Pornography – A Biblical Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson looks at pornography from a biblical worldview perspective. He clearly chronicles the physical, emotional and spiritual harm created by pornography and lays out the scriptural warnings to protect us from its degrading effects.

Pornography has been tearing apart the very fabric of modern society, but the problem has been made much worse with pornography's proliferation through the Internet. Studies show that 40 million adults regularly visit Internet pornography sites.{1} To put that in perspective, that is ten times the amount of people who regularly watch baseball.



When I first started writing about pornography in the 1980s, it was already a multi-billion dollar-a-year business mostly promoted through so-called "adult bookstores" and pornographic magazines. With the development of videos, DVDs, and the Internet, pornography has become ubiquitous.

The wages of sin are enormous when pornography is involved. Revenue from Internet porn exceeds by nearly a 2 to 1 ratio, the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC.{2} And sales of pornographic material on the Internet surpass the cumulative sales of all other products sold online.{3}

The current estimate is the there are over 4 million pornographic websites representing almost 400 million pages of pornographic material.{4}

Pornography is not just something a few men view in the late hours in the privacy of their homes. At least 70 percent of porn is downloaded during work hours (9 am to 5 pm). A percentage of those who do so admit to accessing pornography at work.

And pornography also affects those in church. According to *Leadership Journal*, 40 percent of pastors admit to visiting a pornographic website.{5} And at one Promise Keepers Convention, 53 percent of men admitted to visiting a porn site the week before.{6}

The impact pornography is having on young people is alarming. It used to be that when you would ask someone when they first saw pornography they would tell you a story about seeing a porn magazine at a friend's house when they were in middle school or high school. Now a child in grade school has already seen images that were only available in an adult bookstore a few years ago. At one time these images were inaccessible to youth; now they are merely a mouse click away. The average age of first exposure to Internet pornography is 11 years old. And the largest consumer of Internet pornography is the 12-17 age group.{7}

How should we define pornography? What is the effect on individuals and society? And what is a biblical perspective on this? I deal with each of these questions in detail in my book, *Christians Ethics in Plain Language*.{8} In the next section, we address some of these questions.

Definition and Types of Pornography

How should we define pornography? Pornography has been defined as material that "is predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal." Hard-core pornography "is sexually explicit in the extreme, and devoid of any other apparent content or purpose."{9}

Another important term is obscenity. In the 1973 Supreme Court case of *Miller v. California*, the justices set forth a three-part test to define obscenity:{10}

> (a) The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find the work, taken as a whole, appeals to

the prurient interest.

(b) The work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and

(c) The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

What are the types of pornography? The first type of pornography is adult magazines, which are primarily directed toward adult male readers. The magazines with the widest distribution (*Playboy* and *Penthouse*) do not violate the *Miller* standards of obscenity and thus can be legally distributed.

The second type of pornography is video. Videocassettes or DVDs are rented or sold in most adult bookstores and the Internet. They have become a growth industry for pornography.

The third type of pornography is motion pictures. Ratings standards are being relaxed, and many pornographic movies are being shown and distributed carrying R and NC-17 ratings. Many of these so-called “hard R” rated films would have been considered obscene just a few decades ago.

A fourth type of pornography is television. As in motion pictures, standards for commercial television have been continuously lowered. But cable television poses an even greater threat. The Federal Communications Commission does not regulate cable in the same way it does public access stations. Thus, many pornographic movies are shown on cable television.

A fifth type of pornography is audio porn, which includes “Dial-a-porn” telephone calls, the second fastest growth market of pornography. Although most of the messages are within the *Miller* definition of obscenity, these businesses continue to thrive and are often used by children.

A sixth type of pornography is “cyberporn,” or Internet

pornography. Virtually anyone can download and view hard-core pictures, movies, online chat, and even live sex acts through the Internet.

Addiction to Pornography

Victor Cline, a psychologist, documented how men become addicted to pornographic materials, then begin to desire more explicit or deviant material, and finally act out what they have seen.{11} He maintained "that memories of experiences that occurred at times of emotional arousal (which could include sexual arousal) are imprinted on the brain by epinephrine, an adrenal gland hormone, and are difficult to erase. This may partly explain pornography's addicting effect."{12}

Other research showed that biochemical and neurological responses in individuals who are aroused release the adrenal hormone epinephrine in the brain, which is why one can remember pornographic images seen years before. In response to pleasure, nerve endings release chemicals that reinforce the body's own desire to repeat the process.{13} Kimberly Young, an authority on Internet addiction, found that 90 percent of those who became addicted to cyberporn became addicted to the two-way communication functions: chat rooms, newsgroups, and e-mail.{14}

Psychologists identified a five-step pattern in pornographic addiction. The first step is *exposure*. Addicts have been exposed to pornography in many ways, ranging from sexual abuse as children to looking at widely available pornographic magazines.

The second step is *addiction*. People who continually expose themselves to pornography "keep coming back for more and more" in order to get new sexual highs. James L. McCough of the University of California at Irvine said that "experiences at times of emotional or sexual arousal get locked in the brain

by the chemical epinephrine and become virtually impossible to erase."{15}

A third step is *escalation.* Previous sexual highs become more difficult to attain; therefore users of pornography begin to look for more exotic forms of sexual behavior to bring them stimulation.

A fourth step is *desensitization*. What was initially shocking becomes routine. Shocking and disgusting sexual behavior is no longer avoided but is sought out for more intense stimulation. Concern about pain and degradation get lost in the pursuit of the next sexual experience.

A fifth step is *acting out fantasies*. People do what they have seen and find pleasurable. Not every pornography addict will become a serial murderer or a rapist. But many do look for ways to act out their sexual fantasies

In my book *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, I discuss in further detail the issue of pornographic addiction as well as describe the social and psychological effects of pornography.

Social Effects

Defining the social effects of pornography has been difficult because of some of the prevailing theories of its impact. One theory was that pornography actually performs a positive function in society by acting like a "safety valve" for potential sexual offenders.

The most famous proponent of this theory was Berl Kutchinsky, a criminologist at the University of Copenhagen. His famous study on pornography found that when the Danish government lifted restrictions on pornography, the number of sex crimes decreased.{16} Therefore, he concluded that the availability of pornography siphons off dangerous sexual impulses. But when the data for his "safety-valve" theory was further evaluated,

many of his research flaws began to show.

For example, Kutchinsky failed to distinguish between different kinds of sex crimes (such as rape and indecent exposure) and instead merely lumped them together, effectively masking an increase in rape statistics. He also failed to consider that increased tolerance for certain crimes (public nudity and sex with a minor) may have contributed to a drop in the reported crimes.

Proving cause and effect in pornography is virtually impossible because, ethically, researchers cannot do certain kinds of research. As Dolf Zillman said, "Men cannot be placed at risk of developing sexually violent inclinations by extensive exposure to violent or nonviolent pornography, and women cannot be placed at risk of becoming victims of such inclinations."{17}

Nevertheless, a number of compelling statistics suggest that pornography does have profound social consequences. For example, of the 1,400 child sexual molestation cases in Louisville, Kentucky, between July 1980 and February 1984, adult pornography was connected with each incident and child pornography with the majority of them.{18}

Extensive interviews with sex offenders (rapists, incest offenders, and child molesters) have uncovered a sizable percentage of offenders who use pornography to arouse themselves before and during their assaults.{19} Police officers have seen the impact pornography has had on serial murders. In fact, pornography consumption is one of the most common profile characteristics of serial murders and rapists.{20}

Professor Cass Sunstein, writing in the *Duke Law Journal*, said that some sexual violence against women "would not have occurred but for the massive circulation of pornography." Citing cross-cultural data, he concluded, "The liberalization

of pornography laws in the United States, Britain, Australia, and the Scandinavian countries has been accompanied by a rise in reported rape rates. In countries where pornography laws have not been liberalized, there has been a less steep rise in reported rapes. And in countries where restrictions have been adopted, reported rapes have decreased."{21}

Biblical Perspective

God created men and women in His image (Gen. 1:27) as sexual beings. But because of sin in the world (Rom. 3:23), sex has been misused and abused (Rom. 1:24-25).

