

Pop Psychology Myths vs. A Biblical Point of View

Kerby Anderson compares some current myths with a Christian perspective informed by the timeless teaching of the Bible. These “pop psychology” ideas seem to make sense until one compares them with biblical insights from the creator of us all.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Go into any bookstore and you will see shelves of self-help books, many of which promote a form of “pop psychology.” Although these are bestsellers, they are filled with half-truths and myths. In this essay we are going to look at some of these pop psychology myths as exposed by Dr. Chris Thurman in his book *Self-Help or Self-Destruction*. If you would like more information or documentation for the issues we cover in these pages, I would recommend you obtain a copy of his book.

Myth 1: Human beings are basically good.

The first myth I would like to look at is the belief that people are basically good. Melody Beattie, author of the best-seller *Codependent No More*, says that we “suffer from that vague but penetrating affliction, low self-worth.” She suggests we stop torturing ourselves and try to raise our view of ourselves. How do we do that? She says: “Right now, we can give ourselves a big emotional and mental hug. We are okay. It’s wonderful to be who we are. Our thoughts are okay. Our feelings are appropriate. We’re right where we’re supposed to be today, this moment. There is nothing wrong with us. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with us.”

In other words, Beattie is saying that we are basically good. There is nothing wrong with us. At least there is nothing

fundamentally wrong with us. There isn't any flaw that needs to be corrected.

Peter McWilliams, in his best-seller *Life 101*, actually addresses this issue head on. This is what he says in the brief section entitled, "Are human beings fundamentally good or fundamentally evil?"

My answer: good. My proof? I could quote philosophers, psychologists, and poets, but then those who believe humans are fundamentally evil can quote just as many philosophers, psychologists, and poets. My proof, such as it is, is a simple one. It returns to the source of human life: an infant. When you look into the eyes of an infant, what do you see? I've looked into a few, and I have yet to see fundamental evil radiating from a baby's eyes. There seems to be purity, joy, brightness, splendor, sparkle, marvel, happiness—you know: good.

Before we see what the Bible says about the human condition, let me make one comment about Peter McWilliams's proof. While an infant may seem innocent to our eyes, any parent would admit that a baby is an example of the ultimate in selfishness. A baby comes into the world totally centered on his own needs and oblivious to any others.

When we look to the Bible, we get a picture radically different from that espoused by pop psychologists. Adam and Eve committed the first sin, and the human race has been born morally corrupt ever since. According to the Bible, even a seemingly innocent infant is born with a sin nature. David says in Psalm 51:5 "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." The newborn baby already has a sin nature and begins to demonstrate that sin nature early in life. Romans 3:23 tells us that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We are not good as the pop psychologists teach, and we are not gods as the new age theologians teach. We are sinful and cut off from God.

Myth 2: We need more self-esteem and self-worth.

The next myth to examine is the one that claims what we really need is more self-esteem and self-worth. In the book entitled *Self-Esteem*, Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning state, "Self-esteem is essential for psychological survival." They believe that we need to quit judging ourselves and learn to accept ourselves as we are.

They provide a series of affirmations we need to tell ourselves in order to enhance our self-esteem. First, "I am worthwhile because I breathe and feel and am aware." Well, shouldn't that also apply to animals? And do I lose my self-esteem if I stop breathing? In a sense, this affirmation is a take off on Rene Descartes's statement, "I think, therefore I am." They seem to be saying "I am, therefore I am worthwhile."

Second they say, "I am basically all right as I am." But is that true? Is it true for Charles Manson? Don't some of us, in fact all of us, need some changing? A third affirmation is "It's all right to meet my needs as I see fit." Really? What if I meet my needs in a way that harms you? Couldn't I justify all sorts of evil in order to meet my needs?

Well, you can see the problem with pop psychology's discussion of self-esteem. Rarely is it defined, and when it is defined, it can easily lead to evil and all kinds of sin.

It should probably be as no surprise that the Bible doesn't teach anything about self-esteem. In fact, it doesn't even define the word. What about the term *self-worth*? Is it synonymous with self-esteem. No, there is an important distinction between the terms *self-esteem* and *self-worth*.

William James, often considered the father of American psychology, defined *self-esteem* as "the sum of your successes and pretensions." In other words, your self-esteem is a

reflection of how you are actually performing compared to how you think you should be performing. So your self-esteem could actually fluctuate from day to day.

Self-worth, however, is different. Our worth as human beings has to do with the fact that we are created in God's image. Our worth never fluctuates because it is anchored in the fact that the Creator made us. We are spiritual as well as physical beings who have a conscience, emotions, and a will. Psalm 8 says: "You have made him [mankind] a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands, you have put all things under his feet."

So the good news is that we bear God's image, but the bad news is that all of these characteristics have been tainted by sin. Our worth should not be tied up in what we do, but in who God made us to be and what He has done for us.

Myth 3: You can't love others until you love yourself.

Now I would like to look at the myth that you can't love others until you love yourself. Remember the Whitney Houston song "The Greatest Love of All?" It says, "Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all."

Peter McWilliams, author of *Life 101*, promotes this idea in his book *Love 101* which carries the subtitle "To Love Oneself Is the Beginning of a Lifelong Romance." He asks, "Who else is more qualified to love you than you? Who else knows what you want, precisely when you want it, and is always around to supply it?" He believes that the answer to those questions is you.

He continues by saying, "If, on the other hand, you have been gradually coming to the seemingly forbidden conclusion that before we can truly love another, or allow another to properly

love us, we must first learn to love ourselves–then this book is for you.” Notice that he not only is saying that you cannot love others until you love yourself, but that you can’t love you *until you learn to love yourself*.

Melody Beattie, author of *CoDependent No More*, believes the same thing. One of the chapters in her book is entitled, “Have a Love Affair With Yourself.” Jackie Schwartz, in her book *Letting Go of Stress*, even suggests that you write a love letter and “tell yourself all the attributes you cherish about yourself, the things that really please, comfort, and excite you.”

Does the Bible teach self-love? No, it does not. If anything, the Bible warns us against such a love affair with self. Consider Paul’s admonition to Timothy: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholly, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

The Bible discourages love of self and actually begins with the assumption we already love ourselves too much and must learn to show sacrificial love (agape love) to others. It also teaches that love is an act of the will. We can choose to love someone whether the feelings are there or not.

We read in 1 John 4, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” The biblical pattern is this: God loves us, and we receive God’s love and are able to love

others.

Myth 4: You shouldn't judge anyone.

Let's discuss the myth that you shouldn't judge anyone. No doubt you have heard people say, "You're just being judgmental" or "Who are you to judge me?" You may have even said something like this.

Many pop psychologists certainly believe that you shouldn't judge anyone. In their book entitled *Self-Esteem*, Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning argue that moral judgments about people are unacceptable. They write: "Hard as it sounds, you must give up moral opinions about the actions of others. Cultivate instead the attitude that they have made the best choice available, given their awareness and needs at the time. Be clear that while their behavior may not feel or be good for you, it is not bad."

So moral judgments are not allowed. You cannot judge another person's actions, even if you feel that it is wrong. McKay and Fanning go on to say why: "What does it mean that people choose the highest good? It means that you are doing the best you can at any given time. It means that people always act according to their prevailing awareness, needs, and values. Even the terrorist planting bombs to hurt the innocent is making a decision based on his or her highest good. It means you cannot blame people for what they do. Nor can you blame yourself. No matter how distorted or mistaken a person's awareness is, he or she is innocent and blameless."

As with many of these pop psychology myths, there is a kernel of truth. True we should be very careful to avoid a judgmental spirit or quickly criticize an individual's actions when we do not possess all the facts. But the Bible does allow and even encourages us to make judgments and be discerning. In fact, the Bible should be our ultimate standard of right and wrong. If the Bible says murder is wrong, it is wrong. God's

objective standards as revealed in the Scriptures are our standard of behavior.

How do we apply these standards? Very humbly. We are warned in the gospels “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Jesus was warning us of a self-righteous attitude that could develop from pride and a hypocritical spirit. Jesus also admonished us to “take the plank out of [our] own eye” so that we would be able to “remove the speck from [our] brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:1-5).

Finally, we should acknowledge that Jesus judged people’s actions all the time, yet He never sinned. He offered moral opinions wherever He went. He said, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30). Judging is not wrong, but we should be careful to do it humbly and from a biblical perspective.

Myth 5: All guilt is bad.

Finally, I would like to look at the myth that all guilt is bad. In his best-seller, *Your Erroneous Zones*, Wayne Dyer tackles what he believes are two useless emotions: guilt and worry. Now it is true that worry is probably a useless emotion, but it is another story with guilt. Let’s begin by understanding why he calls guilt “the most useless of all erroneous zone behaviors.”

Wayne Dyer believes that guilt originates from two sources: childhood memories and current misbehavior. He says, “Thus you can look at all of your guilt either as reactions to leftover imposed standards in which you are still trying to please an absent authority figure, or as the result of trying to live up to self-imposed standards which you really don’t buy, but for some reason pay lip service to. In either case, it is stupid, and more important, useless behavior.”

He goes on to say that “guilt is not natural behavior” and that our “guilt zones” must be “exterminated, spray-cleaned and sterilized forever.” So how do you exterminate your “guilt zones”? He proposed that you “do something you know is bound to result in feelings of guilt” and then fight those feelings off.

Dyer believes that guilt is “a convenient tool for manipulation” and a “futile waste of time.” And while that is often true, he paints with too large of a brush. Some guilt can be helpful and productive. Some kinds of guilt can be a significant agent of change.

The Bible makes a distinction between two kinds of guilt: true guilt and false guilt. Notice in 2 Corinthians 7:10 that the Apostle Paul says, “Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Worldly sorrow (often called false guilt) causes us to focus on ourselves, while godly sorrow (true guilt) leads us to focus on the person or persons we have offended. Worldly sorrow (or false guilt) causes us to focus on what we have done in the past, whereas godly sorrow (or true guilt) causes us to focus on what we can do in the present to correct what we’ve done. Corrective actions that come out of worldly sorrow are motivated by the desire to stop feeling bad. Actions that come out of godly sorrow are motivated by the desire to help the offended person or to please God or to promote personal growth. Finally, the results of worldly and godly sorrow differ. Worldly sorrow results in temporary change. Godly sorrow results in true change and growth.

Pop psychology books are half right. False guilt (or worldly sorrow) is not a productive emotion, but true guilt (or godly sorrow) is an emotion God can use to bring about positive change in our lives as we recognize our guilt, ask for forgiveness, and begin to change.

It Takes a Village

Does It Take a Village to Raise a Child?

We rarely do book reviews on the Probe radio program, but from time to time a book is published that is so significant that we depart from our normal format. This essay is a discussion of the book *It Takes a Village* by Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Now it should be obvious that a discussion of this book will no doubt be controversial. After all, the Clinton administration, as well as the First Lady, has been under attack. We will not even venture to discuss any of the allegations that are so much a part of the news. Likewise we will try to avoid any partisan considerations of particular programs and policies.

The focus of this essay will be on the book *It Takes a Village*. It sets forth a clear-cut agenda, and we as Christians need to ask ourselves if this is an agenda that can be supported from the Bible. Mrs. Clinton epitomizes what many people believe could be called "the new feminism." And it is fair to say that Hillary Clinton is perhaps the most visible, prominent feminist in the world. As First Lady her ideas are given national prominence. As First Lady she addresses international women's conferences (like the ones held in Cairo and Beijing). When she writes a book setting forth her ideas, it is appropriate to evaluate those ideas in light of Scripture.

I would like to begin by focusing on the title of the book, *It*

Takes a Village. The title comes from an African proverb which states that "It takes a village to raise a child." This oft-repeated African proverb has become the mantra of recent international women's conferences (Cairo, Beijing). I believe it represents the new paradigm of feminist and socialist thinking.

At its face, there is nothing controversial about the idea that it takes more than parents to raise a child. Grandparents, friends, pastors, teachers, boy scout leaders, and many others in the community all have a role in the lives of our children. In her book, Mrs. Clinton does acknowledge that "parents bear the first and primary responsibility for their sons and daughters."

Unfortunately, the rest of the book contradicts that early statement. The First Lady essentially extends her notion of the village far beyond the family to include various organizations, especially the federal government. By the end of the book, it appears that Mrs. Clinton has never met a government program she didn't like.

She says that those who hold to an anti-government position are the "noisiest" position and getting all the attention from the media. But she goes on to say that "despite the resurgence of anti-government extremism, it is becoming clear that most Americans do not favor a radical dismantling of government. Instead of rollback, they want real reform. And when a strong case can be made, they still favor government action, as they have demonstrated recently in their support for measures like the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Brady Bill, and the new Direct Student Loan program."

By the end of the book Mrs. Clinton has endorsed nearly every government program of the last thirty years including those mentioned above and others like Goals 2000, Parents as Teachers, and AmeriCorps. The *village*, in Mrs. Clinton's book, is much more than the communities in which we live—it is a

metaphor for the continued expansion of government into every aspect of our lives.

Areas of Agreement

If you were to pick up Hillary Clinton's book and begin reading it, you would no doubt be surprised by what you found. Christians will find lots of areas of agreement. In fact, one talk show host even made a confession on air that he expected to find more to disagree with than he did. Instead, he found lots of material in Mrs. Clinton's book with which he could wholeheartedly agree.

I believe this is precisely the reaction Mrs. Clinton intended. She spends countless pages analyzing the social problems facing our children and providing constructive ideas for parents and communities to follow. Not only is she critical of drugs, violence, illegitimacy, and the plight of American education, she is also critical of such things as the impact of no-fault divorce laws. People looking for a clearly stated liberal agenda will not easily find it in this book. In fact, it is probably fair to say that whole chapters in her book could have been written by Dr. James Dobson.

Mrs. Clinton hastens to add that "this book is not a memoir; thankfully, that will have to wait. Nor is it a textbook or an encyclopedia; it is not meant to be. It is a statement of my personal views, a reflection of my continuing meditation on children." Though it does contain a fair amount of technical material, it is still a warm, nurturing, and inviting book. The First Lady also tells of her own family, which she describes as looking "like it was straight out of the 1950s television sitcom *Father Knows Best*." As a counterpoint, she talks about Bill Clinton's dysfunctional family, and even shares tender, intimate stories about rearing Chelsea.

However, interspersed between these long, warm, nurturing sections which appeal to your emotions are political

statements about how government should be used to help the family. I fear that readers without discernment will easily embrace the political agenda of Hillary Rodham Clinton. Each problem or concern is quickly answered by a government program or governmentally-sponsored community program.

Many will remember that the First Lady used a similar tactic in the past to try to sell her plan to nationalize health care. Often she would tell heart-rending stories of families without health insurance in order to bolster her plan to implement nationally-subsidized health care. The same technique can be found throughout *It Takes a Village*.

