

Homeland Security and Privacy

A Supersnoop's Dream

Every day we seem to wake up to news about another terrorist threat, so it's not surprising that Americans are placing more of their faith in the government to protect them. But there are also important questions being raised about our loss of privacy and constitutional protections. So in this article we are going to take a look at some of these issues as we focus on the subject of homeland security.

The Department of Homeland Security was created by combining twenty-two existing agencies and 170,000 federal employees with an annual budget of approximately \$35 billion. While the implications of this megamerger of governmental agencies will be debated for some time, some columnists have already begun to question the impact it will have on our private lives.

The Washington Times called it "A Supersnoop's Dream." Columnist William Safire of the *New York Times* wrote a column entitled "You Are a Suspect" in which he warned of a dangerous intrusion into our lives. He predicted in November 2002 that if the Homeland Security Act were not amended before passage, the following would happen to you:

- *Every purchase you make with a credit card, every magazine subscription you buy and medical prescription you fill, every Web site you visit and e-mail you send or receive, every academic grade you receive, every bank deposit you make, every trip you book and every event you attend—all these transactions and communications will go into what the Defense Department describes as a virtual centralized grand database.*
- *To this computerized dossier on your private life from commercial sources, add every piece of information that government has about you—passport application, driver's*

license and bridge toll records, judicial and divorce records, complaints from nosy neighbors to the F.B.I., your lifetime paper trail plus the latest hidden camera surveillance—and you have the supersnoop’s dream: a Total Information Awareness about every U.S. citizen.

It is important to point out that these concerns about a potential invasion of privacy did not start with the passage of the Homeland Security Act. Over a year ago, critics pointed to the hastily passed U.S.A. Patriot Act which widened the scope of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and weakened 15 privacy laws.

On the other hand, there are many who argue that these new powers are necessary to catch terrorists. Cal Thomas, for example, writes that “Most Americans would probably favor a more aggressive and empowered federal government if it lessens the likelihood of further terrorism. The niceties of civil liberties appear to have been lost on the 9/11 hijackers and countries from which they came. Wartime rules must be different from those in peacetime.”[\[1\]](#)

The Patriot Act

Let’s look more closely at the U.S.A. Patriot Act. When Senator Russ Feingold voted against the Act, he made these comments from the Senate floor on October 11, 2001:

“There is no doubt that if we lived in a police state, it would be easier to catch terrorists. If we lived in a country where police were allowed to search your home at any time for any reason; if we lived in a country where the government is entitled to open your mail, eavesdrop on your phone conversations, or intercept your e-mail communications; if we lived in a country where people could be held indefinitely based on what they write or think, or based on mere suspicion that they are up to no good, the government would probably

discover more terrorists or would-be terrorists, just as it would find more lawbreakers generally. But that wouldn't be a country in which we would want to live."

Most would agree that the Patriot Act weakens grand jury secrecy. Already there is criticism that grand juries have become mere tools of the prosecution and have lost their independence. By destroying its secrecy, any federal official or bureaucrat can "share" grand jury testimony or wiretap information.

The Patriot Act also weakens Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures. Under the Act, law-enforcement agencies can in "rare instances" search a person's home without informing that homeowner for up to ninety days. This so-called "sneak and peek" provision can be used to sneak into your home, and even implant a hidden "key logger" device on a suspect's computer (allowing federal officials to capture passwords and monitor every keystroke).

And, the Patriot Act weakens financial privacy. The bill added additional amendments and improvements to the Bank Secrecy Act which already encourages FDIC member banks to profile account holders and report to the government (FBI, IRS, DEA) when you deviate from your usual spending or deposit habits. The Act exempts bank employees from liability for false reporting of a money laundering violation.

Michael Scardaville of the Heritage Foundation, however, isn't concerned about conferring this new power on bureaucrats. "Even if they wanted to, the program's employees simply won't have time to monitor who plays football pools, who has asthma, who surfs what Web site or even who deals cocaine or steals cars. They'll begin with intelligence reports about people already suspected of terrorism." [\[2\]](#)

Immigration Threats

Lincoln Caplan, writing in the November-December issue of *Legal Affairs* (a magazine of the Yale Law School), said that the U.S.A. Patriot Act “authorized law enforcement agencies to inspect the most personal kinds of information – medical records, bank statements, college transcripts, even church memberships. But what is more startling than the scope of these new powers is that the government can use them on people who aren’t suspected of committing a crime.”

Although there has been some concern expressed about the intrusion of government into our lives, an even greater concern is how the Homeland Security Act fails to address the real threat to our country through lax enforcement of immigration laws. Michelle Malkin, author of *Invasion*, cites example after example of problems at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Foreign students getting visas to enter the U.S. constitute a major problem that is out of control. Malkin says that the bill establishing this new department doesn’t do anything about it. There is also a problem with foreigners getting tourist visas to enter the U.S. and then overstaying their visas. The bill doesn’t do anything about this problem either.

More than 115,000 people from Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries are here illegally. Some 6,000 Middle Eastern men who have defied deportation orders remain on the loose. Add these numbers to those who are here legally, but still intend harm to the United States, and you can begin to grasp the extent of the problem.

Consider the case of Hesham Mohamed Hedayet, who shot and killed people at the Los Angeles International Airport. He managed to stay in this country by obtaining a work permit after his wife won residency in a visa lottery program (given to 50,000 foreigners on a random basis).

Michelle Malkin broke the story about the Washington, D.C. area sniper suspect John Malvo. The INS had him in custody but released him. The U.S. State Department failed to obtain a warrant for the arrest of the other sniper suspect, John Muhammad, after he was suspected of using a forged birth certificate to obtain a U.S. passport.

Congress needs to take another look at both the Patriot Act and the Homeland Security Act. In its rush to deal with the imminent terrorist threat, it has conferred broad powers to bureaucrats that should be refined and failed to address some crucial concerns in immigration that continue to threaten our safety. It is time for Congress to pass some common sense amendments to these two pieces of legislation.

History of Governmental Power

I think all of us would strongly support the President and Attorney General in their attempts to track down terrorists and bring them to justice. But some wonder if Congress has put too much power in the hands of the executive branch, power that could easily be abused by this administration or future administrations.

