Globalization and the Internet – A Christian Considers the Impact

Kerby Anderson looks at the growth and role of the Internet through a Christian worldview perspective. It is important that we continue to understand its capabilities and its dangers.

Introduction

More than one billion people use the Internet and benefit from the vast amount of information that is available to anyone who connects. But any assessment of the Internet will show that it has provided both surprising virtues and unavoidable vices.

Contrary to the oft-repeated joke, Al Gore did not invent the Internet. It was the creation of the Department of Defense that built it in case of a nuclear attack, but its primary use has been during peace. The Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency created a primitive version of the Internet known as ARPAnet. It allowed researchers at various universities to collaborate on projects and conduct research without having to be in the same place.

The first area network was operational in the 1980s, and the Internet gained great popularity in the 1990s because of the availability of web browsers. Today, due to web browsers and search engines, Internet users in every country in the world have access to vast amounts of online information.

The Internet has certainly changed our lives. Thomas Friedman, in his book *The World is Flat*, talks about some of these changes.{1} For example, we used to go to the post office to send mail; now most of us also send digitized mail over the Internet known as e-mail. We used to go to bookstores to

browse and buy books; now we also browse digitally. We used to buy a CD to listen to music; now many of us obtain our digitized music off the Internet and download it to an MP3 player.

Friedman also talks about how the Internet has been the great equalizer. A good example of that is Google. Whether you are a university professor with a high speed Internet connection or a poor kid in Asia with access to an Internet café, you have the same basic access to research information. The Internet puts an enormous amount of information at our fingertips. Essentially, all of the information on the Internet is available to anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

The Internet (and the accompanying digital tools developed to use it) has even changed our language. In the past, if you left a message asking when your friend was going to arrive at the airport, usually you would receive a complete sentence. Today the message would be something like: AA 635 @ 7:42 PM DFW. Tell a joke in a chat room, and you will receive responses like LOL ("laughing out loud") or ROFL ("rolling on the floor laughing"). As people leave the chat room, they may type BBL ("be back later"). Such abbreviations and computer language are a relatively new phenomenon and were spawned by the growth of the Internet.

I want to take a look at some of the challenges of the Internet as well as the attempt by government to control aspects of it. While the Internet has certainly provided information to anyone, anywhere, at any time, there are still limits to what the Internet can do in the global world.

The Challenge of the Internet

The Internet has provided an opportunity to build a global information infrastructure that would link together the world's telecommunications and computer networks. But

futurists and governmental leaders also believed that this interconnectedness would also bring friendship and cooperation, and that goal seems elusive.

In a speech given over a decade ago, Vice-President Al Gore said, “Let us build a global community in which the people of neighboring countries view each other not as potential enemies, but as potential partners, as members of the same family in the vast, increasingly interconnected human family.”{2}

Maybe peace and harmony are just over the horizon because of the Internet, but I have my doubts. The information superhighway certainly has connected the world together into one large global network, but highways don’t bring peace. Highways connected the various countries in Europe for centuries, yet war was common and peace was not. An information superhighway connects us with countries all over the world, but global cooperation hasn’t been the result, at least not yet.

The information superhighway also has some dark back alleys. At the top of the list is pornography. The Internet has made the distribution of pornography much easier. It used to be that someone wanting to view this material had to leave their home and go to the other side of town. The Internet has become the ultimate brown wrapper. Hard core images that used to be difficult to obtain are now only a mouse click away.

Children see pornography at a much younger age than just a decade ago. The average age of first Internet exposure to pornography is eleven years old.{3} Sometimes this exposure is intentional, usually it is accidental. Schools, libraries, and homes using filters often are one step behind those trying to expose more and more people to pornography.

But the influence of the Internet on pornography is only one part of a larger story. In my writing on personal and social

ethics, I have found that the Internet has made existing social problems worse. When I wrote my book *Moral Dilemmas* back in 1998, I dealt with such problems as drugs, gambling, and pornography. Seven years later when I was writing my new book, *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*, I noticed that every moral issue I discussed was made worse by the Internet. Now my chapter on pornography had a section on cyberporn. My chapter on gambling had a section dealing with online gambling. My chapter on adultery also dealt with online affairs.

Internet Regulation

All of these concerns lead to the obvious question: Who will regulate the Internet? In the early day of the Internet, proponents saw it as the cyber-frontier that would be self-regulating. The Internet was to liberate us forever from government, borders, and even our physical selves. One writer said we should "look without illusion upon the present possibilities for building, in the on-line spaces of this world, societies more decent and free than those mapped onto dirt and concrete and capital."{4}

And for a time, the self-government of the Internet worked fairly well. Internet pioneers were even successful in fighting off the Communications Decency Act which punished the transmission of "indecent" sexual communications or images on the Internet.{5} But soon national governments began to exercise their authority.

Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu, in their book, *Who Controls the Internet?*, describe the various ways foreign governments have exercised their authority.{6}

- France requires Yahoo to block Internet surfers from France so they cannot purchase Nazi memorabilia.{7}
- The People's Republic of China requires Yahoo to filter materials that might be harmful or threatening to Party

rule. Yahoo is essentially an Internet censor for the Communist party.{8}

• The Chinese version of Google is much slower than the American version because the company cooperates with the Chinese government by blocking search words the Party finds offensive (words like Tibet or democracy).

Even more disturbing is the revelation that Yahoo provided information to the Chinese government that led to the imprisonment of Chinese journalists and pro-democracy leaders. Reporters Without Borders found that Yahoo has been implicated in the cases of most of the people they were defending.{9}

Columnist Clarence Page points out that "Microsoft cooperates in censoring or deleting blogs that offend the Chinese government's sensibilities. Cisco provides the hardware that gives China the best Internet-blocking and user-tracking technology on the planet."{10}

All of this censorship and cooperation with foreign governments is disturbing, but it also underscores an important point. For years, proponents of the Internet have argued that we can't (or shouldn't) block Internet pornography or that we can't regulate what pedophiles do on the Internet. These recent revelations about Yahoo, Google, and Microsoft show that they can and do block information.

The book *Who Controls the Internet?* argues that the last decade has led to the quiet rediscovery of the functions and justification for territorial government. The Internet has not replaced the legitimate structure of government with a self-regulated cyber-frontier. The Internet may change the way some of these territorial states govern, but it will not diminish their important role in regulating free societies.

Government and Intermediaries

Governments have been able to exercise control over the Internet in various ways. This should not be too surprising. The book *Who Controls the Internet?* points out that while some stores in New York's Chinatown sell counterfeit Gucci bags and Rolex watches, you don't find these same products in local stores. That is because the "most important targets of the laws against counterfeits—trademark laws—are local retailers."{11}

The U.S. government might not be able to go after manufacturers in China or Thailand that produce these counterfeits, but they certainly can go after retail stores. That's why you won't find these counterfeit goods in a Wal-Mart store. And while it is true that by controlling Wal-Mart or Sears doesn't eliminate counterfeit goods, government still can adequately control the flow of these goods by focusing on these intermediaries.

Governments often control behavior through intermediaries. "Pharmacists and doctors are made into gatekeepers charged with preventing certain forms of drug abuse. Bartenders are responsible for preventing their customers from driving drunk."{12}

As the Internet has grown, there has also been an increase in new intermediaries. These would include Internet Service Providers (ISPs), search engines, browsers, etc. In a sense, the Internet has made the network itself the intermediary. And this has made it possible for governments to exert their control over the Internet. "Sometimes the government-controlled intermediary is Wal-Mart preventing consumer access to counterfeit products, sometimes it is the bartender enforcing drinking age laws, and sometimes it is an ISP blocking access to illegal information."{13}

More than a decade ago, the German government raided the

Bavarian offices of Compuserve because they failed to prevent the distribution of child pornography even though it originated outside of Germany.{14} In 2001, the British government threatened certain sites with criminal prosecution for distributing illegal adoption sites. The British ISPs agreed to block the sites so that British citizens could not access them.{15}

Internet Service Providers, therefore, are the obvious target for governmental control. In a sense, they are the most important gatekeepers to the Internet.{16}

Governmental control over the Internet is not perfect nor is it complete. But the control over intermediaries has allowed territorial governments to exercise much great control and regulation of the Internet than many of the pioneers of cyberspace would have imagined.

Globalization and Government

In previous articles we have addressed the issue of globalization and have recognized that technology (including the Internet) has made it much easier to move information around the world. There is no doubt that the Internet has accelerated the speed of transmission and thus made the world smaller. It is much easier for people around the world to access information and share it with others in this global information infrastructure.

Those who address the issue of globalization also believe that it diminishes the relevance of borders, territorial governments, and geography. Thomas Friedman believes that the Internet and other technologies are flattening the world "without regard to geography, distance, or, in the near future, even language."{17}

In one sense, this is true. The lower costs of moving information and the sheer amount of information exchanged on

the Internet have made it more difficult for governments to suppress information they do not like. The explosive growth of blogs and web pages have provided a necessary outlet for opinion and information.

It is also true that there has been some self-governing behavior on the Internet. Friedman, for example, describes eBay as a "self-governing nation-state—the V.R.e., the Virtual Republic of eBay." The CEO of eBay even says, "People will say that eBay restored my faith in humanity—contrary to a world where people are cheating and don't give people the benefit of the doubt."{18}

But it also true that territorial governments work with eBay to arrest and prosecute those who are cheaters or who use the website in illegal ways. And it also relies on a banking system and the potential of governmental prosecution of fraud.

We have also seen in this article that governments have also been able to exert their influence and authority over the Internet. They have been able to use the political process to alter or block information coming into their country and have been able to shape the Internet in ways that the early pioneers of the Internet did not foresee.

Goldsmith and Wu believe that those talking about the force of globalization often naively believe that countries will be powerless in the face of globalization and the Internet. "When globalization enthusiasts miss these points, it is usually because they are in the grips of a strange technological determinism that views the Internet as an unstoppable juggernaut that will overrun the old and outdated determinants of human organization."{19}

There is still a legitimate function for government (Romans 13:1-7) even in this new world of cyberspace. Contrary to the perceived assumption that the Internet will shape governments and move us quickly toward globalization, there is good

evidence to suggest that governments will in many ways shape the Internet.

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Gambling – Is It Good for Society? A Christian Perspective

Kerby Anderson looks at the harmful effects of both legal and illegal gambling. He considers the negative impacts on society, government policy, and the economy when gambling is prevalent in a culture. From a Christian worldview perspective, he considers how gambling introduces problems such as covetousness, poor work ethics, and destroyed family units.

This article is also available in Spanish.

Gambling used to be what a few unscrupulous people did with the aid of organized crime. But gambling fever now seems to affect nearly everyone as more and more states are legalizing various forms of it.

Thirty years ago, gambling was a relatively rare phenomenon with casinos operating only in the distant Nevada desert and a

few states with lotteries or pari-mutuel betting. Today, legalized gambling is permitted in forty-seven states and the District of Columbia. More Americans are gambling than ever before, and they are also gambling more money.{1}

The momentum seems to be on the side of those who want legalized gambling as a way to supplement state revenues. But these states and their citizens often ignore the costs that are associated with legalized gambling.

Types of Gambling

Gambling comes in many forms. Perhaps the most popular type of gambling is state-sponsored lotteries. This would include the weekly lottery games, as well as the daily lottery numbers and scratch-off ticket games.

A second type of gambling would be casinos. Gambling in this venue would include jackpot slot machines, video card game machines, various casino card games such as poker and blackjack, and other casino games such as roulette.

Sports betting is a third type of gambling. Someone can bet on the outcome of a sporting event or a particular part of a sporting event. Usually, bets are placed on a bookmaker’s odds so that the actual bet is against the point spread. Sports betting would also include illegal office pools and even weekend golfers who bet dollars or cokes for each hole.

Pari-mutuel betting (horse racing, dog racing, and jai alai) is another form of sports gambling. Horse racing is legal in 43 states with over 150 racetracks in the United States.

Convenience gambling (also called retail gambling) includes stand-alone slot machines, video poker, video keno, and other games. These are usually found in bars, truck stops, and convenience stores.

Online gambling represents a new frontier in the spread of

gambling. The availability and accessibility of Internet gambling appears to have greatly increased the number of people gambling on a regular basis.

Bad Social Policy

Legalized gambling is bad social policy. At a time when Gamblers Anonymous estimates that there are at least 12 million compulsive gamblers, it does not make a lot of sense to have the state promoting gambling. State sponsorship of gambling makes it harder, not easier, for the compulsive gambler to reform. Since about 96 percent of those gamblers began gambling before the age of fourteen,{2} we should be especially concerned about the message such a policy sends to young people.

The economic costs that gamblers themselves incur are significant. The average compulsive gambler has debts exceeding $80,000.{3} And this figure pales in comparison with other social costs that surface because of family neglect, embezzlement, theft, and involvement in organized crime. Compulsive gamblers affect the lives of family, friends, and business associates. Some of the consequences of gambling are marital disharmony, divorce, child abuse, substance abuse, and suicide attempts.