No one will disagree with many of the problems she catalogs. In fact, former Secretary of Education Bill Bennett catalogs many of these same problems in his *Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*. The source of disagreement comes when proposing government solutions to each problem. Many of these problems themselves are the result of earlier government "solutions" that created these problems. Discerning readers should always be asking whether or not these problems can more effectively be solved by individual initiative, community activities, and church programs.

Is This a "Campaign Book"?

At this point, I would like to raise the question of politics. In particular, many people wonder if this work isn't just a "campaign book."

I think we need to be honest enough to say that it is. After all, the publication of this book was originally intended to aid her husband's campaign. In the book, Mrs. Clinton lists what she believes are her husband's successes: Family and Medical Leave Act, AmeriCorps, Goals 2000, the Brady Bill, and the Direct Student Loan Program. On the other hand, she soft-pedals the radical parts of the Clinton agenda. Abortion is mentioned once (only in a passing reference to the Cairo

Document). Condoms are ignored. Joycelyn Elders and Dr. Henry Foster, Jr., are not discussed. Certainly the book was intended to help the Clinton re-election campaign even if current events surrounding the First Lady have begun to cloud the issue.

In some ways, the book provides the most consistent and comprehensive statement available of the First Lady's agenda for the rest of the 1990s. Whether the President wins re-election is almost irrelevant to the impact of this book. Mrs. Clinton has become the most visible, articulate feminist in the world. What she says in the United States, and what she says at international women's conferences (like Beijing, China) hold significant weight. So let's consider what she says.

Even though Mrs. Clinton attempt to soft-pedal some of the more radical aspects of her agenda, controversy inevitably slips through. For example, many of what she claims are the President's successes can hardly be considered successes, programs such as: Goals 2000 and Parents as Teachers. Many of her other favorites indicate a clear endorsement of socialist programs by Mrs. Clinton.

Let's look at just one example. Mrs. Clinton believes that the best way to solve what she believes is the problem of adequate day care facilities, is to adopt the French model of day care. She asks us to "imagine a country in which nearly all children between the ages of three and five attend preschool in sparkling classrooms, with teachers recruited and trained as child care professionals." She goes on to say this exists where "more than 90 percent of French children between ages three and five attend free or inexpensive preschools called *écoles maternelles*. Even before they reach the age of three, many of them are in full-day programs."

Her desire is to replicate this system in the United States so that the state can have an early maternal influence on the

children of America. She envisions a country in which "Big Brother" essentially becomes "Big Momma."

But is this really what we want in the United States? A nationally subsidized day care system that puts three-years-olds (even two- year-olds) in institutionalized care? Throughout the book Mrs. Clinton seems to be making the tragic assumption that the state can do a better job of raising children than parents. She proposes a system in which the First Lady becomes the "First Mom"—a system in which children are no longer the responsibility of the parents, but become instead wards of the state.

Nostalgia Merchants

Next I would like to discuss the issue of nostalgia. Mrs. Clinton believes that any attempt to return to "the good old days" is flawed. She says, "Those who urge a return to the values of the 1950s are yearning for the kind of family and neighborhood I grew up in and for the feelings of togetherness they engendered. The nostalgia merchants sell an appealing Norman Rockwell-like picture of American life half a century ago." She continues, "I understand that nostalgia. I feel it myself when the world seems too much to take. . . . But in reality, our past was not so picture perfect. As African-American children who grew up in a segregated society, or immigrants who struggled to survive in sweatshops and tenements, or women whose life choices were circumscribed and whose work was underpaid."

In reality, no one is calling for a return to the evils of earlier decades. Yes, racism and sexism are a sad part of our American history. But pro-family leaders are not calling for a return to those values. They are, however, reminding the American people that there was a time, not so long ago, when values and virtue were a part of the social fabric. Today that fabric is unraveling.

Former Secretary of Education Bill Bennett has compiled an *Index of Leading Cultural Indicators* which compares social statistics from 1960 to the present day. Although the population has increased approximately 41 percent, crime has increased 300 percent, and violent crime has increased 560 percent. The illegitimate birth rate has increased 400 percent, the number of divorces has more than doubled, and the number of children in single parent homes has tripled.

Pro-family leaders rightly call for a return to the fundamental Judeo-Christian values that made America great. They are not calling for a return to segregation or Jim Crow laws. They are not calling for a repeal of laws mandating equal pay for equal work. Mrs. Clinton's comments about these so-called "nostalgia merchants" are disingenuous at best.

Another interesting comment has to do with Mrs. Clinton herself. Anytime someone disagrees with her perspective, the motive is labeled as chauvinism. In other words, if you disagree with the First Lady, it must be because you have difficulty dealing with a strong woman who exercises political power.

Let me say that my concerns with Mrs. Clinton's perspectives have to do with the issues, not the person. My disagreements are based upon the substance of those programs and are not based upon the fact that they are proposed by a woman. In fact, I highly admire a number of women who have served in political office like Margaret Thatcher and Jeanne Kirkpatrick. The ideas expressed in Mrs. Clinton's book are dangerous regardless of whether they are proposed by a woman or a man. The issue is not the messenger, but the message.

Mrs. Clinton's Government Solutions to Social Problems

At this point I would like to conclude by addressing some additional issues related to the book. First, Mrs. Clinton

often proposes socialist solutions to the problems she raises in her book. Earlier I noted that she proposed a nationally-subsidized day care system modeled after France as a solution to her perceived problem of quality day care. In other parts of her book she also proposes liberal, government solutions.

She writes that "Other developed countries, including some of our fiercest competitors, are more committed to social stability than we have been, and they tailor their economic policies to maintain it." She then goes on to make a case for the German economic model, complete with an industrial policy in which "there is a general consensus that government and business should play a role in evening out inequalities in the free market system."

When it comes to education, she proposes a national agenda over local control of the schools. Mrs. Clinton believes education will be enhanced by nationalizing it through such programs as Goals 2000 and School-to-Work programs.

And don't think that Mrs. Clinton has abandoned the idea of nationalized health care. She sees nationally-subsidized health care as the solution to everything from infant morality to health care delivery.

From start to finish, Mrs. Clinton proposes government as the answer to every problem. In some cases, the government is behind the scenes providing funding and direction to community-based organizations. In others, it is the primary provider. But whenever a problem is raised, the First Lady seems content to have government take care of it.

By the end of the book, Mrs. Clinton has endorsed such groups as HIPPY, Parent Education Program, Healthy Start, Children's Defense Fund, Parents as Teachers, Carnegie Council on Children, Head Start, and Zero to Three. Many of these groups, along with the government programs she endorses, make up the foundation of her liberal, big-government agenda for children

in the 1990s. Readers without discernment may easily be seduced into believing that these programs are the only way to make life better for their children.

As Christians, I believe we must ask where is the church in this book? Where are communities? Where is individual initiative and responsibility? The world's largest bureaucracy is the Department of Health and Human Services. Mrs. Clinton seems to be saying throughout the book that the solution to nearly every problem will come from enlarging this enormous bureaucracy even more.

I believe the real issue is that Mrs. Clinton's book, *It Takes a Village*, is flawed at its premise. Government is not a village. Parents do not need government bureaucrats and federal programs to raise their children. In many ways, the problems Mrs. Clinton discusses are the result of government "solutions" proposed decades earlier (through the New Deal and Great Society programs). Families don't need more government; they need less government. In a very limited sense we might agree that it does take a village to raise a child, but that doesn't mean it takes the government to raise a child. Children should be raised by families, churches, and communities—not by the federal government.

©1996 Probe Ministries

Feminist Myths

As someone who works in the media, I am well aware that certain myths get started and have a life of their own. A number of these myths are promoted and disseminated by feminists and can be found in the book *Who Stole Feminism?* The author, Christina Hoff Sommers, though a feminist, has been

concerned for some time about the prominence of these myths and does a masterful job tracing down the origin of each and setting the record straight. If you want more information on any of these, I would recommend you obtain her well-documented book.

Myth of the Extent of Anorexia Nervosa

In her book *Revolution from Within*, Gloria Steinem informed her readers that "in this country alone...about 150,000 females die of anorexia each year." To put this dramatic statistic in perspective, this is more than three times the annual number of fatalities from car accidents for the total population. The only problem with the statistic is that it is absolutely false.

Lest you think that this was a mere typographical error, consider the following. The statistic also appears in the feminist best- seller *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf. "How," she asks, "would America react to the mass self-immolation by hunger of its favorite sons?" While admitting that "nothing justifies comparison with the Holocaust," she nevertheless makes just such a comparison. "When confronted with a vast number of emaciated bodies starved not by nature but by men, one must notice a certain resemblance."

What was the source of this statistic? Ms. Wolf got her figures from *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease* by Joan Brumberg, a historian and former director of women's studies at Cornell University. It turns out that she misquoted the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association which had stated that there are 150,000 to 200,000 sufferers (not fatalities) of anorexia nervosa. The actual figure is many orders of magnitude lower. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, there were 70 deaths from anorexia in 1990. Even 70 deaths is tragic, but 70 deaths out of population of over 100 million women can hardly be considered a holocaust.

Apparently Naomi Wolf plans to revise her figures in an updated version of *The Beauty Myth*, but the figure is now widely accepted as true. Ann Landers repeated it in her 1992 column by stating that “every year, 150,000 American women die from complications associated with anorexia and bulimia.” The false statistic has also made it into college textbooks. A women’s studies text, aptly titled *The Knowledge Explosion*, contains the erroneous figure in its preface.

Myth of Amount of Domestic Violence

On November 1992, Deborah Louis, president of the National Women’s Studies Association, sent a message to the Women’s Studies Electronic Bulletin Board. It read, “According to [the] last March of Dimes report, domestic violence (vs. pregnant women) is now responsible for more birth defects than all other causes combined.” On February 23, 1993, Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, said on the Charlie Rose program that “battery of pregnant women is the number one cause of birth defects in this country.”

Certainly unsettling data. But again, the biggest problem is that the statistic is absolutely false. The March of Dimes never published the study and did not know of any research that corroborated the statement.

Nevertheless, journalists willingly recited the erroneous statistic. The *Boston Globe* reported that “domestic violence is the leading cause of birth defects, more than all other medical causes combined, according to a March of Dimes study.” The *Dallas Morning News* reported that “the March of Dimes has concluded that the battering of women during pregnancy causes more birth defects than all the diseases put together for which children are usually immunized.”

When *Time* magazine published essentially the same article, the rumor started spinning out of control. Concerned citizens and

legislators called the March of Dimes for the study. Eventually the error was traced to Sarah Buel, a founder of the domestic violence advocacy project at Harvard Law School. She misunderstood a statement made by a nurse who noted that a March of Dimes study showed that more women are screened for birth defects than they are for domestic battery. The nurse never said anything about battery causing birth defects.

Although we could merely chalk this error up to a misunderstanding, it is disturbing that so many newspapers and magazines reported it uncritically. Battery causing birth defects? More than genetic disorders like spina bifida, Downs syndrome, Tay-Sachs, sickle-cell anemia? More than alcohol, crack, or AIDS? Where was the press in checking the facts? Why are feminist myths so easily repeated in the press?

Myth of Increased Domestic Battery on Super Bowl Sunday

In January 1993 newspaper and television networks reported an alarming statistic. They stated that the incidence of domestic violence tended to rise by 40 percent on Super Bowl Sunday. NBC, which was broadcasting the game, made a special plea for men to stay calm. Feminists called for emergency preparations in anticipation of the expected increase in violence.

Feminists also used the occasion to link maleness and violence against women. Nancy Isaac, a Harvard School of Public Health research associate specializing in domestic violence, told the Boston Globe: "It's a day for men to revel in their maleness and unfortunately, for a lot of men that includes being violent toward women if they want to be."

Nearly every journalist accepted the 40 percent figure—except for Ken Ringle at the *Washington Post*. He checked the facts and was able to expose the myth, but not before millions of Americans were indoctrinated with the feminist myth of male aggression during Super Bowl Sunday.

Myth Concerning Percent of Women Raped

The Justice Department says that 8 percent of all American women will be victims of rape or attempted rape in their lifetime. Feminist legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon, however, claims that rape happens to almost half of all women at least once in their lives.

Who is right? Obviously, the difference between these two statistics stems from a number of factors ranging from under-reporting to very different definitions of rape. The Justice Department figure is obviously low since it is based on the number of cases reported to the police, and rape is the most under-reported of crimes.

The feminist figures are artificially high because they use very broad definitions of rape and let the questioner rather than the victim decide whether there was a rape or not. The two most frequently cited studies are the 1985 *Ms.* magazine study and the 1992 National Women's Study. The *Ms.* magazine study of 3,000 college students gave a statistic of about 1 in 4 for women who have been raped or victim of an attempted rape. However, the study used very broad definitions of rape which sometimes included kissing, fondling, and other activities that few people would call rape. In fact, only 27 percent of those women counted as having been raped actually labeled themselves as rape victims. Also, 42 percent of those counted as rape victims went on to have sex with their "attackers" on a later occasion.

The National Women's Study released a figure of 1 in 8 women who have been raped. Again the surveyors used extremely broad, expanded definitions of rape that allowed the surveyor to decide if a woman had been raped or not.

The statistics for "date rape" and rape on campus have also been exaggerated. Camille Paglia warns that "date rape has swelled into a catastrophic cosmic event, like an asteroid

threatening the earth in a fifties science-fiction film." Contrast this with the date- rape hype on most college campuses that includes rallies, marches, and date-rape counseling groups.

Peter Hellman, writing for New York magazine on the subject of rape on campus, was surprised to find that campus police logs at Columbia University showed no evidence of rape on campus. Only two rapes were reported to the Columbia campus police, and in both cases, the charges were dropped for lack of evidence. Hellman checked figures for other campuses and found fewer than .5 rapes per campus. He also found that public monies were being spent disproportionately on campus rape programs while community rape programs were scrambling for dollars.

The high rape numbers serve gender feminists by promoting the belief that American culture is sexist and misogynist. They also help liberal politicians by providing justification for additional funding for social services. Senator Joseph Biden introduced the Violence Against Women Act to "raise the consciousness of the American public." He argues that violence against women is much like racial violence and calls for civil as well as criminal remedies.

Myth Concerning Female Self-esteem

In 1991, newspapers around the country proclaimed that the self- esteem of teenage girls was falling. The *New York Times* announced, "Little girls lose their self-esteem on way to adolescence, study finds."

The study was commissioned by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to measure self-esteem of girls and boys between the ages of nine and fifteen. Their poll seemed to show that between the ages of eleven and sixteen, girls experience a dramatic drop in self-esteem, which in turn significantly affects their ability to learn and to achieve.

The report made headlines around the country and led to hundreds of conferences and community action projects.

Here is how the AAUW summarized the results of the survey in their brochure: In a crucial measure of self-esteem, 60 percent of elementary school girls and 69 percent of elementary school boys say they are “happy the way I am.” But, by high school, girls’ self-esteem falls 31 points to only 29 percent, while boys’ self-esteem falls only 23 points to 46 percent.