Let's consider our history. President John Adams used the Alien and Sedition Act to imprison his political enemies and curb newspaper editors critical of him. President Woodrow Wilson permitted his attorney general (Mitchell Palmer) to stop political dissent during the Palmer Raids. And President Franklin Delano Roosevelt interned thousands of Japanese-American citizens during World War II.

It is interesting that some of the greatest expansions of powers have come under Republican presidents. The first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, suspended the writ of habeas corpus. (This is a judge's demand to bring a prisoner before him, with the intent to release people from unlawful detention.) This led to the imprisonment of physicians,

lawyers, journalists, soldiers, farmers, and draft resisters. Sixteen members of the Maryland legislature were arrested in order to prevent them from voting for their state to secede from the Union. By the time the Civil War was over, 13,535 arrests had been made.

Although Democrats have often been credited with expanding the size and scope of the federal government, Republican administrations are actually the ones who have expanded various police powers. RICO and nearly all the seizure laws (where police can confiscate cars, boats, even homes without due process) were passed by Republican administrations.

Dana Milbank wrote in the *Washington Post* (Nov. 20, 2001) that "The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the war in Afghanistan have dramatically accelerated a push by the Bush administration to strengthen presidential powers, giving President Bush a dominance over American government exceeding that of other post-Watergate presidents and rivaling even Franklin D. Roosevelt's command."

Perhaps it is time for Congress to revisit this important topic of anti-terrorism and modify some of the provisions of the Patriot Act. Some have suggested that Congress pass legislation that would sunset all aspects of the Patriot Act. The bill currently has sunset provisions that apply to selected portions of the legislation. But sunset provisions do not apply to the expanded powers given to the federal government which weaken the Fourth Amendment protections we are guaranteed under the Bill of Rights. The bill was touted as an emergency wartime measure, but some of the most dangerous aspects of the bill would continue on even after America wins the war on terrorism. It is time to revisit this bill and make some necessary changes.

Christian Perspective on Government and

Privacy

Let's focus in on the matter of government and privacy.

To begin with, Christians must acknowledge that Romans 13:1-7 teaches that civil government is divinely ordained by God. Government bears the sword, and that means it is responsible to protect citizens from foreign invaders and from terrorists. So on the one hand, we should support efforts by our government to make our society safer.

On the other hand, we should also work to prevent unwarranted intrusions into our privacy and any violation of our constitutional liberties. In the past, drawing lines was easier because an unconstitutional search was conducted by a person who came to your door. Today we live in a cyber age where our privacy can be violated by a computer keystroke.

In the past, what used to be called public records weren't all that public. Now they are all too public. And what used to be considered private records are being made public at an alarming rate. What should we do?

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

Second, get involved. When you feel your privacy has been violated or when you believe there has been an unwarranted governmental intrusion into your life, take the time to complain. Let the person, organization, or governmental agency know your concerns. Many people fail to apply the same rules

of privacy and confidentiality on a computer that they do in real life. Your complaint might change a behavior and have a positive effect.

Third, call for your member of Congress to take another look at both the Patriot Act and the Homeland Security Act. In their rush to deal with the imminent terrorist threat, Congress may have expanded federal powers too much. Track congressional legislation and write letters. Citizens need to understand that many governmental policies pose a threat to our privacy. Bureaucrats and legislators are in the business of collecting information and will continue to do so unless we set appropriate limits.

Sadly, most Americans are unaware of the growing threats to their privacy posed by government and law enforcement. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. We need to strike a balance between fighting terrorism and protecting constitutional rights.

Notes

1. Cal Thomas, "More Power to the Government," Nov. 21, 2002.
2. Michael Scardaville, "TIA Targets Terrorists, Not Privacy," Nov. 22, 2002.

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Terrorism and Just War

America's war on terrorism has once again raised important questions about the proper use of military action. President George W. Bush said on September 20, 2001, "Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or justice to our enemies, justice will be done." This message and following statements by

President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld articulated portions of what has come to be known as *just war theory*. This 1600-year-old Christian doctrine attempts to answer two questions: "When is it permissible to wage war?" and "What are the limitations on the ways we wage war?"

Historically, Christians have adopted one of three positions: (1) **Activism** – it is always right to participate in war, (2) **Pacifism** – it is never right to participate in war, or (3) **Selectivism** – it is right to participate in some wars. The just war theory represents the third position and was articulated initially by Augustine who developed it as a logical extension of Romans 13:1-7.

1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Augustine argued that not all wars are morally justified. He said, "It makes a great difference by which causes and under which authorities men undertake the wars that must be waged."

This seven-point theory provides a framework for evaluating military action. A just war will include the following conditions: just cause, just intention, last resort, formal declaration, limited objectives, proportionate means, and noncombatant immunity. The first five principles apply as a nation is “on the way to war” (*jus ad bellum*) while the final two apply to military forces “in the midst of war” (*jus in bello*). Let’s look at each of these in more detail.

Seven Points of a Just War

- ***Just cause*** – All aggression is condemned in just war theory. Participation must be prompted by a just cause or defensive cause. No war of unprovoked aggression can ever be justified.
- ***Just intention*** – War must be to secure a just peace for all parties involved. Revenge or conquest are not legitimate motives.
- ***Last resort*** – War must be engaged as a last resort only after diplomacy and economic pressure have been exhausted.
- ***Formal declaration*** – War must be initiated with a formal declaration by properly constituted authorities.
- ***Limited objectives*** – War must be characterized by limited objectives such a peace. Complete destruction is an improper objective. War must be waged in such a way that once peace is attainable, hostilities cease.
- ***Proportionate means*** – Combatants may not be subjected to greater harm than is necessary to secure victory. The types of weapons and amount of force used should be limited to what is needed to repel aggression and secure a just peace.
- ***Noncombatant immunity*** – Military forces must respect individuals and groups not participating in the conflict. Only governmental forces or agents are legitimate targets.

Objections to Just War

Two types of objections often surface against the idea of just war theory. First, there is the moral objection. Pacifists argue that it is never right to go to war and often cite biblical passages to bolster their argument. For example, Jesus said believers should “turn the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39). He also warned that “those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52).

However, the context of the statements is key. In the first instance, Jesus is speaking to individual believers in his Sermon on the Mount, admonishing believers not to engage in personal retaliation. In the second instance, He tells Peter to put down his sword because the gospel should not be advanced by the sword. But at the same time, Jesus actually encouraged his disciples to buy a sword (Luke 22:36) in order to protect themselves.