Proponents argue that state lotteries are an effective way to raise taxes painlessly. But the evidence shows that legalized gambling often hurts those who are poor and disadvantaged. A national task force on gambling found that those in the lowest income bracket lost more than three times as much money to gambling (as a percentage of income) as those at the wealthiest end of the spectrum.{4} One New York lottery agent reports that “seventy percent of those who buy my tickets are poor, black, or Hispanic.”{5} And a National Bureau of Economic Research “shows that the poor bet a much larger share of their income.”{6} The study also found that “the less

education a person has, the more likely he is to play the lottery."{7}

A major study on the effect of the California lottery came to the same conclusions. The Field Institute's California poll found that 18 percent of the state's adults bought 71 percent of the tickets. These heavy lottery players (who bought more than twenty tickets in the contest's first forty-five days) are "more likely than others to be black, poorer and less educated than the average Californian."{8}

Studies also indicate that gambling increases when economic times are uncertain and people are concerned about their future. Joseph Dunn, director of the National Council on Compulsive Gambling, says, "People who are worried about the factory closing take a chance on making it big. Once they win anything, they're hooked."{9}

The social impact of gambling is often hidden from the citizens who decide to legalize gambling. But later these costs show up in the shattered lives of individuals and their families. One study in *The Journal of Social Issues* found that as gambling increases, there is an increase in "(a) proportion of divorce and separation; (b) disagreement about money matters with one's spouse; (c) lack of understanding between marital partners; and (d) more reported problems among children of gamblers."{10}

Psychologist Julian Taber warns, "No one knows the social costs of gambling or how many players will become addicted . . . the states are experimenting with the minds of the people on a massive scale."{11} Families are torn apart by strife, divorce, and bankruptcy. Boydon Cole and Sidney Margolius in their book, *When You Gamble—You Risk More Than Your Money*, conclude, "There is no doubt of the destructive effect of gambling on the family life. The corrosive effects of gambling attack both the white-collar and blue-collar families with equal vigor."{12}

The impact on crime is also significant. The crime rate in gambling communities is nearly double the national average.{13} Researchers calculate that for every dollar the state received in gambling revenues, it costs the state at least three dollars in increased social costs (for criminal justice and social welfare).{14}

Bad Governmental Policy

Legalized gambling is also bad governmental policy. Government should promote public virtue, not seduce its citizens to gamble in state-sponsored vice. Government is supposed to be servant of God according to Romans 13, but its moral stance is compromised when it enters into a gambling enterprise.

Citizens would be outraged if their state government began enticing its citizens to engage in potentially destructive behavior (such as taking drugs). But those same citizens see no contradiction when government legalizes and even promotes gambling. Instead of being a positive moral force in society, government contributes to the corruption of society.

Ross Wilhelm, professor of business economics at the University of Michigan, says,

> *State lotteries and gambling games are essentially a "rip-off" and widespread legalization of gambling is one of the worst changes in public policy to have occurred in recent years. . . . The viciousness of the state-run games is compounded beyond belief by the fact that state governments actively advertise and promote the games and winners.{15}*

The corrosive effect legalized gambling has on government itself is also a cause for concern. As one editorial in *New York Times* noted, "Gambling is a business so rich, so fast, so powerful and perhaps inevitably so unsavory that it cannot help but undermine government."{16}

Legal and Illegal Gambling

One of the standard clichés used by proponents of legalized gambling is that by instituting legal gambling, illegal gambling will be driven out. This argument makes a number of faulty assumptions. First, it assumes that people are going to gamble anyway; and so the state might as well get a piece of the action. Second, it assumes that given the choice, people would rather gamble in a state-sponsored program because it will be regulated. The state will make sure that the program is fair and that each participant has an equal chance of winning. Third, it assumes that if the state enters the gambling arena, it will drive out illegal gambling because it will be a more efficient competitor for gamblers' dollars.

While the arguments seem sound, they are not. Although some people do gamble illegally, most citizens do not. Legalized gambling entices people to gamble who normally would not gamble at all. Duke University researchers have found that the lottery is a "powerful recruiting device" because one-fourth of those who otherwise would not gamble at all do bet on lotteries.{17}

Second, legal gambling does not drive out illegal gambling. If anything, just the opposite is true. As legalized gambling comes into a state, it provides additional momentum for illegal gambling. The Organized Crime Section of the Department of Justice found that "the rate of illegal gambling in those states which have some legalized form of gambling was three times as high as those states where there was not a legalized form of gambling."{18} And one national review found that

> *In states with different numbers of games, participation rates increase steadily and sharply as the number of legal types of gambling increases. Social betting more than doubles from 35 percent in states with no legal games to 72 percent in states with three legal types; the illegal gambling rate*

> *more than doubles from nine percent to 22 percent; and commercial gambling increases by 43 percent, from 24 to 67 percent.{19}*

Legalized gambling in various states has been a stimulator of illegal gambling, not a competitor to it.

The reasons for the growth of illegal gambling in areas where legalized gambling exists are simple. First, organized crime syndicates often use the free publicity of state lotteries and pari-mutuel betting to run their own numbers games. The state actually saves them money by providing publicity for events involving gambling. Second, many gamblers would rather bet illegally than legally. When they work with a bookie, they can bet on credit and do not have to report their winnings to the government, two things they cannot do if they bet on state-sponsored games. This explains why illegal gambling thrives in states with legalized gambling.

Another important issue is the corrupting influence legalized gambling can have on society. First, legalized gambling can have a very corrupting influence on state government. In the last few years there have been numerous news reports of corruption and fraud in state lotteries. Second, there is the corrupting influence on the citizens themselves. Gambling breeds greed. Research has shown that the number of compulsive gamblers increases between 100 and 550 percent when legalized gambling is brought into an area.{20} Every day, otherwise sane people bet large amounts of money in state lotteries because they hope they will win the jackpot. Moreover, states and various gambling establishments produce glitzy ads that appeal to people’s greed in order to entice them to risk even more than they can afford.

Government should be promoting positive social values such as thrift and integrity rather than negative ones such as greed and avarice. They should be promoting the public welfare

rather than seducing citizens to engage in state-sponsored vice.

Economic Costs

Legalized forms of gambling (state lotteries, pari-mutuel betting, and casinos) are often promoted as good economic policy. Proponents say they are painless ways of increasing billions of dollars in state revenue. But there is another economic side to legalized gambling.

First, the gross income statistics for legalized gambling are much higher than the net income. State lotteries are one example. Although about half the states have lotteries and the figures vary from state to state, we can work with some average figures. Generally, the cost of management, advertising, and promotion is approximately sixty cents of each dollar. In other words, for every dollar raised in a lottery, only forty cents goes to the state budget. By contrast, direct taxation of the citizens costs only about one cent on the dollar, so that for every dollar raised by taxes, ninety-nine cents goes to the state.

Second, gambling adversely affects a state economy. Legalized gambling depresses businesses because it diverts money that could have been spent in the capital economy into gambling that does not stimulate the economy. Boarded-up businesses surrounding casinos are a visible reminder of this, but the effect on the entire economy is even more devastating than may be at first apparent. Money that could be invested, loaned, and recycled through the economy is instead risked in a legalized gambling scheme.

Legalized gambling siphons off a lot of money from the economy. More money is wagered on gambling than is spent on elementary and secondary education ($286 billion versus $213 billion in 1990).{21} Historian John Ezel concludes in his

book, *Fortune's Merry Wheel*, "If history teaches us anything, a study of over 1,300 legal lotteries held in the United States proves . . . they cost more than they brought in if their total impact on society is reckoned."{22}

Biblical Perspective

Even though the Bible does not directly address gambling, a number of principles can be derived from Scripture. First, the Bible emphasizes a number of truths that conflict with gambling. The Bible, for example, emphasizes the sovereignty of God (Matt. 10:29–30). Gambling, however, is based on chance. The Bible admonishes people to work creatively and for the benefit of others (Eph. 4:28), while gambling fosters a something-for-nothing attitude. The Bible condemns materialism (Matt. 6:24–25) while gambling promotes it.

Gambling breeds a form of covetousness, whereas the tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17) admonishes people not to covet. Coveting, greed, and selfishness are the base emotions that entice individuals to gamble. Christians should be concerned about gambling if for no other reason than the effect it has on the "weaker brother" and how it will affect the compulsive gambler. State-sponsored gambling makes it more difficult for compulsive gamblers to reform. Legalized gambling becomes an institutionalized form of greed.

Second, gambling destroys the work ethic. Two key biblical passages deal with the work ethic. In Colossians 3:23–24 the apostle Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." And in 2 Thessalonians 3:7,10, he stated, "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. . . . For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

The Twentieth Century Fund research group commented, “Gambling’s get-rich-quick appeal appears to mock capitalism’s core values: disciplined work habits, thrift, prudence, adherence to routine, and the relationship between effort and reward.”{23} These core values of the work ethic are all part of the free enterprise system and are part of the Christian life. Gambling corrupts these values, and replaces them with greed and selfishness. Rather than depending on hard work, gamblers depend on luck and chance.

Third, gambling destroys families. Gambling is a major cause of family neglect. Many of the social costs associated with gambling come from a get-rich-quick mindset. As people get caught up in a gambling frenzy, they begin to neglect their families. Money spent on lottery tickets or at racetracks is frequently not risk capital but is income that should be spent on family needs. According to 1 Timothy 5:8, a person who refuses to care for his family is worse than an unbeliever. Parents must provide for their children (2 Cor. 12:14) and eat the bread of their labors (2 Thess. 3:12). When gambling is legalized, it causes people to neglect their God-mandated responsibility to care for their families, and many of those families then often end up on welfare.

Fourth, gambling is a form of state-sponsored greed. Romans 13:4 teaches that government is to be a servant of God, providing order in society and promoting public virtue. Legalized gambling undercuts government’s role and subverts the moral fabric of society through greed and selfishness promoted by a state-sponsored vice.

Since gambling undermines the moral foundations of society and invites corruption in government, Christians must stand against attempts to legalize gambling.

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Emerging Adults Part 2: Distinctly Different Faiths – Evangelical Views Declining

National Study of Youth and Religion

The National Study of Youth and Religion (Wave 3) contains the detailed data from which Christian Smith presented a summary of the results in his book, *Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. My prior article, "Emerging Adults and the Future of Faith in America," summarized some of the important results reported in his book. One of his results showed that the number of young adults who identify themselves as not religious or as a religious liberal has grown from one in three young adults in 1976 to almost two out of three young adults in 2008. This huge difference in beliefs reflects that the dominant culture has changed from supporting Christian beliefs to now being basically counter to

them. Today's emerging adults are immersed in a postmodern culture that "stressed difference over unity, relativity over universals, subjective experience over rational authorities, feeling over reason."{1}

This culture has produced a set of young Americans who may still claim to be associated with Protestant or Catholic beliefs but in reality have accepted the view that God and Christ are potentially helpful upon death, but are of little value until then. As these young adults moved from teenagers into emerging adults, Smith found that over four out of ten of them became less religious over a five year span. However, he did find that about one in three would identify themselves as evangelical and probably continue to identify themselves that way for the foreseeable future.

However, to look at the data more closely, we can access this study of 18- to 23-year-olds online at the Association of Religious Data Archives.{2} Using this data, we can look at the association between questions in ways that we could not see in Christian Smith's book. As we studied this data, we found an even bleaker view of the future of the evangelical church than that presented by his book.

Along with general demographic information, the questions asked by the survey can be generally divided into four segments: Religious Beliefs, Religious Practices, Cultural Beliefs, and Cultural Practices. When we analyze the data in these four segments, we find a significant disconnect between each of these four segments. One might expect that we would find a small but significant subset that shared an *evangelical* belief and practice *and* that applied those beliefs consistently to their *cultural* beliefs and practices. Instead, what we find is that of 881 evangelicals, a grand total of zero (that is zilch, nada, none) share a common set of beliefs across all four categories. In other words, there is no set of common beliefs amongst these 18- to 23-year-olds who belong to an evangelical church.

It is worth noting here that the 881 evangelicals discussed here are down from the 1064 evangelicals in the study of this same group as teenagers. The 881 includes 728 who were among the 1064 plus 155 new evangelicals. The new evangelicals were about one-third from mainline protestant, one-third from catholic, and one-third from not religious or non-Christian religions. Of the 336 who left evangelical Christianity about half went to other Christian religions and the other half went to nonreligious or indeterminate religious beliefs. Almost undoubtedly, if we were to include these original evangelicals in our evangelical statistics we would get even worse data. We should also note here that this group was 18 to 23 in 2008 so now they are 20 to 25. However, we will refer to them as 18 to 23 in this article.

Religious Beliefs

Let us begin by first considering the data on religious beliefs. By itself, this is very interesting. First, we find that four out of five of those associated with an evangelical church believe in God as a personal being and Jesus as His Son who was raised from the dead. Unfortunately, it also means we are starting with one-fifth of those still associated with an evangelical church who either don’t believe in God or in Jesus as His Son. It is interesting to note that one-third of mainline Protestants and nearly half of Catholics have this same attitude of unbelief. However, the number of evangelicals who believe in God and Christ is still a significant number and is 28% of the total population of 18- to 23-year-olds in America. When we add in the mainline and Catholic believers, we find approximately half of all young adults have a correct view of God and Jesus at this very basic level. Although half is not what we would like, it is probably more than we would expect to find with active Christians.

But when we add in the concepts that only people whose sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ go to heaven and

that there is only one true religion, the number of evangelicals in this age group who agree drops to 38%. Thus, only one in three ascribe to the most basic beliefs of evangelical Christianity. When we add in mainline Protestants and Catholics, the percentage of young Americans who believe in salvation only through Jesus Christ drops to less than one in five.