Girls are less likely than boys to say they are “pretty good at a lot of things.” Less than a third of girls express this confidence, compared to almost half the boys. A 10-point gender gap in confidence in their abilities increases to 19 points in high school.

It turns out that the report didn’t even define the term self-esteem, or even promote an informal discussion of what the authors meant by it. Other researchers suspect that the apparent gap in self-esteem may merely reflect a gap in expressiveness. Girls and women are more aware of their feelings and more articulate in expressing them, and so they are more candid about their negative emotions in self-reports than males are.

When asked if they are “good at a lot of things,” boys more often answered, “all the time,” whereas girls, being more reflective, gave more nuanced answers (“some of the time” or “usually”). Although the surveyors decided that the girls’ response showed poor self-esteem, it may merely reflect a “maturity gap” between boys and girls. Boys, lacking maturity, reflectiveness, and humility, are more likely to answer the question as “always true.”

Myth of Discrimination Against Females in

School

An American Association of University Women (AAUW) report argued that schools and teachers were biased against girls in the classroom. *The Wellesley Report*, published in 1992, argued that there was a gender bias in education. The *Boston Globe* proclaimed that "from the very first days in school, American girls face a drum-fire of gender bias, ranging from sexual harassment to discrimination in the curriculum to lack of attention from teachers, according to a survey released today in Washington." The release of this study was again followed by great media attention and the convening of conferences. It also provided the intellectual ammunition for the "Gender Equity in Education" bill introduced in 1993 by Patricia Schroeder, Susan Molinari, and others. It would have established a permanent and well-funded gender equity bureaucracy.

Are women really being damaged by our school system? Today 55 percent of college students are female, and women receive 52 percent of the bachelor's degrees. Yes, girls seem somewhat behind in math and science, but those math and science test differentials are small compared with the large differentials favoring girls in reading and writing.

The study also assumed that teachers' verbal interactions with students indicated how much they valued them. The surveyors therefore deduced that teachers valued boys more than girls. However, teachers often give more attention to boys because they are more immature and require the teacher to keep them in line. Most girls, being more mature, don't want the attention or verbal discipline and need less negative attention to get their work done.

Myth of Huge Gender Wage Gap

A major rallying cry during the debates on comparable worth was that women make 59 cents for every dollar men do. The

figure is now 71 cents. But if you factor in age, length of time in the workplace, and type of job, the wage gap is much smaller for younger women. Those with children tend to make slightly less than those without children, but it's closer to 90 cents.

Feminists argue that the pay gap is a vivid illustration of discrimination. Economists argue that it's due to shorter work weeks and less workplace experience. It is no doubt also due to the kind of jobs women choose. Women generally prefer clean, safe places with predictable hours and less stress. The more dangerous, dirty, and high-pressure jobs generally appeal to men. This is reflected in salary differences.

©1996 Probe Ministries.

Congressional Reforms

The Flat Tax

"Our government is too big, and it spends, taxes and regulates too much. Of all the supposed crises we're facing today, this is the one that really matters." So said Representative Dick Armey when he introduced his proposal for a flat tax.

The American public sector is now larger than the entire economy of any other country except Japan. Government employment surpasses jobs in the manufacturing sector. "Today, the average family now pays more in taxes than it spends on food, clothing, and shelter combined. All told, nearly 40% of the nation's income is now spent not by the workers who earned it, but by the political class that taxed it from them."

Congressman Armey believes we need a change. He wants to freeze federal spending, erase stupid governmental regulations, and retire the current Rube Goldberg tax code with a simple, flat tax and a form that could fit on a postcard.

The proposal has tremendous merit, which is why its chances of passing in this session of Congress are slim and none. But Armey is not a Congressional Don Quixote tilting at bureaucratic windmills. He knows that taxpayers are fed up with waste, fraud, and tax confusion. They are eager to change the system and willing to change congressmen if they won't take action.

In this essay we will be looking at the merits of this proposal. The center piece of the proposal is the flat tax. Seven decades of corporate lobbying and congressional tinkering have left the tax code in a mess. Rates are high, loopholes abound, and families must bear an unfair burden of the tax code. Armey's bill would scrap the entire code and replace it with a simple 17% flat tax for all.

All personal income would be taxed once at the single, low rate of 17%. There would be no special tax breaks of any kind except the following: (1) a child deduction of \$5300 (twice what it is today), and (2) a personal allowance – \$13,100 for an individual, \$17,200 for a single head of a household, and \$26,200 for married couples.

Businesses would pay the same 17% as individuals. A corporation would subtract expenses from revenues and pay the same, flat tax. The benefits should be obvious. Americans spend approximately 6 billion person-hours figuring their taxes each year. This lost time costs the economy \$600 billion annually, and people spend another \$200 billion in time and energy looking for legal ways to avoid taxation. Lawyers, accountants, and all taxpayers will be freed up to focus their time and energy on more productive aspects of the economy.

Economic growth will be another benefit of the plan. Armey's bill not only lowers tax rates but eliminates double taxation of savings, thus creating a new incentive for investment. No more capital-gains tax, no estate tax, no tax on dividends. This bill will substantially stimulate the economy and create new jobs.

Perhaps the greatest benefit will be tax fairness. We say that in our society everybody should be treated the same, but we have a tax code that does anything but do that. Under the current code, politicians and lobbyists determine which groups should pay more and which groups should pay less. Under the Armey bill everyone pays the same.

The bill does more than simplify the tax code. It has two other major features. First, it would address the issues of spending cuts and program sunsets. Armey's bill uses a variation of the old Gramm-Rudman law to freeze total federal spending for one year and then allow it to grow only at the rate of inflation after that.

This proposal will eliminate \$475 billion in currently projected spending increases. It will guarantee the government will become no larger in real terms than it is today.

Armey would cut budgets the old-fashioned way: he makes bureaucrats earn them. If a department or agency doesn't perform, it won't continue to exist unless it can justify its existence. Can you imagine the hearings for various agricultural subsidies, pork barrel projects, or for the Strategic Helium Reserve?

Under this proposal new programs will be especially unwelcome. Currently Congress writes new spending bills authorizing "such sums as may be necessary." Armey's bill would require that "such sums" come from existing programs. Congress will no longer be allowed to write a blank check.

A second feature of Armey's bill is to end indiscriminate

regulations. The enormous number of government regulations are effectively a hidden tax on business and individual taxpayers. Armey estimates these regulations cost Americans \$580 billion a year. Thus, these regulations are an even greater burden than the income tax itself.

Armey's bill would force the President to produce a regulatory budget. This would expose, for the first time, the hidden cost of regulations. Congress would then be required to do a cost-benefit analysis and risk assessment on any bill with new regulatory authority.

The bill would also address the erosion of property rights. Any time government regulators write a rule that reduces the value of a person's property, the government must compensate that person just as if the government confiscated the land to build a park or highway. No longer would environmental extremists be able to take a person's land by regulatory fiat.

Finally, the bill ends the deceptive device that has made Big Government possible: income-tax withholding. If taxpayers paid their taxes the same way they pay for their houses or cars, government would not have grown so big. Withholding taxes before the taxpayers see it allows government to grow ever larger. This bill ends withholding and thereby puts one more check on the political class.

The flat tax has merit and is illustrative of the many Congressional reforms being put forward in this session of Congress.

Congressional Privilege

Thomas Jefferson wrote that "the framers of our Constitution... took care to provide that the laws should bind equally on all and especially that those who make them shall not exempt themselves from their operation."

James Madison wrote in the *Federalist Papers* that Congress

"can make no law which will not have its full operation on themselves and their friends, as well as on the great mass of the society. This has always been deemed one of the strongest bonds by which human policy can connect rulers and the people together."

Unfortunately, Congress has exempted itself from many of the laws you and I must obey. Recent votes in the House and the Senate have been an attempt to put Congress under some of these laws. Look at this short list of major pieces of legislation Congress has been able to exempt itself from in the past.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 – Protects against discrimination based on race, color, sex, national origin, religious affiliation.

Americans with Disabilities Act – Protects against discrimination based on disability. Has subjected employers to burdensome architectural renovations and hiring.

Age Discrimination in Employment Act – Protects against age discrimination. Does not apply to House. Applies to Senate through internal rules.

Occupation Safety and Health Act – Sets minimum health and safety standards in the workplace.

Fair Labor Standards Act – Requires employers to pay minimum wage, time and a half, and overtime. Amendments in 1989 covered House employees. Senate is exempt.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – Requires federal agencies to submit affirmative action plans for the disabled to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

National Labor Relations Act – Proscribes unfair labor practices, gives workers right to form unions, requires employers to bargain. Congress is exempt.

Freedom of Information Act – Provides public access to government documents. Congress is exempt, although it does publish floor and committee proceedings.

Privacy Act – Protects individual employees at agencies subject to the act. Congress is exempt.

You might wonder how Congress can justify exempting itself from the laws the rest of us must obey. You might think there would be some Constitutional justification due to the separation of powers. Well, not exactly. Though the argument does have some merit, listen to the justification given the last session of Congress.

Senator Wendell Ford (D-KY) spoke against extending a smoking ban to Senate rooms lacking separate ventilation. He said, "This is going to affect each and every member of this chamber, and the administrative confusion that this will cause for members will be enormous. One day we will have an EPA administrator in our office ...telling us our separate ventilation system for tobacco is insufficient. Then the next day the OSHA inspector is going to arrive and tell us we do not have sufficient ventilation for fumes coming from the new carpeting, or the paint or the varnish. Next thing you know, we will have HHS coming in and telling us we cannot eat at our desks."

All I can say to Senator Ford is, "Yes, you will." You will be subjected to the same regulatory insanity most of us have had to live with for years! Perhaps the members of Congress will be more careful about the bills they pass in the future, when they have to live under the same laws we must obey. No one should be above the law, not even members of Congress.

Capital

Last November, the Republicans won a battle for Capitol Hill. Now they are waging another battle for America's financial

capital. Nearly every day, Capitol Hill is abuzz with discussion of cuts in the capital gains tax, a middle class tax cut, and even a whole new tax code. We are going to look at a number of these proposals.

The first proposal is a cut in the capital gains tax. Proponents say that the economy will be strengthened by cutting the capital gain tax and indexing capital gains to inflation. Instead of the current tax rates ranging from 15% to 28%, the rates would be cut to rates ranging from 7.5% to 19.8%.

Opponents of a capital gains tax cut say it would merely be a "tax break for the rich." But statistics show that the middle class would be the primary beneficiary.

President Clinton recently defined the middle class as those making less than \$75,000 (his middle class tax cut is intended for those making less than \$75,000). Even using this \$75,000 cutoff point, we find that 74% of the people who earn capital gains come from the middle class or below. Since 26% of people making capital gains have incomes above that cutoff point, reducing the capital gains tax is **not** "giving a tax break to the rich."

The benefit to the economy would be substantial. By lowering tax rates on capital, capital becomes more plentiful. Making capital more plentiful will make labor more scarce relative to capital and bid up the price of labor, resulting in more jobs and higher wages.

Another way to look at this is to recognize that more capital per worker makes workers more productive (better and more efficient equipment) making businesses willing to pay more for labor.

Another way to strengthen the economy is to replace the current tax system with a flat tax as we discussed earlier. The income tax would be 20% in the first two years and 17%

thereafter.

Individuals would deduct \$13,100, and married couples would deduct \$26,200. Each dependent would add \$5300 to the tax-exempt portion of the family. In other words, a family of four would not pay any taxes on the first \$36,800 of family income!

If a flat tax is passed, there would be no tax on income from capital gains, interest, dividends, or estates. The current tax code actually discourages capital formation by taxing future financial gains. This plan would promote capital formation by eliminating tax on such investments.

Essentially people can spend their money as they earn it or defer gratification until the future. Currently, if they spend their money immediately, they do not increase their income-tax bills. But, if they invest their money and plan to consume it in the future, they risk paying income taxes on their interest, dividends, or capital gains.

This tax plan would allow businesses to pay the same flat rate on the difference between their gross revenues and their business deductions. It would also change the method of depreciation. Currently businesses must now depreciate their capital expenditures over the life of the equipment they buy. Armey's plan would allow them to fully expense those costs the year they incur.

In essence, the proposals are simple: if you want more of something, reduce the tax on it. If you want more capital, then reduce (or eliminate) the current taxes on capital. In the end, people and the economy will benefit.

Welfare Reform

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) has boldly stated, "We have no health care crisis in this country. We do have a welfare crisis." The social statistics bear out his conclusion. Since 1960 the welfare rolls have increased by 460

percent. Since 1965 Americans have spent more than \$5 trillion on welfare. Currently more than 14 million individuals (including 1 in 7 children) are on welfare.

The current welfare system rewards dependency and punishes initiative. In Maryland, a single parent with two children would need to earn a minimum of \$7.50 an hour to earn the same amount as provided by welfare grants and benefits. No wonder so many welfare mothers therefore conclude that staying on welfare is better than getting off.

Various welfare proposals submitted to Congress attempt to modify the welfare system by addressing the following issues:

The first is child support. Many fathers are not providing child support, and these bills would tighten the loopholes and make these dads pay up. Currently unwed fathers are not named on birth certificates. The omission frequently foils attempts to collect child support. But if dad pays, then mom's check does not have to be so large. The proposed bills would require the mother to identify the father in order to receive a welfare check. States can threaten deadbeat dads with garnishing wages and suspending professional and driver's licenses.

Second is the marriage penalty. If a pregnant teen get married or lives with the father of her child, she is frequently ineligible for welfare. Congressional proposals would encourage states to abolish the "marriage penalty" and make it easier to married couples to get welfare.

A third proposal is a family cap. Welfare mothers in some states can increase the size of their welfare checks by having more children. Congressional bills being considered would allow states to cap payments. If a welfare mother has another child, her check remains the same.

Already in New Jersey, Arkansas, and Georgia, families receive no increase for children born while on the dole. Congressional

proposals would extend and encourage this opportunity to other states. The evidence so far is that this family cap may have some deterrence.

A fourth issue is work. Often if a welfare mother gets a job, her check is reduced, and she is likely to lose such benefits like Medicare and free child care. The new proposals before Congress would drop benefits after two years, but allow welfare mothers to work during that period.

Finally, these proposals address the government bureaucracy. Currently governors have to ask the Federal government if they can revamp their state welfare system. And the federal bureaucracy costs money. If you took the money spent for welfare and gave it to poor families it would amount to \$25,000 a year for every family of four.

These bills would also freeze or change welfare payments. They would replace Food Stamps and AFDC with block grants to the states. This money would come from savings from cutting cash payments to women having children out of wedlock. As states receive these block grants, they would be free to design their own system.