Two political objections have been cited in the last few months against the application of just war theory to our war on terrorism. Critics say that the idea of a just war applies to only to nations and not to terrorists. Even so, that would not invalidate American military actions in Afghanistan or Iraq.

But the criticism is incorrect. It turns out that Christian thought about just war predates the concept of modern nation-states. So the application of these principles can apply to governments or terrorist organizations. Moreover, the very first use of American military force in this country was against Barbary Pirates (who were essentially the terrorists of the 18th century).

Critics also argue that since terrorism is an international threat, the concept of just war would require an international declaration of war. This is not true. The U.S. or any other country does not need to get international approval to defend

itself. Even so, both President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush have brought the issue of Iraq to the United Nations for a vote. But as the current president made clear, he sought UN approval, not permission. He would like multilateral approval and help, but the U.S. is prepared to go it alone if necessary.

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Condoms, Clinics, or Abstinence

Introduction

For more than thirty years proponents of comprehensive sex education have argued that giving sexual information to young children and adolescents will reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

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

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

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

Second, children are sexually miseducated. Parents, to put it simply, have not done their job, so we need “professionals” to do it right. Third, if miseducation is the problem, then sex education in the schools is the solution. Parents are failing miserably at the task, so “it is time to turn the job over to the schools. Schools occupy a safe middle ground between Mom and MTV.”

Learning about Family Life is the curriculum used in New Jersey. While it discusses such things as sexual desire, AIDS, divorce, and condoms, it nearly ignores such issues as abstinence, marriage, self-control, and virginity.

Whitehead concludes that comprehensive sex education has been a failure. For example, the ratio of teenage births to unwed mothers was 67 percent in 1980 and rose to 84 percent in 1991. In the place of this failed curriculum, Whitehead describes a better program. She found that “sex education works best when it combines clear messages about behavior with strong moral and logistical support for the behavior sought.”

One example she cites is the Postponing Sexual Involvement program at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, which offers more than a “Just say no” message. It reinforces the message by having adolescents practice the desired behavior and enlists the aid of older teenagers to teach younger teenagers how to resist sexual advances. Whitehead also found that “religiously observant teens” are less likely to experiment sexually, thus providing an opportunity for church-related programs to help stem the tide of teenage pregnancy.

Condoms

Are condoms a safe and effective way to reduce pregnancy and STDs? Sex educators seem to think so. Every day sex education classes throughout this country promote condoms as a means of safe sex or at least safer sex. But the research on condoms provides no such guarantee.

For example, Texas researcher Susan Weller, writing in the journal *Social Science Medicine*, evaluated all research published on condom effectiveness. She reported that condoms are only 87 percent effective in preventing pregnancy and 69 percent effective in reducing the risk of HIV infection. This 69 percent effectiveness rate is also the same as a 31 percent failure rate in preventing AIDS transmission.

To be effective, condoms must be used “correctly and consistently.” Most individuals, however, do not use them “correctly and consistently” and thus get pregnant and get sexually transmitted diseases.

Contrary to claims by sex educators, condom education does not significantly change sexual behavior. An article in the *American Journal of Public Health* stated that a year-long effort at condom education in San Francisco schools resulted in only 8 percent of the boys and 2 percent of the girls using condoms every time they had sex.

Even when sexual partners use condoms, sometimes condoms fail. Most consumers do not know that the FDA quality-control standards allow for a maximum failure rate of four per 1,000 using a water fill test. And even if condoms are used correctly, do not break, and do not leak, they are still far from 100 percent effective. The Medical Institute for Sexual Health reported that “medical studies confirm that condoms do not offer much, if any, protection in the transmission of chlamydia and human papillomavirus, two serious STDs with prevalence as high as 40 percent among sexually active

teenagers.”

Nevertheless, condoms have become the centerpiece of U.S. AIDS policy and the major recommendation of most sex education classes in America. Many sex educators have stopped calling their curricula “safe sex” and have renamed them “safer sex”—focusing instead on various risk reduction methods. But is this false sense of security and protection actually increasing the risks young people face?

If kids buy the notion that if they just use condoms they will be safe from AIDS or any other sexually transmitted disease whenever they have sex, they are being seriously misled. They should be correctly informed that having sex with any partner having the AIDS virus is life-threatening, condoms or no condoms. It would be analogous to playing Russian roulette with two bullets in your six chambers. Using condoms removes only one of the bullets. The gun still remains deadly with the potential of a lethal outcome.

School-based Health Clinics

As comprehensive sex education curricula have been promoted in the schools, clinics have been established to provide teens greater access to birth control information and devices. Proponents cite studies that supposedly demonstrate the effectiveness of these clinics on teen sexual behavior. Yet a more careful evaluation shows that school-based health clinics do not lower the teen pregnancy rate.

The most often-cited study involved the experience of the clinic at Mechanics Arts High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. Researchers found that a drop in the number of teen births during the late 1970s coincided with an increase in female participation at the school-based clinic. But at least three important issues undermine the validity of this study.

First, some of the statistics are anecdotal rather than

statistical. School officials admitted that the schools could not document the decrease in pregnancies. Second, the total female enrollment of the two schools included in the study dropped significantly. Third, the study actually shows a drop in the teen birth rate rather than the teen pregnancy rate. The reduction in the fertility rate listed in the study was likely due to more teenagers obtaining an abortion.

Today, more and more advocates of school-based health clinics are citing a three-year study headed by Laurie Zabin at Johns Hopkins University, which evaluated the effect of sex education on teenagers. The study of two school-based clinics in Baltimore, Maryland, showed there was a 30 percent reduction in teen pregnancies.

But even this study leaves many unanswered questions. The size of the sample was small and over 30 percent of the female sample dropped out between the first and last measurement periods. Critics point out that some of girls who dropped out of the study may have dropped out of school because they were pregnant. Other researchers point out that the word *abortion* is never mentioned in the brief report, leading them to conclude that only live births were counted.

On the other hand, an extensive, national study done by the Institute for Research and Evaluation shows that community-based clinics used by teenagers actually increase teen pregnancy. A two-year study by Joseph Olsen and Stan Weed found that teenage participation in these clinics lowered teen birth rates. But when pregnancies ending in miscarriage or abortion were factored in, the total teen pregnancy rates increased by as much as 120 pregnancies per one thousand clients.