When one adds in the concepts that faith is important, that demons are real beings, and that there are some actions that are always right or wrong, and combine those with attending a worship service at least two times a month, the number among evangelicals drops to less than one in five. That is, four out of five young evangelicals do not agree with these basic concepts. For mainline Protestants and Catholics, the percentages are 9% and 2%, indicating that almost none of them have a basic set of Christian beliefs. Combining these together shows that only 7% of all young adults hold to these basic beliefs.

Clearly, we have a major disconnect of belief for this age group, even among those who are associated with an evangelical church. As we probe beyond God and Jesus, we find that most of them do not have a set of beliefs consistent with the basic truths of the Bible.

In his book, Smith points out that for emerging adults "evidence and proof trump blind faith."{3} By this he means that most emerging adults view scientific views as based on evidence and truth while religious beliefs are simply blind faith. As one young person put it, "I mean there is proven fact and then there is what's written in the Bible—and they don't match up."{4} Or as another young person put it, "You have to take the Bible as symbolic sometimes. If you take it as literal there's definitely a problem. There's scientific proof [that contradicts it]. So you have to take it piece by piece and choose what you want to believe."{5}

The interesting result of this belief is that it does not primarily apply to the extremely small segment of the Bible which some might consider at odds with scientific theories (e.g., creation of the universe). Rather, they apply it to things like teachings on sexuality, the uniqueness of Jesus, and the beginning of life. So they use the excuse of science to modify any beliefs taught by the Bible that are inconsistent with current cultural beliefs.

Religious Practices

Perhaps we have now found the truly religious 18- to 23-year-olds among the one-out-of-four evangelicals that express a set of core religious beliefs. Even if we add another seven questions on belief in things like life after death, heaven, judgment day, and miracles, we still have almost 15% of evangelical young adults who answer correctly. However, if this 15% is the core group of believers, then their religious behaviors will match their beliefs.

If this group of young adults is the core group, we would expect them to pray on a daily basis and to read the Bible at least once per week. When asked those questions, less than one in ten evangelical emerging adults hold the religious beliefs and engage in the religious practices. In fact, nearly half of those with the core beliefs do not read their Bibles or pray. When we add on questions about whether they are interested in learning more about their faith and have shared their faith with someone else, the number drops to less than one in twenty of the evangelical young adults. So, over 95 out of 100 young people affiliated with evangelical churches do not believe and practice their belief. Sadly, if we look at those who do these things and attend Sunday School or some weekday group and have read a devotional book in the last year, the number drops to 3% of evangelicals.

This data clearly shows that, for 18- to 23-year-old evangelicals, beyond a belief in God and Jesus there is no

common set of beliefs and practices. Virtually every evangelical young adult will depart from the faith on one or more basic core beliefs and practices. It appears that there is *no common core group* of dedicated faithful believers among this age group.

As Christian Smith points out, emerging adults view religious ideas as a cafeteria line where you take the ones you like and leave the rest behind. As he says, "People should take and use what is helpful in it, . . . and they can leave the rest. . . . At least some parts of religions are 'outdated.' Emerging adults are the authorities for themselves on what in religion is good or useful or relevant for them."{6} As one of the emerging adults put it, "Instead of fighting various religions, I just kinda combined religious ideas that were similar or sounded good."{7} So, since the emerging adult is the authority on what religious beliefs to accept rather than the Scriptures, their culture determines their religious beliefs rather than the other way around.

Cultural Beliefs

The data from this survey indicates that there is not a set of doctrinally pure religious believers in the 18 to 23 age range. But perhaps they are clearer on cultural beliefs that should be informed by their faith. To make the analysis easier we will consider two different sets of beliefs. The first set looks at their beliefs about creation, waiting on sex until marriage, and respect for religion in America. The second set considers living meaningful but not guilty lives, caring about the poor, and being against unmarried sex and divorce.

When asked about the creation of the world, approximately half of the evangelical emerging adults said that God created the world without using evolution over a long period of time to create new species. Only one in four young evangelicals believe they should wait to have sex and don't need to try out sex with their partner before they get married. Interestingly,

only 16% of mainline Protestants and less than one in ten Catholic young adults believe the same way. As Smith points out, this belief is odd given the numerous studies which show that couples who do not live together before marriage have a significantly greater chance of success than those who do. Forty-eight percent of evangelicals have respect for organized religion in this country and believe it is ok for religious people to try to convert other people to their faith. However when we combine these three beliefs together, i.e. about creation, sex, and evangelism, we find that only one in ten evangelicals, one in twenty mainline Protestants, and only one in a hundred Catholics agree with all three of these areas. Then when we look to see how many have the religious beliefs and practices *and* believe these cultural topics, we find that only 8 evangelicals (< 1%) and no mainline Protestants or Catholics qualify. Thus, we have only 8 people out of over 2500 who have a consistent set of evangelical religious beliefs, religious practices, and cultural beliefs.

Of course that is only a small subset of the cultural beliefs that should be impacted by our religious beliefs. Let’s look at few more. Let’s consider those who have not felt guilty about things in their life over the last year, who believe their life is meaningful and that they can change important things in their life as needed. We find that approximately one-third of each of the major groups agree with these statements. If we look at how many don’t need to buy more and who care about the needs of the poor, we find that about one in four of all young adults agree with these objectives. However, when we combine these two areas, we find that only about one in ten young adults agree. Now add in the idea that unmarried sex and divorce are not okay, a statement with which 28% of evangelicals and 14% of all emerging adults agree. When we combine all three of these belief areas, we discover that only 2% of evangelicals agree with all three areas. If we combine these areas with religious beliefs and practices, we find that only four evangelicals (or less than one in two

hundred) agreed.

When we combine both sets of cultural beliefs with the religious beliefs and practices, we find that there is one emerging adult out of over 2500 who agrees with those beliefs.

In both sets of data above, we considered questions dealing with sexual activity. In the first, we saw that the idea of waiting to have sex until marriage was rejected by three out of four of the evangelical, emerging adults. In the second set of data, we saw that a similar number believe that unmarried sex and divorce are okay. These beliefs are clearly counter to the teaching of Christianity, but they are dominant beliefs among evangelical, emerging adults. As Christian Smith put it, "[M]ost emerging adults reduce a certain cognitive dissonance they feel—arising from the conflict of religious teachings against partying and sex before marriage versus their wanting to engage in those behaviors—by mentally discounting the religious teachings and socially distancing themselves from the source of those teachings." In other words, they discount any religious teachings that would discourage them from doing what the culture promotes as acceptable, contrasted with the Bible which says, "Love not the world neither the things of the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, are not of the Father but are of the world."{8}

Cultural Practices

Perhaps the disturbing cultural beliefs are belied by the cultural practices. Let's look at some of the relevant cultural practices addressed in the National Study on Youth and Religion. Let's begin with the number of people who have not smoked pot or engaged in binge drinking in the two weeks before the survey. Among evangelical, emerging adults over half (54%) have not engaged in these two activities. Of course this also means that almost half of them have engaged in one of both of these activities. Amongst Catholic emerging adults,

two out of three have engaged in these behaviors.

How many have not engaged in viewing X-rated videos in the last year or unmarried sex (including oral sex)? This number begins at approximately one third of evangelicals not engaging in unmarried sex but drops to only one fifth when X-rated videos are added. So, 4 out of 5 evangelical, emerging adults are engaged in sexual sin, most of them on a regular basis.

On another venue of behavior, how many emerging adults have given money for charitable purposes, volunteered, and don't admire people based on how much money they have? We find that approximately 15% of evangelicals, mainline Protestants, and Catholics have done so. So, over 8 out of 10 have not given of themselves to help others.

Certainly Christians are called to "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess. 5:18) and to "set their minds on heavenly things" (Col. 3:2). So let's consider those who are grateful for the present and sometimes think about the future. This includes about half of all emerging adults. Thus, over half of emerging adults seldom give thanks and rarely think about the future.

Now let's combine these thoughts and actions together and we find that only about 2% of all emerging adults hold to a biblical set of practices. So even though over half hold to a belief in abstaining from drugs and binge drinking, one-fifth affirm abstaining from illicit sexual activity, half hold to an attitude of gratitude for the present and the future, and 15% have given in some way of their time or money, when you combine them together only 2% have done all four items.

If we combine the four categories, Religious Beliefs, Religious Practices, Cultural Beliefs, and Cultural Practices, we find that no one holds to the set of beliefs which are most consistent with Scripture.

Conclusions

There are many conclusions that could be drawn from the data above. Two of the most important conclusions are as follows. First, the basic religious beliefs of emerging adults largely depart from the Bible, and when you add in religious practices and cultural beliefs and practices we find that no one maintains a distinctly biblical worldview. Second, there does not appear to be uniformity in the beliefs of emerging adults. Rather than having a subset of evangelicals, say 15%, holding to a distinctly biblical worldview, you end up with none because they trip up in different areas.

As Christian Smith pointed out, "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."{9} This is because religious teachings are not the authority on this world. Rather, it is what you choose to believe that is your authority for the "truth" in your life. As one emerging adult put it, "I think that what you believe depends on you. I don't think I could say that Hinduism is wrong or Catholicism is wrong . . . I think it just depends on what you believe."{10} This concept results in a set of evangelical, emerging adults who don't hold to a set of common beliefs about God, Jesus, religion, and cultural practices, but instead hold to a wide variety of beliefs which are counter to the Bible. We must not say because they go to church that they believe the truth of the Bible. This survey shows that almost certainly they do not.

At Probe, we are committed to making a difference in this emerging generation. Over the next decade, we are committed to freeing the minds of 50 million Christians and converting them into confident ambassadors for Christ. If we and others like us are not successful, the children of these emerging adults may have no Christian example to follow.

Notes

1. Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 101.

2. www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/NSYRW3.asp, "The National Study of Youth and Religion, www.youthandreligion.org, whose data were used by permission here, was generously funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., under the direction of Christian Smith, of the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame.

3. Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 158.

4. Ibid., 158.

5. Ibid., 158.

6. Ibid., 157.

7. Ibid., 157.

8. 1 John 2:15-16 (NASU)

9. Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 155.

10. Ibid p. 156

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See Also:

Emerging Adults and the Future of Faith in America
Emerging Adults A Closer Look
The Importance of Parents in the Faith of Emerging Adults
Cultural Captives – a book on the faith of emerging adults

Welcome to the Machine: The Transhumanist God

Authorized Dreams Only Please!

Have you ever wondered if scientists could build a giant machine to solve all the world's problems? Or better yet, why not just become machines and get rid of people all together? Imagine it: no more worries, sickness, war, drug addiction, or poverty. We can solve the world's problems by simply getting rid of people. This sounds fantastic but is actually the goal of the new religion of Transhumanism, which wants to replace the human race with machines.

The wisest man once said there is nothing new under the sun (Ecc. 1:9). Despite all our modern innovation and progress, the age-old desire of mankind to become God remains the same. This new religion is steadily gaining ground, perfectly fit for our hyper technological twenty-first century. Transhumanism's beliefs are simple, but their implications will be revolutionary. They want to transcend our mortal bodies and create a super intelligent godlike human and machine hybrid, called a cyborg, or something like the Borg from *Star Trek*. This super machine will solve all our material and spiritual problems by curing disease, extending life expectancy indefinitely, and providing for a meaningful existence through creating a continual sense of euphoria in the brain. There will be no limits to what this super man/machine will be able to do. *All we need to do* is surrender our wills to achieve universal peace and happiness.{1}

Pink Floyd used to sing, "Welcome to the machine. What did you dream? It's alright we told you what to dream."{2} In the brave new world ruled by the cyborg, dreams will all be programmed and peaceful so as not to upset the inhabitants of

utopia. With this hybrid technology, someone will make our decisions for us.

All technology expresses its creator's values and represents a certain view of the world, and how things should be. It is anything but value-free. The question for us is, who will decide what the future will be like in a technologically determined age?

You are What You Worship

Technology shapes the human conception of itself and its relation to the world, including our view of God. In a mechanical age, it is not surprising that people conceive of themselves and others as machines.{3} Human relationships are reduced to efficiency and usefulness or to convenient arrangements. For example, marriage is already largely viewed as an economic contract between two people who may not have anything else in common, rather than as a sacrificial commitment.

Transhumanist philosophy takes the modern mechanistic view to its ultimate level of altering humanity to become a machine. The idea that we become the thing we worship finds greatest expression in the twenty-first century. Those who worship idols become like them (Ps. 115). Those who worship money become greedy. Those who worship drugs become addicted, and those who worship the machine will become a machine. In the past, philosophers and poets often used the machine as a metaphor of dehumanization and alienation from modern life; modern society was thought to function like a machine.{4} This means in a machine culture, people feel like numbers or spare parts and therefore entirely expendable. Individual meaninglessness in a mechanistic society will be realized in the very near future, so that individuals will be spare parts and completely assimilated. The future super computer will offer humanity everything, except the freedom not to choose

assimilation.

The machine represents the ideal existence, even the ideal being. The idea of “salvation in the machine” derives from modern thought in a deistic and Unitarian God who created a clockwork universe.{5} Transhumanism has simply transposed that deity into the machine itself and removed the Clock Maker. Now it’s the clock they worship.