The Bible clearly admonishes us to help those less fortunate, but it instructs us to do it intelligently. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10 we read that if "a man will not work, he shall not eat." We need to revamp the current welfare system to meet real needs and stop subsidizing those who will not work. Congressional proposals are designed to help the helpless but stop rewarding the lazy.

Violence in Society

Kerby Anderson helps us take a biblical perspective on a very scary and touchy issue: violence in America. Applying a Christian worldview, he shines the spotlight on areas of today's culture that should concern us all.

It's a scary world today!

Growing up used to be less traumatic just a few decades ago. Children back then worried about such things as a flat tire on their Schwinn's and hoped that their teacher wouldn't give too much homework.

How life has changed. A 1994 poll found more than half the children questioned said they were afraid of violent crime against them or a family member. Are these kids just paranoid, or is there a real problem?

Well, it turns out this is not some irrational fear based upon a false perception of danger. Life has indeed become more violent and more dangerous for children. Consider the following statistics: One in six youths between the ages of 10 and 17 has seen or knows someone who has been shot. The estimated number of child abuse victims increased 40 percent between 1985 and 1991. Children under 18 were 244 percent more likely to be killed by guns in 1993 than they were in 1986. Violent crime has increased by more than 560 percent since 1960.

The innocence of childhood has been replaced by the very real threat of violence. Kids in school try to avoid fights in the hall, walk home in fear, and sometimes sleep in bathtubs in order to protect themselves from stray bullets fired during drive-by shootings.

Even families living in so-called "safe" neighborhoods are concerned. They may feel safe today, but there is always a

reminder that violence can intrude at any moment. Polly Klaas and her family no doubt felt safe in Petaluma, California. But on October 1, 1993, she was abducted from her suburban home during a sleepover with two friends. If she can be abducted and murdered, so can nearly any other child.

A child's exposure to violence is pervasive. Children see violence in their schools, their neighborhoods, and their homes. The daily news is rife with reports of child molestations and abductions. War in foreign lands along with daily reports of murder, rape, and robberies also heighten a child's perception of potential violence.

Television in the home is the greatest source of visual violence for children. The average child watches 8,000 televised murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school. That number more than doubles by the time he or she reaches age 18.

And the latest scourge is MTV. Teenagers listen to more than 10,000 hours of rock music, and this impact is intensified as they spend countless hours in front of MTV watching violent and sensual images that go far beyond the images shown on commercial television.

It's a scary world, and children are exposed to more violence than any generation in recent memory. An article in *Newsweek* magazine concluded: "It gets dark early in the Midwest this time of year. Long before many parents are home from work, the shadows creep up the walls and gather in the corners, while on the carpet a little figure sprawls in the glow emanating from an anchorman's tan. There's been a murder in the Loop, a fire in a nightclub, an indictment of another priest. Red and white lights swirl in urgent pinwheels as the ambulances howl down the dark streets. And one more crime that never gets reported, because there's no one to arrest. Who killed childhood? We all did."

“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”

Violence has always been a part of the human condition because of our sin nature (Rom. 3:23). But modern families are exposed to even more violence than previous generations because of the media. Any night of the week, the average viewer can see levels of violence approaching and even exceeding the Roman Gladiator games.

Does this have an effect? Certainly it does. The Bible teaches that “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). What we view and what we think about affects our actions.

Defenders of television programs say that isn’t true. They contend that televised imagery doesn’t make people violent nor does it make people callous to suffering. But if televised imagery doesn’t affect human behavior, then the TV networks should refund billions of advertising dollars to TV sponsors.

In essence, TV executives are talking out of both sides of their mouths. On the one hand, they try to convince advertisers that a 30-second commercial can influence consumer behavior. On the other hand, they deny that a one-hour program wrapped around the commercials can influence social behavior.

So, how violent is the media? And what impact does media have on members of our family? First, we will look at violence in the movies, and then we’ll take up the issue of violence on television.

Ezra Pound once said that artists are “the antennae of the race.” If that is so, then we are a very sick society judging by the latest fare of violence in the movies. The body count is staggering: 32 people are killed in “RoboCop,” while 81 are killed in the sequel; 264 are killed in “Die Hard 2,” and the film “Silence of the Lambs” deals with a psychopath who murders women and skins them.

Who would have imagined just a few years ago that the top

grossing films would be replete with blood, gore, and violence? No wonder some film critics now say that the most violent place on earth is the Hollywood set.

Violence has always been a part of movie-making, but until recently, really violent movies were only seen by the fringe of mass culture. Violence now has gone mainstream. Bloody films are being watched by more than just punk rockers. Family station wagons and vans pull up to movie theaters showing R-rated slasher films. And middle America watches these same programs a few months later on cable TV or on video. Many of the movies seen at home wouldn't have been shown in theaters 10-20 years ago.

Movie violence these days is louder, bloodier, and more anatomically precise than ever before. When a bad guy was shot in a black-and-white Western, the most we saw was a puff of smoke and a few drops of fake blood. Now the sights, sounds, and special effects often jar us more than the real thing. Slow motion, pyrotechnics, and a penchant for leaving nothing to the imagination all conspire to make movies and TV shows more gruesome than ever.

Children especially confront an increasingly violent world with few limits. As concerned parents and citizens we must do what we can to reduce the level of violence in our society through the wise use of discernment and public policy. We need to set limits both in our homes and in the community.

Does Media Violence Really Influence Human Behavior?

Children's greatest exposure to violence comes from television. TV shows, movies edited for television, and video games expose young children to a level of violence unimaginable just a few years ago. The average child watches 8,000 televised murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school. That number more than doubles by

the time he or she reaches age 18.

The violent content of TV includes more than just the 22 minute programs sent down by the networks. At a very young age, children are seeing a level of violence and mayhem that in the past may have only been witnessed by a few police officers and military personnel. TV brings hitting, kicking, stabbings, shootings, and dismemberment right into homes on a daily basis.

The impact on behavior is predictable. Two prominent Surgeon General reports in the last two decades link violence on television and aggressive behavior in children and teenagers. In addition, the National Institute of Mental Health issued a 94-page report entitled, "Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties." They found "overwhelming" scientific evidence that "excessive" violence on television spills over into the playground and the streets. In one five-year study of 732 children, "several kinds of aggression—conflicts with parents, fighting and delinquency—were all positively correlated with the total amount of television viewing."

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

Twenty years later Eron and Rowell Huesmann found the pattern continued. He and his researchers found that children who watched significant amounts of TV violence at the age of 8 were consistently more likely to commit violent crimes or engage in child or spouse abuse at 30.

They concluded "that heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the causes of aggressive behavior, crime and violence in society. Television violence affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socioeconomic levels and all levels of intelligence."

Since their report in the 1980s, MTV has come on the scene with even more troubling images. Adolescents already listen to an estimated 10,500 hours of rock music between the 7th and 12th grades. Now they also spend countless hours in front of MTV seeing the visual images of rock songs that depict violence, rebellion, sadomasochism, the occult, drug abuse, and promiscuity. MTV reaches 57 million cable households, and its video images are even more lurid than the ones shown on regular TV. Music videos filled with sex, rape, murder, and other images of mayhem assault the senses. And MTV cartoons like Beavis and "the other guy" assault the sensibilities while enticing young people to start fires and commit other acts of violence. Critics count 18 acts of violence in each hour of MTV videos.

Violent images on television and in the movies do contribute to greater violence in society. Sociological studies along with common sense dictate that we do something to reduce the violence in the media before it further damages society.

Television Promotes Not Only Violence But Fear As Well.

Children see thousands of TV murders every year. And the impact on behavior is predictable. Various reports by the Surgeon General in the last two decades link violence on television and aggressive behavior in children and teenagers. In addition, the National Institute of Mental Health issued a 94-page report entitled, "Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties." They found "overwhelming" scientific evidence that "excessive"

violence on television spills over into the playground and the streets. In one five-year study of 732 children, "several kinds of aggression (such as conflicts with parents, fighting and delinquency) were all positively correlated with the total amount of television viewing."

Confronted with such statistics, many parents respond that their children aren't allowed to watch violent programs. Such action is commendable, but some of the greatest dangers of television are more subtle and insidious. It now appears that simply watching television for long periods can manipulate your view of the world— whether the content is particularly violent or not.

George Gerbner and Larry Gross working at the Annenberg School of Communications in the 1970s found that heavy TV viewers live in a scary world. "We have found that people who watch a lot of TV see the real world as more dangerous and frightening than those who watch very little. Heavy viewers are less trustful of their fellow citizens, and more fearful of the real world."

So heavy viewers were less trustful and more fearful than the average citizen. But what constitutes a heavy viewer. Gerber and Gross defined heavy viewers as those adults who watch an average of four or more hours of television a day. Approximately one-third of all American adults fit that category.

They found that violence on prime-time TV exaggerated heavy viewers' fears about the threat of danger in the real world. Heavy viewers, for example, were less likely to trust someone than light viewers. Heavy viewers also tended to overestimate their likelihood of being involved in a violent crime.

And if this is true of adults, imagine how much TV violence affects children's perception of the world. Gerbner and Gross say, "Imagine spending six hours a day at the local movie

house when you were 12 years old. No parent would have permitted it. Yet, in our sample of children, nearly half the 12-year-olds watch an average of six or more hours of television per day." This would mean that a large portion of young people fit into the category of heavy viewers. Their view of the world must be profoundly shaped by TV. Gerbner and Gross therefore conclude: "If adults can be so accepting of the reality of television, imagine its effect on children. By the time the average American child reaches public school, he has already spent several years in an electronic nursery school."

Television violence affects both adults and children in subtle ways. While we may not personally feel or observe the effects of TV violence, we should not ignore the growing body of data that suggests that televised imagery does affect our perception and behavior.

Obviously something must be done. Parents, programmers, and general citizens must take responsible actions to prevent the increasing violence in our society. Violent homes, violence on television, violence in the movies, violence in the schools all contribute to the increasingly violent society we live in. We have a responsibility to make a difference and apply the appropriate principles in order to help stem the tide of violence in our society.

Some Suggestions for Dealing with Violence in the Media

Christians must address this issue of violence in our society. Here are a number of specific suggestions for dealing with violence.

1. Learn about the impact of violence in our society. Share this material with your pastor, elders, deacons, and church members. Help them understand how important this issue is to them and their community.

2. Create a safe environment. Families live in the midst of violence. We must make our homes safe for our families. A child should feel that his or her world is safe. Providing care and protection are obvious first steps. But parents must also establish limits, provide emotional security, and teach values and virtue in the home.

3. Parents should limit the amount of media exposure in their homes. The average young person sees entirely too much violence on TV and at the movies. Set limits to what a child watches, and evaluate both the quantity and quality of their media input (Rom. 12:2). Focus on what is pure, beautiful, true, right, honorable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).

4. Watch TV with children. Obviously we should limit the amount of TV our children watch. But when they watch television, we should try to watch it with them. We can encourage discussion with children during the programs. The plots and actions of the programs provides a natural context for discussion and teach important principles about relationships and violence. The discussion could focus on how cartoon characters or TV actors could solve their problems without resorting to violence. TV often ignores the consequences of violence. What are the consequences in real life?

5. Develop children's faith and trust in God. Children at an early age instinctively trust their parents. As the children grow, parents should work to develop their child's trust in God. God is sovereign and omnipotent. Children should learn to trust Him in their lives and depend upon Him to watch over them and keep them safe.

6. Discuss the reasons for pain and suffering in the world. We live in the fallen world (Gen. 3), and even those who follow God will encounter pain, suffering, and violence. Bad things do happen to good people.

7. Teach vigilance without hysteria. By talking about the dangers in society, some parents have instilled fear—even terror—in their children. We need to balance our discussions with them and not make them hysterical. Kids have been known to become hysterical if a car comes down their street or if someone looks at them.

8. Work to establish broadcaster guidelines. No TV or movie producer wants to unilaterally disarm all the actors on their screens out of fear that viewers will watch other programs and movies. Yet many of these same TV and movie producers would like to tone down the violence, but they don't want to be the first to do so. National standards would be able to achieve what individuals would not do by themselves in a competitive market.

Violence is the scourge of our society, but we can make a difference. We must educate ourselves about its influence and impact on our lives. Please feel free to write or call Probe Ministries for more information on this topic. And then take time to apply the principles developed here to make a difference in your home and community. You can help stem the tide of violence in our society.

©1995 Probe Ministries

The Teen Sexual Revolution – Abstinence Programs Are The

Only Biblical Response

Kerby Anderson considers the real problems created by the new American attitude extolling the virtues of teen sexual activity. He examines the effectiveness of various programs designed to stem the tide of teen sexual activity. He concludes the only reasonable approach is teaching the reasons for and benefits of abstinence prior to marriage.

One of the low points in television history occurred September 25, 1991. The program was "Doogie Howser, M.D." This half-hour TV show, aimed at preteen and teenage kids, focused on the trials and tribulations of an 18-year-old child prodigy who graduated from medical school and was in the midst of medical practice. Most programs dealt with the problems of being a kid in an adult's profession. But on September 25 the "problem" Doogie Howser confronted was the fact that he was still a virgin.

Advance publicity drove the audience numbers to unanticipated levels. Millions of parents, teenagers, and pajama-clad kids sat down in front of their televisions to watch Doogie Howser and his girlfriend Wanda deal with his "problem." Twenty minutes into the program, they completed the act. Television ratings went through the roof. Parents and advertisers should have as well.

What is wrong with this picture? Each day approximately 7700 teenagers relinquish their virginity. In the process, many will become pregnant and many more will contract a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Already 1 in 4 Americans have an STD, and this percentage is increasing each year. Weren't the producers of "Doogie Howser, M.D." aware that teenage pregnancy and STDs are exploding in the population? Didn't they stop and think of the consequences of portraying virginity as a "problem" to be rectified? Why weren't parents and advertisers concerned about the message this program was

sending?

Perhaps the answer is the trite, age-old refrain “everybody’s doing it.” Every television network and nearly every TV program deals with sensuality. Sooner or later the values of every other program were bound to show up on a TV program aimed at preteens and teenagers. In many ways the media is merely reflecting a culture that was transformed by a sexual revolution of values. Sexually liberal elites have hijacked our culture by seizing control of two major arenas. The first is the entertainment media (television, movies, rock music, MTV). The second is the area of sex education (sex education classes and school-based clinics). These two forces have transformed the social landscape of America and made promiscuity a virtue and virginity a “problem” to be solved.

The Teenage Sexuality Crisis

We face a teenage sexuality crisis in America. Consider these alarming statistics of children having children. A New York Times article reported: “Some studies indicate three-fourths of all girls have had sex during their teenage years and 15 percent have had four or more partners.” A Lou Harris poll commissioned by Planned Parenthood discovered that 46 percent of 16-year-olds and 57 percent of 17-year-olds have had sexual intercourse.

