my family. I can do that in ways that are not selfish.

Adam Smith recognized that every one of us have self-interest and rather than trying to change that, he made self-interest the motor of the capitalist system. And before you react to that, consider the fact that even the gospel appeals to our self-interest. It is in our self-interest to accept Jesus Christ as our savior so that our eternal destiny will be assured.

By contrast, other economic systems like socialism ignore the biblical definitions of human nature. Thus, they allow economic power to be centralized and concentrate power in the hands of a few greedy people. Those who complain of the influence major corporations have on our lives should consider the socialist alternative of how a few governmental

bureaucrats control every aspect of their lives.

Greed certainly occurs in the capitalist system. But it does not surface just in this economic system. It is part of our sinfulness. The solution is not to change the economic system, but to change human nature with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, we may readily acknowledge that capitalism has its flaws as an economic system, but it can be controlled to give us a great deal of economic prosperity and economic freedom.

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Technological Challenges of the 21st Century

We live in historic times. And we will face new challenges as we enter the 21st century, especially in the area of technology. The fields of biotechnology and information technology have the capacity to change the social landscape and even alter the way we make ethical decisions. These are not challenges for the faint-hearted. We must bring a tough-minded Christianity into the 21st century.

We are reminded in 1 Chronicles 12:32 (NIV) that the men of Issachar “understood the times and knew what Israel should do.” Likewise, we must understand our times and know what we should do. New ethical challenges await us as we consider the moral issues of our day and begin to analyze them from a biblical perspective.

We should also enter into the task with humility. Over a hundred years ago, Charles Duell, Director of the U.S. Patent

Office, was ready to close his office down because he believed that “Everything that can be invented has been invented.”^{1} We should not make the mistake of thinking that we can accurately see into the future. However, we can analyze trends and look at new inventions and begin to see the implications of these remarkable changes. Our challenge will always be to apply the timeless truths of Scripture to the quickly changing world around us.

How should Christians analyze the technological changes taking place? First we must begin by developing a theology of technology.

Theology of Technology

Technology is really nothing more than the systematic modification of the environment for human ends. This might be a process or activity that extends or enhances a human function. A telescope extends man’s visual perception. A tractor extends one’s physical ability. A computer extends a person’s ability to calculate.

The biblical mandate for developing and using technology is stated in Genesis 1:28. God gave mankind dominion over the land, and we are obliged to use and manage these resources wisely in serving the Lord. God’s ideal was not to have a world composed exclusively of primitive areas. Before the Fall (Gen. 2:15) Adam was to cultivate and keep the Garden of Eden. After the Fall the same command pertains to the application of technology to this fallen world, a world that “groans” in travail (Rom. 8:22). Technology can benefit mankind in exercising proper dominion, and thus remove some of the effects of the Fall (such as curing disease, breeding livestock, or growing better crops).

Technology is neither good or evil. The worldview behind the particular technology determines its value. In the Old Testament, technology was used both for good (e.g., the

building of the ark, Gen. 6) and for evil (e.g., the building of the Tower of Babel, Gen. 11). Therefore, the focus should not be so much on the technology itself as on the philosophical motivation behind its use. Here are three important principles that should be considered.

First, technology should be seen as a tool, not as an end in itself. There is nothing sacred about technology. Unfortunately, Western culture tends to rely on it more than is appropriate. If a computer, for example, proves a particular point, people have a greater tendency to believe it than if the answer was a well-reasoned conclusion given by a person. If a machine can do the job, employers are prone to mechanize, even if human labor does a better or more creative job. Often our society unconsciously places machines over man. Humans become servants to machines rather than the other way around.

There is a tendency to look to science and engineering to solve problems that really may be due to human sinfulness (wars, prejudice, greed), the fallenness of the world (death, disease), or God's curse on Adam (finite resources). In Western culture especially, we tend to believe that technology will save us from our problems and thus we use technology as a substitute for God. Christians must not fall into this trap, but instead must exhibit their ultimate dependence on God. Christians must also differentiate between problems that demand a technological solution and ones that can be remedied by a social or spiritual one.