Pornography attacks the dignity of men and women created in the image of God. Pornography also distorts God's gift of sex which should be shared only within the bounds of marriage (1 Cor. 7:2-3). When the Bible refers to human sexual organs, it often employs euphemisms and indirect language. Although there are some exceptions (a woman's breasts and womb are sometimes mentioned), generally Scripture maintains a basic modesty towards a man's or woman's sexual organs.

Moreover, Scripture specifically condemns the practices that result from pornography such as sexual exposure (Gen. 9:21-23), adultery (Lev. 18:20), bestiality (Lev. 18:23), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22 and 20:13), incest (Lev. 18:6-18), and prostitution (Deut. 23:17-18).

A biblical perspective of human sexuality must recognize that sexual intercourse is exclusively reserved for marriage for the following purposes. First, it establishes the one-flesh union (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:4-6). Second, it provides for sexual intimacy within the marriage bond. The use of the word "know" indicates a profound meaning of sexual intercourse (Gen. 4:1). Third, sexual intercourse is for the mutual pleasure of husband and wife (Prov. 5:18-19). Fourth, sexual intercourse is for procreation (Gen. 1:28).

The Bible also warns against the misuse of sex. Premarital and extramarital sex is condemned (1 Cor. 6:13-18; 1 Thess. 4:3). Even thoughts of sexual immorality (often fed by pornographic material) are condemned (Matt. 5:27-28).

Moreover, Christians must realize that pornography can have significant harmful effects on the user. These include: a comparison mentality, a performance-based sexuality, a feeling that only forbidden things are sexually satisfying, increased guilt, decreased self concept, and obsessive thinking.

Christians, therefore, must do two things. First, they must work to keep themselves pure by fleeing immorality (1 Cor. 6:18) and thinking on those things which are pure (Phil. 4:8). As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7). Christians must make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Pornography will fuel the sexual desire in abnormal ways and can eventually lead to even more debase perversion. We, therefore, must "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). Second, Christians must work to remove the sexual perversion of pornography from society.

Notes

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Answering the New Atheists – A Christian Addresses Their Arguments

Kerby Anderson counters the claim by popular new atheists that Christianity (along with other religions) is blind, irrational and without any evidence. Kerby demonstrates that contrary to the atheists' claims God is not an invention of mankind, that faith is not dangerous, and that science and Christianity support one another. From a Christian point of view, the new atheists are bringing out tired old arguments that don't stand up to rational scrutiny.

Is Faith Irrational?

Many of the best selling books over the last few years have been written by the New Atheists. I'd like to consider some of the criticisms brought by these individuals and provide brief answers. You may never meet one of these authors, but you are quite likely to encounter these arguments as you talk with people who are skeptical about Christianity.

 For our discussion, we will be using the general outline of the book *Is God Just a Human Invention?* written by Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow.{1} I would encourage you to read the book for a fuller discussion not only of the topics considered here but of many others as well.

You cannot read a book by the New Atheists without encountering their claim that religion is blind, irrational, and without any evidence. Richard Dawkins makes his feelings known by the title of one of his books: *The God Delusion*.

Why does he say that? He says religions are not evidentially based: “In all areas except religion, we believe what we believe as a result of evidence.”{2} In other words, religious faith is a blind faith not based upon evidence like other academic disciplines. So he concludes that religion is a “nonsensical enterprise” that “poisons everything.”{3}

Each of the New Atheists makes a similar statement. Dawkins states that faith is a delusion, a “persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence.”{4} Daniel Dennett claims Christians are addicted to blind faith.{5} And Sam Harris argues that “Faith is generally nothing more than the permission religious people give one another to believe things without evidence.”{6}

Is this true? Do religious people have a blind faith? Certainly some religious people exercise blind faith. But is this true of all religions, including Christianity? Of course not. The enormous number of Christian books on topics ranging from apologetics to theology demonstrate that the Christian faith is based upon evidence.

But we might turn the question around on the New Atheists. You say that religious faith is not based upon evidence. What is your evidence for that broad, sweeping statement? Where is the evidence for your belief that faith is blind?

Orthodox Christianity has always emphasized that faith and reason go together. Biblical faith is based upon historical evidence. It is not belief in spite of the evidence, but it is belief because of the evidence.

The Bible, for example, says that Jesus appeared to the disciples and provided “many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of □□the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Peter appealed to evidence and to eyewitnesses when he preached about Jesus as “a man attested to you by God with

mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22).

The Christian faith is not a blind faith. It is a faith based upon evidence. In fact, some authors contend that it takes more faith to be an atheist than to believe in God.{7}

Is God a Human Invention?

Human beings are religious. We are not only talking about people in the past who believe in God. Billions of people today believe in God. Why? The New Atheists have a few explanations for why people believe in God even though they say God does not exist.

One explanation that goes all the way back to Sigmund Freud is projection. He wrote that religious beliefs are "illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest, and most urgent wishes of mankind."{8} In other words, we project the existence of God based on a human need. It is wish fulfillment. We wish there would be a God, so we assume that he exists.

As Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow point out in their book, there are five good reasons to reject this idea. One objection is that Freud's argument begs the question. In other words, it assumes that there is no God and then merely tries to find an explanation for why someone would believe in God anyway.

The projection theory can also cut both ways. If you argue that humans created God out of a need for security, then you could also just as easily argue that atheists believe there is no God because they want to be free and unencumbered by a Creator who might make moral demands on them.

Perhaps the reasons humans have a desire for the divine is because that is the only thing that will satisfy their spiritual hunger. C.S. Lewis argued that "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires

exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desires: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire, which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. Probably earthly pleasures were never made to satisfy it, but only arouse it, to suggest the real thing."{9}

Some atheists suggest that perhaps we are genetically wired to believe in God. One example would be the book by Dean Hamer entitled *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into Our Genes*. It is worth noting that even the author thought the title was overstated and at least admitted that there "probably is no single gene."{10} Since the publication of the book, its conclusions have been shown to be exaggerated. Francis Collins served as the director of the Human Genome Project and has plainly stated that there is no gene for spirituality.

Richard Dawkins believes that religious ideas might have survived natural selection as "units of cultural inheritance."{11} He calls these genetic replicators *memes*. Although he has coined the term, he is also quick to acknowledge that we don't know what memes are or where they might reside.

One critic said that "Memetics is no more than a cumbersome terminology for saying what everybody knows and that can be more usefully said in the dull terminology of information transfer."{12} Alister McGrath perceives a flaw: "Since the meme is not warranted scientifically, we are to conclude that there is a meme for belief in memes? The meme concept then dies the slow death of self-referentiality, in that, if taken seriously, the idea explains itself as much as anything else."{13}

There is another explanation that we can find in the Bible. Why do most people believe in a God? The writer of

Ecclesiastes (3:11) observes that it is God who has "set eternity in the hearts of men."

Is Religion Dangerous?

The New Atheists contend that religion is not just false; it's also dangerous. Sam Harris believes it should be treated like slavery and eradicated.{14} Christopher Hitchens wants to rally his fellow atheists against religion: "It has become necessary to know the enemy, and to prepare to fight it."{15} Richard Dawkins is even more specific: "I am attacking God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been invented."{16}

Much of the criticism against religion revolves around violence. We do live in a violent world, and religion has often been the reason (or at least the justification) for violent acts. But the New Atheists are kidding themselves if they think that a world without religion would usher in a utopia where there is no longer violence, oppression, or injustice.

Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow point out in their book on the New Atheists that details matter when you are examining religion. Injustices by the Taliban in Afghanistan ought not to be used as part of the cumulative cases against religion in general or Christianity in particular. The fact that there are Muslim terrorists in the world today does not mean that all Muslims are dangerous. And it certainly doesn't mean that Christianity is dangerous.

Alister McGrath reminds us that "all ideals—divine, transcendent, human or invented—are capable of being abused. That's just the way human nature is. And that happens to religion as well. Belief in God can be abused, and we need to be very clear, in the first place, that abuse happens, and in the second, that we need to confront and oppose this. But

abuse of an ideal does not negate its validity."{17}

Religion is not the problem. People are the problem because they are sinful and live in a fallen world. Keith Ward puts this in perspective:

> *No one would deny that there have been religious wars in human history. Catholics have fought Protestants, Sunni Muslims have fought Shi'a Muslims, and Hindus have fought Muslims. However, no one who has studied history could deny that most wars in human history have not been religious. And in the case of those that have been religious, the religious component has usually been associated with some non-religious, social, ethnic, or political component that has exerted a powerful influence on the conflicts.{18}*

The New Atheists, however, still want to contend that religion is dangerous while refusing to accept that atheism has been a major reason for death and destruction. If you were to merely look at body count, the three atheistic regimes of the twentieth century (Hitler in Nazi Germany, Stalin in Russia, and Mao in China) are responsible for more than 100 million deaths.

Dinesh D'Souza explains that "Religion-inspired killing simply cannot compete with the murders perpetrated by atheist regimes." Even when you take into account the differences in the world's population, he concludes that "death caused by Christian rulers over a five-hundred-year period amounts to only 1 percent of the deaths caused by Stalin, Hitler, and Mao in the space of a few decades."{19}

Religion is not the problem; people are the problem. And removing religion and God from a society doesn't make it less dangerous. The greatest death toll in history took place in the last century in atheistic societies.

Is the Universe Just Right for Life?

The New Atheists argue that even though the universe looks like it was designed, the laws of science can explain everything in the universe without God. Richard Dawkins, for example, says that "A universe with a creative superintendent would be a very different kind of universe from one without."{20}

Scientists have been struck by how the laws that govern the universe are delicately balanced. One scientist used the analogy of a room full of dials (each representing a different physical constant). All of the dials are set perfectly. Move any dial to the left or to the right and you no longer have the universe. Some scientists have even called the universe a "Goldilocks universe" because all of the physical constants are "just right."

British astronomer Fred Hoyle remarked, "A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature."{21}

McDowell and Morrow provide a number of examples of the fine tuning of the universe. First is the expansion rate of the universe. "If the balance between gravity and the expansion rate were altered by one part in one million, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, there would be no galaxies, stars, planets, or life."{22} Second is the fine tuning of ratio of the electromagnetic force to the gravitational force. That must be balanced to one part in 10 to the 40^{th} power. That is 1 with 40 zeroes following it.

Scientists also realize that planet Earth has extremely rare conditions that allow it to support life at a time when most of the universe is uninhabitable. Consider just these six conditions: (1) Life must be in the right type of galaxy, (2)

life must be in the right location in the galaxy, (3) life must have the right type of star, (4) life must have the right relationship to the host star, (5) life needs surrounding planets for protection, and (6) life requires the right type of moon.{23}

Scientists (including the New Atheists) are aware of the many fine tuned aspects of the universe. They respond by pointing out that since we could only exist in a fine-tuned universe, we shouldn't be surprised that it is fine tuned. But merely claiming that we could not observe ourselves except in such a universe doesn't really answer the question why we are in one in the first place.

Richard Dawkins admits that there is presently no naturalistic explanation for the find-tuning of the universe.<a href="#text24>{24} But he is quick to add that doesn't argue for the existence of God. And that is certainly true. We know about God and His character from revelation, not from scientific observation and experimentation. But we do see the evidence that the design of the universe implies a Designer.

Are Science and Christianity in Conflict?

The New Atheists believe that science and Christianity are in conflict with one another. They trust science and the scientific method, and therefore reject religion in general and Christianity in particular.

Sam Harris says, "The conflict between religion and science is unavoidable. The success of science often comes at the expense of religious dogma; the maintenance of religious dogma always comes at the expense of science."{25}

Richard Dawkins believes religion is anti-intellectual. He says: "I am hostile to fundamentalist religion because it actively debauches the scientific enterprise . . . . It subverts science and saps the intellect."{26}

Are science and Christianity at odds with one another? Certainly there have been times in the past when that has been the case. But to only focus on those conflicts is to miss the larger point that modern science grew out of a Christian world view. In a previous radio program based upon the book *Origin Science* by Dr. Norman Geisler and me, I explain Christianity's contribution to the rise of modern science.{27}

Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow also point out in their book that most scientific pioneers were theists. This includes such notable as Nicolas Copernicus, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, Blaise Pascal, Johannes Kepler, Louis Pasteur, Francis Bacon, and Max Planck. Many of these men actually pursued science because of their belief in the Christian God.

Alister McGrath challenges this idea that science and religion are in conflict with one another. He says, "Once upon a time, back in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was certainly possible to believe that science and religion were permanently at war. . . . This is now seen as a hopelessly outmoded historical stereotype that scholarship has totally discredited."{28}

The New Atheists believe they have an answer to this argument. Christopher Hitchens discounts the religious convictions of their scientific pioneers. He argues that belief in God was the only option for a scientist at the time.{29} But if religious believers get no credit for the positive contributions to science (e.g., developing modern science) because "everyone was religious," then why should their negative actions (e.g., atrocities done in the name of religion) discredit them? It is a double standard. The argument actually ignores how a biblical worldview shaped the scientific enterprise.{30}

The arguments of the New Atheists may sound convincing, but once you strip away the hyperbole and false charges, there isn't much left.

If you would like to know how to answer the arguments of the New Atheists, I suggest you visit the Probe Web page at www.probe.org and also consider getting a copy of the book by Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow. You will be able to answer the objections of atheists and be better equipped to defend your faith.

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The Federalist Papers

Kerby Anderson takes through a summary of the Federalist Papers as seen from a biblical worldview perspective. Does a Christian view of man and government undergird these foundational documents? Kerby considers this question.

Introduction



The Federalist Papers are a collection of eighty-five essays written by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay between October 1787 and May 1788. They were written at the time to convince New York State to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

They are perhaps the most famous newspaper columns ever written, and today constitute one of the most important documents of America's founding period. They provide the justification for the Constitution and address some of the most important political issues associated with popular self-government.

Clinton Rossiter says that "*The Federalist* is the most important work in political science that has ever been written, or is likely ever to be written, in the United States. . . . It would not be stretching the truth more than a few inches to say that *The Federalist* stands third only to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution itself among all the sacred writings of American political history."{1} Jacob Cooke agrees. He believes that "The United States has produced three historic documents of major importance: The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and *The Federalist*." {2}

All the essays were signed "Publius" even though they were written by three different authors (Hamilton wrote fifty-two, Madison wrote twenty-eight, and Jay wrote five). Political

leaders in New York opposed the new government because the state had become an independent nation under the Articles of Confederation and was becoming rich through tariffs on trade with other states. When it became apparent that New York would not ratify the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton enlisted the aid of James Madison (who was available because the Continental Congress was sitting in New York) and John Jay. Unfortunately, Jay was injured and was only able to complete a few essays.

There are many reasons for the importance of *The Federalist Papers*. First, the authors were significant figures during the founding era. James Madison is considered the architect of the Constitution and later served as President of the United States. Alexander Hamilton served in George Washington's cabinet and was a major force in setting U.S. economic policy. John Jay became the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Each of these men was present at the constitutional convention and was respected by their peers.