Transhumanism affirms artificial selection instead of natural selection. They believe that through science and technology, humanity can direct the cause of evolution. Humanity controls its own evolutionary process to reach a perfectible state. Instead of millions of years to evolve a new species, it will be done in decades, maybe even in one generation.

The Singularity Is Near

Transhumanists expect the merger of humanity and machine around 2045 in an event they call the Singularity. This means artificial intelligence (AI) will equal or exceed human intelligence and there will no longer be any discernible difference. Humanity will lose all distinct consciousness and consider itself as one being.{6}

Humanity then must change itself genetically to keep pace with AI. This will create a giant planetary super organism that knows no distinctions. Humanity will merge with the rest of nature through genetic engineering, and nature will become indistinguishable from the machine. We will no longer know the difference between organic and inorganic, or natural and artificial, something already prevalent today in cities, weather patterns, and food production.

A super organism looks something like a beehive, anthill, or termite mound; various individual cells work together as one. So by mid-century Transhumanism envisions total global unity, not at the political level between states, but ontologically

and biologically. We will have evolved into one massive planet—truly Spaceship Earth, completely interrelated and interdependent, like an anthill. This will be the technological version of the kingdom of God or the Transhumanist version of the millennium.

Ray Kurzweil and the Singularitarians believe people will eventually be able to upload their consciousness into a computer and live forever. [Note: for an intriguing Christian perspective on this idea in a compelling novel, Probe recommends *The Last Christian* by David Gregory.] The religious nature of this movement is obvious in its millennialism or belief in the coming perfect society, and also in its belief in progress and immortality. Critics call the Singularity "the rapture of the nerds," indicating its close connection with religious belief and millennial expectations. The Singularity represents religious belief for computer geeks. The acceptance of progress and human perfection makes Transhumanism the heir of modernity, with its ideal of technological utopianism and its mechanistic view of the body. It's modernism with a vengeance.

The Artilect War

The future may not bring the perfection of the Singularity, but the disaster of the Artilect War. An Artilect is an artificial intelligence or super computer. AI researcher Hugo de Garis predicts that the Transhumanist vision will be disastrous and will result in gigadeath (the death of billions of people). He hypothesizes that by the end of the century, Cosmists, or technically modified people, will want to build Artilects to join with humanity, but that Terrans, or unmodified people, will oppose their construction because it has no benefit to them. A nuclear war will ensue, probably initiated by Terrans as their only way to stop Cosmists.{7}

Jacques Ellul once remarked that "the technical society must

perfect the ‘man-machine’ complex or risk total collapse.”{8} There is no other place to go but up. If the current human enhancement project fails it may prove to have devastating effects for the future of the human race, and if it succeeds the human race faces techno-enslavement or pseudo-extinction by being transformed into another species.

Will the Singularity really happen? It is very possible. Or maybe the Artilect War will happen instead. Perhaps technology will bring the apocalypse instead of utopia. It is all science fiction right now, but science fiction is often correct in the broadest terms. Recall Jules Verne’s vision of space travel to the moon in the nineteenth century when people thought it was pure fantasy and laughed because there was no way to break earth’s gravitational pull. But his work inspired a generation of rocket scientists to find a way to do it, and within a century man was walking on the moon. Something considered impossible was achieved.{9}

A basic principle of futurism states that anything is possible to achieve within twenty years given the resources to do it. And the Bible states that nothing is impossible for humanity in a unified technological society. Gen. 11:6 says “Now nothing that they imagined will be impossible for them.” This of course is talking about Babel, but I think it demonstrates the fact that the discussion of a transhuman transformation should be taken as a credible threat and should be addressed by the church.

Ethic of Limits

The essence of Transhumanist philosophy revolves around the idea that there are no natural or divine limits to what technology can accomplish. It serves the basic technological imperative that says what can be done should be done! This view unleashes all restraint and frees us from all limits, and is one of the greatest examples of the church’s cultural

captivity since we do not present a different view of technology from the rest of society.

This maxim is obviously dangerous because any limitless action leads to self-destruction as a natural corrective. Humanity cannot presume to be greater than the natural limits arrayed against it, such as death or the scarcity of resources. Humanity must learn to live within boundaries.

Christians are called to respect limits and the right balance in its use of technology, between its misuse and its non-use. In an age of limitless technology the church must present an ethic of limitation. This means finding limits to technology, such as limiting computer use, limiting driving, electricity, or even not upgrading. This may seem small, but in trying to discover a workable ethic of technology, it represents something we can do right now. The widow's mite (Mark 12:41-43) will not solve the church's budget deficit, but should be given anyway because it was something she could do, so an ethic of limitation remains a course of action open.

An ethic of limitation only becomes obvious when the situation appears desperate, such as with nuclear weapons, where not even one mishap can be afforded. Other examples consist of over-eating, drug addiction, over-fishing or hunting, or any activity that exhausts natural resources. Because people did not practice limits to begin with, they are now faced with a real possibility of collapse or catastrophe. We must discover the limits to any technology, if we are to use technology correctly and benefit from it. The history of the Tower of Babel teaches that if mankind does not practice self control, God will impose limits Himself in judgment (Gen 11:1-9).

Notes

1. Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (New York:Penguin, 1999); Gregory Stock, *Metaman:The Merging of Humans and Machines into a*

Global Superorganism (New York:Simon and Schuster, 1993); Lewis Mumford, *The Transformations of Man* (New York:Collier, 1956); Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, (New York:Vintage, 1964), 428-436. It was techno critics like Ellul and Mumford that saw the techno future more clearly and soberly than the previously noted Transhumanists. Ellul argued that information would eventually pass from the machine straight to the human brain electronically without being processed through consciousness and that breeding will all be done through artificial means, and natural procreation will be forbidden (432, 433). Whatever problems and disturbances the technology of the future will create will be solved through "a world-wide totalitarian dictatorship" (434). This is exactly what Transhumanist philosophy will bring. Mumford argued that modern technical society will eventually produce a machine replacement for man (100, 117-132).

2. Pink Floyd, "Welcome to the Machine" in *Wish You Were Here*, Capitol, 1975.

3. Cecelia Tichi, *Shifting Gears:Technology, Literature, Culture in Modernist America* (Chapel Hill, NC:The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 16; David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology:The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (New York; Knopf, 1997), 143-171.

4. Karl Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age* (New York:Anchor Books, 1951); Nicols Fox, Against the Machine:The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art and Individual Lives (Washington DC:Island Press, 2002).

5. Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine:The Pentagon of Power* (New York:Harvest, 1970), 33; Noble, *The Religion of Technology*, 146; Mary Midgley, *Science as Salvation:A Modern Myth and Its Meaning* (New York:Routledge, 1992).

6. Lev Grossman, "2045:The Year Man Becomes Immortal", *Time* (February 21, 2011), 43-49.

7. Hugo De Garis, *The Artilect War:Cosmists vs. Terrans:A Bitter Controversy Concerning Whether Humanity Should Build Godlike Massively Intelligent Machines* (Palm Springs, CA:Etc Publications, 2005).

8. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 414.
9. Howard E. McCurdy, *Space and the American Imagination* (Washington DC:Smithsonian Institute Press, 1997), 9-27.

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Emerging Adults: A Closer Look at Issues Facing Young Christians

"Emerging adults" is a term coined by sociologists to capture the new reality of 18- to 30-year-old Americans who have not fully assumed the responsibilities of classic adulthood. In previous articles, we looked at disturbing information on the beliefs of emerging adults in America from surveys by Christian Smith of Notre Dame, by Probe Ministries, and by others. In them, we found clear evidence of accelerating erosion in accepting and adhering to basic biblical truths for living, even among those who were born again. Our emerging cultural milieu of pop post-modernism is clearly taking many young adult Christians captive to the "philosophies of men" (Col. 2:8). Here we will take a closer look at the erosion of belief in several important areas.

Christian Smith and his fellow researchers at Notre Dame published an initial book, *Souls in Transition*, covering the results of their 2008 survey of the religious beliefs and actions of emerging adults from age 18 through 23. We discussed their findings in two earlier articles: *Emerging Adults and the Future of Faith in America*, and *Emerging Adults Part 2: Distinctly Different Faiths*. Their deep distress over some of the results of their surveys and interviews led them

to publish a follow-up book in 2011 entitled *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*. In this book, they focus on five specific areas of concern identified by their earlier research:

1. *Moral aimlessness*
2. *Materialistic consumerism*
3. *Intoxicated living*
4. *Deep troubles from sexually liberated behavior*
5. *Lack of interest in civic and political life*

The troubling characteristics of emerging adult life in America in the early years of the twenty-first century remind us of what Paul warned of in 2 Timothy when he wrote: "in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, . . . arrogant, . . . ungrateful, . . . without self-control, . . . reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (2 Tim 3:1-5).

One major factor in the growth of these problems is the widespread acceptance of pop post-modernism throughout our culture. As Smith points out, the post-modern theory became "democratized and vulgarized in U.S. culture" becoming a "simple-minded ideology presupposing the cultural construction of everything, individualistic subjectivism, soft ontological antirealism and absolute moral relativism."{1}

This popularized post-modern view says there is no objective truth, only the practical truth I choose to live by with my friends. This view leads to a basic disconnect with the teaching of Jesus who claimed His purpose was to "testify to the truth" (Jn. 18:37) because He is the truth.

Dale Tackett, author of The Truth Project, put the problem

this way, “When what is right is what’s good for me, you will find all of the moral chaos that we see today.”{2}

In what follows, we will focus on three of the five areas of concern: moral aimlessness, materialistic consumerism, and the lack of interest in civic and political life.

Moral Viewpoint – A Floating Standard

In his study of American emerging adults, Smith found that their morality is adrift with no standard to hold it in place.

What is morality in the first place? Morality is defined as “a system of ideas of right and wrong conduct.”{3} For Christians, this system is set out for us in the Bible, particularly in the Ten Commandments, the teachings of Jesus, and the New Testament epistles. The Bible makes it clear that God is the source of true morality. It is our responsibility to learn and apply His moral precepts. As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Or as Paul instructed in 1Thessalonians, “examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (5:21-22). Paul is saying hold fast to the morality taught by Christ.

In a Christian nation, how can there be any confusion about morality? Well, sixty percent of emerging adults say that “morality is a personal choice, entirely a matter of individual decision. Moral rights and wrongs are essentially matters of individual opinion, in their view.”{4} And where do these opinions come from? One emerging adult put it this way, “Like just kinda things that I thought up, that I decided was right for me. So I don’t know. I honestly don’t. It just kinda came outta thin air.”{5} So, we can either look for the Bible as the source of our morality or we can just create it out of

thin air.

When faced with a moral choice, almost half of them said they would do what made them feel happy or would help them get ahead. Less than one out of five said they would "do what God or the scripture" says is right. Many of them said they would not really know if their choice was right or wrong until after it was done and they could evaluate how they felt about it.

Not only do they not look to the Bible or society for their moral compass; they believe that it is morally wrong to assume there is a common morality that applies to all. Because we must be tolerant and accept other's views as right for them, we must not apply our moral precepts to their actions. As Smith put it, "Giving voice to one's own moral views is itself nearly immoral." What they fail to realize is that complete moral relativism and tolerance actually dishonor the beliefs of others. With this view, they cannot accept new views which are superior to their own or act to correct views which are inferior. What someone else thinks is about morality is immaterial to them.

This type of thinking will ultimately lead to disaster for the people embracing it. As Chuck Colson said, "So often, the great disasters (of the past) were caused by people disregarding God's standard of right and wrong and doing what was right in their own eyes . . . We've stopped moral teaching in our country and we are seeing the inevitable consequence of failing to teach moral values to a culture. We are seeing chaos."{6}

The whole topic of morality is not something most emerging adults give much thought to. One third of them could not think of any moral dilemmas that they had faced in their lives, while another third of them offered examples that were not actually moral dilemmas. For example, one of them stated, "I guess renting the apartment thing, whether or not I would be able to afford it." That is a dilemma but it is not a moral

dilemma. So through their education from their parents and schools, the vast majority of emerging adults really have not gained a good working knowledge of the concept of morality much less its importance to society. Yet in 1 Peter, Peter makes it clear that our moral actions are one of the most important ways that Christians can share the good news of Jesus Christ. As he said, “For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men” (2:15).

Consumerism – The True Objective of Life

What impact has consumer culture had on the lives of emerging adults?

As Christians, our lives are to be about far more than how much we are able to consume. Jesus never gave his disciples instructions on how to increase their economic wealth. Instead, He sent his disciples out to minister with little more than the clothes on their backs. Similarly, Paul learned to be content with whatever the Lord provided. He states, “I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:12-14). To be clear, the Bible does teach us much about how to operate successfully in the business world. But, it is also clear that our purpose in life is to be focused on things with eternal value and not on how much we can accumulate and consume on this earth.