Second, technology should be applied in different ways, according to specific instructions. For example, there are distinctions between man and animal that, because we are created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), call for different applications of medical science. Using artificial insemination to improve the genetic fitness of livestock does not justify using it on human beings. Christians should resist the idea that just because we *can* do something, we *should* do it.

Technological ability does not grant moral permission.

Third, ethics, rather than technology, must determine the direction of our society. Jacques Ellul has expressed the concern that technology moves society instead of vice versa.[{2}](#) Our society today seems all too motivated by a technological imperative in our culture. The technological ability to do something is not the same as a moral imperative to do it. Technology should not determine ethics.

Though scientists may possess the technological ability to be gods, they nevertheless lack the capacity to act like gods. Too often, man has tried to use technology to become God. He uses it to work out his own physical salvation, to enhance his own development, or even to attempt to create life. Christians who take seriously human fallenness will humbly admit that we often do not know enough about God's creation to use technology wisely. The reality of human sinfulness means that society should be careful to prevent the use of technology for greed and exploitation.

Technology's fruits can be both sweet and bitter. C. S. Lewis writes in the *Abolition of Man*, "From this point of view, what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be power exercised by some men over men with Nature as its instrument. . . . There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows the triumphal car."[{3}](#)

Christians must bring strong biblical critique to each technological advance and analyze its impact. The goal should be to liberate the positive effects of technology while restraining negative effects by setting up appropriate constraints against abuse.

The Challenge of Biotechnology

The age of biotechnology has arrived. For the first time in human history it is possible to completely redesign existing organisms, including man, and to direct the genetic and reproductive constitution of every living thing. Scientists are no longer limited to breeding and cross-pollination. Powerful genetic tools allow us to change genetic structure at the microscopic level and bypass the normal processes of reproduction.

For the first time in human history it is also possible to make multiple copies of any existing organism or of certain sections of its genetic structure. This ability to clone existing organisms or their genes gives scientists a powerful tool to reproduce helpful and useful genetic material within a population.

Scientists are also developing techniques to treat and cure genetic diseases through genetic surgery and genetic therapy. They can already identify genetic sequences that are defective, and soon scientists will be able to replace these defects with properly functioning genes.

Gene splicing (known as recombinant DNA technology) is fundamentally different from other forms of genetic breeding used in the past. Breeding programs work on existing arrays of genetic variability in a species, isolating specific genetic traits through selective breeding. Scientists using gene splicing can essentially “stack” the deck or even produce an entirely new deck of genetic “cards.”

But this powerful ability to change the genetic deck of cards also raises substantial scientific concerns that some “sleight-of-hand” would produce dangerous consequences. Ethan Singer said, “Those who are powerful in society will do the shuffling; their genes will be shuffled in one direction, while the genes of the rest of us will get shuffled in

another.”{4} Also there is the concern that a reshuffled deck of genes might create an Andromeda strain similar to the one envisioned by Michael Crichton in his book by the same title.{5} A microorganism might inadvertently be given the genetic structure for some pathogen for which there is no antidote or vaccine.

The potential benefits of gene splicing are significant. First, the technology can be used to produce medically important substances. The list of these substances is quite large and would include insulin, interferon, and human growth hormone. The technology also has great application in the field of immunology. In order to protect organisms from viral disease, doctors must inject a killed or attenuated virus. Scientists can use the technology to disable a toxin gene, thus producing a viral substance that triggers production of antibodies without the possibility of producing the disease.

A second benefit is in the field of agriculture. This technology can improve the genetic fitness of various plant species. Basic research using this technology could increase the efficiency of photosynthesis, increase plant resistance (to salinity, to drought, to viruses), and reduce a plant's demand for nitrogen fertilizer.

Third, gene splicing can aid industrial and environmental processes. Industries that manufacture drugs, plastics, industrial chemicals, vitamins, and cheese will benefit from this technology. Also scientists have begun to develop organisms that can clean up oil spills or toxic wastes.

