Trends in American Religious Beliefs: An Update

Steve Cable examines the newest data reflecting Americans' religious beliefs. It's not encouraging.

Are Nones Still Increasing Toward a Majority?

One dismaying trend in my book, *Cultural Captives*, was the significant growth of people indicating their religion was atheist, agnostic, or nothing at all, referred to collectively as **the nones**. In 2008, the percentage of emerging adults (18- to 29-year-olds) who self-identified as **nones** was one fourth of the population, a tremendous increase almost two and a half times higher than recorded in 1990.

Now, let's look at some updated data on emerging adults. In 2014, the General Social Survey{1} showed the percentage of **nones** was now up to **one third** of the population. The Pew Religious Landscape{2} survey of over 35,000 Americans tallied **35% identifying as nones.**

When we consider everyone who does not identify as either Protestant or Catholic (i.e., adding in other religions such as Islam and Hinduism), the **percentage of emerging adults who do not identify as Christians increases to 43% of the population** in both surveys.

If this growth continues at the rate it has been on since 1990, we will see **over half** of American emerging adults who do not self-identify as Christians by 2020. Becoming, at least numerically, a post-Christian culture.

Some distinguished scholars have suggested that a large percentage of "**nones**" are actually Christians who just have an

aversion to identifying with a particular religious tradition. Using the GSS from 2014, we can probe this assertion using three investigative avenues:

How many of the "**nones**" in this survey say they actually attend a church at least once a month? The
answer: less than 7% of them.

How many of these "**nones**" say they believe in a God, believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God,
and believe that there is life after death? The answer: about 12% of them.

3. How many of these "**nones**" attend a church *and* have the three beliefs listed above? The answer:
about one out of every one hundred emerging adults not identifying as a practicing Christian.

What about the "nothing at all" respondents, who are not atheists or agnostics? Perhaps, they simply do not want to identify with a specific Christian tradition. Since the majority of **nones** fall into this "nothing at all" category, if all the positive answers to the three questions above were given by "nothing at alls," their percentages would still be very small.

Clearly, the vast majority of **nones** and "nothing at alls" have broken away from organized religion and basic Christian doctrine. Most are not, as some scholars suggest, young believers keeping their identity options open.

American has long been non-evangelical in thinking, but is now becoming post-Christian as well.

Role of Pluralism and Born-Agains in Our Emerging Adult Population

Pluralists believe there are many ways to eternal life, e.g. Christianity and Islam. Our 2010 book, *Cultural Captives*,

looked at pluralism among American emerging adults (18 – 29), finding nearly 90% of non-evangelicals and 70% of evangelicals were pluralists. So, the vast majority of young Americans believed in multiple ways to heaven.

Is that position changing in this decade? We analyzed two newer survey, Portraits of American Life Survey 2012{3} and Faith Matters 2011{4}. In the first, if a person disagreed strongly with the following, we categorized them as not pluralistic:

1. It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am a good person.
2. The founder of Islam, Muhammad, was the holy prophet of God.

In the second, if a person agreed strongly that "one religion is true and others are not," they are not pluralistic.

For non-evangelical, emerging adults, the number of pluralists grew to 92%. For evangelicals, the number grew to 76%. For those over thirty the number of evangelical pluralists drops to two out of three; still a disturbing majority of those called to evangelize their fellow citizens.

Under the threat of death, Peter told the Jewish leaders, "This Jesus . . . has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."{5}

God sent His Son because there was no other way to provide redemption. Many evangelicals seem to think this great sacrifice is one of many ways to reconciliation. But Jesus said, "*No one comes to the Father except through me*."{6}

Not only are Protestants more pluralistic, at the same time there are fewer Protestants. From 1976 to 2008, emerging adults identifying as born-again Protestants only dropped from 28% to 25% of the population. Today only 20% are born-again

Protestants while 43% are non-Christian.

Protestants who do not consider themselves to be born-again have dropped further, from around one quarter in 1990 down to around 14% now.

We are heading to a day when over half of emerging adults will be non-Christians and less that one fourth will identify as Protestants. And, the majority of those Protestants will take a pluralistic view, ignoring the call to evangelize—a major change in the religious make up of our country.

Biblical Worldview Beliefs Considered from A Newer Survey

In our book, *Cultural Captives*, we reported that about one in three evangelical emerging adults and about one in ten non-evangelical emerging adults held a biblical worldview.

Today, we consider a newer survey of over 2,600 people called Faith Matters 2011.{7}
The questions used to define a biblical worldview were on: 1) belief in God, 2) belief in life after death, 3)
the path to salvation, 4) inspiration of the Bible, 5) the existence of hell, and 6) how to determine right and wrong.

Let's begin by looking at how many have a biblical worldview on all of the questions above except for the correct path to salvation. About half of evangelical emerging adults (those 18 – 29) take a biblical view versus about 15% of non-evangelicals.

Adding the question about the path to salvation moves evangelical emerging adults from 50% down to about 5%. The question causing this massive reduction is: "Some people believe that the path to salvation comes through our actions or deeds and others believe that the path to salvation lies in our beliefs or faith. Which comes closer to your views?" The

vast majority of evangelicals responding were unwilling to say that salvation is by faith alone even though the Bible clearly states this is the case. Many of them responded with both, even though it was not one of the options given.

However, the reason may not be that evangelicals feel that they need to do some good works to become acceptable for heaven. Instead, they want to leave room for a pluralistic view that surmises that others, not really knowing of Jesus' sacrifice, may get by on their righteous activities. Supporting this premise, the Faith Matters survey shows that about 80% of evangelicals believe that there are more ways to heaven other than faith in Jesus Christ.

Another survey the 2012 Portraits in American Life Survey (PALS){8} also included questions similar to the biblical worldview questions above but did not ask how one obtained eternal life. About one in three evangelical{9} believers under the age of 30 professed a biblical worldview on those questions.

These new surveys clearly demonstrate a biblical worldview is not rebounding among emerging adults

How Confident are Americans in Those Running Organized Religion?

What do the people of America feel about organized religion? Have those feelings changed since 1976? We can explore these questions using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) which asked this question across the decades from 1976 up to 2014:

As far as the people running organized religion are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Not surprisingly, the surveys show our confidence in these

religious leaders has degraded over time. Let's begin by looking at how these results play out for different age groups.

Across all age groups, the number with "a great deal of confidence" in the leaders of organized religion dropped significantly from 1976 to 2014. The greatest drop from 30% down to 15% was among emerging adults at the time of the survey.

At the same time, those having "hardly any confidence" grew significantly. Both emerging adults and those 45 and over increased the number taking this negative position by about 35% since 1976. For emerging adults, this was an increase from 20% in 1976 to 27% in 2014.

Now let's look at how these results play out across different faith communities, specifically Protestants who claim to be born again, Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Other Religions and Nones (i.e. atheists, agnostics and nothing at all).

Once again consider those who said they had "a great deal of confidence" in the leaders of organized religion. All Christian groups show a significant downward trend in their confidence in faith leaders. Not surprisingly, the Nones fell by well over 60%, probably reflecting the general negative trend. If the mainstream population has problems with their religious leaders, the AAN's are more than happy to jump on the bandwagon, expressing disdain toward those leaders. Mainline Protestants experienced the largest drop among any Christian religious group, dropping almost half from 32% down to 18% across the period.

Do we see a similar uptick across all religions in the percentage of respondents having "hardly any confidence" in the leaders of organized religion? Actually, we do not. We had significant decreases among born-again Protestants and those of other non-Christian religions. At the same time, we saw

increases among Mainline Protestants and Catholics and a very significant increase among the AAN's.

The trends shown here leads one to ask, Can religion have a positive impact on our society when four out of five people do not express a great deal of confidence in its leaders? Make it a point to contribute to our society by promoting a positive view of the religious leaders in your church and denomination.

The Hispanic Religious Landscape

Since 1980, our Hispanic population has grown from 6.5% to 17.4%, almost tripling their percentage of our total population.

Many assume the Hispanic population would be primarily Catholic from the 1980's to today. Looking at General Social Surveys from 1976 through 2014, we can see what the actual situation is. Not surprisingly, in 1976 approximately 80% of Hispanics in American self-identified as Catholics. But, the 1980's saw a downward trend in this number, so that through the 1990's up until 2006, approximately 68% of Hispanics identified as Catholics. From 2006 to 2014, this percentage has dropped significantly down to about 55%.

At the same time, the percentage of Hispanics identifying as "nones," i.e., one having no religious affiliation, has grown from about 6% in the 1990's to 16% in 2014 (and to a high of 22% for emerging adult, Hispanics) according to GSS data.

The median age of Hispanics is America is much lower than that of other ethnicities. Many Hispanics in American are emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 29. How do their beliefs stack up? The GSS data shows that about 45% of Hispanic emerging adults indicate a Catholic affiliation while the Pew survey shows only 35%. Both surveys show that significantly less than half of emerging adult Hispanics are Catholic. So have they become mainline, evangelical, "nones" or some

Eastern religion?

Both surveys show a significant increase in the percentage of Hispanic "nones" for emerging adults compared to those over 30. As with other ethnic groups, Hispanic emerging adults are much more likely to select a religious affiliation of "none" than are older adults. According to extensive data in the Pew Research survey, among emerging adults, the 31% of Hispanics who identify as "nones" is coming very close to surpassing the 35% who identify as Catholic.

A majority of Hispanics still identify at Catholics. How closely are they associated with their local Catholic church through regular attendance? Among emerging adult Hispanics affiliated with a Catholic church, about two out of three state that they attend church once a month or less. So, the vast majority are not frequent attenders, but are still more likely to attend than their white counterparts. Among emerging adult whites affiliated with a Catholic church, about four out of five state that they attend church once a month or less.

Soon more Hispanics will be "nones," evangelicals and mainline Protestants than are Catholic, portending dramatic shifts in the worldview of American Hispanics.

The religious makeup of young Americans is changing dramatically in the early part of this century. We need to proclaim the good news of Christ to our emerging generation.

Notes

1. General Social Survey 2014, National Opinion Research Center, 2014, The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by Tom W. Smith.
2. Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, "America's Changing Religious Landscape", page 11, source: 2014 Pew Religious Landscape Study.
3. Emerson, Michael O., and David Sikkink. *Portraits of*

American Life Study, 2nd Wave 2012.

4. Data downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected on behalf of Harvard University and the University of Notre Dame, principal investigators: Robert Putnam, Thomas Sander, and David E. Campbell.

5. Acts 4:11-12.

6. John 14:6.

7. Data downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected on behalf of Harvard University and the University of Notre Dame, principal investigators: Robert Putnam, Thomas Sander, and David E. Campbell.

8. Emerson, Michael O., and David Sikkink. Portraits of American Life Study, 2nd Wave, 2012.

9. Evangelical includes those who associate with a Historically Black Protestant Church as well as those who associate with an evangelical church.

Big Data

"Big Data" describes the sea of digital facts, figures, products, books, music, video, and much more that we live in. Kerby Anderson calls for a biblical response of discernment and integrity.

We live in the world of "Big Data." That is the new way people are trying to describe this sea of digital facts, figures, products, books, music, video, and much more. All of this is at our fingertips through computers and smartphones. And there is a lot of data. Eric Schmidt, executive chairman for Google, estimates that humans now create in two days the same amount

of data that it took from the dawn of civilization until 2003 to create. No wonder people say we live in the world of "Big Data."