Yet, as a whole, the young, emerging adults in this nation have missed the call of Christ to focus our lives on the eternal rather than the temporal. Instead, not only have they bought into consumerism as the primary goal of life, but they appear to be unable to consider any shortcomings in a life focused on what they can consume. Smith reports, “Contemporary

emerging adults are either true believers or complacent conformists when it comes to mass consumerism."{7}

As one emerging adult put it, "It feels good to be able to get things that you want and you work for the money. If you want something, you go get it. It makes your life more comfortable and I guess it just make you feel good about yourself as well."{8} That statement by itself might not seem so bad until you realize that it is their sole method to feel good about themselves. The more you can consume the better. They miss the balanced view of material things taught in the Bible. For example, in Proverbs we are told,

> *Give me neither poverty nor riches;*
>
> *Feed me with the food that is my portion,*
>
> *That I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the LORD?"*
>
> *Or that I not be in want and steal,*
>
> *And profane the name of my God (Prov. 30:8,9).*

In addition, the idea of limiting one's consumption in order to have the resources to help others is foreign to most emerging adults. Many of them would like to see the needs of the starving people met, "just not by me, not now." If they ever reach a state in life where all their consumer desires are met, then they may consider using some resources for charitable causes. One obvious problem with this approach is that our consumer conscious society always has something new and better that you must purchase and experience.

This attitude is in contrast to that of the Macedonians Paul commends in his second letter to the Corinthian church:

> *. . . that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability,*

> *and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God (2 Cor. 8:1-6).*

Rather than "seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness" and letting the material things be of secondary importance, most young America adults are seeking consumer nirvana and its false sense of well being. With no external moral compass for guidance, they are unwilling to express concerns about the grossest forms of excessive consumerism. As most of them said when asked, "If someone wants it, who am I to say that they are wrong?" When emerging adults refer to a good life, they talk about what they want to possess rather than the good that they can contribute to the world. I find it sad to think about being remembered for how much I consumed rather that how much I contributed. But this thought does not seem to bother these emerging adults.

Civic and Political Involvement – Not For Me

Let continue by examining another disturbing characteristic of young, emerging adults identified by Christian Smith through his extensive surveys and interviews over the last five years: their perception of civic and political involvement. Smith summarizes their attitude by saying, "The vast majority of the emerging adults we interviewed remain . . . politically disengaged, uninformed, and distrustful. Most in fact feel disempowered, apathetic, and sometimes even despairing when it comes to the larger social, civic, and political world beyond their own lives."{9} When we consider that the polls and interviews driving this assessment occurred in the summer of 2008 during the perceived youth movement which brought President Obama into office, this result on political

involvement is particularly surprising.

Some might say that being actively involved in politics is not the right course of action for Christians. And, thus, they may applaud this result. We certainly agree that our primary purpose as Christians will not and cannot be fulfilled through political action. However, what we are talking about here is not a lack of political activism, but rather a disengagement from active participation in the political process. As Paul instructed Timothy, “I urge that entreaties, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We are to be concerned about the impact of government on our lives. If the people Paul were writing to had the right to vote, I am confident he would have said to pray for and exercise your right to vote.

Through his research, Smith identified six different attitudes toward civic involvement among emerging adults. These attitudes are:

> *1. The apathetic are completely uninterested in politics and make up twenty-seven percent of emerging adults. It is important to note that these individuals were not apathetic in general, just about this area of life.*
>
> *2. The uninformed said their lack of interest was driven by their lack of knowledge about the issues and the players. The uninformed made up thirteen percent of emerging adults.*
>
> *3. The distrustful know a reasonable amount about political issues but do not participate because they distrust the political system and politicians. They believe exercising their right to vote will not make any difference.*
>
> *4. The disempowered point to their inability to change the world (rather than distrust of the process) as their reason to be uninvolved. Around ten percent of emerging adults fall*

into this category.

5. The marginally political represent those who expressed some interest in politics but whose interest did not appear to lead to actual involvement in the process. These marginally political emerging adults make up twenty-seven percent of those interviewed.

6. That leaves four percent of emerging adults (all males) who appear to be genuinely political; that is, interested and involved in the process.

In summary, their interviews found two-thirds of the emerging adult population completely uninvolved and almost one-third with a very limited involvement. This meant only four percent considered the process an important responsibility in life.

This seemingly fatalistic view of politics was found to carry over in other areas of civic involvement such as volunteering and charitable giving. Smith summarized their results saying, "Contrary to some of the stories told in the popular media, most emerging adults in America have extremely modest hopes, if any, that they can change society or the world for the better, whether by volunteering or anything else."{10} With that perception, providing help to others is not a requirement for righteousness, but simply an optional personal choice that most are not prepared to make.

Thinking back to our earlier discussion on the lack of a moral viewpoint, Smith's research found a significant association between those who believe all morality is relative and individualistic and an attitude of apathy, ignorance, and distrust of the political process. In addition, Smith found a significant relationship between "enthusiasm for mass consumerism and lack of interest in political participation."{11} So these three attitudes (no moral standards, consumer consumption as our primary objective, and no real political or civic involvement) appear to be common

elements of the emerging adult belief system.

Emerging Adults – Where Will They Take Us?

One root cause of the attitudes expressed by emerging adults in American is pop post-modern individualism. Each individual must decide what is true for him or her and must not accept a common truth. Therefore, most emerging adults cannot grasp the concept of an objective reality beyond their individual selves that would have any bearing on their lives. As we have seen, this concept undermines their moral compass, their attitudes about consumer consumption, and their involvement in society through politics, volunteering, and charitable giving.

These dominant patterns of emerging adult thought in America should make us consider: "What does it mean?" and, "How can we do something about it?" Some might say it is just the way young people are. We were that way when we were young. They will snap out of it. To that idea Smith would say, "It is a different world today. . . . To think otherwise is to self-impose a blurred vision that cannot recognize real life as it is experienced today and so cannot take emerging adults seriously."{12}

Others may say that is not what I hear on the news. Our young adults are leading a new wave of service and public involvement. To which Smith would say, "The fact that anyone ever believed that idea simply tells us how flimsy the empirical evidence that so many journalistic media stories are based upon is and how unaccountable to empirical reality high-profile journalism can be. . . . we – without joy – can set the record straight here: almost all emerging adults today are either apathetic, uninformed, distrustful, disempowered, or , at most marginally interested when it comes to politics and public life. Both the fact itself and the reasons for it speak poorly of the condition of our larger culture and

society."{13} He continues: "One tendency is to claim that emerging adults are deeply committed to social justice, passionately engaged in political activism, actively volunteering in their local communities, devoting themselves to building a greener, more peaceful and just world. Almost nothing could be further from the truth."{14}

Although the vast majority of emerging adults are disengaged from involvement in the public sphere, they are quite engaged in a different way. As Smith points out, "they pursue these private-sphere emotional and relational investments with fervent devotion. . . . progressing yet further toward the nearly total submersion of self into fluidly constructed, private networks of technologically managed intimates and associates."{15} He is referring of course to their disconnected connections via Facebook, Twitter, and other electronic social media.

We believe that there are several positive actions that we can take as Christians to improve this situation.

First, we need to examine ourselves. Are we living our lives under the direction of the ultimate source of morality, Jesus Christ? Are we consumed by consumerism or are we living for eternity? Are we taking an active part in impacting our society so that we may live godly and peaceful lives for Christ?

Next, we need to recognize that emerging adults under the age of thirty are, for the most part, not taking on the full responsibilities of adulthood. They are still emerging and, consequently, still need coaching. However, as Smith points out, "One of the striking social features of emerging adulthood is how structurally disconnected most emerging adults are from older adults. . . Most emerging adults live this crucial decade of life surrounded mostly by their peers . . . who have no more experience, insight, wisdom, perspective, or balance than they do."{16} As parents, pastors, co-workers,

we should continue to actively engage them in a mentor role. It is important that:

> *1. They understand we look to the Bible as the source for our moral decisions.*
>
> *2. We are living in this world as citizens of heaven and as such consumer consumption is not our purpose for living.*
>
> *3. We have a responsibility to be engaged in our society to keep our freedom to lead godly lives serving the Lord.*

The apostle Peter put it this way: "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles so that in the thing in which they slander you as evil doers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:11,12).

Finally, we need to reach out to emerging adults who are already involved in evangelical churches. We need to let them know that it is okay to engage others with their worldview and their source of truth, Jesus Christ. When they don't share their worldview with others as a gift from God, they are effectively consigning those others to hell. Probe is in the midst of preparing materials that you can use in your church to directly address these issues.

Christian Smith captured the essence of this problem when he wrote, "Might it be true that the farthest boundary of sight that youth today can envision as real and being worth pursuit is entirely imminent, purely material, and completely mundane?"{17} As Christians, our boundary extends beyond this universe to the halls of heaven and puts our lives in a new perspective. Let that eternal perspective been seen in every area of your life.

As historian Christopher Lasch put it, “There is only one cure for the malady that afflicts our culture, and that is to speak the truth about it.”{18}

Notes

1. Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 15.

2. Del Tackett and Chuck Colson, *The Way Out: God’s Solution to Moral Chaos in America*, 2011, www.truthinaction.org/index.php/landing-doing-the-right-thing-full-episode/

3. *American Heritage Dictionary*, s.v. “Morality.”

4. Smith, *Lost*, 21.

5. Ibid., 22.

6. Tackett and Colson, *The Way Out*.

7. Smith, *Lost*, 72.

8. Ibid., 73.

9. Ibid., 196.

10. Ibid., 211.

11. Ibid., 218.

12. Ibid., 227.

13. Ibid., 224-5.

14. Ibid., 228.

15. Ibid., 223.

16. Ibid., 234.

17. Ibid., 236.

18. Christopher Lasch, "Give Youth Cause to Believe in Tomorrow," *International Herald Tribune*, December 29, 1989.

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See Also:

Emerging Adults and the Future of Faith in America
Emerging Adults Part 2: Distinctly Different Faiths
The Importance of Parents in the Faith of Emerging Adults
Cultural Captives – a book on the faith of emerging adults

Martial Arts and Just War Theory

Dr. Lawrence Terlizzese examines a Christian view of martial arts in view of the Just War Tradition.

When I was first asked to speak about Christianity and the Martial Arts I was a little skeptical that a Christian can practice Martial Arts in good conscience. The popular objections immediately came to mind: "Aren't the Martial Arts steeped in Zen Buddhist practice?" And, "Should a Christian really participate in something as violent as karate?" Christians commonly object to Martial Arts for such reasons, even vilifying them as something as bad as witchcraft.

Upon reflection, I realized that the practice of Martial Arts naturally corresponds to something I have thought long and hard about: Just War Tradition. A central principal of both Just War thinking and the Martial Arts is personal self–defense. Just War doctrine states that if a Christian is unjustly attacked or sees an innocent third party under attack and has the ability to either prevent the abuse or intervene,

that he or she should do so. What’s more, to fail to render such aid makes one equally culpable in the crime. In other words, inaction and apathy in the face of injustice is just as wrong as the injustice itself.

Just War thinking is usually applied to the relationships between governments and states in times of war. It helps Christians and societies decide if a war is morally acceptable or not and whether it is worthy of their participation. But there is no logical reason to prevent Christians from applying this principle at a personal level. After all, the police cannot possibly be available always and everywhere; we are sometimes forced to protect ourselves.

The Violence Objection

As Americans we naturally think that self–defense means owning a handgun. We live in a gun culture that accepts firearms as a God–given right protected by Law. Christians generally have no objections to gun ownership even though the potential for disaster is obvious. But when it comes to a safer alternative to guns, such as the Martial Arts, practitioners are met with a flurry of protests as if they are embracing some foreign religion. Now, to clear the air, I am entirely in favor of the Second Amendment right to bear arms. I am simply suggesting that those individuals who choose to practice the Martial Arts as a means of self–defense have chosen a safer alternative to gun ownership. (I assume that the discipline replaces gun ownership for them. From observation, gun owners and Martial Arts participants are generally not the same people.)

Guns are so easy to use that the potential for abuse and misuse is frightening and lethal. The Martial Arts, however, requires training, discipline and values related to peace and human dignity. One is taught self–control and respect for life that must accompany any notion of self–defense. Students are taught not to kill but rather to apply only the force necessary for a given situation.

One of the ironies of war states that the defender may become more powerful than the aggressor. This principle was clearly demonstrated in World War II when the Allies routed the Axis powers. At this point, if the defending party does not possess a system of values that imposes limited action out of respect for human life, then the defender becomes the aggressor by virtue of his advantage of power. Only a notion of justice tempered with mercy will prevent the just party from slipping into injustice and excessive aggression.

At the personal level, it is very difficult to achieve limited action that seeks to apply only the necessary force when it comes to using firearms. For example, various schools of Martial Arts often teach restraint in kicking or punching, using only enough force to defend oneself. Bullets cannot be recalled and their results are almost always fatal or horribly injurious. On the other hand, Martial Arts techniques like karate are inherently limited in their effects—despite violence—filled popular Kung Fu movies. They are designed to apply only the force necessary to achieve the goal of self—defense without killing or permanently disabling the opponent. Kicks, chops and blocks will always prove less fatal or damaging than shooting someone at point blank range. The use of force is never ideal or welcome, but if given the choice between karate or a .357 magnum for self—defense, the former clearly comes closer to Christian notions of justice and mercy than the latter.

The Eastern Mysticism Objection

The second objection, that the Martial Arts are *necessarily* tied to Eastern mysticism and thus that any Christian practicing these Arts is betraying Christianity, is much easier to answer. The common misconception is that Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen, brought the Martial Arts from India to China in the Sixth Century AD with the spread of Zen Buddhism. Later, the practice spread to Japan. It is certainly

true that the East has created a synthesis between the Martial Arts and mystical philosophy, but this creation represents a fairly modern innovation, especially in Japan with the rise of the Samurai warrior around 1300 AD. This is the most prominent symbol of the Martial Arts in the American mind. These Arts were practiced for millennia before the arrival of Zen in China or Japan and go as far back as 2000 BC in Mesopotamia. Historically speaking, there is no necessary connection between Zen and the Martial Arts.