Former Secretary of Education William Bennett in speaking to the National School Board Association warned that “The statistics by which we measure how our children how our boys and girls are treating one another sexually are little short of staggering.” He found that more than one-half of America’s young people have had sexual intercourse by the time they are seventeen. He also found that more than one million teenage girls in the U.S. become pregnant each year. Of those who give birth, nearly half are not yet eighteen.

“These numbers,” William Bennett concluded, “are an

irrefutable indictment of sex education's effectiveness in reducing teenage sexual activity and pregnancies." Moreover, these numbers are not skewed by impoverished, inner city youths from broken homes. One New York polling firm posed questions to 1300 students in 16 high schools in suburban areas in order to get a reading of "mainstream" adolescent attitudes. They discovered:

- 57% *lost virginity in high school*
- 79% *lost virginity by the end of college*
- 16.9 *average age for sex*
- 33% *of high school students had sex once a month to once a week*
- 52% *of college students had sex once a month to once a week.*

Kids are trying sex at an earlier age than ever before. More than a third of 15-year-old boys have had sexual intercourse as have 27 percent of the 15-year-old girls. Among sexually active teenage girls, 61 percent have had multiple partners. The reasons for such early sexual experimentation are many.

Biology is one reason. Teenagers are maturing faster sexually due to better health and nutrition. Since the turn of the century, for example, the onset of menstruation in girls has dropped three months each decade. Consequently, urges that used to arise in the mid-teens now explode in the early teens. Meanwhile the typical age of first marriage has risen more than four years since the 1950s.

A sex-saturated society is another reason. Sex is used to sell everything from cars to toothpaste. Sexual innuendos clutter most every TV program and movie. And explicit nudity and sensuality that used to be reserved for R-rated movies has found its way into the home through broadcast and cable television. Media researchers calculate that teenagers see

approximately five hours of TV a day. This means that they see each year nearly 14,000 sexual encounters on television alone.

Lack of parental supervision and direction is a third reason. Working parents and reductions in after-school programs have left teenagers with less supervision and a looser after-school life. In the inner city, the scarcity of jobs and parents coupled with a cynical view of the future invites teenage promiscuity and its inevitable consequences. Adolescent boys in the suburbs trying to prove their masculinity, herd into groups like the infamous score- keeping Spur Posse gang in California.

Even when teenagers want to sit out the sexual revolution, they often get little help from parents who may be too embarrassed or intimidated to talk to their children. Parents, in fact, often lag behind their kids in sexual information. At one sex-education workshop held by Girls Inc. (formerly Girls Club of America), nearly half of the mothers had never seen a condom. Other mothers did not want to talk about sex because they were molested as children and were fearful of talking about sex with their daughters.

Teenagers are also getting mixed messages. In any given week, they are likely to hear contradictory messages. "No sex until you're married." "No sex unless you're older." "No sex unless you're protected." "No sex unless you're in love." No wonder adolescents are confused.

The Report Card on Sex Education

For more than thirty years proponents of comprehensive sex education have told us that giving sexual information to young children and adolescents will reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. In that effort nearly \$3 billion has been spent on federal Title X family planning services, yet teenage pregnancies and abortions rise.

Perhaps one of the most devastating popular critiques of comprehensive sex education came from Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. The journalist who said that Dan Quayle was right also was willing to say that sex education was wrong. Her article in the October 1994 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* entitled "The Failure of Sex Education" demonstrated that sex education neither reduced pregnancy nor slowed the spread of STDs.

Comprehensive sex education is mandated in at least 17 states, so Whitehead chose one state and focused her analysis on the sex education experiment in New Jersey. Like other curricula the New Jersey sex education program rests on certain questionable assumptions.

The first tenet is that children are "sexual from birth." Sex educators reject the classic notion of a latency period until approximately age twelve. They argue that you are "being sexual when you throw your arms around your grandpa and give him a hug."

Second, sex educators hold that children are sexually miseducated. Parents, in their view, have simply not done their job, so we need "professionals" to do it right. Parents try to protect their children, fail to affirm their sexuality, and even discuss sexuality in a context of moralizing. The media, they say, is also guilty of providing sexual misinformation.

Third, if miseducation is the problem, then sex education in the schools is the solution. Parents are failing miserably at the task, so "it is time to turn the job over to the schools. Schools occupy a safe middle ground between Mom and MTV."

Learning About Family Life is the curriculum used in New Jersey. While it discusses such things as sexual desire, AIDS, divorce, condoms, and masturbation, it nearly ignores such issues as abstinence, marriage, self-control, and virginity. One technique promoted to prevent pregnancy and STDs is

noncoital sex, or what some sex educators call outercourse. Yet there is good evidence to suggest that teaching teenagers to explore their sexuality through noncoital techniques will lead to coitus. Ultimately, outercourse will lead to intercourse.

Whitehead concludes that comprehensive sex education has been a failure. For example, the percent of teenage births to unwed mothers was 67 percent in 1980 and rose to 84 percent in 1991. In the place of this failed curriculum, Whitehead describes a better program. She found that "sex education works best when it combines clear messages about behavior with strong moral and logistical support for the behavior sought." One example she cites is the *Postponing Sexual Involvement* program at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, which offers more than a "Just Say No" message. It reinforces the message by having adolescents practice the desired behavior and enlists the aid of older teenagers to teach younger teenagers how to resist sexual advances. Whitehead also found that "religiously observant teens" are less likely to experiment sexually, thus providing an opportunity for church-related programs to stem the tide of teenage pregnancy. The results of Whitehead's research are clear: abstinence is still the best form of sex education.

Is "Safe Sex" Really Safe?

At the 1987 World Congress of Sexologists, Theresa Crenshaw asked the audience, "If you had the available partner of your dreams and knew that person carried HIV, how many of you would have sex depending on a condom for your protection?" When they were asked for a show of hands, none of the 800 members of the audience indicated that they would trust the condoms. If condoms do not eliminate the fear of HIV-infection for sexologists and sex educators, why do we encourage the children of America to play STD Russian Roulette?

Are condoms a safe and effective way to reduce pregnancy and

STDs? To listen to sex educators you would think so. Every day sex education classes throughout this country promote condoms as a means of safe sex or at least safer sex. But the research on condoms provides no such guarantee.

For example, Texas researcher Susan Weller writing in the 1993 issue of *Social Science Medicine*, evaluated all research published prior to July 1990 on condom effectiveness. She reported that condoms are only 87 percent effective in preventing pregnancy and 69 percent effective in reducing the risk of HIV infection. This translates into a 31 failure rate in preventing AIDS transmission. And according to a study in the 1992 *Family Planning Perspectives*, 15 percent of married couples who use condoms for birth control end up with an unplanned pregnancy within the first year.

So why has condom distribution become the centerpiece of the U.S. AIDS policy and the most frequently promoted aspect of comprehensive sex education? For many years, the answer to that question was an *a priori* commitment to condoms and a safe sex message over an abstinence message. But in recent years, sex educators and public health officials have been pointing to one study which appeared to vindicate the condom policy.

The study was presented at the Ninth International Conference on AIDS held in Berlin on June 9, 1993. The study involved 304 couples with one partner who was HIV positive. Of the 123 couples who used condoms with each act of sexual intercourse, not a single negative HIV partner became positive. So proponents of condom distribution thought they had scientific vindication for their views.

Unfortunately that is not the whole story. Condoms do appear to be effective in stopping the spread of AIDS when used "correctly and consistently." Most individuals, however, do not use them "correctly and consistently." What happens to them? Well, it turns out that part of the study received much less attention. Of 122 couples who could not be taught to use

condoms properly, 12 became HIV positive in both partners. Undoubtedly over time, even more partners would contract AIDS.

How well does this study apply to the general population? I would argue the couples in the study group were quite dissimilar from the general population. For example, they knew the HIV status of their spouse and therefore had a vested interest in protecting themselves. They were responsible partners and in a committed monogamous relationship. In essence, their actions and attitudes differ dramatically from teenagers and single adults who do not know the HIV status of their partners, are often reckless, and have multiple sexual partners.

Contrary to popular belief, condoms are not as reliable as public health pronouncements might lead you to think. Abstinence is still the only safe sex.

Only Abstinence-Only Programs Really Work

Less than a decade ago, an abstinence-only program was rare in the public schools. Today directive abstinence programs can be found in many school districts while battles are fought in other school districts for their inclusion or removal. While proponents of abstinence programs run for school board or influence existing school board members, groups like Planned Parenthood bring lawsuits against districts that use abstinence-based curricula arguing that they are inaccurate or incomplete. At least a dozen abstinence- based curricula are on the market, with the largest being *Sex Respect* (Bradley, Illinois) and *Teen-Aid* (Spokane, Washington).

The emergence of abstinence-only programs as an alternative to comprehensive sex education programs was due to both popularity and politics. Parents concerned about the ineffectiveness of the safe sex message eagerly embraced the message of abstinence. And political funding helped spread the message and legitimize its educational value. The Adolescent

Family Life Act enacted in 1981 by the Reagan Administration created Title XX and set aside \$2 million a year for the development and implementation of abstinence-based programs. Although the Clinton Administration later cut funding for abstinence programs, the earlier funding in the 1980s helped groups like Sex Respect and Teen-Aid launch abstinence programs in the schools.

Parents and children have embraced the abstinence message in significant numbers. One national poll by the University of Chicago found that 68 percent of adults surveyed said premarital sex among teenagers is "always wrong." A 1994 poll for USA Weekend asked more than 1200 teens and adults what they thought of "several high profile athletes [who] are saying in public that they have abstained from sex before marriage and are telling teens to do the same." Seventy-two percent of the teens and 78 percent of the adults said they agree with the pro-abstinence message.

Their enthusiasm for abstinence-only education is well founded. Even though the abstinence message has been criticized by some as naive or inadequate, there are good reasons to promote abstinence in schools and society.

1. Teenagers want to learn about abstinence. Contrary to the often repeated teenage claim, not "everyone's doing it." A 1992 study by the Centers for Disease Control found that 43 percent of teenagers (age 14 to 17) had engaged in sexual intercourse at least once. Put another way, the latest surveys suggest that a majority of teenagers are not doing it.

2. Abstinence prevents pregnancy. Proponents of abstinence-only programs argue that it will significantly lower the teenage pregnancy rate and cited lots of anecdotes and statistics to make their case. For example, the San Marcos Junior High in San Marcos, California, adopted an abstinence-only program developed by Teen- Aid. The curriculum dropped the school's pregnancy rate from 147 to 20 within a two-year

period. An abstinence-only program for girls in Washington, D.C., has seen only one of 400 girls become pregnant.

3. Abstinence prevents sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). After more than three decades, the sexual revolution has taken lots of prisoners. Before 1960 there were only two STDs that doctors were concerned about: syphilis and gonorrhea. Today, there are more than 20 significant STDs ranging from the relatively harmless to the fatal. Twelve million Americans are newly infected each year, and 63 percent of these new infections are in people less than 25 years old. Eighty percent of those infected with an STD have absolutely no symptoms.

The conclusion is simple: abstinence is the only truly safe sex.

©1995 Probe Ministries.

Government Programs

Affirmative Action, Part One

Janice Camarena probably never heard of *Brown v. Board of Education* when she enrolled in San Bernardino Valley College in California. No doubt she knows about it now. Mrs. Camarena was thrown out of a class at the college because of her skin color. When she entered the class, the instructor immediately told her to leave. That section of English 101 was reserved for black students only. Mrs. Camarena is white.

Mrs. Camarena (who is currently suing the California Community

Colleges) has come to personify what is wrong with affirmative action programs in the 1990s. Forty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the civil right movement has strayed from the color-blind principles articulated by Martin Luther King, Jr. Government bureaucrats and liberal judges have set up quotas and turned the 1964 Civil Rights Act on its head.

Title VII, Section 703 (j) clearly bans preferences by race, gender, ethnicity, and religion in business and government. The Act was a model of fairness, openness, and equality. Unfortunately the interpretation of the law fell into the hands of bureaucrats and judges who swept away fairness and replaced it with color-based preferences.

No wonder momentum is growing in California for a 1996 initiative (modeled on the 1964 Civil Rights Act) that would amend the state's constitution to prohibit the use of quotas by state institutions. California is often the prairie upon which grassroots grass fires spread, and the California Civil Rights Initiative may be the start of a larger movement poised to spread from coast to coast.

As William Bennett has noted: "Affirmative action has not brought us what we want—a color-blind society. It has brought us an extremely color-conscious society. In our universities we have separate dorms, separate social centers." One might legitimately ask, What's next? Separate water fountains?

How bad has the problem become? Consider just a few examples of the impact of affirmative action quotas on government.

A Defense Department memo cited on the November 18, 1994, broadcast of ABC's "20/20" declared, "In the future, special permission will be required for the promotion of all white men without disabilities."

Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) cites a U.S. Forest Service document that actually states, "Only unqualified applicants will be considered."

Now that affirmative action appears threatened, suggestions are being floated by proponents to modify affirmative action rather than abolish it. The growing drumbeat from liberal proponents of affirmative action is that race-based affirmative action must be replaced by class-based affirmative action. After all, ask proponents, why should preferential treatment be given to an affluent, black Harvard law graduate over a poor, white West Virginia coal miner? Class-based affirmative action would supposedly be fairer and arouse less hostility because it was based upon economic need rather than race.

But the weaknesses of such a system should be quickly apparent. Race-based affirmative action has spawned an enormous governmental bureaucracy. A class-based system would no doubt be even larger and more byzantine. How would one qualify for class-based affirmative action? Would we use the income of the supposed "victim"? Would we use the income of the victim's family of origin? Would non-cash governmental support be counted? Who would decide? The questions are endless. At least in a race-based system, we can reach some consensus about what constitutes an ethnic minority.

Affirmative Action, Part Two

Affirmative action has been under review for some time, but it took a 1995 Supreme Court case to dramatically change the civil rights landscape. The case involved Randy Pech (owner of Adarand Constructors) who lost in the bidding for a guard-rail construction project in Colorado's San Juan National Forest because he had the wrong skin color. He had the lowest bid, but was passed over because he was not a minority. The prime contractor was eligible for a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation for hiring minority-owned subcontractors. The grant was greater than the difference in the bids submitted by Pech and a Hispanic-owned firm.

Pech filed a discrimination lawsuit. When it reached the

Supreme Court, the U.S. Solicitor General argued that Pech had no legal standing to sue, even though the U.S. Government paid the prime contractor \$10,000 to discriminate against him! And this illustrates the double standard currently upheld in the law. Protected minorities have standing to sue even if they were never actually the subjects of discrimination. But victims of reverse discrimination have no such recourse and often do not even have legal standing to sue.

Nevertheless, the court ruled in a narrow 5-to-4 decision that Randy Pech had been discriminated against. Some of the justices even went so far as to argue against the very foundation of affirmative action.