This remarkable change in our world has happened quickly and seamlessly. Today we take for granted that we can create data and access data instantaneously. Pick up the book *The Human Face of Big Data* and look at the pictures and stories that describe the powerful impact the tsunami of data is having on our lives and our world.{1} Look at how this vast amount of data is being used by individuals, universities, and companies to answer questions, pull together information, and persuade us to purchase various goods and services.

One article in *USA Today* explains how "Big Data" will transform our lives and lifestyles.{2} Retailers can target you with online purchasing appeals because of the data they already collect from you when you are online. They can suggest books, videos, and various products you would be interested in based upon previous searches or purchases.

If you have a smartphone, think of how you already depend upon it in ways that would have been unimaginable a decade ago. It can help answer a question someone poses. It can direct you to a place to eat. If you need gas for your car, it can tell you where the closest gas station is located.

"Big Data" also provides power through instant access to information. Juan Enriquez, author of *As the Future Catches You*, writes that "today a street stall in Mumbai can access more information, maps, statistics, academic papers, price trends, futures markets and data than a U.S. president could only a few decades ago."{3}

Welcome to the world of "Big Data." We have more information at our fingertips than any generation in history. As you will see, Christians need to be thinking about this change in our

world. We as individuals and as a society must consider how to use all of this accumulated information wisely.

An Ocean of Data

Nearly a century ago, a dystopian novel imagined a world where every building was made of glass so that various authorities could monitor what citizens are doing every minute of the day. Dan Gardner suggests that the world of Big Data already makes that possible.[{4}](#)

The term Big Data describes the continuous accumulation and analysis of information. There is a reason people are calling it Big Data. I noted earlier that humans now create in two days the same amount of data that it took from the dawn of civilization until 2003 to create. Some predict that we will now be creating that same amount every few hours.

Dan Gardner says we are awash in an ocean of information. "Every time someone clicks on something at Amazon, it's recorded and another drop is added to the ocean. . . . Every time a customs officer checks a passport, every time someone posts to Facebook, every time someone does a Google search—the ocean swells."

Anyone who has access to that data can begin to use powerful computer algorithms to sift through texts, purchases, posts, photos, and videos to extract more data and trends. Gardner says it will be able to extract meaning and "sort through masses of numbers and find the hidden pattern, the unexpected correlation, the surprising connection. That ability is growing at astonishing speed."

We actually welcome some aspect of Big Data. When I buy a book online from Amazon, it recommends other books I might want to know about and purchase. When I buy a book at Barnes and Noble, the register receipt instantaneously prints out a list of other books similar to the one I just purchased.

This ocean of Big Data is also intrusive. The government knows more about you than you might want them to know. The Internal Revenue Service is collecting more than your taxes these days. They are collecting a massive amount of personal information on your digital activities: credit card payments, e-pay transactions, eBay auctions, and Facebook posts.

Why is the Internal Revenue Service using Big Data to invade your privacy? Government leaders are putting pressure on the IRS because the federal government needs more money, and it is estimated that as much as $300 billion in revenue is lost to evasion and errors each year. Collecting and analyzing this data might be one way to close the so-called "tax gap."

The amount of data the government and private industry collects on us each day is overwhelming. Like the fictional novel, we seem live in a world where all the buildings are made of glass.

Keeping Up With the Data

Juan Enriquez believes that we are going to have trouble keeping up with all the data coming our way. He explains the data explosion in his essay, "Reflection in a Digital Mirror."{5} He says, "Most modern humans are now attempting to cram more data into their heads in a single day than most of our ancestors did during entire lifetimes." He goes on to say that in the time it takes to read his essay, "the amount of information generated by the human race will have expanded by about 20 petabytes." That is equivalent to about three times the amount of information currently in the Library of Congress.

We are trying to keep up. He estimates that we "try to cram in, read, understand, and remember at least 5 percent more words than the year before." That essentially means that five years ago we were trying to cope with 100,000 words per day.

Now we are trying to cope with 130,000 words per day.

Who can keep up? Two years ago, a global marketing intelligence firm estimated that "we played, swam, wallowed, and drowned in 1.8 zettabytes of data." To put that in perspective, the firm used this illustration. Imagine you wanted to store this data on 32-gigabyte iPads. You would need 86 billion devices, just enough to erect a 90-foot-high wall 4,000 miles long.{6}

The good news is that we don't have to collect, catalog, and analyze all the data. Computers with powerful algorithms can do much of it. We will benefit greatly from this tsunami of data. We will go from sampling the available data to having a collection of enormous data sets. We will know the world around us in unprecedented ways.

The explosion of digital data is also unprecedented. Juan Enriquez estimates that in 1986, only 6 percent of the world's data was digital. The world wide web was still three years away. There was no Google or any of the services that we take for granted today. Now more than 99 percent of the world's written words, images, music, and data are in digital form.

On the one hand, we are drowning in a sea of data. On the other hand, we have access to this data because we live in a digital world. The real question we will have to ask in the 21st century is what to do with all this data.

We will need discernment. Proverbs 3:21 admonishes us to "preserve sound judgment and discernment." Proverbs 15:14 reminds us that a "discerning heart seeks knowledge." Paul prayed that believers would "be able to discern what is best" (Philippians 1:9-11). We will need discernment in this age of Big Data.

Dark Data

We live in a world filled with digital facts, figures, books, music, and video. Most of it is at our fingertips, and that is a good thing. But there is also the great concern over what could be called "Dark Data."

Marc Goodman has written about "Dark Data," and he is concerned.{7} He has worked on security issues in more than 70 countries and sees the possibilities for criminals in our digital world.

He reminds us that criminals and terrorists have found ways to use these new devices and innovations. Sadly, we often underestimate their creativity and can easily be a step behind those who intend us harm. Sometimes they have better access to information than law enforcement and Homeland Security.

Drug-runners in Mexico not only have the latest smartphones but have actually been building their own encrypted radio networks in their country. Drug cartels in Columbia are using their vast wealth from drugs "to fund research and development programs in everything from robotics to supply chain management."

During the terrorist attack in Mumbai five years ago, the terrorists were armed not only "with the standard artillery and explosives, but also with satellite phones, Blackberrys, night vision goggles, and satellite imagery." If that is what terrorists had access to years ago, it is reasonable to assume that the next terrorist attack will come from terrorists using even more sophisticated technology.

One of greatest innovations for the terrorists is their open-source intelligence center, which they developed across the border in Pakistan. They were able to monitor the Internet and social media to determine the progress of their terrorist attacks. They had a real-time open-source feedback loop that

gave terrorists situational awareness and tactical advantages.

One final concern about dark data is the ability to affect many more people with a crime or terrorist attack. Access to all of this data gives the bad guys an advantage unavailable to criminals in the past. Jesse James could rob a train. Bonnie and Clyde could rob a bank. A few dozens or a few hundreds would feel their impact. Today hackers can steal information from millions of people. Cybercrimes can ruin the lives of many more people, and cybercriminals may even be harder to catch.

These new technological advances and the incredible amount of data will no doubt make our world a better place. But we should also realize that criminals and terrorists will also be there to exploit it. We need to train those in law enforcement and counterterrorism in the latest technology so they can keep us safe.

Big Data and Surveillance

The TV program begins with these words: "You are being watched. The government has a secret system: a machine that spies on you every hour of every day. I know because I built it. I designed the machine to detect acts of terror, but it sees everything."

The program I am talking about is the CBS series *Person of Interest*. The creator of the program, Jonathan Nolan, hit a cultural nerve about our increasing lack of privacy. In her article about the program, Susan Karlin reminds us that the storyline is fiction but based upon real-life source material that Jonathan Nolan cited in his interview with her.[8] He got some of his ideas from books like *The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State* and from the government's defunct Total Information Awareness Office.

This isn't the first time Jonathan Nolan has raised the

question of surveillance in the scripts he has written. When he co-wrote the script for the movie *The Dark Knight*, he inserted a scene where Batman turns all of the Gotham City cell phones into tracking devices so he can find the location of The Joker.

According to Susan Karlin, "Nolan got a taste of encroaching surveillance while growing up in the North London neighborhood of Highgate. 'Scotland Yard began putting cameras up everywhere,' he recalls of a time long before local phone hacking scandals erupted. 'There were cameras out on street corners; English police employed cameras. When I moved to the States at 12, there weren't any cameras. Now you're seeing some cities catching up. In Manhattan, they counted 5,000 in 2005. In 2010, the number was uncountable.'" When you add all the cell phone cameras in the population to these other cameras, you can easily see we have lost our privacy.

The popularity of the television program is no doubt due to many factors, in addition to concerns about privacy and surveillance. Whatever the reasons, it has struck a nerve and caused us to once again think about Big Brother.

This topic also reminds us that we must live our lives above reproach. Philippians 2:14-15 says "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." 1 Timothy 3:2 says that an elder must be "above reproach," which is an attribute that should describe all of us. Live a life of integrity and you won't have to be so concerned about what may be made public in age where we are losing our privacy.

Notes

1. *The Human Face of Big Data*, Against All Odds Productions, 2012.

2. Chuck Raasch, "Big data transforms our lives and lifestyles, *USA Today*, 13 December 2012.

3. Juan Enriquez, *As the Future Catches You*, Crown Business, 2005.

4. "Big Data could know us better than we know ourselves," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 27, 2012.

5. *Human Face of Big Data*, 18-21.

6. Ibid., 19.

7. Ibid., 74-77.

8. Karlin, Susan, "'Person Of Interest' Creator Jonathan Nolan Isn't Paranoid—Or Is He?" *Fast Company*, 21 September 2011.

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C.S. Lewis, the BBC, and Mere Christianity

Dr. Michael Gleghorn explains how a series of radio talks during WWII became one of Christianity's most cherished classics.

One can rarely predict all the consequences which will follow a particular decision. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, France and Britain declared war on Germany. World War II was officially underway. Back in England, C. S. Lewis was "appalled" to find his country once again at war with Germany. Nevertheless, he believed it was "a righteous war" and was determined to do his part "to assist the war effort."{1}

At this point in his life, Lewis was already a fairly successful Oxford don. "His academic works and lively lectures attracted a large student following."{2} Although he published a number of academic studies, Lewis also enjoyed writing popular literary, theological and apologetic works. In 1938 he published the first volume of his science-fiction trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*. And in 1939, as the war began, he was working on *The Problem of Pain*, a thought-provoking discussion of the problem of evil and suffering.{3}

It was this latter work which attracted the attention of James Welch, the Director of Religious Broadcasting for the British Broadcasting Corporation, or BBC. Welch and his assistant, Eric Fenn, were both committed Christians who firmly believed that Christianity had something vital to say to the men and women of England as they faced the horrors and challenges of war. According to Welch:

> In a time of uncertainty and questioning it is the responsibility of the Church – and of religious broadcasting as one of its most powerful voices – to declare the truth about God and His relation to men. It has to expound the Christian faith in terms that can be easily understood by ordinary men and women, and to examine the ways in which that faith can be applied to present-day society during these difficult times.{4}

After reading *The Problem of Pain* by C. S. Lewis, Welch believed that he had found someone who just might meet his exemplary standards of religious broadcasting. He wrote to Lewis at Oxford University in February 1941, and asked if he might consider putting together a series of broadcast talks for the BBC.{5} Lewis responded a couple days later, accepting the invitation and indicating a desire to speak about what he termed "the law of nature," or what we might call "objective right and wrong."{6} Although Lewis could hardly have known it at the time, this first series of talks would eventually

become Book I in his bestselling work of basic theology, *Mere Christianity*.