This last benefit, however, also raises one of the greatest scientific concerns over the use of biotechnology. The escape (or even intentional release) of a genetically engineered organism might wreak havoc on the environment. Scientists have created microorganisms that dissolve oil spills or reduce frost on plants. Critics of gene splicing fear that radically altered organisms could occupy new ecological niches, destroy

existing ecosystems, or drive certain species to extinction.

A significant question is whether life should be patented at all. Most religious leaders say no. A 1995 gathering of religious leaders representing virtually every major religious tradition spoke out against the patenting of genetically engineered substances. They argued that life is the creation of God, not humans, and should not be patented as human inventions.[\[6\]](#)

The broader theological question is *whether* genetic engineering should be used and, if permitted, *how* it should be used. The natural reaction for many in society is to reject new forms of technology because they are dangerous. Christians, however, should take into account God's command to humankind in the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28). Christians should avoid the reflex reaction that scientists should not tinker with life; instead Christians should consider how this technology should be used responsibly.

One key issue is the worldview behind most scientific research. Modern science rests on an evolutionary assumption. Many scientists assume that life on this planet is the result of millions of years of a chance evolutionary process. Therefore they conclude that intelligent scientists can do a better job of directing the evolutionary process than nature can do by chance. Even evolutionary scientists warn of this potential danger. Ethan Singer believes that scientists will "verify a few predictions, and then gradually forget that knowing something isn't the same as knowing everything. . . . At each stage we will get a little cockier, a little surer we know all the possibilities."[\[7\]](#)

In essence biotechnology gives scientists the tools they have always wanted to drive the evolutionary spiral higher and higher. Julian Huxley looked forward to the day in which scientists could fill the "position of business manager for the cosmic process of evolution."[\[8\]](#) Certainly this technology

enables scientists to create new forms of life and alter existing forms in ways that have been impossible until now.

How should Christians respond? They should humbly acknowledge that God is the sovereign Creator and that man has finite knowledge. Genetic engineering gives scientists the technological ability to be gods, but they lack the wisdom, knowledge, and moral capacity to act like God.

Even evolutionary scientists who deny the existence of God and believe that all life is the result of an impersonal evolutionary process express concern about the potential dangers of this technology. Erwin Chargaff asked, "Have we the right to counteract, irreversibly, the evolutionary wisdom of millions of years, in order to satisfy the ambition and curiosity of a few scientists?"^{9} His answer is no. The Christian's answer should also be the same when we realize that God is the Creator of life. We do not have the right to "rewrite the fifth day of creation."^{10}

What is the place for genetic engineering within a biblical framework? The answer to that question can be found by distinguishing between two types of research. The first could be called genetic repair. This research attempts to remove genetic defects and develop techniques that will provide treatments for existing diseases. Applications would include various forms of genetic therapy and genetic surgery as well as modifications of existing microorganisms to produce beneficial results.

The Human Genome Project has been able to pinpoint the location and sequence of the approximately 100,000 human genes.^{11} Further advances in biotechnology will allow scientists to repair these defective sequences and eventually remove these genetic diseases from our population.

Genetic disease is not part of God's plan for the world. It is the result of the Fall (Gen. 3). Christians can apply

technology to fight these evils without being accused of fighting against God's will.^{12} Genetic engineering can and should be used to treat and cure genetic diseases.

A second type of research is the creation of new forms of life. While minor modifications of existing organisms may be permissible, Christians should be concerned about the large-scale production of novel life forms. That potential impact on the environment and on mankind could be considerable. Science is replete with examples of what can happen when an existing organism is introduced into a new environment (e.g., the rabbit into Australia, the rat to Hawaii, or the gypsy moth in the United States). One can only imagine the potential devastation that could occur when a newly created organism is introduced into a new environment.

God created plants and animals as "kinds" (Gen. 1:24). While there is minor variability within these created kinds, there are built-in barriers between these created kinds. Redesigning creatures of any kind cannot be predicted the same way new elements on the periodic chart can be predicted for properties even before they are discovered. Recombinant DNA technology offers great promise in treating genetic disease, but Christians should also be vigilant. While this technology should be used to repair genetic defects, it should not be used to confer the role of creator on scientists.