Second, *The Federalist Papers* provide the most systematic and comprehensive analysis of the constitution. Not only do the authors explain the structure of the constitution, but they also defend their decisions against the critics of their day. They were, after all, writing to convince New York to ratify the constitution.

Third, *The Federalist Papers* explain the motives of the Founding Fathers. Often when Supreme Court justices are trying to discern the founder's intentions, they appeal to these writings.{3} *The Federalist Papers* are the most important interpretative source of constitutional interpretation and give important insight into the framers' intent and purpose for the Constitution.

Human Nature

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* were concerned about the relationship between popular government and human nature. They were well aware that human beings have the propensity to pursue short-term self-interest often at the expense of long-term benefits. The writers were also concerned that factions that formed around these areas of immediate self-interest could ultimately destroy the moral foundations of civil government.

James Madison argued in *Federalist Paper #51* that government must be based upon a realistic view of human nature:

> But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.{4}

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* certainly believed that there was a positive aspect to human nature. They often talk about reason, virtue, and morality. But they also recognized there was a negative aspect to human nature. They believed that framing a republic required a balance of power that liberates human dignity and rationality and controls human sin and depravity.

As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust, so there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form.{5}

As we will discuss in more detail later, James Madison concluded from his study of governments that they were destroyed by factions. He believed this factionalism was due to "the propensity of mankind, to fall into mutual animosities" (*Federalist Paper #10*) which he believed were "sown in the nature of man." Constitutional scholars have concluded that "the fallen nature of man influenced Madison's view of law and government."{6} He therefore concluded that government must be based upon a more realistic view which also accounts for this sinful side of human nature.

A Christian view of government is based upon a balanced view of human nature. It recognizes both human dignity (we are created in God's image) and human depravity (we are sinful individuals). Because both grace and sin operate in government, we should neither be too optimistic nor too pessimistic. We should view governmental affairs with a deep sense of biblical realism.

Factions and the Republic

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* were concerned about the previous history of republics. Alexander Hamilton writes that "the history of the petty republics of Greece and Italy" can only evoke "horror and disgust" since they rocked back and forth from "the extremes of tyranny and anarchy."

James Madison focused on the problem of factions. "By a faction I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of the citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."{7}

Madison believed there were only two ways to cure the problem of factions: remove the causes or control the effects. He quickly dismisses the first since it would either destroy

liberty or require everyone to have “the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.”

He further acknowledges that “causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man.” So he rejects the idea of changing human nature. And he also rejects the idea that a political leader will be able to deal with the problem of factions: “It is vain to say that enlightened statesmen will be able to adjust these clashing interests and render them all subservient to the public good. Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm.”{8}

Madison believed the solution could be found in the extended republic that the framers created. While a small republic might be shattered by factions, the larger number of representatives that would be chosen would “guard against the cabals of a few.”

Also, since “each representative will be chosen by a greater number of citizens, it will be more difficult for unworthy candidates to practice with success the vicious arts by which elections are too often carried.” Also, the voters are “more likely to center on men who possess the most attractive merit and the most diffusive and established characters.”{9}

Madison also believed that this extended republic would minimize the possibility of one faction pushing forward it agenda to the exclusion of others. This was due to the “greater number of citizens and extent of territory.” A smaller society would most likely have fewer distinct parties. But if you extend the sphere, you increase the variety and interests of the parties. And it is less likely any one faction could dominate the political arena.

Madison realized the futility of trying to remove passions or human sinfulness, and instead designed a system that minimized the influence of factions and still provided the greatest amount of liberty for its citizens.

Separation of Powers

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* were concerned with the potential abuse of power, and set forth their rationale for separating the powers of the various branches of government. James Madison summarizes their fear of the centralization of political power in a famous quote in *Federalist Paper* #47.

> No political truth is certainly of greater intrinsic value, or is stamped with the authority of more enlightened patrons of liberty, than that on which the objection is founded. The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.{10}

Madison quickly dismisses the idea that constitutional provisions alone will prevent an abuse of political power. He argues that mere "parchment barriers" are not adequate "against the encroaching spirit of power."{11}

He also believed that the legislature posed the greatest threat to the separation of powers. "The legislative department is everywhere extending the sphere of its activity and drawing all power into its impetuous vortex."{12} The framers therefore divided Congress into a bicameral legislature and hoped that the Senate would play a role in checking the passions of popular majorities (*Federalist Paper* #63).

His solution was to give each branch separate but rival powers. This prevented the possibility of concentrating power into the hands of a few. Each branch had certain checks over the other branches so there was a distribution and balance of power.

The effect of this system was to allow ambition and power to control itself. Each branch is given power, and as ambitious

men and women seek to extend their sphere of influence, they provide a check on the other branch.

Madison said, “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government.”{13} This policy of supplying “opposite and rival interests” has been known as the concept of countervailing ambitions.

In addition to this, the people were given certain means of redress. Elections and an amendment process have kept power from being concentrated in the hands of governmental officials. Each of these checks was motivated by a healthy fear of human nature. The founders believed in human responsibility and human dignity, but they did not trust human nature too much. Their solution was to separate powers and invest each branch with rival powers.

Limited Government

The writers of *The Federalist Papers* realized the futility of trying to remove passions and ambition from the population. They instead divided power and allowed “ambition to counteract ambition.” By separating various institutional power structures, they limited the expansion of power.

This not only included a horizontal distribution of powers (separation of powers), but also a vertical distribution of powers (federalism). The federal government was delegated certain powers while the rest of the powers were reserved to the states and the people.

James Madison rightly called this new government a republic which he defined as “a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure

for a limited period, or during good behavior."{14}

He also argued that "the proposed government cannot be deemed a national one; since its jurisdiction extends to certain enumerated objects only, and leaves to the several states a residuary and inviolable sovereignty over all other objects."{15}

Governmental power was limited by the Constitution and its interpretation was delegated to the judicial branch. As Alexander Hamilton explained, the Constitution was to be the supreme law of the land.

A constitution is, in fact, and must be regarded by the judges as, a fundamental law. It therefore belongs to them to ascertain its meaning as well as the meaning of any particular act proceeding from the legislative body. If there should happen to be an irreconcilable variance between the two, that which has the superior obligation and validity ought, of course, to be preferred; or, in other words, the Constitution ought to be preferred to the statute, the intention of the people to the intention of their agents.{16}

Although Hamilton referred to the judiciary as the weakest of the three branches of government, some of the critics of the Constitution warned that the Supreme Court "would be exalted above all power in the government, and subject to no control."{17} Unfortunately, that assessment certain has proved correct over the last few decades.

The Federalist Papers provide an overview of the political theory that undergirds the U.S. Constitution and provide important insight into the intentions of the framers in constructing a new government. As we have also seen, it shows us where the current governmental structure strays from the original intent of the framers.

The framers fashioned a government that was based upon a realistic view of human nature. The success of this government

in large part is due to separating power structures because of their desire to limit the impact of human sinfulness.

Notes

1. Clinton Rossiter, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: New American Library, 1961), vii.
2. Jacob E. Cooke, *The Federalist* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), ix.
3. James G. Wilson, "The Most Sacred Text: The Supreme Court's Use of The Federalist Papers," *Brigham Young University Law Review* I (1985).
4. James Madison, *Federalist Papers,* #51 (New York: New American Library, 1961), 322.
5. Madison, *Federalist Papers* #55, 346.
6. John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 101.
7. Madison, *The Federalist Papers,* #10, 78.
8. Ibid., 80.
9. Ibid., 82-3.
10. Madison, *The Federalist Papers,* #47, 301.
11. Madison, *The Federalist Papers,* #48, 308.
12. Ibid., 309.
13. Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, #51, 322.
14. Madison, *The Federalist Papers,* #39, 241.
15. Ibid, 245.
16. Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers,* #78, 467.
17 Herbert Storing and Murray Day, eds. *The Complete Anti-Federalist* (University of Chicago Press, 1981) II, 420.