Right and Wrong

Mere Christianity originated as a series of talks entitled *Right and Wrong: A Clue to the Meaning of the Universe.* Lewis pitched his idea to James Welch, the Director of Religious Broadcasting at the BBC, in the following terms:

> It seems to me that the New Testament, by preaching repentance and forgiveness, always *assumes* an audience who already believe in the law of nature and know they have disobeyed it. In modern England we cannot at present assume this, and therefore most apologetic begins a stage too far on. The first step is to create, or recover, the sense of guilt. Hence if I gave a series of talks, I shd [*sic*] mention Christianity only at the end, and would prefer not to unmask my battery till then.{7}

In certain respects, this was a rather difficult time to be involved in religious broadcasting. Most of the talks were not pre-recorded, but were given live. And because of the war, the British government was anxious to insure that no information that might be "damaging to morale or helpful to the enemy" end up in a broadcast.{8} As Eric Fenn, the BBC's Assistant Director of Religion, who worked closely with Lewis in the editing and production of his talks, later recalled, ". . . every script had to be submitted to the censor and could not be broadcast until it bore his stamp and signature. And thereafter, only that script—nothing more or less—could be broadcast on that occasion."{9}

Lewis not only had to contend with these difficulties, however, he also had to learn (as anyone who writes for radio must) that this is a very precise business. Since "a listener cannot turn back the page to grasp at the second attempt what

was not understood at the first reading," the content must be readily accessible for most of one's listening audience.[10] Additionally, the talks must fit within a narrowly defined window of time. In Lewis's case, this was fifteen minutes per talk — no more, no less. As one might well imagine, Lewis initially found it rather difficult to write under such constraints.[11]

Eventually, however, the combination of Fenn's coaching and Lewis's natural giftedness as a writer and communicator paid off. The talks were completed and successfully delivered. The BBC was pleased with its new broadcasting talent and quickly enlisted Lewis for a second series of talks.[12]

What Christians Believe

This second series would be titled *What Christians Believe.* Since these talks would require Lewis to more directly communicate some of the core truths of the Christian faith, he sent "the original script to four clergymen in the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Churches for their critique."[13] Although Lewis was a brilliant and well-read individual, he was nonetheless a layman with no formal training in theology. Since his desire was to communicate the central truth-claims of Christianity, and not just the distinctive beliefs of a particular denomination, he wanted to be sure that his talks were acceptable to a variety of Christian leaders. Although a couple of them had some minor quibbles with certain things that Lewis had said, or not said, they were basically all in agreement. This was important to Lewis, who later tells us, "I was not writing to expound something I could call 'my religion,' but to expound 'mere' Christianity, which is what it is and was what it was long before I was born and whether I like it or not."[14]

The BBC was elated with this second series of talks, liking them even more than the first. According to Justin Phillips,

who wrote a book on the subject, it was this second series of talks which most closely fulfilled James Welch's original vision as Director of Religion for the BBC "to make the gospel relevant to a people at war. It speaks of the core doctrines of Christianity and explains them in plain English to the general listener."{15}

Eric Fenn, who helped with the editing and production of the talks, wrote appreciatively to Lewis afterwards to tell him he thought they were excellent. He then asked if Lewis might consider doing yet another, even longer, series sometime in the near future.{16} Lewis would agree to the request, but he was beginning to get a little disenchanted with some of the unanticipated consequences of his success. Already a very busy man, with a variety of teaching, writing, and administrative responsibilities, Lewis now found himself, in addition to everything else he was doing, nearly overwhelmed by the avalanche of mail he was receiving from many of his listeners. This Oxford don was clearly making a powerful connection with his audience!

Why Was Lewis So Popular?

According to Justin Phillips, "Even though Lewis was a prolific correspondent himself, even by his standards it was all becoming a bit too much to cope with."{17} Indeed, were it not for the able secretarial support of his brother Warnie, Lewis may *not* have been able to keep up with it all.

Jill Freud, one of the children evacuated from London at the start of the war, lived with the Lewises for a while. She recalled just how much help Warnie offered his brother, whom they called "Jack":

  He did all his typing and dealt with all his correspondence which was considerable — so huge it was becoming a problem. There was so much of it from the books and then the

broadcast talks. And he was so meticulous about it. Jack wrote to everybody and answered every letter.[18]

Indeed, Warnie later estimated that he had pounded out at least 12,000 letters on his brother's behalf![19] So what made Lewis so popular? What enabled him to connect so well with his readers and listeners?

In the first place, Lewis was simply a very talented writer and thinker. When it came to communicating with a broad, general audience, Lewis brought a lot to the table right from the start. But according to Phillips, the BBC should also be given some credit for the success of the broadcast talks. He writes, "The attention given to Lewis's scripts by his producers in religious broadcasting made him a better writer."[20]

Ironically, even Lewis's rather volatile domestic situation may have contributed to his success. Lewis was then living with his brother, who had a drinking problem, a child evacuee from London, and the adoring, but also dominating, mother of a friend who had been killed in World War I. Phillips notes:

> All this helped to 'earth' Lewis's writings in the real world. . . . It took him out of the seclusion of the Oxford don . . . and gave him a real home life more like that of his listeners than many of his professional colleagues.[21]

Finally, Lewis combined all of this with a rather disarming humility in his presentations. He wasn't pretending to be better than others; he was only trying to help. And his listeners responded in droves.

The Impact of the Broadcasts

The BBC eventually got a total of four series of talks out of Lewis. Each of the series was so successful that the BBC continued, for quite some time, to entreat Lewis to do more.

But according to Phillips, Lewis was becoming increasingly disillusioned with broadcasting. The BBC issued one invitation after another, but nearly eighteen months after his fourth series concluded Lewis had turned down every single one of them.{22} Although he would eventually be tempted back to the microphone a few more times, the days of his broadcast talks were now a thing of the past. While he was glad to be of service in this way during the war, Lewis never really seemed to care that much for radio. Indeed, in one of his less serious moods, he even blamed the radio "for driving away the leprechauns from Ireland!"{23}

In spite of this, however, the impact of the broadcasts has been immense. Since first being aired on the BBC, these talks have generated (and continue to generate) a great deal of interest and discussion. *Mere Christianity*, a compilation of the talks in book form, continues to show up on bestseller lists even today.{24} And Phillips, speaking of the cumulative impact of *all* of Lewis's writings, observes that while numbers vary, "in the year 2000 some estimates put worldwide sales of Lewis's books at over 200 million copies in more than thirty languages."{25}

As the origin of *Mere Christianity* shows, however, we cannot often predict how it may please God to use (and perhaps greatly multiply) our small, seemingly insignificant, investments in the work of His kingdom. Lewis was simply trying to do his part to be faithful to God and to help his countrymen through the horrors of World War II. But God took his humble offering and, like the story of the loaves and fish recounted in the Gospels, multiplied it far beyond anything Lewis could ever have reasonably imagined.

This should be an encouragement to us. As we faithfully exercise our gifts and abilities in the service of Jesus Christ, small and inconsiderable though they may seem to be, we may one day wake to find that incredibly, and against all odds, God has graciously multiplied our efforts to accomplish

truly extraordinary things!

Notes

1. Justin Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War: The World War II Broadcasts that Riveted a Nation and Became the Classic* Mere Christianity (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 4.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. James Welch, *BBC Handbook 1942*, 59; cited in Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 78.
5. Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 80-81.
6. Ibid., 82.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 33.
9. Interview with Eric Fenn by Frank Gillard for the BBC Oral History Archive, 4 July 1986; cited in Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 33.
10. Ibid., 88.
11. Ibid., 87-88.
12. Ibid., 134-35.
13. Ibid., 142.
14. C. S. Lewis, "Preface," in *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1960), vii.
15. Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 153.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 155.
18. Interview with Jill Freud, 19 November 1999; cited in Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 157.
19. Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Companion & Guide* (London: Harper Collins, 1966), 33; cited in Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 158.
20. Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 165.
21. Ibid., 183.
22. Ibid., 268.
23. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to an American Lady* (Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 1967); cited in Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 276.

24. See, for example, www.bookvideoawards.com/bookstandard/images/BestSellersAwards_Program.pdf and peopleofthebook.us/2007/02/.
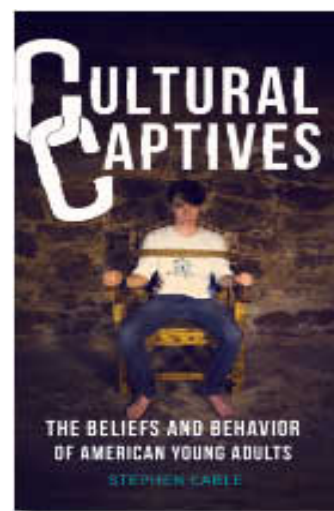
25. Phillips, *C. S. Lewis in a Time of War*, 279.

Trend Indicates Over Half of Emerging Adults Will Identify as Non-Christian by 2020

More Cultural Research from Steve Cable

One of the dismaying trends I reported on in my book, *Cultural Captives*, was the significant increase in the percentage of people who indicated that their religion was atheist, agnostic, or nothing at all. I referred to this group collectively as the **"nones"** (those with "no religious affiliation"). The percentage of emerging adults (i.e., 18- to 29-year-olds) who self-identified as **"nones"** in 2008 was 25% of the population. This level is a tremendous increase from the 1990 level of 11%.

Now, we have later results from both the General Social Survey (GSS) and the Pew Research Center. Both surveys show another significant increase in the percentage of **"nones"** among this young adult group. In 2014, the GSS survey showed the

percentage of emerging adult "nones" was now up to 33% of the population, an increase of eight percentage points. The Pew survey of over 35,000 Americans (an astounding number) came up with a similar result, tallying **35% of emerging adults identifying as "nones"** (an increase of nine percentage points over their 2007 survey).

When we consider the number who do not identify as either Protestant or Catholic (i.e., adding in other religions such as Islam and Hinduism), the percentage of emerging adults who do not identify as Christians increases to 43% of the population in both surveys.

If this trend continues at the same rate of growth it has been on since 1990, we will see **over half** of American emerging adults who do not self-identify as Christians by 2020. We will become, at least numerically, a post-Christian culture if things do not turn around.

Acknowledgments:

The General Social Survey 2014 data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by Tom W. Smith and the National Opinion Research Center.

The Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study interactive tool, located at http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/ was the source of our data on the Pew survey

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The Importance of Parents in the Faith of Emerging Adults

Steve Cable explores the results of Probe's survey of 18- to 40-year-old born agains, focusing on the role of parents in

their faith.

The State of Born Again Emerging Adults

In previous articles[1] we considered the dramatic changes in the beliefs of American evangelicals particularly among young adults. It certainly appears that we are sliding into an era of cultural captivity where one's identification with Christ and an evangelical church does not keep one from holding a set of beliefs consistent with the culture and counter to biblical truth. Here we want to consider the role that parents had in establishing these inconsistent belief systems of their children, and think about some ways today's parents may be able to counter these destructive patterns in the future. Before looking at the roles parents do and should play in establishing these belief systems, let's consider some of the key belief trends that are driving our concern.