A related issue in the field of biotechnology is human cloning. It appears that the cloning of a human being will no doubt take place some time in the future since many other mammals have been cloned. Proponents of human cloning argue that it would be a worthwhile scientific endeavor for at least three reasons. First, cloning could be used to produce spare parts. The clone would be genetically identical to the original person, so that a donated organ would not be rejected by the immune system. Second, they argue that cloning might be a way to replace a lost child. A dying infant or child could be cloned so that a couple would replace the child with a

genetically identical child. Third, cloning could produce biological immortality. One woman approached scientists in order to clone her deceased father and offered to carry the cloned baby to term herself.[\[13\]](#)

While cloning of various organisms may be permissible, cloning a human being raises significant questions beginning with the issue of the sanctity of life. Human beings are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28) and therefore differ from animals. Human cloning would certainly threaten the sanctity of human life at a number of levels. First, cloning is an inefficient process of procreation as shown in cloning of a sheep. Second, cloning would no doubt produce genetic accidents. Previous experiments with frogs produced numerous embryos that did not survive, and many of those that did survive developed into grotesque monsters. Third, researchers often clone human embryos for various experiments. Although the National Bioethics Advisory Commission did ban cloning of human beings, it permitted the cloning of human embryos for research. Since these embryos are ultimately destroyed, this research raises the same pro-life concerns discussed in the chapter on abortion.

Cloning represents a tampering with the reproductive process at the most basic level. Cloning a human being certainly strays substantially from God's intended procedure of a man and woman producing children within the bounds of matrimony (Gen. 2:24). All sorts of bizarre scenarios can be envisioned. Some homosexual advocates argue that cloning would be an ideal way for homosexual men to reproduce themselves.

Although this would be an alternative form of reproduction, it is reasonable to believe that human clones would still be fully human. For example, some people wonder if a clone would have a soul since this would be such a diversion from God's intended process of procreation. A traducian view of the origin of the soul, where a person receives both body and soul from his parents rather than an act of special creation by

God, would imply that a cloned human being would have a soul. In a sense a clone would be no different from an identical twin.

Human cloning, like other forms of genetic engineering, could be used to usher in a “brave new world.” James Bonner says “there is nothing to prevent us from taking a thousand [cells]. We could grow any desired number of genetically identical people from individuals who have desirable characteristics.”^{14} Such a vision conjures up images of Alphas, Betas, Gammas, and Deltas from Aldous Huxley’s book *Brave New World* and provides a dismal contrast to God’s creation of each individual as unique.

Each person contributes to both the unity and diversity of humanity. This is perhaps best expressed by the Jewish Midrash: “For a man stamps many coins in one mold and they are all alike; but the King who is king over all kings, the Holy One blessed be he, stamped every man in the mold of the first man, yet not one of them resembles his fellow.”^{15} Christians should reject future research plans to clone a human being and should reject using cloning as an alternative means of reproduction.

The Challenge of Information Technology

The information revolution is the latest technological advance Christians must consider. The shift to computers and an information-based society has been swift as well as spectacular. The first electronic digital computer, ENIAC, weighed thirty tons, had 18,000 vacuum tubes, and occupied a space as large as a boxcar.^{16} Less than forty years later, many hand-held calculators had comparable computing power for a few dollars. Today most people have a computer on their desk with more computing power than engineers could imagine just a few years ago.

The impact of computers on our society was probably best seen

when in 1982 *Time* magazine picked the computer as its “Man of the Year”—actually listing it as “Machine of the Year.”[{17}](#) It is hard to imagine a picture of the Spirit of St. Louis or an Apollo lander on the magazine cover under a banner “Machine of the Year.” This perhaps shows how influential the computer has become in our society.

The computer has become helpful in managing knowledge at a time when the amount of information is expanding exponentially. The information stored in the world’s libraries and computers doubles every eight years.[{18}](#) In a sense the computer age and the information age seem to go hand in hand.

The rapid development and deployment of computing power however has also raised some significant social and moral questions. People in this society need to think clearly about these issues, but often ignore them or become confused.