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Church and Poverty

The church in general, and evangelical Christians in particular, has been helping people in poverty. But you wouldn't know that if you attended a roundtable discussion of poverty at Georgetown University. President Obama made lots of critical comments, but I wanted to focus on just one of his statements.

The president was critical of churches focusing so much time on social issues and so little time on poverty. He wanted "faith-based organizations to speak out on" the issue of poverty and stop being obsessed with what he called "reproductive issues" or same-sex marriage.

Evangelical Christians do have concerns about abortion and same-sex marriage, but that hasn't kept them from also doing a great deal to help the poor. In fact, Christians are the most generous with their time, treasure, and talents. Also, conservative people are more generous than liberal people. In previous commentaries, I have quoted from the extensive research done by Arthur Brooks in his book, *Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth about Compassionate Conservatism.*

What about the institutional church? In term of disaster relief, the Southern Baptist Convention spent more than $6 million. It was the third largest provider behind the Red Cross and Salvation Army. And that is just one Protestant denomination.

An op-ed in the *Washington Post* by Rob Schwarzwalder and Pat Fagan concluded that: "the evangelical relief group World Vision spent roughly $2.8 billion annually to care for the poor." They added: "That would rank World Vision about 12th within the G-20 nations in terms of overseas development assistance." And I might mention that World Vision is just one evangelical ministry. "Groups such as Samaritan's Purse, Food

for the Hungry, World Relief and many others provide hundreds of millions of dollars in anti-poverty programs at home and abroad."

The church has been one of the most effective social outreach programs in history, even if the president doesn't think so.

This blog post originally appeared at pointofview.net/viewpoints/church-and-poverty/ on May 26, 2015.

Biblical Interpretation

Earlier this month at the meeting of the International Society of Christian Apologetics there was a robust discussion of inerrancy and hermeneutics. Those are scholarly words for the belief that the Bible is without error and needs to be interpreted according to sound practices of biblical interpretation.

There is a practical aspect of this debate that affects you and the way you read and interpret the Bible. If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you have probably had someone ask: Do you take the Bible literally? Before you answer, I would recommend you ask that person what they mean by literally.

Here is a helpful sentence: "When the literal sense makes good sense, seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense." Obviously the context helps in understanding how to interpret a passage.

After all, the Bible uses various figures of speech. Jesus told parables. Jesus used metaphors and proclaimed that He is the vine, the door, and the light of the world. There are

types and symbols and allegories. If you are reading a section in the Bible that describes historical events, you expect the historical record to be accurate. If you are reading poetic literature like the Psalms, you should not be surprised that God is described as a shepherd, a sun and a shield.

Here is another helpful sentence: “When the literal sense does not make good sense, we should seek some other sense lest it lead to nonsense.” We should reject a literal sense when it contradicts the moral law, physical law, or supernatural law.

When Jesus says in Matthew 5:30 to cut off your hand, that is not to be taken literally because if violates moral law. When Jesus talks about those who swallow a camel in Matthew 23:24, that violates a physical law. When we read in Jonah 3:10 that God repented or changed His mind, we know that violates a supernatural law, because God does not change His mind (Numbers 23:19).

But in most cases, we are to read the Bible in the literal sense because seeking some other sense will result in nonsense. That’s just common sense.

April 23, 2015

“Which Countries Deny Religious Freedom?”

I understand there are six countries who deny religious freedom. I have Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, and North Korea. Is this list correct? Are there more, or is this complete?

Your list is accurate, but I think it might be better to list

the countries that deny any form of freedom to their citizens. Each year Freedom House posts a list of the countries that are free, partially free, or not free. You can see the list and the map of the world on their Web site (www.freedomhouse.org).

The list of not free countries is very long. Here is the 2001-2002 list just of the countries whose names that start with the first letters of the alphabet:

Afghanistan
Algeria
Angola
Bahrain
Belarus
Bhutan
Brunei
Burma
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Chad
China
Congo
Cuba

As you can see, the list is very long of countries that deny freedom (religious freedom or other freedoms).

Addendum added March 25, 2015:
A better place to get a handle on religious freedom is www.uscirf.gov which is the site of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The Freedom House site deals more with political freedom rather than religious freedom. From the 2015 report, we get the following summary of the nations who are particularly offensive to the ideas of religious liberty.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

> *(USCIRF), an independent federal advisory body the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) created to monitor religious freedom abuses abroad, released its 2014 Annual Report, and recommended that the State Department add eight more nations to its list of "countries of particular concern," defined under law as countries where particularly severe violations of religious freedom are tolerated or perpetrated:* ***Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam.***
>
> *USCIRF also recommended that the following eight countries be re-designated as "countries of particular concern," or CPCs:* ***Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan.***

Kerby Anderson

Myths About the Bible

Newsweek began 2015 with a cover story on the Bible. In the lead article, we get a heavy dose of liberal theory and secular skepticism about the Bible. But the author is correct in arguing that very few Americans are biblically literate. Many Christian ministries have documented this through various surveys as well as lots of anecdotal stories.

Two writers with *The Federalist* decided to follow the lead of *Newsweek* and write about "The Eight Biggest Myths About the Bible." Here are just a few of the cultural myths so many have accepted.

Many people believe the Bible teaches: "money is the root of all evil." That is not what Paul taught (in 1 Timothy 6:10)

which says: “For the love of money is a root all kinds of evil.” The Bible does not condemn money or wealth, but does admonish us to be generous and not to make money an idol.

Another myth is the pervasive belief that Christians are never to make moral judgments. One of the most quoted verses these days is Matthew 7:1. Jesus says, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” He is not telling us not to make moral judgments. In the following verses, he explains that we are not to be hypocritical. We may only see the speck in another person’s eye and not notice the log in our own eye.

One of the current myths being spread by many atheists is that the Bible condones slavery. This is hard to accept if you just look at history. Most abolitionists in this country or Great Britain were Bible-believing Christians. Paul Copan has chapters in many of his books addressing the misunderstanding of the concept of debt-servanthood or indentured servitude that is nothing like slavery. He also addresses another one of the myths listed: that the God of the Old Testament is an Angry Tribal Deity.

Newsweek is correct that much of America is biblically illiterate. And the writers in *The Federalist* are right that many have accepted these cultural myths about the Bible. That is why we need to study God’s Word and take the time to read some good books that destroy these myths.

January 23, 2015

Faith and Charity

Here is an interesting fact. Families in San Francisco give almost exactly the same amount to charity each year as

families in South Dakota. Arthur Brooks talked about this in his book, *Who Really Cares?* He went on to explain that these two communities were very different. They were separated by not only geography but by many cultural differences.

Their donations to charity also represented a significant difference due to income. The average San Francisco family made (back when the book was written) nearly twice as much each year as a family in South Dakota. Put another way, an average South Dakota family gave away 75 percent more of its household income each year than the average family in San Francisco. When Brooks asked an executive of a foundation in South Dakota why people in her state gave so much more, she had a simple answer: religion.

People of faith give much more than secular people. In his book, he divides Americans into four groups to show their differences in giving to charity.

Religious conservatives are the largest group of the four. They represent 24 percent of all Protestants, 19 percent of Catholics, along with a number of other religious groups. This group is most likely to give money to charity and they give away the most money.

Religious liberals are the smallest of the four groups. They are almost as likely to give as religious conservatives. They are a little less likely to volunteer.

Secular conservatives are much less likely to give to charity. They are also much less likely to volunteer or help people in need. Secular liberals are the second largest group and have the highest average income. Nevertheless they are poor givers, even to secular charities they might be expected to support.

The obvious conclusion is that faith makes a big difference in whether someone gives time or money to a charity.