Foremost among our concerns is the dramatic change in the number of young adults who hold to no Christian religious beliefs or espouse a liberal view of Christianity. Looking at data from 1970 to the present, we uncover a disturbing new trend. From 1970 through 1990, the number of 18- to 25-year-old Americans who professed no Christian belief was constant at about twenty percent of the population. In 2000, this non-Christian group had grown to about thirty percent of this young generation, and by 2010 the numbers had exploded to around thirty-six percent.[2] If this trend continues, less than half of young adults will consider themselves Christians by the year 2020.

This concern over the future is heightened by the conflicted beliefs of young born agains. Among young adults, who consider themselves born again believers, only about one-third of them ascribe to a basic set of biblical beliefs. These beliefs include a creator God, a sinless Jesus, salvation through grace, a real Satan, an accurate Bible and the existence of

absolute moral truths. This statistic means that over two-thirds of these born agains do not ascribe to one or more of these beliefs. Overall, this means that less than ten percent of young American adults profess to being born again and hold to a set of biblical beliefs as compared to the sixty-eight percent who hold to no Christian beliefs or a liberal view of Christianity.

When we delve further into young adult beliefs, we find that their beliefs appear to be hodgepodge of cultural concepts and what's going on in their life, with little or no connection to their religious upbringing. Even though emerging adults looked to religion as a place to learn good morals, in his study Christian Smith discovered a chilling paradox. "It was clear . . . that emerging adults felt entirely comfortable describing various religious beliefs that they affirmed but that appeared to have no connection whatsoever to the living of their lives."{3} One emerging adult observed, "I don't think it's the basis of how I live, it's just, I guess I'm just learning about my religion and my beliefs. But I still kinda retain my own decision or at least a lot of it on situations I've had and experiences."{4} In fact, when we look at how many have a consistent biblical worldview that carries over into their views on sexuality, science, a concern for the poor, and basic religious practices, the survey data indicates that less than two percent of evangelical young adults would qualify. So the overwhelming majority of young evangelicals are not carrying their basic religious beliefs into the realm of everyday decision making.

The Impact of Parents on Spiritual Beliefs

So, what role did their parents have in establishing these inconsistent beliefs?

In 2010, we commissioned a survey to help us examine the

causes and potential opportunities to change the marked shift in the thinking of young adults over the last decade. We surveyed over 800 born again, young adults across America to get an understanding for what they thought about spiritual and cultural issues *and* how they felt about their beliefs and actions. One area of questioning was, "When you think about how you developed the religious beliefs you hold today, who do you feel had the greatest influence on you? Did your beliefs come from your family, your friends, your church, your independent studies, your college professors, or others?"

The answers we received to this question were not shocking but still sobering. More than sixty-five percent of the respondents reported that the source that had the greatest influence on their religious beliefs was a family member, with the vast majority of those saying it was parents or grandparents. Over twenty percent of the respondents pointed to another influential individual such as a pastor, youth leader, or college professor. Only about eleven percent stated that something less personal such as a youth group or the Bible was the greatest influencer of their religious beliefs.

As Christian Smith noted, "What the best empirical evidence shows . . . is that . . . when it comes to religion, parents are in fact *hugely* important."{5}In fact, "religious commitments, practices, and investments made during childhood and the teenage years, by parents and others in families and religious communities, matter—they make a difference."{6}

Of those who stated that a family member was the primary influence, over seven out of ten stated it was their mother or grandmother while less than three out of ten said it was their father or grandfather. So clearly among born again young adults, the female side of the family has a greater influence in passing down religious beliefs than do the males. One can postulate that this may be due to a combination of greater spiritual involvement on the female side of the family and a higher level of communication with their children. However,

the rate of fatherly influence almost doubles for young adults with a biblical worldview compared to those without such a worldview. So it appears that fathers who hold a biblical worldview are much more likely to be involved in establishing the spiritual beliefs of their children.

Less than one out of ten of the respondents listed a pastor as the primary source of influence, and only three percent listed a youth group. These church-related functions may have an important role in helping to shape our religious beliefs, but our survey shows that it is at best a secondary role for the vast majority of people. We are mistaken if we are relying on the church to pass on the right type of beliefs to our children. Parents, what you communicate through your lives is picked up by your children. What are you communicating to them concerning religious beliefs?

The Translation of our Beliefs

Since the beliefs of today's young adults are dramatically different than the dominant beliefs of forty years ago, does this mean that older adults have changed their beliefs as well, or have the beliefs been translated by the younger culture into something different?

An important part of understanding this question is that the survey results on who was the most significant source of our religious beliefs were almost identical regardless of racial background or levels of church attendance. In other areas of consideration such as biblical worldview, views on cultural behavioral issues, and church involvement, we found significant differences based on racial background, education, etc. But it appears clear that no matter our race, economic level, or religious beliefs, our mothers are the primary sources that pass down those beliefs to the next generation. In other words, if born-again believers have degraded views on worldview and cultural issues, it appears that their parents

are communicating (or at least not contradicting) similar views.

As we look at the hodgepodge of religious and cultural beliefs held in our society, we can see the results of what Christian Smith referred to as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."{7} The Baby Boomers and their children are captives of our society's focus on pluralism and tolerance as the only acceptable views. With this view, I can hold to certain religious beliefs that are strictly private in their application. But, when those religious views begin to move into areas which may imply someone else's belief is wrong, then I need to modify my beliefs to be more accepting. To believe in God as creator and Jesus as his sinless Son is probably okay. But when I say that Jesus is the only way we can be reconciled to God, I am starting to step on other's toes, making it inherently wrong.

On the one hand, Baby Boomers have bought into the cultural distaste for absolute beliefs which makes them loathe to state their beliefs too strongly. This viewpoint has been interpreted by the younger generation as an indication that those beliefs are not firm but rather culturally determined. So living in a more multi-ethnic, culturally diverse, and sexually liberated generation, these young adults pick and choose among biblical beliefs and distinctly non-biblical beliefs, with no apparent concern for the discontinuity in their belief systems.

The culture is winning the battle on two fronts. First, the older generation is buying into the importance of not being too forthright with their views. Second, the younger generation, given no clear direction from their parents, is buying into a disjointed set of views that avoids any conflict with others. According to Smith's research, the result is that the vast majority of young adult Americans are holding to some form of mainline Protestant philosophy. This philosophy states that Jesus is a worthwhile model of good behavior but our focus should be on getting along and not making waves rather

than promoting faith in Christ.

Countering Parents with a Truth Experience

Have we, the Baby Boomers, the parents and grandparents of our society, so flummoxed up the works that we have started a downward spiral of disconnected beliefs from which we cannot recover? Of course, time will tell, but if we hold to a consistent set of biblical worldview beliefs, we should not sit back and wait patiently for the end of Christianity as we know it. We are called to "proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man so that we might present every man complete in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

Interestingly, of those respondents who graduated from college and have a biblical worldview, a much greater percentage of them pointed to a source other than a family member as the most influential. This factor is probably the result of college students having their faith challenged and looking for answers from pastors, Bibles, and books. In other words, the direct challenge to their faith presented by some professors and many of their peers caused some to fall away but caused others to examine the reasons for their belief in Christ. We do not need to fear this examination. Our Lord's case is more than capable of standing up to examination. In fact, it is the only religion that has a consistent, viable explanation for the complexities and shortcomings of life as we know it.

If a hostile, or at least a highly skeptical, attack on the basis of their faith caused some to examine their reasons for belief and come out with a stronger, more biblical faith, perhaps a friendly encouragement to examine their faith could produce similar results. If the parents are passing on a watered down, inconsistent set of beliefs, perhaps we can change those beliefs by causing the young adults to run them through a consistency and credibility filter. Probe has been

doing this for years through our [Mind Games](#) conferences and summer camps for high school students. We have seen that this approach makes a difference.

Is it too late to make a difference in the lives of our young adults? When Viggo Olsen was in his mid-twenties, beginning his residency to become a doctor, his wife's parents had a change in their belief system, becoming followers of Jesus Christ. Viggo wanted to restore his wife's parents to sanity so he began an intense study to show the obvious failure of Christianity to address the real world. What he discovered was that a biblical worldview was the only viable answer to understanding our lives and our future. He went from a mission to disprove Christianity to accepting Jesus not only as his Savior but as his purpose in life as a medical missionary to Bangladesh.[{8}](#)

In a similar way, we need to encourage, or better yet force our younger church-goers to examine their beliefs and compare them with the teachings of Christ. Ask them not to live an unexamined life conforming to the culture, but rather to examine their beliefs and see if they stand up to close examination.

Consistent Worldview Parents are Best

Unfortunately, many parents have not been passing on a clear view of faith in Christ from generation to generation. Instead our belief system, even among those who belief they are going to heaven when they die because of their faith in Jesus, has been eroding into a mishmash of popular cultural beliefs mixed in with some variation of beliefs taught in the Bible.

Confronting young adults with the disconnects and shortcomings created by their mixture of beliefs as compared to a consistent Christian worldview can get their attention and bring about changes in their thinking. This confrontation with

truth has been a major focus of Probe throughout the years.

However, a major take-away from these studies should be for the young adults who are parents of our future generations. Listen up, young adults! If you do not communicate a clear set of biblical worldview beliefs through your words and through your actions, your children are going to pick up on the worldview you *do* communicate. Your desire to fit in with the culture and not make too many waves will result in children who believe that the culture is the ultimate authority on truth and right living. Why? Because that is what your life is saying to them loud and clear.

Suzie strongly believed that sex outside of marriage was wrong before God. It had a detrimental effect on the individuals caught up in it and on the society which promoted it. However, she felt that many of her friends did not view it in the same way she did. So, to get along, she never said much about it. What she did not realize was that her children were watching what she said. Even though she had told them she hoped they would remain pure until marriage, they did not hear her standing up for sexual purity among her friends. Without even thinking about it, her children relegated sexual purity to a nice ideal but not an important belief to live by. Suzie was instrumental in establishing their thinking on this topic. Their thinking lined up with what Suzie demonstrated was important to her even though it did not really line up with what she truly believed.

As parents, our beliefs have the greatest impact on our children's views. Things that you may not believe but grit your teeth and say nothing about will become core beliefs of your children. The society is saying they are true; they don't see a consistent disagreement from your words or your life. Thus, it must be the right value to hold. This process of gradually turning over our core beliefs to be reset by the culture is at least partially the reason for the tremendous shift in our cultural morality over the last

sixty years.

As parents, we can make a difference in future generations. We need to hold fast to the truths of Jesus Christ, speak them with our tongues, and live them through our actions. Our children are still looking to us for truth in this area. Let us commit to not let them down by deferring to the norms of the culture.

Notes

1. "Emerging Adults and the Future of Faith in America," probe.org/emerging-adults-and-the-future-of-faith-in-america/; "Emerging Adults Part 2: Distinctly Different Faiths," probe.org/emerging-adults-part-2-distinctly-different-faiths/; "The True State of Evangelicals in 2011," probe.org/the-true-state-of-american-evangelicals/.
2. Source General Social Surveys taken from 1976 through 2010.
3. Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 154.
4. Ibid., 154.
5. Ibid., 285.
6. Ibid., 256.
7. Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 162-170.
8. Viggo Olsen, *Daktar: Diplomat in Bangladesh* (Moody Press, 1973).