Philosophically speaking, there is no necessary connection between Zen and the Martial Arts, either. Zen philosophy teaches a way of meditation or a means of achieving enlightenment focused on the practical and tangible world as opposed to the spoken or written word. That is, it doesn't rely on sacred texts or traditional reason, but rather on intuitive experience. Zen adherents prefer practice and encounter with reality rather than simply talking about it. Since the Martial Arts are also very practical and physical, this makes Zen attractive to many Martial Artists, but this represents an incidental connection, not a logically necessary one. The connection between the two practices is a convenience. One no more has to be a Buddhist to practice the Martial Arts than one has to be a Christian to be an American. Simply put, just because Zen appeals to many Martial Artists doesn't mean the two go together essentially. One can do just fine without the other, and that's where Christians can reconcile doing Martial Arts with their faith.

However, the notion of Chi ["chee"], or life–force, in the Martial Arts presents a serious obstacle to many Christians. This underlying idea states that one must align his or her Chi in order to be an effective practitioner. Since Chi clearly represents a pantheist philosophy, a suitable Christian–theist substitute should replace it. Chi is really nothing more than right attitude, enthusiasm and concentration; it signifies the power of the focused mind rather than a mystical supernatural

energy we can draw from. As in all sports and disciplines of any kind, one must focus the mind. This is no different for the Martial Artist than for the marksman who must aim at a target or a ball player who must kick or hit a ball. The body follows the mind.

As Christians legitimately concerned with the compromise of faith with Eastern mysticism or a violent culture, a conceptual union of Just War thinking and the Martial Arts creates an excellent theological and practical tool to reconcile both currents in American society. So, if after considering this perspective your conscience is clear, enjoy the Martial Arts for the sport, discipline and art form that they can be.

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Bringing the Truth of Christ to Your Generation

Are you a believer wondering if you're part of a dwindling population? Do people who follow hard after Christ—and show it by their actions and attitudes—seem to be a vanishing breed? Do you get the feeling that we're living in a post—Christian culture? We're not announcing the end of the Church in America and the West, but there is much cause for concern. We have the evidence straight from the mouths of believers—many of them caught up in captivity to the culture.

Here at Probe, we have been analyzing both existing and new original survey data to obtain a better grip on the realities of born-again faith in America today. Although the evangelical church has remained fairly constant in size as a percentage of

our population over the last twenty years, these surveys show its impact on our society has continued to decline as the percentage of non–Christians has grown considerably over the same period. We see two reasons for this change:

> *1. The increased acceptance of pluralism removes the felt need to share our faith with others. In our new Barna survey, almost one half of all born-again 18- to 40-year-olds believe that Jesus is one way to eternal life, but Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc. when followed well, will also result in eternal life.*
>
> *2. Captivity to the culture rather than to Christ's truth shapes believers' perspectives on nearly every aspect of life. The recent National Study of Youth & Religion, a survey of 18- to 23-year-olds, shows that only a quarter of those affiliated with an evangelical church have a consistent set of biblical theological beliefs and that less than 2% of them combine those theological beliefs with a consistent set of biblical beliefs on behaviors and attitudes.*

A combination of pluralism and cultural captivity eliminates both the reason for and the evidence of changed lives needed to effectively share the great news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, these problems are not unique to our time and country. In fact, these problems were key issues addressed in the letters of Peter, John and Paul back in the first century. In this article, we will use the writings of Peter to introduce Paul's response to this problem as laid out in the book of Colossians with special emphasis on Col. 4:2-6.

As advocates of apologetics and a biblical worldview, we often focus on 1 Peter 3:15, which exhorts us to always be ready to give a defense for the hope of the gospel to anyone who asks. However, Peter points out that our testimony for Christ, goes far beyond our ability to make a reasoned defense. In the first chapter of his letter, Peter provides an excellent

description of the hope of the gospel. He makes it clear that only through the resurrection of Christ can we can receive eternal life. He then goes on to describe the ways that we are called to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." Specifically, we are told to proclaim Christ through:

- *our excellent behavior (1 Peter 2:11-17),*
- *our right relationships with others (1 Peter 2:18–3:14),*
- *a verbal explanation of why we believe the good news (1 Peter 3:15-16), and*
- *sound judgment for the purpose of prayer (1 Peter 4:7)*

As our behavior and relationships cause observers to ask us to fully explain the hope that is driving these actions, we have the opportunity to speak the truth to them with words empowered by prayer (1 Peter 3:15-16). So Peter makes it clear that pluralism and cultural captivity are counter to the message of the gospel as portrayed in the lives of genuine believers.

Given this message from Peter, let's take a more in–depth look at how Paul addresses this topic in his letter to the Colossians. In the first two chapters, Paul gives an in–depth description of what the gospel is and what it is not. In the New American Standard version, the reader is told to "set your mind on the things above" where we are living with Christ. Because we are residents of heaven, we need to consider our life on earth from that eternal perspective. From this point on in the letter, Paul lays out the same four instructions as Peter laid out on how we are to share Christ in this world.

In Colossians 3:5–17, we are given the standard for excellent behavior that our *new self* is being renewed to live in accordance with. As Paul makes clear in the first two

chapters, this excellent behavior is not a qualification for heaven; after all, according to Colossians 2:9, the audience of believers is already "complete in Christ." Rather, the purpose of our excellent behavior is so the world can get a savory taste of heavenly living.

Then, in Colossians 3:18–4:1, Paul instructs us on the importance of **good relationships** in our families and at work. It is through our good relationships that the world can see the true meaning of "love your neighbor as you love yourself." As Paul points out, in all of these relationships "it is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

Paul then points to the remaining aspects of fully proclaiming Christ: through **our prayers** and **our words**. He addresses our prayer life as follows:

> *Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak (Col. 4:2-4).*

First, we are to devote ourselves to **prayer**, making it a strong player in ordering our lives. I think that "keeping alert in it" gives us the idea that we are to be ready to take something to prayer at any time during our busy daily schedule. Prayer is not to be strictly relegated to a set prayer time, but rather a real–time, always–on communication with God in response to the interactions and challenges of our day. Paul also indicates we should not be praying as a rote habit, but rather with an attitude of thanksgiving, knowing that God hears and responds to our prayers.

Secondly, Paul gives us a consistent topic for our **prayers**: that God would open up a door for the word in the lives of those who need to hear. We may live a life characterized by

excellent behavior and good relationships. But, if we are not praying that God will use our lives to open up a door for the gospel, then we are short–circuiting the purpose of God in our lives. Let me say it directly to you: If you are not seeing doors opening for the word through your life, perhaps you should ask, "What am I praying for? Am I praying that God will open up opportunities for me to share Christ with others?"

Note that in the first chapter of Colossians, Paul explains the mystery of Christ we are to "speak forth" saying,

> *. . .That I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the **mystery** which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**" (Col. 1:25-27).*

We are praying for an open door to speak forth so that everyone can receive the promise of eternal glory through receiving Christ in their lives. In other words, we need to actively ask God to give us entrée into others' lives to communicate the gospel so they can receive the riches of eternal life along with us. Do we really want this? It's a prayer God is sure to answer. If so, we're living according to a biblical worldview in one more essential way. If not, we risk the loss of succeeding generations.

Finally, Paul addresses the importance of our **words** in fulfilling our purpose as followers of Christ:

> *Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person (Col. 4:5-6).*

We need to be wise in our relationships with those who don't

know Christ. The verse literally says we are to redeem the time spent with unbelievers. As followers of Christ, we have the privilege of taking the most temporal and earth–bound thing in the world, time, and converting it into something of eternal value through our behavior, our relationships, our prayers and the words we speak.

We are to make the most of each opportunity to season our speech with the grace of Christ. If our speech is regularly salted with references to God's grace in our lives, we can tell from someone's reaction how we should respond to them. If we are not looking for it, how can we know when God answers our prayers to provide an open door for the gospel? And why would we be praying for it unless we value what God is saying to us here?

In summary, we must make clear to upcoming generations of evangelicals that we have a consistent message from Christ and His apostles on these two points:

> *1. Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God and the only possible way to eternal life. Religious pluralism just doesn't work.*
>
> *2. We are called to live distinctly different lives–as captives of Christ not our culture–in our behavior, relationships, prayers and speech. Why? In order to be representatives of the good news of Jesus Christ in a world that desperately needs Him.*

If we choose to live our lives as if these statements are untrue, we have allowed ourselves to be deceived by the persuasive arguments of the world. Let's make the choice not to be taken captive and, instead, be bold and caring in proclaiming the truth for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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The Millennial Generation – The Future of Christianity in America

Millennials are the largest generation in American history and also the least religious generation. Kerby Anderson examines what they believe, how media and technology has affected them, and how pastors and Christian leaders can reach this generation.

The Millennial generation is a group of young people whose birth years range from 1980 to 2000. This generation is actually just slightly larger than the Baby Boom generation (born from 1946 to 1964). Nearly 78 million Millennials were born between 1980 and 2000.

Millennials are already having an impact on business, the workplace, churches, and other organizations. They certainly are having an impact on politics. The 18- to 29-year-old Millennials voted for Barack Obama in 2008 by an significant margin. Because of their impact in business, politics, and the church, they are simply too large and too influential to ignore.

For this article I will be using much of the data from an excellent book by Thom and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation.*{1} Their survey of 1,200 older Millennials (born between 1980 and 1991) provides a detailed look at this generation.

We should begin by noting that not only are Millennials the largest generation, they are also one of the most diverse. That means that for every trend we identify in this

generation, there are also lots of exceptions. But that doesn't mean we can't learn some key facets of the Millennials. Here are just a few characteristics.

First, they are on track to become America's most educated generation. "In 2007, the first year the twenty-five- to twenty-nine-year-old age group was entirely comprised of Millennials, 30 percent had attained a college degree. That is the highest rate ever recorded for that age group."{2}

Second, Millennials view marriage differently than previous generations. They are marrying later, if at all. The average age for first marriage has increased approximately five years since 1970 for both men and women. "About 65 percent of young adults cohabit at least once prior to marriage, compared to just 10 percent in the 1960s."{3}

Finally, Millennials are the least religious generation in American history. They may say that they are spiritual, but only a small fraction of them say that is important in their lives. The sad reality is that most Millennials don't think about religion at all.

Perhaps the most amazing response from the survey of Millennials was that they are hopeful. Consider their response to the simple statement: "I believe I can do something great." About 60 percent agreed strongly with this statement, and another 36 percent agreed somewhat. That was almost every respondent, 96 percent in total.{4}

Marriage and Family

How does the Millennial generation view marriage and family? One way to answer that question is to look at the characteristics of their parents.

Baby Boomers wanted the best for themselves. They had a level of self-centeredness that eventually shifted toward meeting

the needs of their children. They wanted everything to be perfect for the Millennial children.

There was a high level of parental involvement. Hence, the parents of Millennials are often called “helicopter parents.” When Millennials were asked about parental involvement, 89 percent responded that they received guidance and advice from their parents.{5} It turns out that the Boomers are helping Millennials make decisions about work and life. Sometimes the parents sit in on job interviews and even try to negotiate salaries. While previous generations might have rejected such advice, 87 percent of Millennials view their parents as a positive source of influence.{6}

This positive view Millennials have of parents extends to the older generation as a whole. While Baby Boomers tended to be antiauthoritarian, Millennials have a very positive attitude towards those who are older. Of the Millennials interviewed, 94 percent said they have great respect for older generations.{7}

When it comes to marriage, Millennials are still optimistic about it even though they grew up in a world where divorce was common. They were asked to respond to the following statement: “It is likely that I will marry more than one time in my life.” For those who responded, 86 percent disagreed that they will marry more than once.{8} Apparently most Millennials plan to marry once or not at all. It is also worth noting that Millennials are marrying much later than any generation that had preceded them.

Millennials also view marriage differently in part because of the political battles concerning same-sex marriage and the definition of marriage. In the survey of Millennials, they were asked to respond to this statement: “I see nothing wrong with two people of the same gender getting married.” Six in ten agree with the statement (40 percent strongly agreed, 21 percent agreed somewhat).{9} Put simply, a significant

majority of Millennials see nothing wrong with same-sex marriage.

The impact of technology on marriage and family is significant. The Millennial generation has grown up with the Internet, cell phones, and social media. It is easier than ever to call on a cell phone or send a text to other members of one's extended family. Posting pictures on Facebook allows family members to immediately see what is happening to their children and grandchildren. Millennials are introducing their families to a variety of ways to stay connected.

Motivating the Millennials

How can we motivate the Millennial generation? The answer to that question is easy: build relationships. Thom and Jess Rainer put it this way. "The best motivators in the workplace for this generation are relationships. The best connectors in religious institutions are relationships. The best way to get a Millennial involved in a service, activity, or ministry is through relationships."{10}

Relationships are important because of their connection to their family. Millennials also see the world as a much smaller place since they can visit anywhere in the world (either in person or on the Internet). And they are connected to people through the new media in ways that no other generation was able to do.