Douglas Kirby, former director of the Center for Population Options, had to admit the following: "We have been engaged in a research project for several years on the impact of school-based clinics. . . . We find basically that there is no

measurable impact upon the use of birth control, not upon pregnancy rates or birth rates.”

Sex Education Programs

As we've seen, the evidence indicates that the so-called “solution” provided by sex educators can actually make problems worse.

The problem is simple: education is not the answer. Teaching comprehensive sex education, distributing condoms, and establishing school-based clinics is not effective. When your audience is impressionable teens entering puberty, explicit sex education does more to entice than educate. Teaching them the “facts” about sex without providing any moral framework merely breaks down mental barriers of shame and innocence and encourages teens to experiment sexually.

A Louis Harris poll conducted for Planned Parenthood found that the highest rates of teen sexual activity were among those who had comprehensive sex education, as opposed to those who had less. In the 1980s, a Congressional study found that a decade-and-a-half of comprehensive, safe sex education resulted in a doubling in the number of sexually active teenage women.

Our society today is filled with teenagers and young adults who know a lot about human sexuality. It is probably fair to say that they know more about sex than any generation that has preceded them, but education is not enough. Sex education can increase the knowledge students have about sexuality, but it does not necessarily affect their values or behavior. Since 1970 the federal government has spent nearly \$3 billion on Title X sex education programs. During that period of time nonmarital teen births increased 61 percent and nonmarital pregnancy rates (fifteen-to-nineteen-year-olds) increased 87 percent.

Douglas Kirby wrote these disturbing observations in the *Journal of School Health*:

“Past studies of sex education suggest several conclusions. They indicate that sex education programs can increase knowledge, but they also indicate that most programs have relatively little impact on values, particularly values regarding one’s personal behavior. They also indicate that programs do not affect the incidence of sexual activity. According to one study, sex education programs may increase the use of birth control among some groups, but not among others. Results from another study indicate they have no measurable impact on the use of birth control. According to one study, they are associated with lower pregnancy rates, while another study indicates they are not. Programs certainly do not appear to have as dramatic an impact on behavior as professionals once has hoped.”

So, if sex education is not the solution, what is? Let’s look at the benefits of abstinence and the abstinence message in the schools.

Abstinence

Less than a decade ago an abstinence-only program was rare in the public schools. Today, directive abstinence programs can be found in many school districts while battles are fought in other school districts for their inclusion or removal. While proponents of abstinence programs run for school board or influence existing school board members, groups like Planned Parenthood bring lawsuits against districts that use abstinence-based curricula, arguing that they are inaccurate or incomplete.

The emergence of abstinence-only programs as an alternative to comprehensive sex education programs was due to both popularity and politics. Parents concerned about the

ineffectiveness of the safe- sex message eagerly embraced the message of abstinence. And political funding helped spread the message and legitimize its educational value.

Parents and children have embraced the abstinence message in significant numbers. One national poll by the University of Chicago found that 68 percent of adults surveyed said premarital sex among teenagers is "always wrong." A poll for *USA Weekend* found that 72 percent of the teens and 78 percent of the adults said they agree with the pro-abstinence message.

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

First, teenagers want to learn about abstinence. Contrary to the often repeated teenage claim, not "everyone's doing it." A study by the Centers for Disease Control found that 43 percent of teenagers from ages fourteen to seventeen had engaged in sexual intercourse at least once. Put another way, the latest surveys suggest that a majority of teenagers are *not* doing it.

Second, abstinence prevents pregnancy. Proponents of abstinence- only programs argue that abstinence will significantly lower the teenage pregnancy rate, and they cited numerous anecdotes and statistics to make their case.

Third, abstinence prevents sexually transmitted diseases. After more than three decades the sexual revolution has taken lots of prisoners. Before 1960, doctors were concerned about only two STDs: syphilis and gonorrhoea. Today there are more than twenty significant STDs ranging from the relatively harmless to the fatal.

Fourth, abstinence prevents emotional scars. Abstinence speakers relate dozens and dozens of stories of young people who wish they had postponed sex until marriage. Sex is the most intimate form of bonding known to the human race, and it

is a special gift to be given to one's spouse.

Teenagers want and need to hear the message of abstinence. They want to promote the message of abstinence. Their health, and even their lives, are at stake.

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Education: What Works

If anything is constant in public education, it is the endless cycle of reform and innovation that in turn generates endless theories and educational jargon. Heated conflicts exist over how to teach everything from reading to algebra. In the past, when our public schools were mostly local affairs, the debate was more localized. Today, state legislatures and even Congress take part in the battles, which can occasionally become the single most important issue in statewide elections.

Parents are usually not interested in the politics of education; they want to know what works! They realize that their children have one opportunity to become an educated person and those inappropriate educational ends or methods will permanently shape their children's lives. Here we will focus on answers to the question, "What works in education?" Some of the answers will come from a compilation of research done by the Department of Education under William Bennett in the 1980's.

Education should be about two tasks, building the intellect and instilling virtue. Regarding the intellect, the following words of Jacques Barzun serve us well:

[I]t is intelligence stored up and made into habits of discipline, signs and symbols of meaning, chains of reasoning and spurs to emotions—a shorthand (and a wireless) by which the mind can skip connectives, recognize ability, and communicate truth. Intellect is at once a body of common knowledge and the channels through which the right particle of it can be brought to bear quickly, without the effort of redemonstration, on the matter in hand.[{1}](#)

Many have recognized the fact that parents are the first and most important teachers of their children. Christian parents should seek to begin their children's education as early as possible. To that end, John Amos Comenius wrote in his work *The Great Didactic* that,

If we want to educate a person in virtue we must polish him at a tender age. And if someone is to advance toward wisdom he must be opened up for it in the first years of his life when his industriousness is still burning, his mind is malleable, and his memory still strong.[{2}](#)

What can parents do? To begin with, the more book-friendly parents can make a home the better. Parents should read to their young children and let their children read to them. Asking in-depth questions about what is being read will boost comprehension skills, vocabulary, and general knowledge. Keep a consistent family routine for meals, bedtime and homework. Both parents should model the importance of a life of the mind. One of the best ways of doing this is to limit mindless entertainment like television. For, in order for our children to become mature handlers of the Word (2 Timothy 2:15), they must become competent readers.