This blog post originally appeared at

pointofview.net/viewpoints/faith-charity/on December 9, 2014.

Gay Agenda in Schools – A Christian Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson summarizes the efforts currently underway to implement a gay agenda in our public schools, identifying some of the negative consequences. Looking at this initiative from a biblical worldview perspective, he suggests actions that Christians should take in response to these actions.

Advancing the Gay Agenda in Schools

Since the early 1990s gay activists and various homosexual groups have been using strategies that provide them with greater access to public schools. Usually the focus is upon making the schools a safer place for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and transsexual students, thereby justifying the introduction of topics and speakers on the subject of homosexuality. And the establishment of homosexual clubs on campus provides an ongoing program to continue to introduce homosexuality to students on campus.



Two key organizations are the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Both have been helpful in establishing a foothold for homosexual speakers, programs, and curricula.

Perhaps the most effective wedge used by gay activists to open the door to the public schools has been concern over student

safety. Kevin Jennings. Executive Director for GLSEN, explained in a speech how the "safety" issue was a most effective strategy:

> *In Massachusetts, the effective reframing of this issue was the key to the success of the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth. We immediately seized upon the opponent's calling card—safety—and explained how homophobia represents a threat to students' safety by creating a climate where violence, name-calling, health problems, and suicide are common. Titling our report "Making Schools Safe for Gay and Lesbian Youth," we automatically threw our opponents onto the defensive and stole their best line of attack. This framing short-circuited their arguments and left them back-pedaling from day one.{1}*

The strategy has obviously been successful because no one would want to be against making the schools a safer environment. It almost doesn't matter whether the allegations are true. Once you raise the concern of safety, most administrators, teachers, and parents quickly fall in line.

There is an irony in all of this. Many of the behaviors that are taught and affirmed in these school programs and clubs are unsafe in term of public health. For example, *Pediatrics* (Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics) reported on a Harvard study that found more than thirty risks positively associated with self-reported gay-lesbian-bisexual (GLB) orientation.{2} So it is indeed ironic that the idea of "safety" is often used as means to introduce teaching and discussion of behaviors that have been proven to be quite "unsafe."

The Goals of GLSEN

The mission statement of GLSEN is straightforward: "The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that

each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression."{3} It is a growing, well-funded homosexual organization that promotes homosexual identity and behavior on campus. It has been very successful in gaining access on campus by working with such influential groups as the National Education Association.

Anyone who takes the time to read some of the materials recommended by GLSEN will quickly find that it condones sexual themes and information that would be disturbing to most parents. One researcher who has taken the time to review these materials and investigate various school programs came to the following seven conclusions:{4}

1. GLSEN believes the early sexualization of children can be beneficial. This means that virtually any sexual activity as well as exposure to graphic sexual images and material, is not just permissible but good for children, as part of the process of discovering their sexuality.

2. "Coming out" (calling oneself or believing oneself to be homosexual) and even beginning homosexual sex practices at a young age, is a normal and positive experience for youth which should be encouraged by teachers and parents, according to GLSEN.

3. Bisexuality, "fluid" sexuality and sexual experimentation is encouraged by GLSEN as a right for all students.

4. Meeting other "gay" and "questioning" youth, sometimes without parental knowledge, is a frequent theme in GLSEN materials. At these meetings, minors will come into contact with college-age people and adults practicing homosexuality.

5. In GLSEN material, the "cool" adults—parents, teachers and counselors—are those who encourage students to embrace homosexuality and cross-dressing. They also allow adult-level freedoms and let children associate with questionable teens or

adults.

6. GLSEN resources contain many hostile, one-sided anti-Christian vignettes and opinions, as well as false information about Christianity and the Bible's position on homosexuality. This encourages antagonism against biblical morality and increases the risk that youth will experiment with high-risk behavior.

7. The spirituality presented positively in GLSEN resources is heavily laced with occult themes and nightmarish images.

Goals of PFLAG and Gay Clubs

PFLAG is a national organization of parents, families, and friends that "promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons."{5} It has been an active organization at the local level to promote its views of human sexuality into schools, churches, and various youth organizations. Although there is a strong emphasis on rights and tolerance, their message about sexuality would be disturbing to most parents.

One researcher who has taken the time to review their brochures and other materials came to the following five conclusions:{6}

1. PFLAG believes in total sexual license for people of all ages. For children, this means that virtually any sexual activity, as well as exposure to graphic sexual images and material, is not just permissible but good for children as part of the process of discovering their sexuality.

2. "Coming out" (calling oneself homosexual or cross-dressing) at a very young age, and even beginning early homosexual sex practices, is a desirable goal in the world according to PFLAG.

3. Bisexuality, fluid sexuality, and sexual experimentation is encouraged by PFLAG. The group believes it's important for all students to learn about these options.

4. Meeting with other "gay" and "questioning" youth, usually without parental knowledge, is a frequent theme in PFLAG materials. At these community meetings, thirteen-year-olds will come into contact with college-age youth and adults practicing homosexuality.

5. PFLAG spreads false information about the Bible, religious faith, and restoration of heterosexuality through faith. This misinformation closes the door of change for many young people, and stirs up anti-Christian and anti-Jewish bias and hostility.

Another way the gay agenda is promoted in the public schools is through Gay-Straight Alliance clubs. In the mid-1990s, there were a few dozen Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs in U.S. high schools. Today there are 3,200 GSA clubs registered.{7}

These student-run clubs provides a meeting place for student talk about homosexuality and homosexual behaviors. It is also provides a platform for outside speakers to address various topics and for students to organize a "Pride Week" on campus. Once a year, many of the students in these clubs also participate in "The Day of Silence." This is a day when students will remain silent all day as a way of acknowledging the silence induced by those who oppose homosexuality.

Legal Liability

Is there any legal liability when schools permit and even promote the teaching of homosexual education the campus? One group (Citizens for Community Values) believes there is a potential liability. The group has published a manual documenting the potential liability that schools,

administrators, and teachers might face. The following is a brief summary of much more information that can be found in the document "The Legal Liability Associated with Homosexual Education in Public Schools."{8}

Life expectancy—The *International Journal of Epidemiology* found that gay and bisexual men involved in homosexual behavior cut off years from their lives. One study showed that "life expectancy at age 20 years for gay and bisexual men is 8 to 20 years less than for all men." They therefore concluded that if "the same pattern of mortality were to continue, we estimate that nearly half of gay and bisexual men currently aged 20 years will not reach their 65th birthday."{9}

Sexually transmitted diseases—The danger of various STDs, including HIV infection in homosexual relationships, has been well documented through many studies. The Medical Institute for Sexual Health says that "Homosexual men are at significantly increased risk of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, anal cancer, gonorrhea and gastrointestinal infections as a result of their sexual practices. Women who have sex with women are at significantly increased risk of bacterial vaginosis, breast cancer and ovarian cancer than are heterosexual women."{10}

Other health risk behaviors—A study by Harvard University of over four thousand ninth- to twelfth-grade students found that gay-lesbian-bisexual "youth report disproportionate risk for a variety of health risk and problem behaviors" and they found that they "engage in twice the mean number of risk behaviors as did the overall population."{11}

Mental health—A study published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* found those engaging in homosexual behavior have a much higher incidence of mental health problems. "The findings support the assumption that people with same-sex sexual behavior are at greater risk for psychiatric disorders."{12}

Permitting and promoting homosexual activity through on-campus

programs and clubs will certainly increase homosexual behavior among students. Administrators, teachers, and parents should reconsider the impact these programs, and the subsequent behavior, will have on the student body.

Biblical Response

When we talk about the issue of homosexuality, it is important to keep two biblical principles in tension. On the one hand we must stay true to our biblical convictions, and on the other hand we should reach out with biblical compassion. Essentially this is the balance between truth and love.