The Technological Simulacra [no footnotes]

What Saccharine is to Sugar, or The Technological Simulacra: On the Edge of Reality and Illusion

"Anyone wishing to save humanity today must first of all save the word." — Jacques Ellul

Simulacra

Aerosmith sings a familiar tune:

"There's something wrong with the world today,
I don't know what it is,
there's something wrong with our eyes,
we're seeing things in a different way
and God knows it ain't [isn't] his;
there's melt down in the sky. We're living on the edge."

 What saccharine is to sugar, so the technological simulacra is to nature or reality—a technological replacement, purporting itself to be better than the original, more real than reality, sweeter than sugar: hypersugar.

This article with footnotes

Simulacra, (*Simulacrum,* Latin, pl*., likeness, image, to simulate*): or simulation, the term, was adapted by French social philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) to express his critical interpretation of the technological transformation of reality into hyperreality. Baudrillard's social critique

provided the premise for the movie *The Matrix* (1999). However, he was made famous for declaring that the Gulf War never happened; TV wars are not a reflection of reality but projections (recreations) of the TV medium.

Simulacra reduces reality to its lowest point or one-dimension and then recreates reality through attributing the highest qualities to it, like snapshots from family vacation. When primitive people refuse to have their picture taken because they are afraid that the camera
steals their souls, they are resisting simulacra. The camera snaps a picture and recreates the image on paper or a digital medium; it then goes to a photo album or a profile page. Video highlights amount to the same thing in moving images; from three dimensions, the camera reduces its object to soulless one-dimensional fabrication.

Simulacra does not end with the apparent benign pleasures of family vacation and media, although media represents its most recent stage. Simulacra includes the entire technological environment or complex, its infrastructure, which acts as a false "second nature" superimposed over the natural world, replacing it with a hyperreal one, marvelously illustrated in the movie *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991). As liquid metal conforms itself to everything it touches, it destroys the original.

Humanity gradually replaces itself through recreation of human nature by technological enhancements, making the human race more adaptable to machine existence, ultimately for the purpose of space exploration. Transhumanists believe that through the advancements in genetic engineering, neuropharmaceuticals (experimental drugs), bionics, and artificial intelligence it will redesign the human condition in order to achieve immortality. "Humanity+," as Transhumanists say, will usher humanity into a higher state of being, a technological stairway to heaven, "glorification," "divinization" or "ascendency"in theological terms.

God made man in his own image and now mankind remakes himself in the image of his greatest creation (image), the computer. If God's
perfection is represented by the number seven and man's imperfection by the number six, then the Cyborg will be a five according to the descending order of being; the creature is never equal or greater than the creator but always a little lower.{9}

Glorious Reduction!

www.probe.org/machinehead-from-1984-to-the-brave-new-world-order-and-beyond/

Hyperreality

An old tape recording commercial used to say, "Is it real or is it Memorex?" By championing the superiority of recording to live
performance the commercial creates hyperreality, a reproduction of an original that appears more real than reality, a replacement for reality with a reconstructed one, purported to be better than the original.

Disneyland serves as an excellent example by creating a copy of reality remade in order to substitute for reality; it confuses reality
with an illusion that appears real, "more real than real." Disney anesthetizes the imagination, numbing it against reality, leaving spectators with a false or fake impression. Main Street plays off an idealized past. The technological reconstruction leads us to believe that the illusion "can give us more reality than nature can."

Hyperreality reflects a media dominated society where "signs and symbols" no longer reflect reality but are manipulated by their

users to mean *whatever*. Signs recreate reality to achieve the opposite effect (metastasis); for example, in Dallas I must travel west on Mockingbird Lane in order to go to East Mockingbird Lane. Or, Facebook invites social participation when no actual face to face conversation takes place.

Hyperreality creates a false perception of reality, the glorification of reduction that confuses fantasy for reality, a proxy reality
that imitates the lives of movie and TV characters for real life. When reel life in media becomes real life outside media we have entered the high definition, misty region—the Netherlands of concrete imagination—hyperreality!

Hyperreality goes beyond escapism or simply "just entertainment." If that was all there was to it, there would be no deception or
confusion, at best a trivial waste of time and money. Hyperreality is getting lost in the pleasures of escapism and confusing the fantasy world for the real one, believing that fantasy is real or even better than reality. Hyperreality results in the total inversion of society through technological sleight of hand, a cunning trick, a sorcerer's illusion transforming the world into a negative of itself, into its opposite, then calling it progress.

Hyperreality plays a trick on the mind, a self-induced hypnotism on a mass scale, duping us by our technological recreation into
accepting a false reality as truth. Like Cypher from the movie *The Matrix* who chose the easy and pleasant simulated reality over the harsh conditions of the "desert of the real" in humanity's fictional war against the computer, he chose to believe a lie instead of the truth.

The Devil is a Liar

A lie plays a trick on the mind, skillfully crafted to deceive through partial omission or concealment of the truth. The lie is the
devil's (devil means liar) only weapon, always made from a position of inferiority and weakness (Revelation 20:3, 8). A lie never stands on its own terms as equal to truth; it does not exist apart from twisting (recreating) truth. A lie never contradicts the truth by standing in opposition to it.

A lie is not a negative (no) or a positive (yes), but obscures one or the other. It adds by revealing what is not there—it subtracts by concealing what is there. A lie appears to be what is not and hides what it really is. "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

A lie does not negate (contradict) or affirm truth. Negation (No) establishes affirmation (Yes). Biblically speaking, the no comes
before the yes—the cross then the resurrection; law first, grace second. The Law is no to sin (disobedience); the Gospel is yes to faith (obedience). Truth is always a synthesis or combination between God's no in judgment on sin and His yes in grace through faith in Jesus Christ. "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Law without grace is legalism; grace without law is license.

www.probe.org/law-and-grace-combating-the-american-heresy-of-pelagianism/

The devil's lie adds doubt to the promise of God; "Indeed, has God said, 'you shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"(Genesis 3:1
NASB) It hides the promise of certain death; "You surely will not die" (Genesis 3:4). The serpent twists knowledge into

doubt by turning God's imperative, "Don't eat!" into a satanic question "Don't eat?"

But it is Eve who recreates the lie in her own imagination. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6).

Sight incites desire. We want what we see (temptation). Eve was tempted by "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) after seeing the fruit, then believed the false promise that it would make her wise. "She sees; she no longer hears a word to know what is good, bad or true." Eve fell victim to her own idolatrous faith in hyperreality that departed from the simple trust in God's word.

The Void Machine

Media (television, cell phone, internet, telecommunications) is a void machine. In the presence of a traditional social milieu, such as family, church or school, it will destroy its host, and then reconstruct it in its own hyperreal image (Simulacra). Telecommunication technology is a Trojan Horse for all traditional institutions that accept it as pivotal to their "progress," except prison or jail. The purpose of all institutions is the promotion of values or social norms, impossible through the online medium.

Media at first appears beneficial, but this technology transforms the institution and user into a glorified version of itself. The personal computer, for example, imparts values not consistent with the mission of church or school, which is to bring people together in mutual support around a common goal or belief for learning and spiritual growth (community). This is done primarily through making friends and forming meaningful relationships, quite simply by people talking to

each other. Values and social norms are only as good as the people we learn them from. Values must be embodied in order to be transmitted to the next generation.

Talking as the major form of personal communication is disappearing. Professor of Communications John L. Locke noted that "Intimate
talking, the social call of humans, is on the endangered species list." People prefer to text, or phone. Regrettably, educational institutions such as high schools and universities are rapidly losing their relevance as traditional socializing agents where young people would find a potential partner through like interests or learn a worldview from a mentor. What may be gained in convenience, accessibility or data acquisition for the online student is lost in terms of the social bonds necessary for personal ownership of knowledge, discipline and character development.

An electronic community is not a traditional community of persons who meet face to face, in person, in the flesh where they establish
personal presence. Modern communication technologies positively destroy human presence. What philosopher Martin Heidegger called *Dasein*, "being there," (embodiment or incarnation) is absent. As Woody Allen put it, "90 percent of life is showing up." The presence of absence marks the use of all electronic communication technology. Ellul argued, "The simple fact that I carry a camera [cell phone] prevents me from grasping everything in an overall perception." The camera like the cell phone preoccupies its users, creating distance between himself and friends. The cellphone robs the soul from its users, who must exchange personal presence for absence; the body is there tapping away, but not the soul! The cell phone user has become a void!

The Power of Negative Thinking

According to popular American motivational speakers, the key to unlimited worldly wealth, success and happiness is in the power of
positive thinking that unleashes our full potential; however, according to obscure French social critics the key to a meaningful life, lived in freedom, hope and individual dignity is in the power of negative thinking that brings limits, boundaries, direction and purpose.

Negativity gives birth to freedom, expanding our spiritual horizons with possibilities and wise choices, which grounds faith, hope and
love in absolute truth, giving us self-definition greater than our circumstances, greater than reality of the senses. To freely choose in love one's own path, identity and destiny is the essence of individual dignity.

According to French social critics Jacques Ellul and Herbert Marcuse, freedom is only established in negation that provides limits
and boundaries, which tells us who we are. Technological hyperreality removes all natural and traditional limits in the recreation of humanity in the image of the cyborg. The transhuman transformation promises limitless potential at the expense of individual freedom, personal identity and ultimately human dignity and survival.

www.probe.org/into-the-void-the-coming-transhuman-transformation/

All limitless behavior ends in self-destruction. Human extinction looms over the technological future, like the Sword of Damocles,
threatening humanity's attempt to refit itself for immortality in a grand explosion (nuclear war), a slow poisoning (ecocide) or suicidal regressive technological replacement. Stephen

Hawking noted recently that technological progress threatens humanity's survival with nuclear war, global warming, artificial intelligence and genetic engineering over the course of the next 100 years. Hawking stated, "We are not going to stop making progress, or reverse it, so we must [recognize] the dangers and control them."

In asserting "NO!" to unlimited technological advance and establishing personal and communal limits to our use of all technology,
especially the cell phone, computer and TV, we free ourselves from the technological necessity darkening our future through paralyzing the will to resist.

After we "JUST SAY NO!" to our technological addictions, for instance, after a sabbatical fast on Sunday when the whole family turns off their electronic devices, and get reacquainted, a new birth of freedom will open before us teeming with possibilities. We will face unmediated reality in ourselves and family with a renewed hope that by changing our personal worlds for one day simply by pushing the off button on media technology we can change the future. Through a weekly media fast (negation) we will grow faith in the power of self-control by proving that we can live more abundant lives without what we once feared absolute necessity, inevitable and irresistible. "All things are possible with God" (Mark 10: 27). When we exchange our fear of idols for faith in the Living God the impossible becomes possible and our unlimited potential is released that will change the world forever!

I see trees of green, red roses, too,
I see them bloom, for me and you
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.

I see skies of blue, and clouds of white,
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself

What a wonderful world.

The colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky,
Are also on the faces of people going by.
I see friends shaking hands, sayin', "How do you do?"
They're really sayin', "I love you."

I hear babies cryin'. I watch them grow.
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.

"[I]f man does not pull himself together and assert himself . . . then things will go the way I describe [cyborg condition]." — Jacques Ellul

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Machinehead: From 1984 to the Brave New World Order and Beyond

Wherever the survival of humanity is threatened we find the work of Satan. In the previous century that was Fascism, then Mutually Assured Destruction during the Cold War. Today, Satan hides behind the ascendancy of the global Empire of Technology: assimilation of humanity into the machine, creating a new planetary being: the Cyborg. I believe people best understand large conglomerates when personalized, such as, referring to the Federal Government as "Uncle Sam," so I have chosen to name the Brave New World Order: Machinehead!