Now that affirmative action appears threatened, suggestions are being floated by proponents to modify affirmative action rather than abolish it. The growing drumbeat from liberal proponents of affirmative action is that race-based affirmative action must be replaced by class-based affirmative action. But a class-based system would even go further in pitting one ethnic minority against another. This is already the case with race-based affirmative action. At the University of California at Berkeley, for example, thousands of qualified Asian-American students are turned away each year in order to increase the percentage of African-American and Hispanic-American students on campus. A class-based system of affirmative action would not only continue this practice but increase it.

The best solution is to abolish affirmative action quotas and move to a society that is truly color-blind. When an employer engages in discrimination, civil rights laws and judicial rulings provide a basis for legal remedy. But current interpretations of civil rights laws and affirmative action quotas do not provide equality before the law. They grant protected minorities racial privilege before the law.

In his famous dissent from the Supreme Court case of *Plessy v.*

Ferguson, Justice John Marshall Harlan argued that the Constitution “is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law.”

In his famous 1963 speech, Martin Luther King Jr. dreamed of “a Nation where they [his children] will not be judged by the color of their skins, but by the conduct of their character.”

Affirmative action quotas violate the spirit of these dreams and turns the 1964 Civil Rights Act on its head. It’s time to return to a Constitutional foundation. It’s time to return to the true spirit of the civil rights movement. It’s time for affirmative action quotas to go.

Missile Defense

A four-star general calling the President on a hot-line red phone:

“Mr, President, we have a national emergency. Our satellites have detected a ballistic missile launched from a former Soviet republic at the United States.”

[Pause]

“No, sir. We cannot shoot it down. We have no ballistic missile defense. There is nothing we can do to stop it.”

While the scenario is fiction (similar to the plot in the movie “Crimson Tide”), the problem is fact. If a rogue Russian or a Islamic fundamentalist or a North Korean general decided to fire a missile at the United States, we would be unable to defend ourselves!

It is not that we cannot deploy the technology to defend ourselves. It is that we choose not to deploy that technology. The reason is simple: the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Twenty-three years ago, the U.S. made the mad promise that it

would not defend itself from ballistic missile attack. The MAD (mutually assured destruction) doctrine was the basis of the 1972 ABM treaty. Incredibly, President Clinton wants to keep this reckless pledge today even though the Soviet Union no longer exists and the world is no doubt more dangerous as nuclear proliferation continues.

Opponents of missile defense systems have argued that they are expensive and technologically impossible. Now a group of 16 eminent scientists formed under the auspices of the Heritage Foundation have put forward an affordable and doable plan.

They propose an upgrade of the Navy's Aegis air defense system to shoot down long-range and short-range ballistic missiles. The Aegis is a ship-board radar-tracking and interceptor system that directs surface-to-air missiles.

The Navy is already working on an upgrade that would allow it to intercept missiles outside the atmosphere, in what is called the "upper tier." If developed and deployed on ships scattered around the world, the U.S. would effectively have a protective shield against strategic missiles.

But there is the problem. By agreeing to abide by this obsolete treaty, the U.S. is prevented from deploying an "upper tier" defense. At his recent summit with Boris Yeltsin, President Clinton reaffirmed his support for the ABM treaty signed with the Soviet Union, a country that no longer exists.

As questionable at the ABM treaty was during the Cold War, it is even more absurd in our current political and military environment. Former Reagan official Frank Gaffney points out that a Navy Aegis commander in the Sea of Japan would be in the absurd position of being able to shoot down a missile in North Korea heading for Tokyo, but would be prevented from shooting down a missile heading for San Francisco! Is it really in the interests of the U.S. to dumb down the "upper tier" system so that we can protect our allies abroad but not

our own homeland?

The Heritage Foundation scientists believe an upgraded system could be deployed in three years at a cost of only \$1 billion. This is a plan we need to pursue. The United States is vulnerable to missile attack, and yet has the means to defend itself. In this dangerous post-Cold War world, we need to be able to defend ourselves from missile attack.

Is the threat that great? Well, consider the number of countries already in the nuclear club. They include the U.S., Great Britain, France, China, Russia, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and South Africa (South Africa is currently dismantling its nuclear program).

But that's not all. Most intelligence experts also put Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus in that list because they control some Soviet missiles. Finally, four other powers Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria are working furiously to develop and deploy nuclear missiles. Thus, all of these countries make up what could be called "the doomsday club." They all have the capacity or will soon have the capacity to bring about a nuclear Armageddon!

Intelligence experts estimate is that there are as many as 25 countries that have or will have the technical capability to develop a nuclear weapon, and approximately 26 countries have access to long-range missiles. In many ways, the post-Cold War world is more dangerous now that the Soviet Union has fallen and nuclear proliferation has accelerated.

Soviet scientists are willing to sell their services abroad. Boris Yeltsin seems unwilling or unable to stop the spread of nuclear technology. Likewise President Clinton has been unable to stop nuclear proliferation. If there was ever a time we needed an anti-ballistic missile system, it is now.

The "Crimson Tide" scenario is great movie drama, but it's lousy foreign policy. A missile launched from Kiev or Baghdad

or Pyongyang would devastate an American city, and the U.S. can do nothing to stop it. Although the movie does not mention it, the real reason this potential nightmare is so scary is because the U.S. has no defense against ballistic missile attack.

You must do two things. First, educate yourself and your friends about the danger. America is vulnerable to nuclear attack, and yet most Americans do not know this. Second, call for Congress to deploy an “upper tier” defense to the Aegis system. The cost would be less than one percent of the entire Defense Department budget. Building such a system would protect the United States from rogue leaders and military dictators who might someday decide to launch ballistic missiles on this country.

Corporate Welfare

Cutting a \$200 billion deficit from a \$1.6 trillion budget is not as difficult as the media might make it sound, especially when politicians target the easier cuts first. One of the most obvious cuts is so-called “corporate welfare.” Both liberals (like Secretary Robert Reich) and conservatives (like Speaker Newt Gingrich) talk about cutting corporate welfare. When Congress reconvenes, politicians need to stop talking about cutting and begin cutting programs.

What should be placed on the cutting block? Here is a list of examples from the Cato Institute of corporate welfare that should be eliminated.

Department of Agriculture’s Market Promotion Program puts \$110 million a year into the advertising budgets of major U.S. corporations. In 1991, they spent \$2.5 million promoting Dole pineapple products; \$2.9 million selling Pillsbury muffins and pies; \$10 million advertising Sunkist oranges; \$465,000 boosting the sales of McDonald’s Chicken McNuggets; and \$1.2 million promoting American Legend mink coats.

Farm subsidies also should be cut. Consider the sugar price support program. A full 40 percent of its \$1.4 billion in subsidies goes to the largest one percent of sugar producers. The 33 largest sugar cane plantations each receive more than \$1 million in federal funds.

The Rural Electrification Administration and the federal Power Marketing Administrations are funneling \$2 billion in annual subsidies to some of the wealthiest electric utility cooperatives in the country. One firm (ALLTEL) boasted of sales exceeding \$2.3 billion.

Taxpayer-subsidized REA loans have helped big electric utilities serve ski resorts in Aspen, Colorado, and beach resorts like Hilton Head, South Carolina. They have also helped serve gambling resorts communities in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The U.S. Forest Service dished out \$140 million for road building projects in national forests in 1994 to help harvest timber for firms like Georgia-Pacific and Weyerhauser. Last year the Clinton administration championed grants through the Advanced Technology Program. Some of the recipients last year were companies like Caterpillar, Dupont, Xerox, General Electric, and United Airlines.

The administrations also pushed over \$500 million through the Technology Reinvestment Project. Many of the recipients are some of the richest companies in America: Chrysler Corporation (\$6 million), Texas Instruments (\$13 million), Hewlett-Packard (\$10 million), Boeing (\$7 million), and Rockwell (\$7 million).

Recently the Congress considered a bill that proposed \$7.6 billion in cuts in corporate welfare. Here are a few highlights of that bill.

It would eliminate the Department of Commerce, beginning with the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It would also

eliminate federal support for expensive projects with dubious commercial potential, such as high speed rail and “smart” cars.

The bill would also discard needless bureaucracy through the elimination of the Department of Energy, the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Federal Maritime Commission, the Maritime Administration, and U.S. Parole Commission. It would eliminate state and local tree-planting programs run by the Small Business Administration. It would also stop funding “transition expenses” from the Postal Service’s reorganization that occurred 24 years ago.

There are more proposals, but you get the idea. There is a lot to cut. We can balance the federal budget, and a good place to start is with corporate welfare. We need to stop talking about it and do it.

©1995 Probe Ministries

Baby Boomerangs

In the last few years, newspapers and newsmagazines have been full of stories about baby boomers returning to church. The purpose of this essay is to take a look at those stories and statistics and see what we can make of all of this hoopla. Is there a spiritual revival taking place? What caused the exodus and what is bringing about the return? These are just a few questions we will address.[\(1\)](#)

The baby boomers returning to church have been dubbed “baby boomerangs.” Most of them grew up in religious households. In fact, about 96 percent had some religious instruction in their early years. But many jettisoned their religious beliefs when

they became adults because spirituality seemed irrelevant in the secular, pluralistic culture of modern life. Now, like boomerangs return to the point of their departure, many baby boomers are returning to church.

At least two processes were responsible for their exodus from organized religion. The process of secularization in modern society removed religious ideas and institutions from the dominant place they had in previous generations. Religious ideas were less meaningful, and religious institutions were more marginal in their influence on the baby boom generation. To their parents' dismay, most boomers dropped out of traditional religion for at least two years during their adolescence and adulthood.

The process of pluralization in their world rapidly multiplied the number of world views, faiths, and ideologies. This increase in choice led naturally to a decrease in commitment and continuity. Many boomers during their adolescence and early adulthood went through what might be best called serial-conversions. Spiritually hungry for meaning, they dined heartily at America's cafeteria for alternative religions: est, gestalt, meditation, scientology, bioenergetics, and the New Age. Others sought spiritual peace through 12-step programs for alcoholics, workaholics, even chocoholics. This have-it-your-way, salad-bar spirituality has been high on choices and options but low on spiritual commitment.

One author wrote, "Although there are those who try to follow the demanding precepts of traditional religion, most baby boomers find refreshment in a vague religiosity which does not interfere in any way with how they live."

As this generation passes through midlife, it will inevitably look to the future more with anxiety than anticipation. Boomers are asking, Who will care for me? Will I be able to provide for me and my family?

And these questions are also mingled with questions of identity. Who am I? Where am I going? Is this all there is to life? These questions have an underlying spiritual dimension and are not easily answered in a secular world nor in a mystical world filled with bland spirituality.

Certainly this generation has sought answers in self-help programs and community activities, but something more than social changes and technology are necessary. As one commentator said, "There is a feeling of being lost and looking for something greater. People know that technology hasn't worked for them. It hasn't done anything for their souls."

This is, in part, why many baby boomers have begun to return to church. But is this a true spiritual revival? Furthermore, what about the large segment of this generation that is still outside the church and seemingly uninterested in coming back? What could the church do to reach out to those boomers who are still outside the church?

Seekers of Experiences

As in other endeavors, baby boomers have been seekers: seekers of pleasure, seekers of experience, seekers of freedom, seekers of wealth, and yes, seekers of spirituality. But unlike their parents, boomers' search for spirituality took them down unpredictable paths. This generation has been eclectic in its religious

experiences where brand loyalty is unheard of and the customer is king. While some have stayed true to the "faith of their fathers," most mix traditional religion with New Age mysticism and modern self-help psychologies in a flexible and syncretistic manner.

Tracking this generation's values and attitudes toward religion and spiritual issues is not easy, if for no other

reason than the lack of substantial research. Most of the significant research on boomer attitudes toward religion have been done within the last ten years. Consider this comment from the late 1980s: "When the first of its number reached 40 last summer, the Baby Boom once again entered the spotlight. But for all the coverage, including a 10-page cover story in *Time* and [Landon] Jones' 350-page book, little more than a paragraph was written on the role of religion in the lives of the Baby Boom generation." Fortunately, more research since then has provided a better perspective on this generation's attitudes and perspectives on religion.

Boomers can be divided into three religious subcultures: loyalists, returnees, and dropouts. Loyalists tend to be social conservatives. They had better relations with their parents and tended to grow up in stricter homes. Loyalists never really identified with the counterculture and never left their church or synagogue.

At the other extreme are the dropouts. They had less confidence in the country when growing up and had more conflicts with parents. Traditional religion was, to them, out of touch with modern life. They have never come back to church and pursue spirituality (if at all) in a personal and individual way.

Between the loyalists and the dropouts are the returnees. They were and are middle-of-the-road types who were less alienated than the dropouts but more disaffected than the loyalists. They left church or synagogue and have returned but often with some ambivalence.

Each religious subculture manifests differences in spiritual styles and commitment but all are affected to some degree by their experiences in the counterculture. Though their views are different from one another, collectively the three boomer subcultures are very different from their parents. For example, few in the returnees subculture actually consider

themselves religious and do not hold to traditional views of God even though they may actually attend religious services on a regular basis. Returnees are much less likely to engage in traditional religious activities (daily prayers, saying grace at meals, reading the Bible). Almost one-fourth of returnees and nearly one-fifth of loyalists say they believe in reincarnation.

In short, baby boomers are very different from their parents in terms of spiritual commitment and biblical understanding. And churches and Christian organizations that reach out to this generation must be aware of these differences if they are to be effective.

“Teach Your Children Well...”

Those baby boomers who have returned to church—the so-called “baby boomerangs”—have returned for one of two major reasons: children or spiritual restlessness. Boomers concerned about the moral and spiritual upbringing of their children have made the spiritual pilgrimage back to their religious roots. Members of this generation may say they do not believe in absolute values, but frequently their relativistic world view collapses when they have children. They don’t want their kids growing up without any moral direction. Church suddenly becomes a much more important place. Gallup surveys, for example, show that nearly nine in ten Americans say they want religious training for their kids, even though fewer than seven in ten with children (ages 4-18) say they are currently providing such training.

The boomerang phenomenon is not peculiar to baby boomers. Church historians have found a predictable pattern of church attendance that has affected numerous generations. Typically after high school young adults drop out of church and often don’t drop back into church until they have children. In that regard, boomers are no different than generations that preceded them.

Unlike previous generations, boomers prolonged the cycle by postponing marriage and children. Getting married later and having children later essentially extended their absence from church. And this extended absence allowed many of them to get more set in their ways. A generation used to free weekends and sleeping in on Sunday is less likely to make church attendance a priority.

Kids begin to rearrange those priorities. Statistically, it has been shown that the presence of children in a family makes a significant difference in the likelihood of church attendance. One survey found that married baby boomers are nearly three times more likely to return to church if they have children. Children do indeed seem to be leading their parents back to church.