One key issue is computer crime. In a sense computer fraud is merely a new field with old problems. Computer crimes are often nothing more than fraud, larceny, and embezzlement carried out by more sophisticated means. The crimes usually involve changing address, records, or files. In short, they are old-fashioned crimes using high technology.

Another concern arises from the centralization of information. Governmental agencies, banks, and businesses use computers to collect information on its citizens and customers. For example, it is estimated that the federal government has on average about fifteen files on each American.[{19}](#) Nothing is inherently wrong with collecting information if the information can be kept confidential and is not used for immoral actions. Unfortunately this is often difficult to guarantee.

In an information-based society, the centralization of information can be as dangerous as the centralization of power. Given sinful man in a fallen world, we should be

concerned about the collection and manipulation of vast amounts of personal information.

In the past, centralized information processing was used for persecution. When Adolf Hitler's Gestapo began rounding up millions of Jews, information about their religious affiliation was stored in shoe boxes. U.S. Census Bureau punch cards were used to round up Japanese Americans living on the West Coast at the beginning of World War II.[{20}](#) Modern technology makes this task much easier. Governmental agencies routinely collect information about citizens' ethnic origin, race, religion, gross income, and even political preference.

Moreover, the problem is not limited to governmental agencies. Many banking systems, for example, utilize electronic funds-transfer systems. Plans to link these systems together into a national system could also provide a means of tracking the actions of citizens. A centralized banking network could fulfill nearly every information need a malevolent dictator might have. This is not to say that such a thing will happen. It does mean, however, that societies that want to monitor their citizens will be able to do so more efficiently with computer technology.

A related problem arises from the confidentiality of computer records. Computer records can be abused like any other system. Reputations built up over a lifetime can be ruined by computer errors and often there is little recourse for the victim. Congress passed the 1974 Privacy Act which allows citizens to find out what records federal bureaucracies have on them and to correct any errors.[{21}](#) But more legislation is needed than this particular act.

The proliferation of computers has presented another set of social and moral concerns. In the recent past most of that information was centralized and required the expertise of the "high priests of FORTRAN" to utilize it. Now most people have access to information because of increasing numbers of

personal computers and increased access to information through the Internet. This access to information will have many interesting sociological ramifications, and it is also creating a set of troubling ethical questions. The proliferation of computers that can tie into other computers provides more opportunities for computerized crime.

The news media frequently carry reports about computer "hackers" who have been able to gain access to confidential computer systems and obtain or interfere with the data banks. Although these were supposed to be secure systems, enterprising computer hackers broke in anyway. In many cases this merely involved curious teenagers. Nevertheless computer hacking has become a developing area of crime. Criminals might use computer access to forge documents, change records, and draft checks. They can even use computers for blackmail by holding files for ransom and threatening to destroy them if their demands are not met. Unless better methods of security are found, professional criminals will begin to crack computer security codes and gain quick access into sensitive files.

As with most technological breakthroughs, engineers have outrun lawmakers. Computer deployment has created a number of legal questions. First, there is the problem of establishing penalties of computer crime. Typically, intellectual property has a different status in our criminal justice system. Legal scholars should evaluate the notion that ideas and information need not be protected in the same way as property. Legislators need to enact computer information protection laws that will deter criminals, or even curious computer hackers, from breaking into confidential records.

A second legal problem arises from the question of jurisdiction. Telecommunications allows information to be shared across state and even national borders. Few federal statutes govern this area and less than half the states have laws dealing with information abuse.

Enforcement will also be a problem for several reasons. One reason is the previously stated problem of jurisdiction. Another is that police departments rarely train their personnel in computer abuse and fraud. A third reason is lack of personnel. Computers are nearly as ubiquitous as telephones or photocopiers.

Computer fraud also raises questions about the role of insurance companies. How do companies insure an electronic asset? What value does computer information have? These questions also need to be addressed in the future.

Technology and Human Nature

These new technologies will also challenge our views of human nature. Already medical technology is challenging our views of what it means to be human. A key question in the abortion debate is, When does human life begin? Is an embryo human? What about a developing fetus? Although the Bible provides answers to these questions, society often takes its cue from pronouncements that do not square with biblical truth.