Post-Orwellian World

Say good bye to Orwell's nightmare world of *1984*! And welcome to Machinehead: the Brave New World Order and beyond!

Machinehead is what I call the technological idol or the planetary being taking shape in the convergence of human and computer intelligence, a global cyborg. "Machine" is defined as *one global system with many subsystems.*

Experts already recognize the global system as a superorganism, one life-form made of billions and billions of individual parts or cells like an anthill or beehive, with one mind and one will. Thus, the global machine consists of millions of subsystems interfacing one over-system. Mankind acts as agent for the global machine's ascendancy, creating a technological god in its own image.

The suffix "head" refers to the *divine essence* as in "Godhead" (Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. Acts 17: 29). Machinehead is the replacement of all traditional views of God with the new Living God of the Machine, best illustrated by the recent movie *Transcendence* (2014), which depicts the computer's awaking to consciousness in one mind and will, the Singularity!

Two prophets of modernity plead in dire warning for us to reconsider modern faith in expansive government and escalating technological acceleration. The first and most notable was master political satirist and critic George Orwell (1903-1950), famous for *Animal Farm* and *1984,* and the second, English literatus Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), author of *Brave New World (BNW).*

Orwell envisioned the end of history in the all-powerful political dictatorship of *Oceania* marked by perpetual war,

omnipresent government surveillance, thought control, and the ubiquitous media projection of Big Brother.

Orwell gave us the foundation of the current age in Cold War politics, but does not serve as guide to the future, which belongs, if humanity allows it, to the apparent benign technophilia of *Brave New World* that follows upon Orwell's cruel political combat boot in the face!

The Cold War Era and *1984*

Orwell divided his fictional geopolitical borders into three grids: *Oceania, Eurasia* and *Eastasia,* shadowing accurately Cold War divisions between Western and Eastern Bloc countries allied behind NATO (Oceania) and Warsaw pact nations (Eurasia), leaving the Third World (Eastasia) as pawns (proxy wars) for interminable power battles between the two Super Powers (Super States). Perpetual war characterized normative relations between the super states in *1984* with the objective to further consolidate the State's power over its own citizens. The threat of war inspires fear in the population and offers government the opportunity and justification for further largesse and control. War insures a permanent state of crisis, leaving the population in desperation for strong leadership and centralized command and control.

The wars of *1984* were a side note to the main thrust of the novel, omnipotent government control. The novel introduced the world to the ominous character Big Brother. The central drama takes place in *Airstrip One,* the capital of *Oceania*, formerly London, England, where Winston Smith the protagonist struggles to maintain his dignity as an individual, under the crushing gears of Fascist government.

Popular criticism asserts that Orwell had Stalinism in the cross hairs in his novel. However, that interpretative ruse acts as an escape clause for the West to disavow any participation in totalitarianism. Most Americans falsely

assume that *1984* applied to the Soviet Union and not NATO. Eurasia (the Eastern bloc) was a mere literary foil. Orwell's social criticism applies to all forms of totalitarianism, especially the subtle power structure of the West hidden behind democratic rhetoric, media bias, and an acute lack of national self-criticism. *Oceania* was Orwell's analogy and commentary on the future of the West after World War II. The NATO alliance, founded in 1949 the same year Orwell published *1984,* was the target of Orwell's criticism—not the Soviet Union.

Brave New World Order in the 21ˢᵗ Century: The Imperial Machine

Huxley's novel *Brave New World* foresaw a techno heaven on earth that knows nothing of wars, political parties, religion or democracy, but caters to creature comforts, maximization of pleasure and minimization of pain; total eradication of all emotional and spiritual suffering through the removal of free choice by radical conditioning from conception in the test tube to blissful euthanasia.

Television was the controlling technology in *1984*, so in *BNW* control is asserted through media, education and a steady flow of *soma*—the perfect drug and chemical replacement for Jesus. "Christianity without tears" was how Mustapha Mond the World Controller described soma. "Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your morality around in a [pill] bottle."{2}

Spiritual perfection commanded by Jesus, "Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), will be given to all through genetic programing, sustained through chemical infusion and mental conditioning (propaganda). If *1984* was about power for the sake of power, *BNW* emphasizes the kinder, gentler technological dictatorship that does not promise happiness, but delivers it to all whether they want it

or
not!

Brave New World Order amounts to technological totalitarianism, analogous to Huxley's "World State" motto: "Community, Identity, Stability*."*{3}

The "imperial machine" as it has been called by political scientists acts outside the traditional political process and in tandem with it when needed with no central geographical location or person or groups with any discernable hierarchical structure that directs it; the United States, Great Britain, United Nations, The People's Republic of China or The European Union are not the power brokers of 21st century Empire, but its pawns.
Technological Empire rules as an all-encompassing, all-pervasive power, shaping human destiny in its own image.

Transvaluation of Man and Machine

A titanic transvaluation (reversal in the meaning of values) between superstructure (intangible ideological system: beliefs, convictions, morality, myth, etc.) and infrastructure (tangible urban development: roads, buildings, houses, cars, machines, etc.) begun with the Industrial Revolution will finally be complete some time during the 21st century. Infrastructure replaces superstructure. Technology has become our belief, religion and hope, what was once a means (technology) to an end (human progress) has replaced the end with the means. Technology replaces humanity as the goal of progress; technology for technology's sake not for the good of mankind or God's glory.

The reversal of meaning is found everywhere in postmodern society beginning with the death of God and unfolding in lock step to the death of man, progress, democracy and Western Civilization; concomitantly paired with an equal ascendency of

all things technological, until the machine ultimately replaces humanity.

Marxist regimes were fond of calling their systems "democratic" or "republic" such *as the People's Republic of China* despite the fact that the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* bears the opposite meaning. The majestic word *Liberal,* once meant freedom from government interference and rule by inner light of reason in the seventeenth century, had come to be synonymous with government regulation and planning by the twentieth century.

The cruelest irony in the transvaluation process is that the triumph of mankind over nature and tradition in the modern world has resulted in his replacement by the machine. Humanism of the modern period promoted the Rational as ideal type of Man. This ideal was already adapted to the machine as *1984* and *Brave New World* illustrated through the removal of faith and the attenuation of human nature to mechanical existence. French Intellectual Jacques Ellul argued further that "This type [of man] exists to support technique [technological acceleration] and serve the machine, but eventually he will be eliminated because he has become superfluous . . . the great hope that began with the notion of human dominance over the machine ends with human replacement by the machine."[{4}]

The Devil's Logic

What we fear will happen is already here because we fear it; it will overtake us according to our fears; it will recede according to our love. (1 John 2)

Human Replacement does not necessarily mean total human extinction, a cyborg race that fundamentally alters human nature will cause a pseudo-extinction—meaning part of humanity, the Machine Class, those most fit for technological evolution will ascend to the next stage, leaving the great majority behind. The movie *Elysium* (2011) offers an excellent

illustration: the technological elite, who reap all the benefits from technological advance control the earth from an orbiting space station. H. G. Wells in his famous novel *The Time Machine* painted a similar picture of human evolution that branched into two different species: the hideous cannibalistic Morlocks, "the Under-grounders," their only principle was necessity, feeding off the beautiful, yet docile Eloi, "the Upper-worlders," whose only emotion was fear.{5}

When fear dominates our thinking, love is absent from our motives. To say, "It is necessary" in defense of technological practice, abdicates choice, giving unlimited reign to technological acceleration, i.e. abortion, government surveillance, or digital conversion. "Fear" and "necessity" are the devil's logic. Necessity imposes itself through fear of being left behind by "technological progress."

Necessity is not the Mother of Invention, but the Father of Lies! New technology becomes necessity only after it is invented. There is no conscious need for what does not yet exist. Technological need establishes itself through habitual use creating dependence and finally normalcy in the next generation who cannot relate to a past devoid of modern technological essentials.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," serves as our mandate, if we wish to create a future of universal love and empathy instead of universal speed and memory.

Knowledge without wisdom leads to disaster. "Where is the wisdom lost in knowledge?"{6} Wisdom is the loving use of knowledge. Love counsels limits to knowledge for the liberation of all. Fear dictates limitless necessity, enslaving all.

A choice faces us. Say "yes!" to God and "no!" to *limitless* advance. Otherwise mankind faces replacement by the new digital god: Machinehead!

Notes

1. George Orwell, *1984* [{New York: HBJ, Inc., 1949}](#), 17)
2. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: The Modern Library, 1932), 285.
3. Ibid, 1.
4. Lawrence J. Terlizzese, *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 104-105).
5. H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (New York: Bantam, 1982 [1895]).
6. T.S. Eliot quoted in Huston Smith, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991, 5).

Future Husbands and Cheerleaders: A Review of OMI's Cheerleader and Meghan Trainor's "Dear Future Husband"

Meghan Trainor's song ["Dear Future Husband"](#) and OMI's song ["Cheerleader"](#) have striking similarities. Musically they are both fun and upbeat songs. Both songs engage with the idea of marriage and outline what they expect and value in their potential spouse. However, the two songs offer conflicting ideas of what a good husband and wife look like. It is almost comical that "Cheerleader," from a man's perspective, describes the potential wife as a mere cheerleader and "Dear Future Husband," from the woman's perspective even if only

satirically,[1] describes the potential husband as a mere servant. That brings me to the final comparison: both songs expect the spouse to be an aid in providing whatever the artist desires.

However, there are some truths hidden in these songs about the role of husband and wife in marriage that can best be understood and even celebrated through a biblical understanding of marriage.

Marriage as a Deal

Meghan Trainor's song "Dear Future Husband" is basically a list of criteria that a man must accomplish or agree to before he is allowed to marry her. The song introduces
the list by remarking "Here's a few things you'll need to know if you wanna be my one and only all my life." Trainor spells out examples of what she expects from her husband including taking her on dates, telling her she is beautiful, not correcting her, apologizing, buying her a ring, opening doors for her, and even letting her sleep on the left side of the bed. Then of course she adds the the catch—all requests such as "be a classy guy," "treat me like a lady," and "love me right."
The song also outlines what he will get in return as a reward if he does everything right. She will only "be the perfect wife," buy groceries, give "some kisses," be his "one and only all [her] life," give "that special loving" if he does exactly what she asks of him. Additionally, he will have to expect that she will be crazy (at least some of the time), she will correct but not be corrected, she will not cook, and they will favor her extended family over his. What a deal! And unfortunately that is exactly what marriage is conflated into—a deal, an exchange.

Most of these actions are pretty standard ways men show love to their wives. However, men should not and likely do not perform the acts because of a contractual agreement or because

of expectations. How can this man show true unconditional and sacrificial love to his wife if he does these actions out of duty or hope of reward?

This marred picture of marriage is so faulty because it offers a picture of marriage that is a one-sided willingness to be served by her husband and then only serve him as a response. Even though the song lists loving actions in marriage, this picture of marriage is ultimately selfish, conditional, manipulative, and loveless.