Another reason for boomers returning to church is spiritual restlessness. Sixteen hundred years ago, St. Augustine acknowledged, "We were made for thee, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee." Social commentators have generally underestimated the impact of this generation's restless desire for meaning and significance. Ken Woodward, religion editor for *Newsweek* magazine believes "That search for meaning is a powerful motivation to return to the pews. In the throes of a midlife re-evaluation, Ecclesiastes-'A time for everything under heaven'-is suddenly relevant." George Gallup has found that two thirds of those who dropped out of a traditional church (left for two years or more) returned because they "felt an inner need" to go back and rediscover their religious faith.

For these and other less significant reasons, baby boomers are returning to church though not in the numbers sometimes reported in the media. All of this attention to returning boomers fails to take into account that more than forty percent of baby boomers have not returned to church. And while many are celebrating those coming in the front door, they shouldn't overlook the stream of boomers leaving the church

out the back door. They are bored, disillusioned, or restless and need to be reached more effectively if the church is to make a difference in the 1990s and the 21st Century.

“If It Feels Good...”

Although much has been made of the baby boomerang phenomenon, many more are skeptical of church as well as other institutions such as government, military, and schools. While they are consistent with previous generations in their boomerang cycle, “statistics on church attendance, when viewed up close, reveal dramatic and distinctive patterns along generational lines.” The data show:

- Throughout their lives, Americans born during the Depression have been more faithful than later generations in their church/synagogue attendance.
- “War babies” [born 1939-45] dropped out of church as they entered their twenties during the turbulent sixties, and stayed away. The twin disillusionments stemming from Vietnam and Watergate made them more suspicious of institutions—the church included. Only recently, as they approach and pass midlife, are they trickling back to church.
- “Baby boomers” [born 1946-64] also dropped out of the church in their twenties, but now, in their thirties and early forties, they are returning to the ranks of the faithful. The real boom in church attendance is coming from this generation.”[\(2\)](#)

Nevertheless, boomers are returning to church in increasing numbers. By the early 1980s the number of leading edge baby boomers who attend church regularly rose nearly ten percent (33.5% to 42.8%) and continued to rise through the decade.

Will this revitalized interest in religion make a difference in society? This is a question many social commentators are considering. “Will the churches and synagogues provide the

kind of training necessary to keep the faith vital—or will the churches merely mirror the culture?” asks sociologist Os Guinness. “The natural tendency of the baby boomers is to be laissez faire socially. Will their return to faith make any decisive difference in their personal and social ethics, or will their religious commitment be [simply] a variant of their social philosophy?”

Traditionally boomers have been samplers with little brand loyalty. They don’t feel bound to the denomination of their youth and search for experiences (both spiritual and otherwise) that meet their needs. It is not uncommon for families to attend different churches each week (or on the same day) to meet their perceived spiritual needs. They aren’t bashful about attending a particular church to take advantage of a special seminar or program and then picking up and moving to another church when those programs seem inviting.

Many boomers may be interested in spiritual issues but see no need to attend church. George Gallup refers to this characteristic in his book *The Unchurched in America—Faith Without Fellowship*. Such religious individualism stems both from American individualism that has been a part of this country for centuries and this generation’s desire for flexibility and individuality. The have-it-your-way attitude in every area of a boomer’s life has given rise to this religious individualism.

Boomers approach religion and spirituality differently than previous generations. They embrace a faith that is low on commitment and high on choice. As one commentator noted, “They are comfortable with a vague, elastic faith that expands to fill the world after a pleasant Christmas service and contracts to nothing when confronted with difficulties.” No wonder many boomers are starting to embrace religious beliefs that previous generations would never have considered.

Spiritual hunger

Spiritually hungry boomers looking for nourishment for their souls have already tried a variety of selections from America's spiritual cafeteria. They will probably continue to do so. Lonely, isolated in boxes in the suburbs, often hundreds of miles from their families, boomers are facing significant psychological issues in the midst of busy lives that sap their emotional and spiritual resources. Beneath this isolation and turmoil is a restless desire for spirituality.

Some will try to meet these needs by dabbling in the New Age Movement. And if the churches do not meet their real and perceived needs, this trickle may turn into a torrent. The New Age Movement is attractive to the spiritually naive and institutionally cynical. If the church fails, then the New Age will thrive.

This may be the greatest challenge for the Christian church. Can church leaders woo baby boomers back to the flock? Can the church challenge boomers to a greater level of religious commitment in their lives? Can the church provide religious training necessary to keep boomers' faith vital? These are important questions.

Churches need to challenge boomers to deeper faith and greater religious commitment, but surveys and statistics show that churches themselves may be suffering from the same maladies as baby boomers. Church members like to believe that they are more spiritually committed and live lives different from the unchurched. The data show otherwise.

Approximately 40 percent of America attends church or other religious services on a fairly regular basis. But George Gallup has found that fewer than 10 percent of Americans are deeply committed Christians. Those who are committed "are a breed apart. They are more tolerant of people of diverse backgrounds. They are more involved in charitable activities.

They are more involved in practical Christianity. They are absolutely committed to prayer."

Numerous surveys show that most Americans who profess Christianity don't know the basic teachings of the faith. Such shallow spirituality makes them more susceptible to the latest fad, trend, or religious cult. Gallup notes that not being grounded in the faith means they "are open for anything that comes along." For example, studies show that New Age beliefs "are just as strong among traditionally religious people as among those who are not traditionally religious."

Lack of commitment to a faith position and to a lifestyle based upon biblical principles also extends to church attendance and instruction. Eight in ten Americans believe they can arrive at their own religious views without the help of the church.

Commitment to biblical instruction is not high either. George Gallup says that Americans are trying to do the impossible by "being Christians without the Bible." He goes on to say that, "We revere the Bible, but we don't read it." Pastors and pollsters alike have been astounded by the level of biblical illiteracy in this nation.

Churches that reach out to baby boomers will have to shore up their own spiritual commitment as they challenge this generation to a higher level of commitment and discipleship. If they are successful, then their congregations will grow. If they aren't then this generation will go elsewhere to satisfy its spiritual hunger.

Notes

1. Information in this pamphlet is taken from my book *Signs of Warning, Signs of Hope*. (Moody, 1994).
2. Wesley Pippert, "A Generation Warms to Religion," *Christianity Today*, 6 October 1989, p. 22.

Welfare Reform

Many members of Congress have been pushing to reform the welfare system and break the cycles of illegitimacy and dependency. But changing the existing welfare system will not be easy. In its more than 50 years of existence, the system has indeed developed into a mass of bureaucratic idiosyncrasies, and these experts say the numerous institutionalized workers are likely to resist attempts to reform them or their routines.

Most taxpayers are skeptical that real change will take place, and they have every right to be skeptical. Since 1960, Congress has passed at least six major welfare revisions so welfare recipients can find work. But the rolls increased by 460% in the same period. Nevertheless, welfare must be reformed. Since 1965, American taxpayers have been forced to pay \$5 trillion into a welfare system created to end poverty. The result? No measurable reduction in poverty. After three decades of Great Society programs to fight the war on poverty, poverty and families are doing worse.

The most visible and most cost-inefficient segment of the U.S. welfare system today is Aid for Dependent Children or AFDC. AFDC began in 1935 as a little-noticed part of the Social Security Act. Its principal purpose was to aid widows and their children until the Social Security survivors' fund could pay out claims. Currently there are more than 14 million individuals on AFDC, and 1 in 7 children is on welfare.

AFDC is not the only program of concern. In the early 1960s, the Kennedy administration proposed several other welfare

programs. Their stated purposes were the admirable goals of eliminating dependency, delinquency, illegitimacy, and disability. And the modern welfare state was born during the flood of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs aimed at the war on poverty.

But the road to utopia ran into some devastating chuckholes. Most social statistics indicate that the war on poverty had many casualties. The unintended consequences of these welfare programs was a system which breaks down families, traps the poor in idle frustration, and perpetuates a cycle of government dependency. One aspect of this dependency is family breakdown. Approximately half of today's AFDC recipients are mothers who have never been married to the father or fathers of their children. Another 40 percent are mothers whose husbands have left home.

Another aspect of this dependency is poverty. Half of the poor live in female-headed households. And welfare has not improved their lot. The poverty level has remained relatively unchanged since that time, while illegitimate births have increased more than 400 percent. In the 1960s we declared war on poverty, and poverty won.

Obviously, reform must take place. In fiscal year 1992, the U.S. spent \$305 billion for AFDC. This is more than the current defense budget.

Good Intentions Gone Awry

The dramatic increases in the number of welfare recipients and the length of their dependency on welfare have alarmed both liberals and conservatives. But liberals and conservatives differ in their prescriptions. Liberals argue for more effective programs and for additional job training. Conservatives, on the other hand, argue that the intractable pathologies of the welfare system (the destruction of the family unit and the fostering of dependency) are due to large-

scale governmental intervention. Their argument has been strengthened by the earlier research of Charles Murray in his book *Losing Ground*.

His thesis is that our government not only failed to win its war on poverty, but ended up taking more captives. Under the guise of making life better, it ended up making life worse for the poor. Murray said, "We tried to provide more for the poor and produced more poor instead. We tried to remove the barriers to escape from poverty and inadvertently built a trap." Murray proposes radical changes in the current welfare system, and a number of conservative proposals before Congress include various aspects of Murray's proposals.

But long before Murray's book provided a thorough statistical evaluation, social theorists and even casual observers could see that our current welfare system promotes dependency and destroys the family unit.

Welfare payments provide economic incentives for the creation of single-parent families since they provide a continuous source of income to young mothers. The welfare system was designed to assist when there was no father. But the system effectively eliminated the father entirely by tying payments to his absence.

An irresponsible man can father a child without worrying about how to provide for the child. And a dedicated father with a low-paying job may feel forced to leave home so his children can qualify for more benefits. Eventually the welfare system eliminated the need for families to take any economic initiative by rewarding single parents and penalizing married couples. The result has been an illegitimate birth rate for black women of 88 percent.

A second reason for the breakdown of the family is the "adultification" of children. Various judicial rulings have undercut the role parents can have in helping their children

with difficult decisions. Courts have ruled that parental notification for dispensing birth control drugs and devices violates the minors' rights. Courts have ruled that children need not obtain their parents' permission before they obtain an abortion. The natural progression of this continued trend toward children's rights is the breakdown of the family.

The most rapid rise in poverty rates have been among the children the system was designed to help. This astonishing increase of illegitimate births by over 400 percent is a principal reason for poverty and the perpetuation of a poverty cycle of "children raising children."

Third, the current welfare system rewards dependency and punishes initiative. Welfare does not require recipients to do anything in exchange for their benefits. Many rules actually discourage work, and provide benefits that reduce the incentive to find work. In Maryland, for example, a single parent with two children would need to earn a minimum of \$7.50 an hour to earn the same amount as provided by welfare grants and benefits. Is it any wonder that so many welfare mothers therefore conclude that staying on welfare is better than getting off.

Can Welfare Be Changed?

Now I would like to focus on the various congressional proposals that seek to end welfare as we know it. Although there has been much talk of welfare reform, there have been very few substantive changes in the welfare system in the last three decades. Since 1960, Congress has passed at least six major welfare revisions so welfare recipients can find work. But the rolls increased by 460 percent in the same period.

A report issued by the Department of Health and Human Services revealed the cost of administering welfare programs grows twice as fast as the number of recipients. According to the Congressional Budget Office, welfare as a percent of the Gross

Domestic Product has increased by 230 percent, and its cost will exceed \$500 billion by the end of this decade.

Various congressional proposals attempt to either substantially modify or else eliminate the current system. First let's focus on those proposals that want to modify welfare in the following five areas.

The first change would be in child support. Fathers are not providing child support, and these bills would tighten the loopholes and make these dads pay up. Currently unwed fathers are not named on birth certificates. The omission frequently foils attempts to collect child support. But if dad pays, then mom's welfare check does not have to be so large. The proposed bills would require the mother to identify the father in order to receive a welfare check. States can threaten deadbeat dads with garnishing wages and suspending professional and driver's licenses.

The second change is in the so-called marriage penalty. If a pregnant teen get married or lives with the father of her child, she is frequently ineligible for welfare. Congressional proposals would encourage states to abolish the "marriage penalty" and make it easier to married couples to get welfare.

Creating a family cap is another significant change. Welfare mothers can increase the size of their welfare check by having more children. Congressional bills being considered would allow states to cap payments. If a welfare mother has another child, her check remains the same.

Already in New Jersey, Arkansas, and Georgia, families receive no increase for children born while on the dole. Congressional proposals would extend and encourage this opportunity to other states. The evidence so far is that this family cap may have some deterrence.

Another change is to emphasize work. Often if a welfare mother gets a job, her check is reduced, and she is likely to lose

such benefits like Medicare and free child care. The new proposals before Congress would drop benefits after two years. If an able-bodied welfare recipient does not find a private-sector job then she would be assigned a minimum-wage government job.

A final change would be to keep teenage mothers in school. In the current system a teenager can receive a welfare check, get her own apartment, and drop out of school. Congressional proposals would require a teen mother to live at home until age 18. She has to stay in school or she will lose her benefits. If the family's income is high enough, she does not receive any check at all.

These then are a few of the elements of the congressional proposals to end welfare as we know it. They take some solid steps toward ending illegitimacy and dependency. But there are even more radical proposals, and we will consider them next.

Congressional Proposals

Now we will turn our focus to some of the bills that attempt to do more than just modify the system and actually propose elimination of certain aspects of welfare.

One bill by Congressman James Talent would no longer provide welfare checks, food stamps, and public housing to women under 21 with children born out of wedlock. The justification for such actions stems from the original work by Charles Murray who believes that only this radical solution will cause teenage mothers to change their behavior.

Illegitimacy is the underlying cause of poverty, crime, and social meltdown in the inner cities. Proponents of these more radical proposals believe it is better to stem the tide of illegitimacy than trying to build a dam of social programs to try to contain the flood of problems later on.

Illegitimacy leads to poverty and to crime. Nearly a third of

American children are born out of wedlock, and those children are four times more likely to be poor. And the connection between illegitimacy and crime is also disturbing. More than half the juvenile offenders serving prison time were raised by only one parent. If birth rates continue, the number of young people trapped in poverty and tempted by the values of the street will increase. Illegitimacy is essentially a ticking crime bomb.

Welfare is supposed to be a second chance, not a way of life, but tell that to some children who represent the fourth generation on welfare. Proponents of these radical reforms believe we must scrap the current system.

Another concern is the entangled bureaucracy of welfare. Currently governors have to ask the Federal government if they can revamp their state welfare system. And the federal bureaucracy costs money. If you took the money spent for welfare and gave it to poor families it would amount to \$25,000 a year for every family of four.

These bills would also freeze or change welfare payments. They would replace Food Stamps and AFDC with block grants to the states. Each state would then be free to design its own system.

These proposals also emphasize work by providing a transition for able-bodied welfare recipients into the workplace. The federal government would double welfare payments during the transition period, but would send the check to the employer rather than directly to the welfare recipient. This would no doubt provide greater incentive to work hard and stay on the job.