Biotechnology raises yet another set of questions. Is a frozen embryo human and deserving of a right to life? Is a clone human? Would a clone have a soul? These and many more questions will have to be answered. Although the Bible doesn't directly address such issues as genetically engineered humans or clones, key biblical passages (Ps. 139, Ps. 51:5) certainly seem to teach that an embryo is a human created in the image of God.

Information technology also raises questions about human nature in an unexpected way. Researchers believe that as computer technology advances, we will begin to analyze the human mind in physical terms. In *The Society of Mind*, Marvin Minsky, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that "the mind, the soul, the self, are not a singly ghostly entity but a society of agents, deeply

integrated, yet each one rather mindless on its own.”[{22}](#) He dreams of being able ultimately to reduce mind (and therefore human nature) to natural mechanism. Obviously this is not an empirical statement, but a metaphysical one that attempts to reduce everything (including mind) to matter.

Will we some day elevate computers to the level of humanity? One article asked the question, Would an Intelligent Computer Have a “Right to Life?”[{23}](#) Granting computer rights might be something society might consider since many are already willing to grant certain rights to animals.

In a sense the question is whether an intelligent computer would have a soul and therefore access to fundamental human rights. As bizarre as the question may sound, it was no doubt inevitable. When 17th century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz first described a thinking machine, he was careful to point out that this machine would not have a soul—fearful perhaps of reaction from the church. Already scientists predict that computer intelligence will create “an intelligence beyond man’s” and provide wonderful new capabilities.[{25}](#) One of the great challenges in the future will be how to manage new computing power that will outstrip human intelligence.

Once again this is a challenge for Christians in the 21 st century. Human beings are more than just proteins and nucleic acids. Human being are more than bits and bytes. We are created in the image of God and therefore have a spiritual dimension. Perhaps this must be our central message to a world enamored with technology: human beings are created in the image of God and must be treated with dignity and respect.

Notes

1. Memo from Charles H. Duell, Director of the U.S. Patent Office, 1899.

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6. Kenneth Woodward, "Thou Shalt Not Patent!" *Newsweek*, 29 May 1995, 68.
7. Testimony by Ethan Singer before the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearings*, 15 March 1977, 79.
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Privacy 2000

Introduction

Privacy is something I believe we all take for granted until we lose it. Then we begin to think about how someone invaded our privacy, often by incremental steps. In this article we are going to discuss ways in which we have lost our privacy. Most of the intrusions into our lives come from government, but not all. Businesses also buy and sell information about us every day. Most of us would be shocked to find out how much personal information is in databases around the country.

As we cover this important issue of privacy and focus on a specific threats to our privacy I want to begin by highlighting how quickly our privacy is being lost and how often it takes place without any debate.

Let's look at the last few years of congressional debate. It's amazing to me that there never was an extended debate on the issue of privacy. Granted there wasn't a lot of debate on a number of issues, but the lack of debate on this fundamental issue shows how far down the road we have gone. Let's look at a few of these issues.

For example, we saw absolutely no debate on issues such as the national ID card, the medical ID number, the administration's encryption policy, and the expansion of the FBI's wiretap capability.

Some of the proposals were defeated, at least for now. The national ID card was defeated, for example, not because Congress debated the issue, but because thousands of Americans wrote letters and made phone calls. Most other issues, however, are moving ahead. Congress gave the FBI permission to use "roving wiretap surveillance." That means that the next time you use a pay phone at your local grocery store, it may

be tapped merely because there's a criminal suspect within the area. One wiretap order in California authorized surveillance on 350 phones for over two years. In another case, five pay phones were tapped, intercepting 131,000 conversations.

Those are just a few of the examples we will discuss on the subject of privacy. Unfortunately whenever someone cries for privacy, another is sure to ask, "What do you have to hide?" The question confuses privacy and secrecy. I don't really have anything I want to keep secret, but I'm not too excited about the government listening to every one of my phone conversations. You may not want your future boss to know that you have a genetic predisposition to breast cancer. You may not want a telemarketer to know what you just recently purchased so that he can call your home number and try to sell you more. The point is that each day we are losing a bit of our privacy. And we will continue to do so unless we work to establish some limits to this invasion of our privacy.