Marriage as a Cheerleader

Looking to "Cheerleader," the song offers a more hopeful and less distorted picture of marriage—however, we are still left wanting. The future wife in OMI's song is a woman characterized by her support, affection, strength, physical beauty, readiness to serve, and faithfulness. All these attributes are biblically commendable and should even be sought after.Yet, what does OMI, as the future husband, offer to her? Fidelity and sex. In contrast to
Trainor's song, here the husband remains rightly faithful and offers sex because he values his wife so much, especially her ability to support him.{2}

However, again the picture seems woefully incomplete. The song portrays a limited picture of women by reducing his future wife to only a handful of attributes that benefit him. His wife should be more than a mere cheerleader. She is simply a tool he can pull out whenever he wants or needs her. The song further reduces—and in some ways even dehumanizes—her by focusing on the services she can offer him. As a result, she is not represented as her own person with her own needs and desires.

Marriage as a Picture of Unity

Ultimately marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church—a picture both songs catch a small glimpse of. When Trainor in "Dear Future Husband" desires (albeit via demand) for her husband to show her love by serving her and affirming her, she desires something that is biblical. Husbands are called to nourish, cherish, honor, embrace, protect, and love their wives.{3} Having biblical standards in what to expect in a husband is what God wants, but not through demands and deals.

OMI also desires legitimate attributes in his wife. He values a wife who will support and affirm him. In Genesis God created woman with Adam's need for companionship and assistance in mind.{4} Proverbs 31 describes an excellent wife as a woman who is strong, trustworthy and praiseworthy.{5} However, Proverbs 31 does not just define an excellent wife in those terms; the excellent wife is generous, wise, skilled, dignified, and uses her time buying, selling, trading, and providing for her entire household. So when OMI seeks an excellent wife, he gets a cheerleader—but if he were to look for a biblically defined wife of excellence then the proverb would ring true, that "he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord."{6}

But neither artist has the full picture. Marriage is not an exchange of services—yes, spouses should serve each other; not out of duty but out of a thankful and loving heart. The element that is missing from both songs is the true and complete needs and desires of the opposite spouse. However, both songs together offer a fuller picture of what each spouse needs and desires. Ephesians 5 commands husbands to love their

wives, something Trainor focused on, and for wives to respect their husbands, as OMI touched on through valuing affirmation from his wife.{7}

Genesis describes marriage as becoming one flesh, and following that theme Paul in Ephesians calls husbands to "love his wife as himself."{8} By being one flesh, spouses should see their separate wills as one unified will and their separate body as one body. Paul writes that concerning this idea of unity, "For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."{9} This picture of marriage is strikingly different from the deal-making, manipulating, and self-serving marriage according to Trainor and OMI.

The true beauty and blessing in marriage for the Christian, is ultimately that marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Again in Ephesians, Paul refers to marriage by writing, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."{10} When a man and a woman marry, they symbolize unity that is fully complete between Christ and His people.{11}

However, because of our sin we were incapable of being united with Christ. In order for Christ to marry his Church he had to make us clean and even righteous. Christ accomplished this by taking our place and dying on the cross for our sins so we might receive the righteousness of Christ. In that way, when God the Father looks down at His Church He sees a people who are flawless and thus fitting to be united with His son. Christ is the perfect husband, and when we are complete in our glorification, we will be the perfect wife as the Church.

Marriage as a Broken Picture

Yet our marriage is only a picture—a flawed and imperfect picture. Husbands abuse wives, wives undermine their husbands, and spouses cheat on each other which can all lead to separation and divorce. God did not intend marriage to be plagued by sin, and divorce and pain was not in his design.{12} However, we did sin and as a result sin has damaged our relationships, including marriage, in a deeply painful way.

Nevertheless, God still works to better our marriages. He sent the Holy Spirit to help believers in the process of sanctification—which is making us more like Christ. Both songs lack a place for sanctification. Trainor does not want to be confronted and OMI only wants to be affirmed.

But marriage is made for more than just affirming the good and ignoring the bad. Because men and women are different yet compatible, God uses marriage to aid in the process of making us more Christlike. Women tend to be more relational and emotional and men tend to be more protective and provisional. In marriage, the wife can learn from and value her husband's strengths and the husband can learn from and value his wife's strengths, as co-heirs with Christ. And when one spouse has wronged the other they can and should go to each other for confession, repentance and reconciliation that will result in more unity and ultimately aid in their sanctification.

With the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, even in our sinful state, we can still strive to symbolize our unity in Christ in our marriages. Married Christians should continually search the Bible for insight and direction on how to better serve and love their spouse. However, both married and single Christians all wait expectantly for the glorious wedding feast celebrating our unity to Christ.

Notes

1. There has been some debate about whether or not Trainor's song is supposed to be understood as a satire. I am more inclined to think it may be hyperbolic but I think it might be too generous to call it a satire. However, most conclude that if it is meant to be satirical it does not skillfully convey that message. For more of this conversation simply google "Dear Future Husband sexist satire" and you should have plenty of articles to start on.
2. Fidelity and sex should both be a fundamental part of a biblical marriage. See Hebrews 13:4.
3. Ephesians 5:28-29, 1 Peter 3:7, and Proverbs 4:7-9. All Bible verses are in the English Standard Version.
4. Genesis 2:18.
5. Genesis 2:18, Proverbs 31:10-11, 17, 28.
6. Proverbs 18:22.
7. Ephesians 5:33.
8. Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:33
9. 1 Corinthians 7:4.
10. Ephesians 5:32.
11. Because marriage is a picture of the reality of our unity in Christ that is not yet fully realized, we value and guard the sanctity of it. That is why as Christians we should be mournful at the distortions of marriage such as divorce or homosexuality. Distortions in marriage are so offensive because they distort the truth that marriage is supposed to reflect. Because marriage should be highly regarded and protected the Bible uses harsh language when speaking about sexual immorality and divorce (For example, see Malachi 2:16 for severity of husbands not loving their wives).
12. See Matthew 19:6 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.

Bad Blood Reconciled: A Review of Taylor Swift's "Bad Blood"

Probe intern Sarah Withers contrasts Taylor Swift's Bad Blood song to the deep spiritual truths of the gospel of Christ.

Naomi, a young Taylor Swift fan fighting leukemia, adopted Swift's song "[Bad Blood](#)" as her theme song during her battle with cancer. In response to her [video](#) Naomi uploaded on YouTube, Taylor Swift contributed [$50,000 to Naomi's medical bills](#). Naomi through her heartwarming story was able to transform the song to make it inspiring and hopeful. However, as most know, the song is not about fighting terrible cancer but instead about a broken relationship. Although Swift did not disclose the antagonist, she no longer sees reconciliation as an option. By contrasting Swift's "Bad Blood" with Christ's reconciling blood, Christians are reminded of the transformative power of the gospel to bring healing and hope to broken relationships.

Destructive Power of Bad Blood

"Bad Blood," through the lyrics and video, paints a picture of the pain that is felt after someone is wronged in a relationship. The antagonist attacking her and "rubbing it in so deep" left Swift with a "a really deep cut." Many, if not all of us, have felt the pangs of being cut deeply with words and actions in a relationship gone wrong. A quick read through the Psalms reveals victims of broken relationships crying out in pain. The Psalmist laments, "Even my closest friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel before me."[{1}](#)

Not only do broken relationships hurt initially and deeply, but often the pain lingers. Swift captures this experience through the lyrics, "Still got scars in my back from your knives, so don't think it's in the past, these kinds of wounds they last and they last." Again the Psalmist writes, "I am restless in my complaint and I moan, because the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked."{2} One thing both the Psalms and Swift can agree on is that broken relationships and betrayal are deeply painful.

For Swift, not only is the relationship broken and painful, it is irreconcilable. She notes the hopelessness of the relationship, "I don't think we can solve them (problems)" and "in time can heal but this won't." This is the most upsetting part of the song.

We all have had broken relationships, yet the ones that hurt the most are the ones that turn from feelings of hurt to feelings of hate. We should hate sin and the pain it brings with it, but we are called to love even our enemies. Ephesians 6 says that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the "spiritual forces of evil."{3} As difficult as it may be, we should guard our heart from future pain without hating the individual who hurt us. Thus, reconciliation should always be the ideal goal and in cases where reconciliation cannot or does not occur, forgiveness should still reign in our heart.

Healing Power of Christ's Blood

It seems like an impossible request to forgive someone and even move towards reconciliation with someone who betrayed and hurt us. This would be an unimaginable task if it were not for someone who did this for us first. The gospel is the perfect example of reconciliation.

When we sin, whether or not it affects anyone, we sin against God. Our most fundamental problem with sin is not that it

hurts other people, but that it separates us from the love of God. Those who do not accept Christ as their savior are outside of the effect of Christ's atoning blood and therefore are not able to experience God's love. However, Paul in Ephesians says "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."[4]

Before we can offer true love and reconciliation to others, we must first receive love and be reconciled to God. The only way to turn our bad blood against God into unity with God is through the power of Christ's redeeming blood on the cross. Colossians states, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."[5] His blood cleanses us so that we are filled with the selfless love towards others that the Scriptures ask of us.[6]

Our Fight against Bad Blood

Even for Christians who have been shown love and forgiveness, we still do not always experience an overflowing of love and forgiveness for those who wrong us. We still struggle with having bad blood towards our enemies. We still feel the pain of the broken relationships even though we are in Christ. As Christians, we look forward to a day when we will not feel pain, but while we still live in a fallen world, pain and hurt are very much part of our everyday lives.

However, the wrong that causes our pain has been or will be paid for. As Christians, if we are wronged by a believer in Christ, remember that Jesus died for those sins as well as for ours.[7] Yes, we should still lament that even believers sin and cause pain, yet justice was important enough to Christ that He died for those sins.[8] For those who sin against us and remain outside of Christ, their wrongs will be righted at the cost of their own life in eternal wrath. The hope of sharing the gospel is to offer others the redemptive power of

Christ which indeed makes the gospel good news!

Looking back to the Psalms, there is a life-giving trend even within the darkness and pain. Even in Psalm 88, which is considered to be one of the darkest Psalms, the psalmist still cries out to God. In our broken relationships with others, true reconciliation must start and end with the grace and justice of God.

God knew we had bad blood and provided a Savior to change our hearts. He still continues to hear our cries of pain and sent the Holy Spirit to continue to protect our hearts from holding on to the bad blood in our relationships.

Notes

1. Psalm 41:9 All verses are from the English Standard Version.
2. Psalm 55:2-3, see also Psalm 69.
3. Ephesians 6:12
4. Ephesians 2:13
5. Colossians 1:19-20
6. Hebrews 9:14
7. Ephesians 1:7
8. This is why I think St. Anselm was on the right track in *Cur Deus Homo*, when he argued that Jesus Christ had to become incarnate and die for our sins so that God's justice and grace could be made manifest. If God just ignored our sins, justice would not prevail—thank God He is both just and gracious through Jesus Christ!