Next we will look at the way parents and teachers can partner together to educate our children.

The Parent Teacher Partnership

It is extremely important that both teacher and parents convey high expectations to students regarding academic performance. Studies have shown that low expectations on the part of teachers can become self-fulfilling prophecies for their students. These students are often seated far from the teacher, receiving less direct instruction and attention. Parents need to work with teachers who have failed to expect good work from their children. This requires frequent communication with the teacher, as well as the student. If a parent perceives that a teacher may have "given up" on their child, a meeting with everyone involved, including a school counselor, should be called immediately. If the situation is allowed to continue, your child may find himself hopelessly behind.

Sometimes parents demand too much of their children, resulting in anxiety and low self-confidence, but it is far more common for parents not to expect reasonably high standards for their children's academic work.

A corollary to setting high expectations for students is helping them to make a healthy connection between ability and effort. When students are young they equate effort with ability. In other words, if they work hard and do well, they assume that they have a high level of ability. Failure means that they did not try hard enough, something that they can personally overcome on the next assignment. Later, students learn that ability and effort are not the same. Some students need to work much harder at certain things in order to do as well as others. As a result, students might try to mask what they perceive to be low ability by turning in tests early even though they are hastily finished or by choosing not to participate in class discussions. High levels of effort come to represent low ability. As a result many students fail to work to their potential. Believing that they lack ability,

they eventually lose hope for academic success.

Underachievement becomes a response to the possibility that they may be low ability students. Teachers and parents must intervene before these patterns become fixed. By setting high standards and insisting on consistent, diligent work, parents and teachers can work together to build confidence that can become the foundation for future effort. In some cases, parents may need to help their children crawl before they can walk. They may have to supervise homework efforts minute by minute until the student begins to see a connection between the work invested and its resulting success.

Some general rules for successful study include: convince your child not to cram or try to accomplish large amounts of work in one sitting, help them to weigh the importance of an assignment by developing a system of schoolwork triage, and help your student to identify the standards necessary to succeed. Parents and students should work together to find a strategy that yields the best results.

Classroom Environment

The amount of class time spent on instruction has an obvious influence on student achievement. Unfortunately, studies show that in elementary classrooms actual "time on task," time focused on academic subjects, ranges from 50 percent to 90 percent of a given school day. This is so proportioned because of tasks imposed on the classroom teacher by those outside of the schools. But it can also be an indication of poor classroom management. What does a well-managed classroom look like?

First, class work is carefully planned, including content, presentation time, and instructional activities. Good teachers set and communicate clear expectations to the students so that they know what is required to succeed. They also make sure that content is sequenced so that it builds in a logical and

consistent fashion and that students know where they are heading and how to get there.[{3}](#) A good teacher will also check students for comprehension often and give them multiple opportunities to practice what they have learned. This common sense approach to classroom management is called direct instruction, and research indicates that it has been found to help young and disadvantaged students learn basic skills and older, higher ability students to tackle more complex material.[{4}](#)

Since the more time that is focused on a topic naturally results in greater learning, the way that a teacher utilizes homework is also important. Research shows that although homework is beneficial for all students, it is even more significant for those with low and medium abilities. In fact, average students who do three to five hours of homework a week, begin to receive grades equal to those of high-ability students who do no homework at all.[{5}](#) It has been found that Japanese students spend about twice as much time studying outside of school as American students.[{6}](#)

However, not every type of homework is helpful. All of us can remember doing homework that seemed like an afterthought. Homework needs to be well planned to be effective. It should relate directly to what is happening in the classroom and be treated as an integral part of instruction by the teacher. This means that teachers should take time to evaluate the assignments and count the grade. Assignments should be analytical rather than standard work sheets, and they should encourage students to think more deeply about the material. Homework encourages students to follow directions, to make comparisons, to raise questions, and to develop responsibility and self-discipline.[{7}](#)

Student assessment is another key factor to effective schooling. Teachers should evaluate students often in order to detect if the material is being covered too quickly or too slowly. Assessment should be done often and by various means.

Teachers should use essays, tests, homework, quizzes (both verbal and written), as well as group projects to measure student progress. Students benefit from immediate feedback so that they can correct ineffective study habits or arrange for special tutoring

Teaching Methods

You wouldn't think that how we teach children to read would be very controversial. It is! The ongoing battle between whole-language advocates and those who recommend systematic, structured phonics instruction is a heated and often strident one. The two methods stand on very different theoretical foundations and thus emphasize different activities for children. Both use phonics and both advocate early, intensive reading by children. But whole-language promoters argue that learning to read and write are natural skills that can be acquired as easily as learning to talk. Just immerse children in words and good books, and they will eventually make sense of it all. Phonics advocates argue that reading is not a natural skill, and that children need intensive and comprehensive phonics training to succeed. They add that a high level of illiteracy, even in the U.S. where the written word is universally found, refutes the notion that language skill acquisition is automatic.

Jeanne Chall, long time professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education argued that research has established that reading is essentially a phonemic activity; children must know the relationship between sounds and letters. If children have not mastered this basic information, they cannot learn to read. Research has also demonstrated that teaching phonics benefits all children, particularly those who are at risk. Focusing on phonics does not deaden a child's desire to read, in fact, whole language is hurting children by not providing them with the tools necessary to read.[\[8\]](#) Although whole language advocates argue that invented spelling, which calls

upon students to apply phonics knowledge, actually forces students to think more deeply about phonics, others are not convinced of its effectiveness.

Our question is, "What really works?" Research by Steven A. Stahl and Patricia Miller concluded, "We have no evidence showing that whole language programs produce effects that are stronger than existing basal programs, and potentially may produce lower effects." [\[9\]](#) Even stalwarts of whole language are moving towards a more comprehensive phonics curriculum.

Similar arguments have arisen over the use of calculators in early math instruction. Although many math teachers advocate early classroom use, the public is not so sure. One survey found that 80 percent of math teachers are in favor of early use, but only 10 percent of the public agrees. Although the final word on early calculator use is still out, research does support the use of manipulatives in teaching young children math. Using objects to represent mathematical values helps students to understand abstract ideas quicker.