National ID Card

Issuing internal passports has been one of the methods used by communist leaders to control their people. Citizens had to carry these passports at all times and had to present them to authorities if they wanted to travel within the country, live in another part of the country, or apply for a job.

A few years ago, the Department of Transportation called for the establishment of a national ID system by October, 2000. Although presented as merely a move toward standardization, this seemed to many as a move toward a national passport to allow the government to "check up" on its citizens.

A little history is in order. Back in 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. This charged the federal Department of Transportation with establishing national requirements for birth certificates and driver's licenses. Add to this the 1996 Kennedy-Kassebaum

health-care law that implies that Americans may be required in the future to produce a state- issued ID that conforms to federal specifications.

If all of this sounds to you like Big Brother or even the mark of the beast, then you have company. Congressman Ron Paul believes that the Department of Transportation regulations would adversely affect Americans and fought to end these regulations.

The law ordered the Attorney General to conduct pilot programs where the state driver's license includes a "machine-readable" social security number. It also ordered the development of a social security card that uses magnetic strips, holograms, and integrated circuits.

The good news is that the work by Congressmen Ron Paul and Bob Barr paid off and the attempt to create a national ID card was stopped, for now. But it is likely to surface again. After all there has been a push to establish a federal database for Americans and having each person carry an ID card would allow that information to be linked to a federal database. And while it would help the government catch illegal aliens, it could also be used to track law-abiding American citizens.

Tracking down illegal aliens and standardizing licenses are worthy goals. But the ends do not justify the means. That is why so many people wrote Congress to stop this push for a national ID card. Sometimes in the midst of this political debate, citizens must ask themselves how much they value their freedom and privacy.

Congressman Bob Barr says, "Novelists Aldous Huxley and George Orwell have given us countless reasons why we shouldn't trade our privacy for any benefit, no matter how worthwhile it sounds." In the end, we must ask, At what cost? Is it worth trading our privacy for the benefits government promises? The answer is no, and that's why we need to pay attention to

governmental attempts to invade our privacy.

Carnivore

We've talked about attempts to establish a national ID card and attempts to expand wiretaps. Another threat to privacy is Carnivore, the FBI's newest electronic snooping device that can read your e-mail right off your mail server.

Packed in a slim laptop computer, this program looks downright docile, but privacy advocates believe that it is quite dangerous. This automated system to wiretap the Internet is called Carnivore because it rapidly finds the "meat" in vast amounts of data. The programmers devised a "packet sniffer" system that can analyze packets of data flowing through computer networks to determine whether it is part of an e-mail message or some other piece of Web traffic.

The FBI has been quietly monitoring e-mail for about a year. Finally the bureau went public with their operation to what the *Wall Street Journal* called "a roomful of astonished industry specialists." Although the device has been used in less than 100 cases, there is every reason to believe that it will be expanded. A judge can issue a court order to tap your e-mail just as they tap your phones.

In this electronic age, new devices threaten our privacy. And in this current political climate, administration officials seem to have little concern about threats to our Fourth Amendment rights. Critics argue that Carnivore, like some ravenous beast, will be too hungry to be trusted. But the FBI says that this new device can be tailored to distinguish between packets of information and only grab e-mails from the suspect. Carnivore appears to be more discriminating than a standard telephone wire tap. The FBI says that messages belonging to those not being probed (even if criminal) would not be admissible in court. Perhaps that is true, but privacy advocates wonder how this new device will be used in the

future.

Carnivore is nothing more than a standard computer with special software. The computer is kept in a locked cage for about a month and a half. Every day an agent comes by and retrieves the previous day's e-mail sent to or by someone suspected of a crime. But it can also capture file downloads and chat room conversations. And once it is installed, the FBI can dial into Carnivore to make changes and monitor data that have been collected.