Many in Congress are skeptical of proposals to provide jobs through job training programs. In the past job training has been relatively ineffective. One 1990 study of New York welfare recipients found that 63 percent of black recipients

and 54 percent of whites have received training while on welfare, but few left the rolls for employment. Even with the training, less than 8 percent of blacks and 5 percent of white recipients were working.

Finally, these proposals would also encourage marriage. Currently the welfare system encourages fathers to leave. These proposals would not only provide social incentives but economic incentives by providing two-parent families with a \$1000 tax credit.

These then are a few of the elements of the congressional proposals to end welfare as we know it. They do take some solid steps toward ending illegitimacy and dependency.

Biblical Principles

I want to conclude this discussion of welfare and welfare reform with some biblical principles that we should use to understand and act on this vital social issue.

The Bible clearly states that we are to help those in need. Christians may disagree about how much is necessary and who should receive help, but there should be no disagreement among Christians about our duty to help the poor since we are directly commanded to do so. Let's then, look at two important questions.

First, who should help the poor? The Bible clearly states that the primary agent of compassionate distribution of food and resources should be the church. Unfortunately, the majority of poverty programs in existence today are government programs or governmentally sponsored programs. While we can applaud the excellent programs established by various churches and Christian organizations, we must lament that most poverty programs are instituted by the state.

Poverty is much more than an economic problem. It results from psychological, social, and spiritual problems. Government

agencies, by their very nature, cannot meet these needs. The church must take a much greater role in helping the poor and not be content to allow the government to be the primary agency for welfare.

A second important question is who should we help? Government programs help nearly everyone who falls below the poverty line, but the Bible establishes more specific qualifications. A biblical system of welfare must apply some sort of means test to those who are potential recipients of welfare. Here are three biblical qualifications for those who should receive welfare.

First, they must be poor. They should not be able to meet basic human needs. We should help those who have suffered misfortune or persecution, but the Bible does not instruct us to give to just anyone who asks for help or to those who are merely trying to improve their comfort or lifestyle.

Second, they must be diligent. Some people are poor because of laziness, neglect, or gluttony. Christians are instructed to admonish laziness and poor habits like drinking, drugs, or even laziness that lead to poverty. Proverbs says, "Go to the ant, you sluggard, and observe her ways and be wise." The Apostle Paul more pointedly says, "If a man will not work, neither let him eat." Lazy people should not be rewarded by welfare, but rather encouraged to change their ways. Third, the church must provide for those thrown into poverty because of the death of the family provider. The Bible commands us to provide for widows and orphans who are in need. Paul wrote to Timothy that a widow who was 60 years or older whose only husband has died was qualified to be supported by the church.

I believe the needs of the poor can and should be met by the church. Churches and individual Christians need to do their part in fighting poverty in their area. Homemakers can provide meals. Educators can provide tutoring and counseling. Businessmen can provide employment training. The church as a

whole can provide everything from a full-time ministry to the poor to an occasional collection for the benevolence fund to be distributed to those facing temporary needs brought about by illness or unemployment. The key is for the church to obey God's command to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Helping the poor is not an option. We have a biblical responsibility which we cannot simply pass off to the government.

©1994 Probe Ministries

National Health Care

One of the hottest areas of debate in our society today is in the area of health care. Congress, the President, state legislatures, doctors, insurance companies, and private citizens are talking about rising health costs and proposing ways to deal with this issue.

Consider the following scenario: Suppose the federal government decided to do something about hunger in America and instituted food reform. Imagine that the proposed solution was to herd everyone into food alliances. Then it required that everyone buy food from those food alliances or else required them to eat their meals in huge cafeterias, all offering the same government-approved menu at government approved prices.

What would be the impact? If everyone had to go to food alliances to buy food, the price of food would go up. Imagine if every month money were deducted from your paycheck to pay for food insurance. Then when you went to the food alliance, you gave the cash register receipt to the government for reimbursement. Since you aren't paying for it, you would rarely comparison shop. You wouldn't be looking for bargains and eventually the cost of food would sky-rocket.

The only way the federal government could keep the price down would be to institute price control. It would have to tell manufacturers what they could charge for food. But this would lead to scarcity, because some farmers and manufacturers would conclude that the price was too low for them to make a profit. And some supermarkets would find the profit margin too small so they would go out of business.

Finally what would be the impact on you—the consumer? Well, you would see less diversity and less food at the food alliance. And there would be much more governmental regulation than is really necessary.

This, essentially, is what is being proposed in the area of health care. Government will establish health alliances, set prices, and implement employer mandates. These are just a few of the elements of what is called managed competition.

But is there a better way? Of course there is, and we can return to our food analogy to find it. Currently what does the federal government do to help people who do not have enough to eat? Does it assign people to food alliances or herd them into huge cafeterias? No. It gives them food stamps which they can use in local grocery stores. They comparison shop and find the food and prices they think is best.

Many are saying that this is the model we should use for health care. Don't socialize health care and turn over the decision-making to a few federal bureaucrats and national health boards. Put the power and responsibility into the hands of 100 million individuals who would effectively organize and regulate the health care market.

This of course is just one proposal, but it illustrates rather dramatically what could happen if we made people responsible to their own actions rather than enlarge the role of government in health care.

How Many Americans Are Uninsured?

During the 1992 campaign, Bill Clinton said that there were 37 million Americans who are uninsured. We were told we need to reform health care in the U.S. in order to provide for the millions of Americans who do not have health insurance.

How many Americans are truly uninsured? During the campaign Bill Clinton stated that 37 million Americans are uninsured. But during his 1994 State of the Union speech President Clinton began using the higher figure of 58 million. Did that mean that 21 million Americans lost health insurance during the first year of the Clinton Administration? Obviously not. So what is the correct figure?

Well, it turns out that these figures only work if you include the Clinton disclaimer "some time each year." This would include anyone who changed jobs, changed health plans, moved, etc. Using that criterion, it would be true to say that I have been homeless in the past since I have been "between homes during some time during a year." But that did not mean that I slept under an overpass. Perhaps a better way to look at this issue would be to figure out how many people do not have insurance over a longer period of time—this would be the people who are chronically uninsured.

So how many Americans are chronically uninsured? It turns out that half the uninsured used in President Clinton's statistic have insurance again within six months. Only 15 percent stay that way for more than 2 years. This produces a figure of about 5.5 million chronically uninsured.

But 37 percent of those people are under the age of 25. For them, insurance plans are often a bad buy or even unnecessary because they may still be covered by their parents' plans. So if we eliminate the 37 percent, this brings the number down to approximately 3 million Americans who are chronically uninsured.

I might also add that some of these 3 million may not want to be insured. Some may be very wealthy and not want health insurance. Some of the other 3 million may want to be outside the system. The Amish may not want to be forced to buy insurance. Christians who are part of a group called "the Brotherhood" have opted out of traditional insurance and pay one another's bills.

So we may have even less than 3 million people are chronically uninsured and want to be insured. That is no small number and it certainly isn't insignificant if you are one of those people who are uninsured. But the 3 million figure does put the problem in a different light.

We could merely expand Medicaid to include these people. We could provide supplementary insurance for these people. We could even come up with free market alternatives. But we don't need government to take over one-seventh of the American economy merely to deal with the problem of 3 million uninsured Americans.

And that's the point, some of the numbers are being used to justify rash and draconian actions. We don't need health alliances, employer mandates, national health boards, or mandated universal coverage if the real problem is that 3 million Americans are chronically uninsured. We can develop a simple program to meet their needs and avoid the problems of socialized medicine.

What About the Costs?

At this place in the discussion it's appropriate to focus on the possible cost of health care reform. Most Americans want to know the price tag of health care reform. And when you hear people talking about the potential cost, recognize that you probably aren't hearing the whole story. Proponents will talk about the direct cost of health care reform, but remember that are other hidden costs that may be more significant.

For example, what will be the impact of health care reform on business? Proponents argue that the impact will be minimal. Business owners are not so sure. They fear that employer mandates will hurt their business, affect their bottom line, and create substantial unemployment.

During a Presidential town meeting in April 1994, President Clinton got into a verbal sparring match with Herman Cain, president and CEO of Godfather's Pizza. The President asked, "Why wouldn't you be able to raise the price of pizza two percent? I'm a satisfied customer. I'd keep buying from you." Then he asked to see Mr. Cain's calculations. Mr. Cain replied in a letter to the President (later reprinted in the *Wall Street Journal*). The following is a brief summary of the letter.

Although there are over 10,000 employees with Godfather's Pizza, two-thirds are owned and operated by franchisees. Mr. Cain focused his calculation only on the approximately one-third which were corporate-owned operations.

Mr. Cain concluded that the Clinton Health Care plan would cost nearly \$2.2 million annually. This represents a \$1.7 million increase. In other words this increase would be a 3 1/2 times their insurance premium for the previous year!

If these calculations by Mr. Cain are accurate (and no one has challenged them so far), then how did President Clinton arrive at his figures of a 2 percent increase in price of pizza? President Clinton stated that restaurants with approximately 30 percent labor need only increase prices by 2.5 percent. Apparently he multiplied 30 percent by the employer mandate of 7.9 percent.

But Mr. Cain's detailed calculations show that it just isn't that simple. He estimates that you would need a 16 to 20 percent increase in "top line" sales to produce the same "bottom line" due to variable costs such as labor, food costs,

operating expenses, marketing, and taxes.

I would argue that even a 2 percent increase in pizza costs could be devastating. Most people buy pizza to save time and money. Even a small increase in the cost of pizza would affect business. Mr. Cain noted that half of all Godfather's Pizza customers use coupons to purchase pizzas. The impact of a 16 to 20 percent increase would be devastating to Godfather's Pizza. And what would be the impact on the economy? In essence the President was predicting that health care reform would require the inflation of prices.

Will a health care reform bill with employer mandates adversely affect business? Proponents say that health care reform will not be costly to the American taxpayer or to American business. But tell that to Herman Cain and Godfather's Pizza. Their detailed spreadsheets project that these health care bills will more than triple their insurance costs in just the first year.

Health care reform may cost much more than we think it will. The direct costs may not seem like much, but don't forget to count the indirect costs to you and to American business.

Other Issues

Other key issues being discussed along with health care reform need to be examined. The first is health care costs. Originally only about 5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product was spent on health care. And until the mid-1980s, it was less than 10 percent. But now it is approximately 14 percent of Gross Domestic Product and could be as high as 18 percent by the end of the decade. In actual numbers, health care costs were \$74.4 billion in 1970 and will be approximate \$1.7 trillion by the year 2000.

Part of the problem is that a third party pays for health insurance. If there were more personal accountability, people

would comparison shop and bring market pressures to bear on some of the health care costs. For example, if I told you I was going to take you to dinner on the Probe credit card, you would probably spend a lot of time looking at the left side of the menu. However, if I said, "Let's go out to eat, Dutch treat," you would probably spend a lot more time looking at the right side of the menu. When someone else pays for our medical bills, we don't pay as much attention to cost. When we have a personal responsibility, we pay more attention and thereby lower costs.

A second issue is tax fairness. Nearly 90% of all private health insurance is employer-provided and purchased with pre-tax dollars. But the self-employed and those who buy their own insurance must buy theirs with after-tax dollars. Presently the government "spends" about \$60-billion a year subsidizing employer-based health insurance by permitting employers to deduct the cost.

Tax fairness would allow all people to buy health insurance with pre-tax dollars. One solution is to allow those who purchases their own health insurance to have a tax deduction or tax credit. This would eliminate the tax benefit for getting health insurance through an employer and employees could purchase their own insurance which leads to the next issue.

Portability is the third major issue. Americans usually cannot take their health insurance with them if they change jobs. A fair tax system would offer no tax subsidy to the employer unless the policy was personal and portable. If it belonged to the employee, then it would be able to go with the employee when he or she changed jobs.

In essence, health insurance is merely a substitute for wages. In a sense, it is an accident of history. Health insurance was provided as a benefit after World War II. Health insurance should be personal and portable. After all, employers don't

own their employees' auto insurance or homeowner's insurance. Health insurance should be no different.

Price fairness is another issue. Proponents of socialized medicine would force people with healthy lifestyles into a one tier system with people who smoke, drink too much, use drugs, drive irresponsibly, and are sexually promiscuous. A better system would be one that rewards responsibility and penalizes irresponsibility. Obviously we should provide for the very young, the very old, the chronically ill, etc., but we shouldn't be forced into a universal risk pool and effectively subsidize the destructive behavior of those who voluntarily choose sin over righteousness.

These are just a few of the key issues in the health care debate. Unfortunately many of them have been ignored. A truly ethical health care system must provide tax fairness, price fairness, and portability.

The Moral Costs

I would like to conclude by examining the social and moral implications of health care reform? Critics of health care reform warn that it will inevitably lead to rationing. Most of the government health care plans proposed will be forced to ration care and no doubt put a squeeze on the aged and on high tech medicine. This would be the only way to save money. For example, when Hillary Clinton testified before the Senate Finance Committee, she explained to the Senators their justification for health care services. She said their proposal creates "the kind of health security we are talking about, then people will know they are not being denied treatment for any reason other than it is not appropriate—will not enhance or save the quality of life." Medical services will be curtailed for those whose quality of life is not deemed necessary to treat. This has been the inevitable result in other industrialized countries that have socialized medicine. If you increase demand (by providing universal

coverage), you will have to decrease supply (health care benefits provided to citizens). Those patients whose quality of life is not deemed satisfactory will be denied treatment.

Canada, for example, has a single-payer plan. They have found that their health care costs are going up as fast as U.S. while their research is lagging behind. Patients find themselves in waiting lines and have been coming in significant numbers to the U.S. for health care. Those remaining in Canada wait in line. There are currently 1.4 million waiting for care and 45 percent say they are in pain.

There would also be a squeeze on high tech medicine. The quickest way to save money is to limit the number of CAT scans, MRIs, or other sophisticated forms of technology. In Canada high tech equipment is relatively rare and used sparingly. In the U.S., the latest technology is available to nearly all Americans.

Health care expert Danny Mendelson writing in *Health Affairs* journal predicted that “a few years down the line, you first start to see what we call silent rationing, where the patient’s don’t even know that they’re not receiving the beneficial care that they need. Further down the line, I think it would become very clear that we were denying patients some of the latest technology in order to save money.”

Finally, critics wonder if government should be entrusted with running the health care system in America. Government has not proven to be an efficient deliverer of services. As one wag put it, if we have government take over health care, we might end up with a system that has the efficiency of the post office, the compassion of the IRS, at Pentagon prices. No slight is intended to the good people who work in those areas of government, but the joke does underscore the growing concern over government delivery of services, especially health care.

As Americans begin to evaluate the costs of various health care reform packages, they are beginning to find they are a bad buy. The solution is to reduce the scope of government in health care, not expand it.

©1994 Probe Ministries