Likewise, students learn science best when they are able to do experiments on personal predictions regarding natural phenomenon. Students often reject textbook and lecture material for what they consider to be common sense. Only when they are confronted with actual experimental data do they shed themselves of incorrect assumptions.

Finally let's look at how overall school organization affects learning.

School Organization

Schools benefit greatly from having a strong educational leader, usually the principal, who focuses continually on improving the educational program of the school. This doesn't seem too controversial. Unfortunately, many principals are either not equipped to perform this role or are not expected

to. In order to be an educational leader, a principal must have thought carefully and deeply about what it means to be an educated person, and to have developed a clear vision for implementing his or her plan. Some principals haven't had the academic experience to prepare them for this role. Too many have come from a physical education background and coaching duties, which may be a plus when it comes to discipline problems, but not very helpful in constructing an overall vision for academic excellence.

The educational leader should also enjoy a high degree of autonomy in building his or her program. This includes the hiring and firing of teachers and unrestricted communication with parents. Success is often determined by how well parents and teachers can be motivated towards the principal's vision. Unfortunately, this is much easier to do in private schools than in public ones.

A safe and orderly school environment is necessary for learning to occur. Nevertheless, many schools do not enjoy this basic requirement for success. This problem not only impacts inner city schools, which fight the multiple problems related to poverty and highly bureaucratic administrations. Rural schools can suffer from poor discipline and a lack of consistent policies as well. Realistically, even in generally good schools, a single teacher can diminish the educational experience of his or her class by refusing to, or not even desiring to, maintain order. This is where a strong principal can step in and make a difference.

A teaching staff is most effective when they share high morale, agree that students need grounding in the basics of each subject, and hold students to high standards. Teacher collegiality, the sharing of problems and solutions with one another in a professional atmosphere, is another indication of an effective teaching staff. Unfortunately, many teachers operate without the benefit of peer input. Collegiality seems to occur more often at the elementary school level than in our

high schools.

Schools that test their students for the purpose of offering remedial help tend to be more effective, as are those that encourage their students to take more advanced academic courses.

Just knowing what an effective school looks like is only part of the battle for better schools. The challenge is to change poorly performing schools into effective ones. Research shows that effective schools tend to have a much higher degree of autonomy than ineffective ones; something found far more often in private schools than in public schools. Unfortunately, our public school bureaucracy doesn't appear to be moving in the right direction.

Notes

1. Jacques Barzun, *The House of Intellect*, (Harper & Row: New York, 1959), 4.
2. *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning*, U.S. Department of Education, 1986, 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 34.
4. *Ibid.*, 35.
5. *Ibid.*, 41.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 42.
8. "Whole Language in the 90's," *Update, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, Vol 35 #9, 1993.
9. Arthur Ellis & Jeffrey Fouts, *Research on Educational Innovations*, Princeton, NJ: Eye On Education, 46.

The Feminization of American Schools

There is growing recognition that American school-age boys are not doing well. In fact, many of our sons are experiencing significant problems both inside and outside of the classroom. This is ironic since educators have been concerned primarily about girls since a 1990 report released by the American Association of University Women claimed that girls are the ones being shortchanged in school.

However, recent statistics reveal that from the elementary years and beyond, girls get better grades than boys and generally fare better in school.[{1}](#) Although girls have all but eliminated the much-discussed math and science gap with boys, boys' scores in reading and writing have been on the decline for years. At the end of eighth grade, boys are held back 50 percent more often, and girls are twice as likely to say that they want to pursue a professional career.[{2}](#) Boys are twice as likely to be labeled "learning disabled" and in some schools are ten times more likely to be diagnosed with learning disorders such as ADD. Boys now make up two thirds of our special education classes and account for 71 percent of all school suspensions.[{3}](#) There is also evidence that boys suffer from low self-esteem and lack confidence as learners.[{4}](#)

As high school seniors, girls have higher educational goals than boys, are more likely to enroll in college, and once there, are more likely to complete a bachelor's degree in five years.[{5}](#) The majority of those receiving master's degrees are now women and the percentage of males seeking professional degrees is declining every year.[{6}](#) Boys are not faring much better outside the classroom either. Boys are three times more likely to be a victim of a violent crime and between four to six times more likely to commit suicide.[{7}](#)

While there is little controversy that a problem exists, widely divergent causes and solutions are being offered. Dr. William Pollack, who among other things is a faculty member of the Harvard Medical School and a founding member of the Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity of the American Psychological Association, has written a book titled *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*. He argues that a false masculinity is being forced on our boys, one that disconnects them from themselves. In a very general sense, our boys need to get back in touch with who they really are. Christina Hoff Sommers, a W. H. Brady Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, takes an opposing view. She believes that our boys suffer from a school environment that favors feminine traits and that attempts to squeeze boys into an androgynous mold from which they naturally rebel.

Although both of these authors could be wrong, they most certainly cannot both be right. In this article we will consider the arguments and attempt to discover what needs to be done to help our boys.

Losing the Inner Boy

One popular viewpoint among feminists contends that boys are suffering from masculinity myths which, when enforced, work to squeeze them into a gender straightjacket. According to this theory, outmoded notions about masculinity cause parents to push boys away from their mothers too soon, resulting in a life long sense of anxiety and permanent damage to self-esteem. This is the viewpoint of Harvard professor William Pollack in his book *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*.

What are these masculine myths that Dr. Pollack feels are so dangerous? The first myth is that nature wins out over nurture, in other words, that boys will be boys. The assumption here is that testosterone is more powerful in shaping behavior than relationships and training are. The

second myth is that boys *should* be boys. This dangerous myth supports the idea that boys should learn to be tough and never exhibit feminine traits. Myth number three is that boys are toxic. Where girls have a civilizing effect on the environment, boys are by nature dangerous and potentially damaging to those around them.

When these myths are used as a guide to raising boys, Dr. Pollack believes that we damage our children. In our desire to make boys into tough, competitive men, they lose touch with who they really are, their "inner boy," and as a result they become angry, dysfunctional adult males likely to abuse their wives and neglect their children.