Critics are concerned that Carnivore will soon become a hungry beast, ready to devour personal and confidential information in people's e-mail messages. The FBI says that won't happen, but such assurances do nothing to mollify the critics. Maybe Carnivore will never tap into your e-mails, but its existence is just one more good reason why we should be careful about what we put in our e-mails.

Encryption

The privacy threats surrounding today's technology are numerous, and I want to turn to computers and talk about another important issue: encryption. Now I know that's probably an unfamiliar word. But stay with me. Encryption is big word for a big issue that I think you need to know about.

Encryption is a relatively new technology that enables you to have private phone conversations and send e-mail messages that are secure. Encryption codes your words so that they cannot be deciphered by people listening in on your conversation or reading your mail.

As you may know, nosy people already can listen in on your wireless phone calls (cellular or cordless phones). And they can intercept and read your e-mail. Sending e-mail without encryption is like mailing a postcard—everyone can read it along the way. And we all know that people will do exactly

that. If you have ever had a phone on a party line, you know that people listen in.

What you may not know is that various branches of the government are demanding the authority to read encrypted messages. Now remember that the Fourth Amendment guarantees citizens be free of unreasonable searches and seizures. Nevertheless, these and other law enforcement officers believe they have the right to open your mail.

What they are asking for is the key to the code. When you send a message in code, you need a key to enable you to send the code and the recipients need the same key to read the code. The Clinton administration is demanding access to all encryption keys. This is like giving the government the power to steam open all the letters we send in the mail. Frankly you only see this level of surveillance in totalitarian countries. If government has the key, then it could call up information on you, your family, your medical records, your bank records, your credit card purchases, and your e-mail messages to all of your friends and relatives.

What is even more disturbing is the current attempt by government to limit American citizen's access to strong and power encryption software. A new study from the Cato Institute says that "People living outside the United States find it amusing and perplexing that U.S. law regulates the distribution of strong encryption."

Everyone wants encryption in the computer age. Citizens want private communication. Businesses want to prevent billing records and personnel records from falling in the wrong hands. Consumers don't want their credit card numbers widely distributed. That is why we need strong encryption software, and that is why government should not be given a key to the messages we send. Most Americans would not like to turn over so much of their privacy to the government, but unfortunately most Americans don't realize that they already have.

Privacy and Your Life

We have been talking about the threats to our privacy through wiretaps of our phones and e-mail correspondence, as well as through the issuing of a national ID number. Common citizens are having their privacy violated in new and unexpected ways.

Such is life in the cyberage. As more and more people are seeing their privacy violated, they wonder what to do in a time of financial and personal indecent exposure. What used to be called public records weren't all that public. Now they are all too public. And what used to be considered private records are being made public at an alarming rate. What should we do?

First, don't give out personal information. You should assume that any information that you do give out will end up on a database somewhere. Phone solicitors, application forms, warranty cards all ask for information you may not want to give out. Be careful how much information you disclose.

Second, live your life above reproach. Philippians 2:14-15 says "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." 1 Timothy 3:2 says that an elder must be "above reproach" which is an attribute that should describe all of us. If you live a life of integrity, you don't have to be so concerned about what may be made public.

Third, exercise discretion, especially when you use e-mail. Too many people assume they have a one-on-one relationship with someone through the Internet. The message you send might be forwarded on to other people, and the message may even be read by other nosy people. One Web site provider says, "A good rule of thumb: Don't send any e-mail that you wouldn't want your mother to read."

Finally, get involved. When you feel your privacy has been violated, take the time to complain. Let the person or organization know your concerns. Many people fail to apply the same rules of privacy and confidentiality on a computer that they do in real life. Your complaint might change a behavior and have a positive effect.

Track congressional legislation and write letters. Many of the threats to privacy I've covered started in Congress. Citizens need to understand that many governmental policies pose a threat to our privacy. Bureaucrats and legislators are in the business of collecting information and will continue to do so unless we set appropriate limits.

Sadly most Americans are unaware of the growing threats to their privacy posed by government and private industry. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. We must continue to monitor the threats to our privacy both in the public and private sector.

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