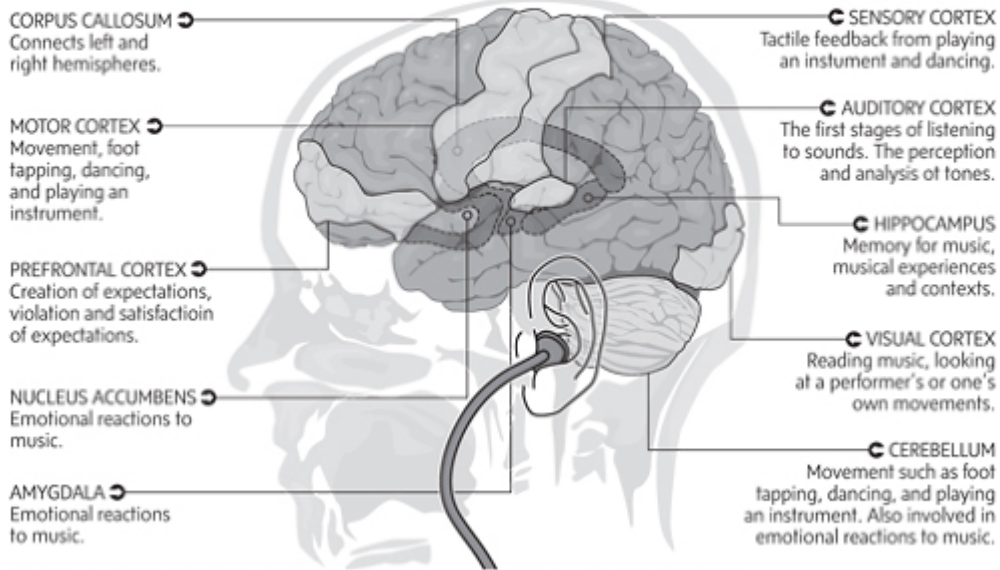# How and Why We Should Biblically Analyze Songs

Probe intern Sarah Withers provides insight about thinking biblically about popular songs.

Numerous scientific studies have revealed that music is linked to relieving pain/stress, releasing endorphins, aiding coordination, increasing concentration, expanding memory, improving language skills, and lowering blood pressure, just to list a few.[1] Unfortunately, not all genres of music offer these benefits, so it would be quite misleading to say that critically analyzing songs can act as a remedy for migraines—however convenient and persuasive that claim might be!

While I may not be able to claim health advantages, powerful benefits can be gleaned for us and others by being aware and graciously critical of songs. I hope that I can provide how and why we should biblically analyze songs and challenge you to be a more thoughtful and gracious critical consumer of all types of music.

Music on the mind

When we listen to music, it's processed in many different areas of our brain. The extent of the brain's involvement was scarcely imagined until the early nineties, when functional brain imaging became possible. The major computational centres include:

CORPUS CALLOSUM
Connects left and right hemispheres.

MOTOR CORTEX
Movement, foot tapping, dancing, and playing an instrument.

PREFRONTAL CORTEX
Creation of expectations, violation and satisfactioin of expectations.

NUCLEUS ACCUMBENS
Emotional reactions to music.

AMYGDALA
Emotional reactions to music.

SENSORY CORTEX
Tactile feedback from playing an instument and dancing.

AUDITORY CORTEX
The first stages of listening to sounds. The perception and analysis of tones.

HIPPOCAMPUS
Memory for music, musical experiences and contexts.

VISUAL CORTEX
Reading music, looking at a performer's or one's own movements.

CEREBELLUM
Movement such as foot tapping, dancing, and playing an instrument. Also involved in emotional reactions to music.

MIKE FAILLE/THE GLOBE AND MAIL ⫸ SOURCE: THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON MUSIC: THE SCIENCE OF A HUMAN OBSESSION

How Do We Biblically Analyze a Song?

The most obvious first step to biblically analyzing a song is to actively listen to the lyrics and sometimes even watch the music video. It helps me focus and understand if I pull up the lyrics and read along as I listen. While I listen, I think about how the song makes me feel, what the song got right or wrong in its worldview, what I appreciate about the song, and any questions about possible meanings and interpretations. I also think about if or how I can relate to the song's message. Have I ever experienced, desired, or seen something similar to the song's message? If the answer is no, then maybe I could think about how seeing the songwriter's perspective could help me relate and communicate with someone with very different desires and experiences than my own.

Ultimately we biblically critique a song by shining the light of the biblical truths on it. No secular song gets everything right for the obvious reason that the gospel is not present. For some songs all that is missing is an explicit reference to the gospel, while other songs directly conflict with the

gospel. Yet, for even the more difficult songs, Christians can understand the song's message for the glory of God.

For example, Lana Del Rey's song "Born to Die"{2} provides the message that we should enjoy life because when we die there is nothing left for us. For those in Christ, that song is radically wrong about our purpose and destiny.

However, for those who are outside of Christ, that song paints a rather apt picture of their bleak destiny.{3} So yes, the song is very dark and upsetting, yet when I hear that song I can mourn for those outside of Christ and praise God that the lyrics of that song are not true for me. In that way, that song can incite worship and foster resolve to reach out to unbelievers-something Del Rey probably would never consider possible! That is the transformative power of the gospel, the greatest good news.

However, there are songs that Christians should avoid. Songs that are overly sexualized or demonic in nature may be too difficult to redeem.{4} Also some people are more affected by music than others. If you are not able to redeem the song by countering it with life-giving truths from Scripture and the song continues to bring you down, then you should not listen to it. Christians should pray for wisdom and guidance to know when to listen and engage and when to turn it off.{5}

Why Should We Care?

Since music is so integrated into our daily lives, many of us are consumers of music whether we are intentional about it or not. The American Academy of Pediatrics in 1996 (AAP) found that 14- to 16-year-olds listened to an overage of 40 hours of music per week. For a more conservative number, RAIN (Radio and Internet Newsletter) reported that students "spend an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes a day consuming media, 2 hours 19 minutes of which is spent listening to music."{6}

While these studies focus on teens and adolescents, it is fair to say that adults also listen to a fair amount of music, whether it is through headphones at work or the radio in the car. When it comes down to it, music is very much part of our everyday life. For some it can be avoided, but by most, it is accepted and greatly enjoyed.

Musical lyrics are also sticky. It never ceases to amaze me how I can still easily sing along to songs from my childhood the second the second it plays. Yet, when discussing my project of biblically analyzing popular music, a common response is that people often do not listen to the lyrics, but rather just enjoy the melody and beat. The AAP (1996) reported that "in one study 30% of teenagers knew the lyrics to their favorite songs," which would seem to affirm that initial claim.

With those intuitions and findings, it would be easy to undermine this project as interesting but unimportant. However, the same AAP (2009) article cited the Knobloch-Westerwick *et al*. study that "although young listeners might not understand all the details in lyrics, they recognize enough to obtain a general idea of the message they bring."

Moreover, the fact that we do remember song lyrics well after we have stopped listening to them shows that we are aware of the words even if we are not actively thinking about the message. In many respects we have become passive consumers of information and entertainment, especially when it comes to music. It is in light of this passivity that we should strive to be active listeners.

Every song with words carries a message, although some are more obvious and dangerous than others. For example, current artists such as Macklemore, Hozier, Lana Del Rey, and Lady Gaga proclaim more explicit messages and agendas in their songs-something as Christians we should be aware of and ready to critique. The AAP (1996) claimed that "awareness of, and

sensitivity to, the potential impact of music lyrics by consumers, the media, and the music industry is crucial."

Although the rate and impact of the consumption of songs can be debated, there are still benefits of being aware of and engaging with our culture through songs.

What Are the Benefits?

Well, there are three main benefits to biblically analyzing songs. First, we refine our ability to enjoy music. For many this will be very counterintuitive. People I have talked with have feared that if they are too critical of the music's message, then they will no longer be able to enjoy it. I will agree, there are some songs that might be ruined by listening critically to the lyrics. However, Christians should likely avoid listening to those songs anyway.

Even with songs we don't like, we can still enjoy them for their musicality and benefit from some insights, however hard to find. The vast majority of songs are redeemable even though they may counter the gospel. Where God provides the songwriter with common grace insights, there is an opportunity to redeem the song. Remember Lana Del Rey's song; I am still able to enjoy her powerful use of a darker sound and message, but I am also reminded of the hope I have in the gospel.

If we get to a point where we become cynical and antagonistic towards our music culture, we should remember that God gave us music and culture as a gift. The Psalms are examples of a great variety of songs that were written to offer the expression of truth about God, humanity, and our world. The obvious difference is that the Psalms are God-breathed and inspired—yet there are often truths that can be gleaned even from secular and popular songs. After all, we are all made in God's image and bear His music-loving traits.

Another benefit of analyzing songs is the ability to learn

about our culture and the people influenced by it. Regardless of whether the lyrics are true, they are believed to be true by the songwriter and often by people in our culture. Part of the appeal of songs is that they are relatable. Relatability makes the song powerful and influential.

We can gain invaluable insight into the thoughts of our culture and younger generations through the lyrics of songs. Many songs provide commentary on our culture's view of alcohol consumption, drug use, violence, relationships, sexuality, freedom, and self-worth. By learning what the songs say about such topics, we can be better equipped to understand where people are coming from.

The final benefit which naturally flows from the previous one is being able to relate and engage with our culture. By engaging with themes in songs, we are ultimately practicing how to engage with people. I was talking with a group of high school students about one of Macklemore's songs called "Starting Over" which is about his relapse as an alcoholic. The song is marked with shame, a deep sense of failure, and loss of identity. Before listening to the song, I encouraged them to listen to the lyrics as if a person was talking with them. With that perspective, students would be less likely to immediately judge him as a failure, and instead would be more likely to empathize and relate as we are all failures and slaves to sin outside of Christ.

By being aware of songs, we can better engage the lies of our culture and counter them with the truths of Scripture.{7} The AAP (1996 & 2009), encourages parents to "become media-literate" which means "watching television with their children and teenagers, discussing the content with them, and initiating the process of selective viewing at an early age." Later in the article, the authors even suggest that parents should look up the lyrics and become familiar with them. Even if you are not a parent, as Christians one way we can help

correct lies of our culture is through conversations about popular music.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is our hope and joy that we have been redeemed and my prayer that Christians will show others the light of Christ.

So, the goal of analyzing songs from a Christian perspective is not merely an academic exercise that challenges critical thought, but to move us to action. Peter claimed that Christians were saved so "that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."{8} Ultimately we should be encouraged to talk, relate, empathize, and love others. Through songs we can help others to "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."{9}

Notes

1. Another article that was particularly helpful was from the eMedExpert. However, if you just search "benefits to music" (or the like) and you will be overwhelmed by how many articles develop all the unique benefits to music.
2. The video includes sexual content, brief drug use, and a violent image at the end.
3. I should note however, that the song seems to hold the message of mere extinction at death. As Christians, we believe that souls are immortal which means even the non-believer persists. For those outside of Christ, they will experience death as eternal wrath and destruction. See John 3:36, Roman 6:23, Matthew 25:46, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, and Revelation 21:8.
4. To address briefly the pushback on the idea that we can or should "redeem culture": The confusion rests in the nuanced

difference in meaning of the word "redeemed." I use the word "redeemed" in this context to mean something closer to transformed by truth, not redeemed in the sense God has redeemed believers. Yes, Scriptures never call us to "redeem culture" but God does call us to let the light of truth shine. By engaging culture with the truth of Scriptures, Christians can make aspects of culture honoring to God, thus in that sense redeeming them. For example, pornography falls under the category of "unredeemable," meaning that there is no way someone could make pornography honoring to God. However, with different aspects of culture this task is possible and I think should be encouraged.

5. See Hebrews 5:14.

6. RAIN cited [The Kaiser Family Foundation study](#) for these statistics. The report also broke down how the kids and teens were listening to the music, finding that on average per day they listen to 41 minutes of music on their IPod and similar devices, 32 minutes of music on computers (iTunes and Internet radio), and 32 minutes listening to the radio.

7. See Ephesians 6:17-20 and 2 Corinthians 10:1-6.

8. 1 Peter 2:9.

9. Colossians 2:8