Much of what Dr. Pollack says about boys rings true. He wants us to raise boys who are able to be empathetic, compassionate, and to appreciate the full spectrum of human behavior. Unfortunately, he defines gender roles so broadly that he leaves us with few discernable boundaries. It appears that Dr. Pollack would agree with feminist Gloria Steinem who recently advocated that "we need to raise boys like we raise girls." [\[8\]](#)

According to Dr. Pollack homosexuality is no longer controversial. It is normal. And much of the damage done to young boys is the result of homophobia. Unfortunately, what he considers to be the strongest scientific evidence for the biological roots of homosexuality is a study done in the 1950's. [\[9\]](#) He ignores recent research that greatly reduces the strength of his argument.

The only guideline that seems to matter to professor Pollack is whether or not a specific behavior makes a boy happy. Happiness is all that counts, even if a boy feels that happiness lies in the homosexual lifestyle, or in a promiscuous heterosexual one. Humanistic psychology really doesn't have much else to go on. The biblical concept that a holy God might have created male and female with distinct roles in mind does not enter into the picture.

Therefore, let us consider a response to the popular ideas of Dr. Pollack.

The Androgynous Zone

The 1990's brought to bear a number of powerful ideas on the way schools look at and treat boys. Carol Gilligan, Harvard's first professor of gender studies, wrote a book in the early '80s that described how young girls lose their self-esteem when they reach adolescence. The American Association of University Women built on her work in the early 90s by releasing a survey that announced that girls were victims of a "male-voiced" culture and, as a result, lose self-esteem when they reach the age of twelve or thirteen. Successful lobbying of Congress resulted in passage of the Gender Equity Act in 1994 that categorized girls as an under-served population, placing them on par with other oppressed minorities.

Since then teachers and administrators have been deluged with gender equity materials and conferences sponsored by the Department of Education. However, what really panicked school administrators was a 1999 Supreme Court decision that applied sexual harassment laws to school children. The decision resulted from a lawsuit by the family of a ten-year-old Monroe, Georgia, girl because of the school's failure to prevent her harassment by a ten-year-old boy. With the threat of expensive lawsuits over their heads, principals could not refuse to inject gender politics into their schools.

An example of the kind of information being disseminated can be gleaned from statements made by the director of the Women's Educational Equity Act Publishing Center, Katherine Hanson. Hanson has argued that four million women are beaten to death every year in America, that violence is the leading cause of death among women, and that the leading cause of injury among women is being beaten by a man at home.[{10}](#) These would be shocking statistics if they were true. Actually, one million women die in this country each year with the leading cause of

death being heart disease, followed by cancer.[{11}](#) Homicide is far down the list, after suicide.[{12}](#)

Why do gender equity leaders feel the need to exaggerate the abuse of women in our society? It is because they want to establish a radical retraining of America's boys. Feminists like Dr. Nancy Marshall of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women believe that gender is a totally learned concept. She states that "when babies are born, they do not know about gender."[{13}](#) In other words, little boys have to learn what it means to be a boy. She believes that this happens between the ages of two to seven. In a slide show presented by Ms. Marshall, she explained that "a young mind is like Jell-O: you learn to fill it up with all the good stuff before it sets."[{14}](#) The good stuff constitutes the feminization of boys. To make her point, she returned several times to the image of a pre-school boy dressed up in high heels and a dress.

Gender Politics in the Classroom

Gender crusaders believe that if they can influence little boys early enough, they can make them more like little girls. Feminist philosopher Sandra Lee Bartky writes that human beings are born bisexual and through conditioning are "transformed into male and female gender personalities."[{15}](#) William Pollack, a Harvard psychologist, argues that by doing away with traditional male stereotypes the next generation of boys "will be able to safely stay in the doll corner as long as they wish, without being taunted."[{16}](#) Age appropriate doll playing by boys is not a problem. Yet it becomes one when it is the center of an attempt to redefine what it means to be male.

The Department of Education supported the writing of a model curriculum for day care providers called *Creating Sex-Fair Family Day Care*.[{17}](#) It seems that the main goal of the curriculum is, again, to get boys to play with dolls. Of its

ten photographs, two are of boys with dolls. Instructors are warned to “avoid highly feminine dolls such as Barbie or highly masculine dolls such as G.I. Joe.”[{18}](#) They also urge instructors to monitor the children’s fantasy play. If gender stereotypes are acted out, adults should be ready to intervene. According to the authors, without gender neutral child rearing, “we cannot fulfill our dreams of equality for all people.”[{19}](#)

A teacher in San Francisco is going one step further. She has transformed her classroom into a woman-centered community of learners. All the images in the classroom are of women, and as one feminist noted “perhaps for the first time, boys are the ones looking through the window.”[{20}](#) While each student is required to perform a dramatic dialogue in the author’s voice, the boys are forced to do works by women. One little boy attempts to lip-synch a song by blues singer Etta James, and when the other boys giggle they are chastised for their insensitivity.[{21}](#) During a history class the girls are encouraged to discuss how boys are sexual predators. The teacher is excited to see how angry the girls are getting. Although one boy tries to defend his gender, another admits to an interviewer, “I couldn’t really defend myself, because it’s true. Men are pigs, you know?”[{22}](#)

Schools are denying the very behavior that makes little boys boys. In Southern California, a mother was stunned to find out that her son was disciplined for running and jumping over a bench at recess.[{23}](#) Studies in England have shown that boys benefit from competition in school. However, in deference to the female tendency to learn more in cooperative groups, competition of all types is being purged from the schoolhouse. Sixty percent of American high schools no longer use class rankings or announce valedictorians.[{24}](#) Referring to the hostility towards honor rolls, one principal has stated, “It flies in the face of the philosophy of not making it so competitive for those little kids...We even frown on spelling

bees.”[{25}](#)

Biblical Masculinity

Feminists argue that we only have two models of masculinity to pick from. On the one hand, we have the self-centered, win-at-all-costs, barbaric, macho mentality portrayed by the stereotypical high school football coach. They contend that this model produces boys who beat, rape, and generally oppress women. It is also blamed for the bloodshed on high school campuses in Colorado, Arkansas, and elsewhere. The other model, the one offered by feminists, calls for a “profound revolution,” one that will change the way society constructs young males.[{26}](#) It hopes to eliminate stereotypical boyish behavior such as roughhousing and aggressive competition. In fact, they hope the future will look more like the Philadelphia school which has “replaced the traditional recess with ‘socialized recesses,’ in which children are assigned structured activities and carefully monitored” so that gender stereotypes are extinguished.[{27}](#)

I would like to endorse a third model of masculinity. This biblical model defines mature masculinity as “a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships” with the opposite sex.[{28}](#) This biblical model assumes a number of things to be true about gender. First of all, God created men and women to complement each other. Both are equally valuable to God and His kingdom, but each have different God-given roles. Second, it looks to the servant leadership model depicted by Christ’s role as head of the church, for which He suffered and died.