On the one hand, it is crucial for us to understand how the homosexual agenda threatens to normalize and even promote homosexuality within the schools. Moreover, gay activists are pushing an agenda in the courts, the legislature, the schools, and the court of public opinion that will ultimately threaten biblical authority and many of our personal and religious freedoms. Christians, therefore, must stand for truth.

I have provided a brief overview of the groups and programs that are promoting the gay agenda in the public schools. I encourage you to find out what is happening in your community. We have also documented the potential legal liability associated with many of the behaviors that are encouraged by these programs. Often administrators and teachers are unaware of the potential dangers associated with homosexual education in the schools. Take time to share this information with them.

On the other hand, it is also important for us to reach out to those caught in the midst of homosexuality and offer God’s grace and redemption. We cannot let the hardened rhetoric of gay activists keep us from having Christ’s heart toward homosexuals. As individuals and as the church, we should reach out to those caught in the sin of homosexuality and offer them hope and point them to Jesus Christ so that they will find

freedom from the sexual sin that binds their lives.

It is important to remember that many in the homosexual lifestyle are there because of some emotional brokenness in their families. They may be trying to meet their emotional needs in ungodly ways. Youth in the public schools may be experimenting sexually and find themselves caught up in the homosexual lifestyle.

It is also important to remember that change is possible. The testimony of hundreds of former homosexuals is proof that someone can change their sexual behavior. So are the various studies that document these same behavioral changes. And, most importantly, the Bible teaches that change in possible. Paul, writing to former homosexuals in the Corinthian church, noted that "such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

In addressing the issue of the gay agenda in public schools, it is crucial to stay true to our biblical convictions (and stand for truth) while we also reach out with biblical compassion.

Notes

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Divorce – A Biblical Christian Perspective

Kerby Anderson examines the epidemic of divorce from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective. He presents data on its impact on families and society and compares the trend with biblical teaching on the subject.

Families are experiencing many problems today, but the role of divorce in this picture has been frequently overlooked because its destructive effects have been subtle, yet insidious. When the divorce rate increased in the 1960s, few would have predicted its dire consequences three decades later. Yet divorce has changed both the structure and the impact of the family.

This is not just the conclusion of Christians, but also the conclusion of non-Christian researchers working in the field. Clinical psychologist Diane Medved set out to write a book to help couples facing transitions due to divorce. She begins her book with this startling statement:

> I have to start with a confession: This isn't the book I set out to write. I planned to write something consistent with my previous professional experience helping people with decision making. . . . For example, I started this project believing that people who suffer over an extended period in unhappy marriages ought to get out….I thought that striking down taboos about divorce was another part of the ongoing enlightenment of the women's, civil- rights, and human potential movements of the last twenty-five years….To my utter befuddlement, the extensive research I conducted for this book brought me to one inescapable and irrefutable conclusion: I had been wrong."(1)

She titled her book *The Case Against Divorce.*

Until the 1960s, divorce has been a relatively rare phenomenon. Certainly there have always been some couples who have considered divorce an option. But fundamental changes in our society in the last few decades have changed divorce from being rare to routine.

During the 1970s, the divorce rate doubled (and the number of divorces tripled from 400,000 in 1962 to 1.2 million in 1981).(2) The increase in the divorce rate came not from older couples but from the baby boom generation. One sociologist at Stanford University calculated that while men and women in their twenties comprised only about 20 percent of the population, they contributed 60 percent of the growth in the divorce rate in the 1960s and early 1970s.(3)

This increase was due to at least two major factors: attitude and opportunity. The baby boom generation's attitude toward

such issues as fidelity, chastity, and commitment were strikingly different from their parents'. Their parents would stay in a marriage in order to make it work. Baby boomers, however, were less committed to the ideal of marriage and quite willing to end what they felt was a bad marriage and move on with their lives. While their parents might keep a marriage going "for the sake of the kids," the baby boom generation as a whole was much less concerned about such issues.

Economic opportunities also seem to be a significant factor in divorce. The rise in divorce closely parallels the increase in the number of women working. Women with a paycheck were less likely to stay in a marriage that wasn't fulfilling to them. Armed with a measure of economic power, many women had less incentive to stay in a marriage and work out their differences with their husbands. A study of mature women done at Ohio State University found that the higher a woman's income in relation to the total income of her family, the more likely she was to seek a divorce.(4)

Divorce and Children

Divorce is having a devastating impact on both adults and children. Every year, parents of over 1 million children divorce. These divorces effectively cut one generation off from another. Children are reared without the presence of their father or mother. Children are often forced to take sides in the conflict. And, children often carry the scars of the conflict and frequently blame themselves for the divorce.

So what is the impact? Well, one demographer looking at this ominous trend of divorce and reflecting on its impact, acknowledged:

> No one knows what effect divorce and remarriage will have on the children of the baby boom. A few decades ago, children of divorced parents were an oddity. Today they are the

majority. The fact that divorce is the norm may make it easier for children to accept their parents' divorce. But what will it do to their marriages in the decades ahead? No one will know until it's too late to do anything about it.(5)

What little we do know about the long-term impact of divorce is disturbing. In 1971, Judith Wallerstein began a study of sixty middle-class families in the midst of divorce. Her ongoing research has provided a longitudinal study of the long-term effects of divorce on parents and children.

Like Diane Medved, Judith Wallerstein had to revise her previous assumptions. According to the prevailing view at the time, divorce was seen as a brief crisis that would resolve itself. Her book, *Second Chances: Men, Women and Children a Decade After Divorce*, vividly illustrates the long-term psychological devastation wrought not only on the children but the adults.(6) Here are just a few of her findings in her study of the aftershocks of divorce:

- *Three out of five children felt rejected by at least one parent.*
- *Five years after their parent's divorce, more than one-third of the children were doing markedly worse than they had been before the divorce.*
- *Half grew up in settings in which the parents were warring with each other even after the divorce.*
- *One-third of the women and one-quarter of the men felt that life had been unfair, disappointing and lonely.*

In essence, Wallerstein found that the emotional tremors register on the psychological Richter scale many years after the divorce.

In addition to the emotional impact is the educational impact. Children growing up in broken homes do not do as well in

school as children from stable families. One national study found an overall average of one lost year of education for children in single-parent families.(7)

Divorce and remarriage adds another additional twist to modern families. Nearly half of all marriages in 1990 involved at least one person who had been down the aisle before, up from 31 percent in 1970.(8)

These changing family structures complicate relationships. Divorce and remarriage shuffle family members together in foreign and awkward ways. Clear lines of authority and communication get blurred and confused in these newly revised families. One commentator trying to get a linguistic handle on these arrangements called them “neo-nuclear” families.(9) The rules for these neo- nukes are complex and ever-changing. Children looking for stability are often insecure and frustrated. One futuristic commentator imagined this possible scenario:

> On a spring afternoon, half a century from today, the Joneses are gathered to sing “Happy Birthday” to Junior. There’s Dad and his third wife, Mom and her second husband, Junior’s two half brothers from his father’s first marriage, his six stepsisters from his mother’s spouse’s previous unions, 100-year- old Great Grandpa, all eight of Junior’s current “grandparents,” assorted aunts, uncles- in-law and step-cousins. While one robot scoops up the gift wrappings and another blows out the candles, Junior makes a wish …that he didn’t have so many relatives.(10)

The stress on remarried couples is difficult enough, but it intensifies when step-children are involved. Conflict between a stepparent and stepchild is inevitable and can be enough to threaten the stability of a remarriage. According to one study, remarriages that involve stepchildren are more likely to end in divorce than those that don’t.(11) Fully 17 percent of marriages that are remarriages for both husband and wife

and that involve stepchildren break up within three years.(12)

No Fault Divorce

Historically the laws governing marriage were based upon the traditional, Judeo-Christian belief that marriage was for life. Marriage was intended to be a permanent institution. Thus, the desire for divorce was not held to be self-justifying. Legally the grounds for divorce had to be circumstances that justified making an exemption to the assumption of marital permanence. The spouse seeking a divorce had to prove that the other spouse had committed one of the "faults" recognized as justifying the dissolution of the marriage. In most states, the classic grounds for divorce were cruelty, desertion, and adultery.