Education is a high priority for Millennials. This generation is on pace to have significantly more college degrees than the rest of the nation as a whole. About a quarter of the current U.S. population over 25 years old has a college degree, but nearly four in ten of Millennials will probably receive a degree.{11}

Millennials do want to make money, but they are not driven by money. Their motivation for education and career are motivated

more by family and friends. One word that often surfaces is the word “flexibility.” They see money as a means to do what they want to do. At the same time, they reject the “keeping up with the Jones’ mentality” that often drives their parents.

Religion is not much of a motivating factor for Millennials. Spiritual matters are not important to them. Only 13 percent of them viewed religion and spirituality as important. And even among those who described themselves as Christian, only 18 percent said their religion was important to them.{12}

Only one group in the study said their faith was important to them. This was the subgroup identified as “Evangelicals” because of their orthodox biblical beliefs. Nearly two thirds (65 percent) said their faith was important to them.{13}

The political orientation of Millennials will no doubt influence elections. Millennials voted for Barack Obama over John McCain in the 2008 election by a two-to-one margin (66 percent to 32 percent). It is also worth noting that only half of the Millennials were eligible to vote that year. A greater percentage of that generation will become eligible to vote in each new election cycle.

Various polls, including exit polls, showed that this generation wanted more centralized power in government. And by more than a two-to-one margin (71 percent to 29 percent) they thought the federal government should guarantee health-care coverage for all Americans. More than six out of ten felt that government should be responsible for providing for their retirement.{14}

Millennials and Media

The Millennial generation has been influenced by media and technology like no other generation. Social commentators made much of the influence of television on the Baby Boomers but the proliferation of Internet, smart phones, and social media

has had an even greater impact on Millennials.

When technology first comes on the scene, there are early adopters, then a significant majority, and finally laggards. Millennials fit into the category of early adopters. In the survey they were asked if they agree with the following statement: “I am usually among the first people to acquire products featuring new technology.” About half agreed with the statement, and half disagreed with the statement.{15} And even for those who disagreed, it is safe to say they did not fit into the category of laggards. Millennials are quick to embrace new technology.

There is one technology that Millennials always have in their hands: video games. “Video-game consoles are part of the industry that pulled in more than twenty billion dollars in revenue in 2008.”{16} If there was one form of technology that is easily identifiable with Millennials it is video games.

When asked how they most frequently communicate when not actually with the other person, they rated phone first (39 percent), then texting (37 percent), and then e-mail (16 percent). At the bottom was by letter (1 percent). The survey also noticed a difference between older and younger Millennials. Put simply, the younger you are, the more likely you are to communicate by texting.

Social media is also a significant part of the lifestyle of a Millennial. Not surprisingly, the most popular social media site was Facebook (73 percent), followed by MySpace (49 percent) as a distant second. They also like to read blogs (30 percent) and write blogs (13 percent). But since blogs require more time and energy than other social media, they do not draw in the large numbers like Facebook and MySpace.

Although social media can be accessed in many ways, still the most pervasive is through the computer. Millennials use computers both for work and for personal use. Most Millennials

(83 percent) use a computer for work and spend about 17 hours on it each week. One out of five Millennials use their computer for work for 40 or more hours per week.{17} And Millennials spend time on computers for personal use. The responses ranged from 5 hours per week to 30 hours per week. The average was 17 hours per week.

If you put these numbers together, you find something shocking. The average Millennial spends 17 hours per week on a computer for work, and spends the same amount of time on a computer for personal use. That totals 34 hours per week on a computer. "That means that roughly one-third of Millennials' waking lives are spent on a computer."{18}

Millennials and Religion

The Millennial generation is the least religious generation in American history. The survey found that they are likely to have a syncretistic belief system. In other words, he or she will take portions of belief from various faiths and non-faiths and blend them together in to a unique spiritual system.

Thom and Jess Rainer found that this generation is less likely to care about religion or spiritual matters than previous generations. When they were asked in an open-ended question what was important to them, spiritual matters were sixth on the list. Preceding them in importance were family, friends, education, career, and spouse/partner.

When asked to describe themselves, two-thirds (65 percent) used the term Christian. Interestingly, nearly three in ten (28 percent) picked either atheism, agnosticism, or no preference. In other words, they have moved completely away from certain belief in God.

When asked if they were "born-again Christians", using a precise definition provided by the interviewers, only 20

percent affirmed this definition of belief and experience. And when presented with seven statements about orthodox Christian belief, the researchers found that only 6 percent of Millennials could affirm them and thus could be properly defined as Evangelical.{19}

A third (34 percent) of Millennials said that no one can know what will happen when they die. But more than one-fourth (26 percent) said they believe they will go to heaven when they die because they have accepted Christ as their Savior.{20}

Church attendance has been decreasing with each generation. The Millennial generation illustrates that trend. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) rarely or never attend religious services.{21} About one-fourth (24 percent) are active in church (meaning they attend at least once a week). This might suggest that a number of Millennials who attend church do so as seekers. In other words, they are at least spiritually interested enough to visit a church even though they may not be saved.

The Millennial generation presents a significant challenge for us as Christians. The largest and least religious generation in American history is here and making an impact. If the church and Christian organizations are to be vibrant and effective in the twenty-first century, pastors and Christian leaders need to know how to connect to the Millennials. The first step is understanding them and their beliefs. That is why I recommend the book by Thom and Jess Rainer and encourage you to visit our Web site (www.probe.org) for other information on this generation.

Notes

1. Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, B&H Publishing Group, 2011).
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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 16.
5. Ibid., 55.
6. Ibid., 56.
7. Ibid., 59.
8. Ibid., 63.
9. Ibid., 66.
10. Ibid., 105.
11. Ibid., 108.
12. Ibid., 111.
13. Ibid., 112.
14. Ibid., 115.
15. Ibid., 188.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 197.
18. Ibid., 198.
19. Ibid., 232.
20. Ibid., 233.
21. Ibid., 236.

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Boy Scouts and the ACLU: A War of Worldviews

Byron Barlowe, an Eagle Scout and Assistant Scoutmaster, assesses the battle with the values of the ACLU from an insider's perspective.

Traditional Mainstay As Good Cultural

Influence vs. Liberal Legal Activists with Social Engineering Agenda

In a gang-ridden section of Dallas, 13-year-old Jose saw a Boy Scouts recruiting poster. That started Jose's improbable climb to Scouting's highest rank of Eagle and a life of beating the odds. He said this about Scoutmaster Mike Ross: "He was a father figure watching over me, the first time I felt it from someone other than my [single] mom."{1}

In February 2010, the Boy Scouts of America, or BSA, celebrated a century of building traditional values into nearly 100 million youths like Jose through adults like Mr. Ross. The original Boy Scouts began in England in 1907. The Prime Minister said the new movement was "potentially 'the greatest moral force the world has ever known'." Yet surprisingly, there are those who would gut the movement of its culture-shaping distinctives.

In this article we take a look at the warring worldviews of The BSA and its arch-enemy, The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). In his book *On My Honor: Why the American Values of the Boy Scouts Are Worth Fighting For*, Texas governor and Eagle Scout Rick Perry writes, "The institutions we saw as bulwarks of stability—such as the Scouts—are under steady attack by groups that seem intent upon remaking (if not replacing) them in pursuit of a very different [worldview]."{2} In a crusade to elevate the minority viewpoints of girls who want entry, as well as atheists and gay activists, the ACLU's unending efforts to ensure inclusiveness undermine the very Scout laws and oath that make it strong—commitment to virtues like kindness, helpfulness and trustworthiness. This is no less than a war of worldviews.

I ran through all the ranks from Cub Scouts to Eagle Scout, worked professionally with the BSA, and now serve as Asst. Scoutmaster. I have first-hand, lifelong knowledge of

Scouting's benefits to boys, their families, and society. Nowhere else can young men-in-the-making be exposed to dozens of new interests (which often inspire lasting careers) and gain confidence in everything from leadership to lifesaving to family life. Scouting is good life skills insurance!

The pitched battle between the BSA and the ACLU embodies what many call the Culture Wars—battles that in this case reveal contrasting values like humanism vs. religious faith, politically correct "tolerance" vs. more traditional, absolutist views and radical individual rights vs. group—centered freedoms of speech and association. The contrast is stark.

Conservatives relate most to Scouting. "Of course, the *Boy Scout Handbook* is rarely regarded as being a conservative book. That probably accounts for why the *Handbook* has managed to continuously stay in print since 1910. If it were widely known how masterly the book inculcates conservative values, it would, like Socrates, be charged with corrupting the nation's youth."{3}

Scouting is also good for culture. Harris pollsters found that former Scouts agreed in larger numbers than non-Scouts that the following behaviors are "wrong under all circumstances": to exaggerate one's education on a resume, lie to the IRS, and steal office supplies for home use. Scouts pull well ahead of non—Scouts on college graduation rates. The "stick-to-it" mentality that Scouting demands comes into play here and in other findings. Scouting positively affects things like treating co—workers with respect, showing understanding to those less fortunate than you and being successful in a career. "This conclusion is hard to escape: Scouting engenders respect for others, honesty, cooperation, self—confidence and other desirable traits."{4} It also promotes the freedom to exercise a Christian worldview within its program, which provides a venue for transmitting a Christian worldview within the context of the outdoors and community service.

The absolutist morality of Scouting stands in stark relief to the moral relativism of our day and to the ACLU's worldview. Wouldn't you prefer to hire someone with Scouting's values of trustworthiness and honesty?

The Battles, Including Girls Joining the BSA

The Boy Scouts of America celebrates its centennial this year, but its long-time nemesis the ACLU isn't celebrating. In fact, they and other litigants have maintained a siege against the BSA in court in order to transform key characteristics including Scouting's "duty to God," the exclusion of openly gay leaders, and Scouting's access to government forums like schools. "In all, the Boy Scouts have been involved in thirty lawsuits since the filing of the [original] case," many brought by the ACLU.{5}

The opening salvo was a string of lawsuits on behalf of girls who wanted membership, many brought by the ACLU. The primary legal issue regarding these kinds of cases is "public accommodation." The BSA's position is that refusing membership to certain individuals like girls and open gays is its right as a private organization. Freedoms of speech and association are at stake for the BSA. Indeed, the definition of freedom of association is "the right guaranteed especially by the First Amendment . . . to join with others . . . as part of a group usually having a common viewpoint or purpose and often exercising the right to assemble and to free speech."{6}

In the case of Mankes vs. the BSA, the plaintiff claimed that restricting membership to boys amounted to sex discrimination. Yet the court decided against the claim on the basis that "the Boy Scouts did not, in creating its organization to help develop the moral character of young boys, intentionally set out to discriminate against girls."{7} Even the U.S. Congress chartered separate Scouting organizations, one for girls and

one for boys, not one unisex organization.

C.S. "Lewis puts it this way in discussing the crisis of post-Christian humanist education: 'We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.'"{8} I believe that even the most committed feminist would inwardly hope for brave, virtuous men of integrity. That's what Boy Scouts is all about: engendering young men with chests.

Underneath these battles lies an aversion to any kind of discrimination of supposed victims. The ACLU's goals raise ethical concerns: when one individual or a minority seeks rights that are not in the best interest of the community at large, it leads to unintended consequences, like possibly shutting down good institutions like the Scouts.

It's understandable why some girls would want to participate. However, given gender differences and the right to freedom of association, it seems best to restrict the Boys Scouts to boys.

The Battles over Gay Leaders (the Scouts' Doctrine of "Morally Straight")

A very contentious battle between the Boy Scouts of America and equal rights advocates revolves around disallowing openly gay leaders from joining the organization. "The BSA's position is that a homosexual who makes his sex life a public matter is not an appropriate role model of the Scout Oath and Law for adolescent boys."{9} Or as Rick Perry puts it, "Tolerance is a two-way street. The Boy Scouts is not the proper intersection for a debate over sexual preference." He continues, "A number of active homosexuals, with the assistance of the ACLU and…various gay activist organizations have challenged the BSA's long-standing policy." {10}

The landmark Dale case featured a lifelong Scouter who discovered his gay identity only then to realize the Scouts' policy against openly gay leaders. Eventually landing in the U.S. Supreme Court, BSA vs. Dale marked the end of cases in this category. The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that state laws may not prohibit the BSA's moral point of view and the right to expressing its own internal leadership.{11}

Ultimately, gay people could launch their own organization and any good Scout would recognize the right for them to do this. Even the courts have implied this view, again and again upholding the Scout's rights to operate the way they see fit. Why would it be improper for a private organization like the BSA to restrict leadership to those who share its values?

"BSA units do not routinely ask a prospective adult leader about his (or her) sex life," writes Perry.{12} This approach falls in line with the controversial "Don't ask, don't tell" doctrine of the U.S. military that's currently being challenged in court. Where members of the military may be concerned about the affect of another squad member's sexuality on its rank-and-file members, Scout units are concerned with the even greater influence of adults on the minds and morals of the children they lead.

A biblical worldview recognizes that belief that gay rights supersede traditional moral teachings springs from the fleshly, fallen state of man's soul. Romans 1 says humans "suppress the truth," and speaks out against unnatural acts in a clear allusion to homosexual unions. People—sometimes believers—fight morality as revealed by God through our conscience and stated moral law. The virtue ethics of the Scouts at least makes room for this morality.