This legal foundation changed when California enacted a statute in 1969 which allowed for no-fault divorce. This experiment has effectively led to what could now be called "divorce-on-demand." One by one, various state legislatures enacted no-fault divorce laws so that today, this concept has become the de facto legal principle in every state.

The fault-based system of divorce law had its roots in the view that marriage was a sacrament and indissoluble. The current no- fault provisions changed this perception. Marriage is no longer viewed as a covenant; it's a contract. But it's an even less reliable contract than a standard business contract.

Classic contract law holds that a specific promise is binding and cannot be broken merely because the promisor changes his/her mind. In fact, the concept of "fault" in divorce proceedings is more like tort law than contract law in that it implies an binding obligation between two parties which has been breached, thus leading to a divorce. When state legislatures implemented no-fault divorce provisions, they could have replaced the fault-based protections with contract-

like protections. Unfortunately, they did not. In just a few decades we have moved from a position where divorce was permitted for a few reasons to a position in which divorce is permitted for any reason, or no reason at all.

The impact on the institution of marriage has been devastating. Marginal marriages are much easier to dissolve, and couples who may have tried to stick it out and work out their problems instead opt for a no-fault divorce.

But all marriages (not just marginal marriages) are at risk. After all, marriages do not start out marginal. Most marriages start out on a solid footing. But after the honeymoon, comes the more difficult process of learning to live together harmoniously. The success of the process is affected by both internal factors (willingness to meet each other's needs, etc.) and external factors (such as the availability of divorce). But even these factors are interrelated. If the law gives more protection to the marriage contract, a partner may be more likely to love sacrificially and invest effort in the marriage. If the law gives less protection, a partner may be more likely to adopt a "looking out for number one" attitude.

Biblical Perspective

The Bible speaks to the issue of divorce in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The most important Old Testament passage on divorce is Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

> If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be

> detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

These verses were not intended to endorse divorce; just the contrary. The intention was to regulate the existing custom of divorce, not to put forth God's ideal for marriage. Divorce was allowed in certain instances because of human sinfulness (Matt. 19:8).

Divorce was widespread in the ancient Near East. The certificate of divorce apparently was intended to protect the reputation of the woman and provided her with the right to remarry. This public declaration protected her from charges of adultery. The Mishnah, for example, stated that a divorce certificate was not valid unless the husband explicitly said, "Thou art free to marry any man."(13)

Key to understanding this passage is the definition of "something indecent." It probably did not mean adultery since that was subject to the penalty of death (22:22), nor did it probably mean premarital intercourse with another man (22:20-21) since that carried the same penalty. The precise meaning of the phrase is unknown.

In fact, the meaning of this phrase was subject to some debate even during the time of Christ. The conservative school of Shammai understood it to mean a major sexual offense. The liberal school of Hillel taught that it referred to anything displeasing to the husband (including something as trivial as spoiling his food). The apparent purpose of this law was to prevent frivolous divorce and to protect a woman who was divorced by her husband. The passage in no way encourages divorce but regulates the consequences of divorce.

Another significant Old Testament passage is Malachi 2:10-16.

> Have we not all one Father ? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?…Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh

> and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel.

This passage deals with breaking a prior agreement or covenant. It specifically addresses the issue of illegal intermarriage and the issue of divorce. Malachi specifically teaches that husbands and wives are to be faithful to one another because they have God as their Father. The marriage relationship is built upon a solemn covenant. While God may tolerate divorce under some of the circumstances described in Deuteronomy 24, the instructions were given to protect the woman if a divorce should occur. This passage in Malachi reminds us that God hates divorce.

In the New Testament book of Matthew, we have the clearest teachings by Jesus on the subject of divorce.

> It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery. (Matthew 5:31 32) I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery. (Matthew 19:9)

In these two passages, Jesus challenges the views of the two schools of Jewish thought (Shammai, Hillel). He teaches that marriage is for life and should not be dissolved by divorce.

Defining the word *porneia* (which is translated marital unfaithfulness) is a key element in trying to understanding these passages. While some commentators teach that this word refers to incestuous relationships or sexual promiscuity during the betrothal period, most scholars believe the word applies to relentless, persistent, and unrepentant adultery.

Among those holding to this exception clause for adultery, some believe remarriage is possible while others do not.

The other significant section of teaching on divorce in the New Testament can be found in Paul's teaching on divorce in 1 Corinthians 7:10-15.

> To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

In the first section, Paul addresses Christians married to one another. Paul was obviously aware of the prevalence of divorce in the Greek world and of the legal right that a wife has to initiate a divorce. He gives the command for believers to stay married.

In the next section, Paul addresses the issue of mixed marriages. He says that even in spite of religious incompatibility in such a marriage, Paul teaches that the believing spouse is not to seek divorce. Some divorces may have been initiated because of the command of Ezra to the Israelites in Jerusalem after the exile (Ezra 10:11) to divorce themselves from pagan spouses. Paul affirms the same biblical principle: do not seek divorce. However, if the unbelieving spouse insists on divorce, the believer may have

to concede to those proceedings and is not bound in such circumstances.

Based on the preceding verses, we can therefore conclude that a Christian can acquiesce to divorce in cases of marital infidelity by the other spouse or in cases of desertion by an unbelieving spouse. Yet even in these cases, the church should not encourage divorce. Certainly in very troubling cases which involve mental, sexual, and/or physical abuse, legal separation is available as a remedy to protect the abused spouse. God hates divorce; therefore Christians should never be in the position of encouraging or promoting divorce. Instead they should be encouraging reconciliation.

One final question is whether a divorced person is eligible for a leadership position within the church. The key passage is 1 Timothy 3:2 which calls for a church leader to be above reproach and "the husband of one wife." Rather than prohibiting a divorced person from serving in leadership, the language of this verse actually focuses on practicing polygamists. Polygamy was practiced in the first century and found among Jewish and Christian groups. The passage could be translated "a one-woman man." If Paul intended to prohibit a divorced person from leadership, he could have used a much less ambiguous term.

As Christians in a society where divorce is rampant, I believe we must come back to these important biblical principles concerning marriage. Christians should work to build strong marriages. Pastors must frequently preach and teach about the importance of marriage. We should encourage fellow Christians to attend various marriage enrichment seminars and ministries in our community.

As Christians I also believe we should reach out to those who have been through divorce. We must communicate Christ's forgiveness to them in the midst of their shattered lives. They need counseling and support groups. Many times they also

need financial help and direction as they begin to put together the shattered pieces of their lives.

But as we reach out to those whose lives are shattered by divorce, we must be careful that our ministry does not compromise our theology. We must reach out with both biblical convictions and biblical compassion. Marriage for life is God's ideal (Genesis 2), nevertheless, millions of people have been devastated by divorce and need to feel care and compassion from Christians. Churches have unfortunately erred on one side or another. Most churches have maintained a strong stand on marriage and divorce. While this strong biblical stand is admirable, it should also be balanced with compassion towards those caught in the throes of divorce. Strong convictions without compassionate outreach often seems to communicate that divorce is the unforgivable sin.

On the other hand, some churches in their desire to minister to divorced people have compromised their theological convictions. By starting without biblically-based convictions about marriage and divorce, they have let their congregation's circumstances influence their theology.

Christians must simultaneously reach out with conviction and compassion. Marriage for life is God's ideal, but divorce is a reality in our society. Christians should reach out with Christ's forgiveness to those whose lives have been shattered by divorce.

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