Despite all the cases, "evidence of a planned, strategic legal assault on the Scouts didn't arise until the ACLU became involved, with cases that focused Scouts' 'duty to God.'"{13}

The Battle over “Duty to God”

Boy Scouts and Scout leaders are really into patches for our uniforms. One of the most beautiful I’ve ever owned is my Duty to God patch earned at the legendary Rocky Mountain Scout adventure ranch known as Philmont. The requirements were minimal: take part in several devotions and lead blessings over the food. Nothing dictated which god to pray to, just a built-in acknowledgement of the Creator. This non-sectarian, undirected acknowledgement of God is classic Scout stuff. The program has long featured specific special awards for all major world religions, including Christianity. Scouting’s Creator-consciousness can seem vague or even smack of animistic Native American religion, but troops chartered by Christian organizations like ours simply turn it into a chance to honor the God of the Bible.

This hallmark of Scouting is vilified by atheists and agnostics who would participate in Scouting only minus the nod to God. The ACLU has carried out a culture-wide campaign to cut out all mention of God from the public square, motivated by a warped value of self-determination.{14} Seeking protections from all things religious, the ACLU’s activist lawyers have raised human autonomy up as the ultimate good. And the Boy Scouts are a tempting target to further this cause célèbre. From where do the ACLU’s motivations spring? Apparently, from the ideology known as humanism, a philosophical commitment to man as the measure of all things coupled with an atheist anti-supernatural bias. But not even Rousseau, whose political theory emphasized individual freedoms, would likely have gone so far. In his view, the individual was subordinate to the general will of the people—and most people in American society agree that the BSA’s values and impact outweighs any individual right “not to hear” anything at all of religion.{15}

When the BSA lays out its broad yet very absolute

requirements, the most prominent and controversial are a "duty to God"{16} and a Scout's pledge to be reverent.{17} This in no way dictates which or even what kind of deity one's faith is ascribed to, but it sharply clashes with the ACLU's ideals of secularism and humanism. In effect, the BSA directly challenges the sacred-secular split so prevalent today, where faith is to be kept totally private and godless science serves as the only source of real knowledge. As a result of this worldview mistake, religious commitments and the supernatural are relegated to the personal, subjective, and ultimately meaningless level.

One blogger opines about a duty to God passage in the original 1910 Scout handbook:

> *"A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others." Such an earnest and irony-free worldview is naturally antithetical to the South Park-style mock-the-world moronity that pervades the culture. In a society that combines libertarian Me-ism with a liberal nanny state that suckles "men without chests," it is not surprising that the ranks of Boy Scouts are dwindling (Scouting is down 11 percent over the last decade). But we should be cheerful that an institution where self-sacrifice and manly virtues are encouraged manages to survive at all.{18}*

The ACLU was not involved in the first "duty to God" case against the Scouts. Yet by 2007, its "involvement in fourteen cases against the Boy Scouts had covered, cumulatively, more than 100 years of litigation."{19} The ACLU's view, according to Governor Perry, "is that if one citizen believes there is no God, they must be protected from public references to or acknowledgement of an Almighty Creator. . . . When they get their way, the ACLU enforces upon us the tyranny of the minority."{20}

Thank God the courts have not yet allowed this to happen.

Pluralism Done Right

A fellow in my Sunday school sounded alarmed when I asked the class to pray for a Scouting trip: "Isn't The Boy Scouts a Mormon outfit?" Since Mormons use Scouts as their official youth program for boys, his experience was skewed. Yet, the BSA is a non-sectarian association that simply requires chartering groups to promote belief in God and requires boys to reflect on reverence according to their family's chosen religion. *The Boy Scout Handbook*, (11th ed.) explains a Scout's "duty to God" like this: "Your family and religious leaders teach you about God and the ways you can serve. You do your duty to God by following the wisdom of those teachings every day and by respecting and defending the rights of others to practice their own beliefs." Note the genuine tolerance toward other religions. Even a pack or troop member cannot be forced by that unit to engage in religious observances with which they disagree.{21} This policy is the best way to handle a wide-open boys' training program in a very pluralistic culture.

Many Christians talk as if any kind of pluralism is anathema, especially the religious kind, as if we should live in a thoroughly Christianized society that, for all intents and purposes, is like church. However, this is unrealistic. America's Founding Fathers guarded against state-sanctioned religion.

God Himself tacitly acknowledged, even in the theocracy of the Old Testament period that living around His people were those of other religions. Jehovah didn't force people to believe in Him. God was pluralistic in the sense of allowing man's free will.

The Boy Scouts reflects this larger reality and it serves the

organization well. It is not seeking to be a church or synagogue or temple. The BSA's Scoutcraft skills and coaching, its citizenship and moral training, remains open to people of all religions. The BSA's vagueness regarding "duty to God" is actually a plus for Christians interested in promoting their own understanding of God and His world. Talk about a platform to pass along a biblical worldview! Think of it: Scouting's genius is that it combines outdoor exploits like regular camping trips and high-adventure activities with moral and religious instruction in the context of boy-run leadership training. Regular and intensive meetings with dedicated adults to review skills and Scouting's ideals provide ample time for what amounts to discipleship. Some of the richest ministry opportunities in my quarter-century as a full-time minister have been during Scoutmaster-to-Scout conferences in the great outdoors.

If you're committed to seeing the next generation of boys walk into adulthood not only as capable young men but with their faith intact, Scouting is one of the best venues out there. Hopefully, the ACLU won't be able to quash that.

Notes

1. *Readers Digest*, May, 2010, 138.
2. Rick Perry, *On My Honor: Why the American Values of the Boy Scouts Are Worth Fighting For* (Macon, GA: Stroud & Hall Publishers, 2008).
3. Carter, Joe, "The Most Influential Conservative Book Ever Produced in America," First Thoughts (the official blog of the journal First Things), posted February 8, 2010: http://bit.ly/fI8V9Z.
4. Perry, *On My Honor*, 163.
5. Ibid., 57.
6. Dictionary.com. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law*. Merriam-Webster, Inc. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/freedom of association (accessed: April 21, 2010).

7. Perry, *On My Honor*, 59.
8. Lewis, C.S., *The Abolition of Man* (Macmillan Publishing: New York, NY) 1947, p. 34; as quoted by R. J. Snell, "Making Men without Chests: The Intellectual Life and Moral Imagination," First Principles: ISI Web Journal, posted Feb. 25, 2010: www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=1380.
9. Ibid., 69.
10. Ibid., 71.
11. Ibid., 71-73.
12. Ibid., 69.
13. For a brief list of individual cases, some of which are being brought by the ACLU, see: www.bsalegal.org/duty-to-god-cases-224.asp.
14. Evans, C. Stephen, Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion: 300 Terms & Thinkers Clearly & Concisely Defined (Intervarsity Press: Downer's Grove, Ill.), 2002, p. 103.
15. The Scout Oath, quoted in reprint of 1910 original *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys,* Seventeenth Edition p. 32, accessed 1-20-11 http://bit.ly/gaM5OM. (Note, the table of contents links to page 22, but page 32 is the actual location in this format.)
16. The Scout Law, 33-34.
17. Carter, "The Most Influential Conservative Book Ever Produced in America."
18. Perry, *On My Honor*, 64 and 66.
19. Ibid, 87-88.
20. Bylaws of Boy Scouts of America, art. IX, § 1, cls. 2-4, as quoted on the BSA legal Web site: www.bsalegal.org/duty-to-god-cases-224.asp.

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Should Christians Respect Obama?

Mar. 9, 2010

The email below titled "Should Christians Respect Obama?" was forwarded to me. Perhaps you've seen it too. (I have formatted the spacing to fit below; however, all emphases—bolds, italics, exclamation marks, words in all caps—are original.)

> **Dr. David Barton is more of a historian than a Biblical speaker, but very famous for his knowledge of historical facts as well as Biblical truths.**
>
> **Dr. David Barton – on Obama**
> Respect the Office? Yes. Respect the Man in the Office? No, I am sorry to say. I have noted that many elected officials, both Democrats and Republicans, called upon America to unite behind Obama. Well, I want to make it clear to all who will listen that I AM NOT uniting behind Obama !
>
> I will respect the Office which he holds, and I will acknowledge his abilities as an orator and wordsmith and pray for him, BUT that is it. I have begun today to see what I can do to make sure that he is a one-term President !
>
> Why am I doing this ? It is because:
> – I do not share Obama's vision or value system for America ;
> – I do not share his Abortion beliefs;
> – I do not share his radical Marxist's concept of re-distributing wealth;
> – I do not share his stated views on raising taxes on those who make $150,000+ (the ceiling has been changed three times since August);
> – I do not share his view that America is Arrogant;
> – I do not share his view that America is not a Christian

Nation;
– I do not share his view that the military should be reduced by 25%;
– I do not share his view of amnesty and giving more to illegals than our American Citizens who need help;
– I do not share his views on homosexuality and his definition of marriage;
– I do not share his views that Radical Islam is our friend and Israel is our enemy who should give up any land;
– I do not share his spiritual beliefs (at least the ones he has made public);
– I do not share his beliefs on how to re-work the healthcare system in America ;
– I do not share his Strategic views of the Middle East ; and
– I certainly do not share his plan to sit down with terrorist regimes such as Iran .

Bottom line: my America is vastly different from Obama's, and I have a higher obligation to my Country and my GOD to do what is Right ! For eight (8) years, the Liberals in our Society, led by numerous entertainers who would have no platform and no real credibility but for their celebrity status, have attacked President Bush, his family, and his spiritual beliefs !

They have not moved toward the center in their beliefs and their philosophies, and they never came together nor compromised their personal beliefs for the betterment of our Country ! They have portrayed my America as a land where everything is tolerated except being intolerant ! They have been a vocal and irreverent minority for years ! They have mocked and attacked the very core values so important to the founding and growth of our Country ! They have made every effort to remove the name of GOD or Jesus Christ from our Society ! They have challenged capital punishment, the right to bear firearms, and the most basic principles of our

criminal code ! They have attacked one of the most fundamental of all Freedoms, the right of free speech !

Unite behind Obama? Never ! ! !

I am sure many of you who read this think that I am going overboard, but I refuse to retreat one more inch in favor of those whom I believe are the embodiment of Evil! PRESIDENT BUSH made many mistakes during his Presidency, and I am not sure how history will judge him. However, I believe that he weighed his decisions in light of the long established Judeo-Christian principles of our Founding Fathers!!! Majority rules in America , and I will honor the concept; however, I will fight with all of my power to be a voice in opposition to Obama and his "goals for America ." I am going to be a thorn in the side of those who, if left unchecked, will destroy our Country ! ! Any more compromise is more defeat ! I pray that the results of this election will wake up many who have sat on the sidelines and allowed the Socialist-Marxist anti-GOD crowd to slowly change so much of what has been good in America !

"Error of Opinion may be tolerated where Reason is left free to combat it." – Thomas Jefferson
GOD bless you and GOD bless our Country ! ! !
(Please, please, please, pass this on if you agree.)
Thanks for your time, be safe. "In GOD We Trust"
"If we ever forget that we're one nation under GOD, then we will be a nation gone under." – Ronald Reagan
I WANT THE AMERICA I GREW UP IN BACK…..

In GOD We Trust……..

Respectfully, I disagree. The person who wrote this email didn't say how to respect the office without respecting the person holding it. It may be possible to do so; however, I believe it is more important to respect people than positions. It sounds very noble to say, "I respect the office but not the

man." It's like saying, "I respect my boss's position of authority over me, but I don't respect my boss." But in my experience, this attitude makes it very difficult to "do everything without complaining or arguing." That habit derives only from love. And love is expressed by subordinates to their authorities largely through respect (Eph 5:21–6:8; note especially 5:33 and 6:5).

It is possible not to respect the positions the President holds and still respect the President as an Image-bearing human creation if nothing else. But this kind of generosity which derives from thinking Christianly (a Christian worldview) is not expressed in this email. The tone of this email conveys contempt, not respect. I'm particularly unnerved by the way the term "embodiment of Evil" was tossed out there. Calling liberals Satan incarnate is sensationalist at best and certainly doesn't portray the high view of human dignity that Christianity gives us.

A few other side notes to consider when viewing email forwards like this one:

- It is highly unlikely that a PhD wrote an email in such broad strokes with such inflammatory language, not to mention so many exclamation points. (In fact, I would be cautious of anything with this many exclamation marks, whether it claims to be from a PhD or not because when every sentence is exclaiming, that's a sign that the email is not trying to get you to think about the topic, but is only interested in goading an inordinately emotional reaction from you (as opposed to an emotionally passionate response tempered with thought-full-ness).)

- From Dad: "Dr. Barton's website does not have a record of this document – so, I doubt that it is from him. I sent an e-mail inquiry to wallbuilders.com asking them to comment on its authenticity." Thanks Dad!

- Thirdly, there are at least three of the President's views/positions that have been distorted and intentionally misrepresented in this email. Email forwards are notorious for this, and there is very little that is less Christian than bearing false witness.

- Finally, I just want to comment that it is okay for Christians to disagree about most of the items in that list. This email implies that a Christian nation (whatever that means anyway) would resemble the exact set of beliefs behind this email; it implies that any good Christian would agree with this email wholesale.

So, should Christians respect President Obama? We, more than anyone, should—especially if you dislike him and/or disagree with his basic platforms. It is easy to love people we like: people who are like us, people with whom we agree. But Christ demands we love those who are irritating to us.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

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