Boys who embrace this ideal of mature masculinity would not stand by and allow women to be abused physically or sexually, as has recently occurred in a Central Park celebration. Nor would they personally take advantage of a woman without violating their own definition of what it means to be a man.

This picture of masculinity allows men to be nurturing and sensitive. It doesn't prohibit them from being chefs or nurses. It does define, in an ultimate sense, how a man is to perceive a woman. He is to treat all women, starting with his mother, as worthy of being honored and protected. When men's competitive, physically active natures are focused on this purpose, women will find our society a much safer place in which to dwell.

It will be an uphill battle to restore this kind of thinking in our schools, especially when the trend is going in the opposite direction. However, as parents we have considerable influence on our boys and young men. A biblical ethic should be communicated clearly and often as our boys grow older, and specifically when they begin to have significant relationships with girls. To allow the feminist model to dominate will result in frustrated boys who are stymied in their God-given role to lead, provide for, and protect the women in their lives.

Re-engineering boys in the name of egalitarianism will not only fail, but do damage to countless normal children in our schools.

Notes

1. William Pollack, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 15.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., xxiii
5. "Education Week" (Vol. XIX, #34, May 3, 2000), 1.
6. Pollack, 15.
7. Ibid.
8. Christina Hoff Sommers, *The War Against Boys*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 44.
9. Pollack, 214.

10. Ibid., 48.
11. Ibid., 49.
12. Ibid.
13. bid., 74.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 86.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 76.
18. Ibid., 77.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 81.
21. Ibid., 82.
22. Ibid., 83.
23. Ibid., 94.
24. Ibid., 169.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 85.
27. Ibid., 95.
28. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 36.

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Helping Your Child in School

Introduction

Over the course of their growing up, our two children have attended private Christian schools, public schools, and have been home schooled. To some, this personal experience makes us experts and is far more valuable than the twelve years I was a teacher and principal in public schools. To others my wife and I were merely confused and couldn't make up our minds. The

truth is probably somewhere in the middle.

I do know that nothing can be more exciting or frustrating than watching your child engage in the learning process and ultimately move towards mature independent adulthood.

Looking back at our twenty years of parenting, I would encourage all new parents to take the long view regarding the mental and moral development of their children. There are times when our little ones amaze us with their insight and precocious behavior. At other times we become desperate for any sign of intelligent life. Fortunately, most of our children will grow up to be capable adults. If we are patient and compassionate, not exasperating our sons and daughters with unreasonable demands (Eph. 6:4), we can not only enjoy a good relationship with them, but often they will follow our steps of faith.

A second axiom is that you are your child's first and most important teacher. This point cannot be emphasized enough. In most cases, no one cares about your child as much as you care nor do they know your child like you do. This means that you must be engaged in the educational process of your child at every step regardless of the setting. Part of this responsibility includes deciding what goals should be accomplished by your children's education. The answer to this question might seem obvious. However, quite a variety of goals have been suggested. Some believe that learning to live in a democracy is the ultimate educational concern. Others emphasize vocation training. Still others seek character development or becoming a global citizen. It would be time well spent to think about the kind of person that should emerge from twelve or sixteen years of schooling.

Next, I would argue that there is no such thing as a perfect school, but there *are* some really bad ones. Unfortunately, this is true about private schools and home schools, as well as public schools. Just because a school has chosen to call

itself Christian, it does not automatically follow that the school offers a sound curriculum or that its teachers are capable and motivated. In fact, private schools can fall victim to many of the ills found in public schools.

Finally I would argue that, as parents, we are called to use discernment when making important educational choices. This demands that we take very little for granted when it comes to our children's education. And one of the important aspects of our children's education is the parent-school connection.

The Parent-School Connection

There is much more freedom today for parents to choose a school that fits their educational philosophy and goals. Rather than being the end of a parent's responsibilities, selecting between a public or private school is really just the beginning. Once a child is placed in a school, the parent's job as chief advocate begins.

Although teachers, counselors, and administrators are usually well intentioned, students slip through the cracks in even the best schools. Students can sometimes find themselves at odds with a teacher or administrator because of an oversight or immature behavior, or they fail to get important information regarding their course selection and requirements for graduation.

Under ideal circumstances, a parent would want to get to know, and be known by school administrators and other personnel before a problem occurs. Volunteering at the school—in the library, on committees, or in the classroom—is not only a positive civic service, but is also a good way to ensure a sympathetic hearing if a problem occurs later.

In order to be an effective advocate, a parent needs to be aware of the school's authority structure and rules. Every

school should publish a handbook with all the important rules and regulations, as well as graduation requirements. Students are notorious for not reading or taking these documents seriously. It is often parents who must guide their children through course selection and run-ins with school personnel. Another important source of information is the school's open house. Schools usually host an open house each semester for the purpose of allowing parents the opportunity to meet their child's teachers and see the rooms they are assigned to.

Though most parents are hesitant to interfere with their child's schooling, my experience says that if something feels amiss, it is better to get involved rather than simply hope things will just work out. Teachers and administrators are public servants. Parents who are courteous, yet assertive, often get results when problems occur. Unfortunately, waiting and hoping for a positive resolution to a problem can result in long term difficulties for your child.

One obvious place for parental involvement is in your child's placement. In grade school this might mean tracking or special education classes. In high school, it might be the choice between vocational college prep, and honors programs. Such decisions should never be considered final. Unfortunately, once a student is placed in one program there is a tendency for school personnel to stick to that decision. But children change. Sometimes an honors class proves too demanding, or a vocational curriculum is not challenging enough. The parent is usually the best person to make these assessments.

The Parent-Teacher Connection

Teachers are often hard working, dedicated, and sacrificial in the amount of time they devote to their profession. However, like most other workplaces, schools also employ many mediocre and some highly incompetent staff. No matter how good a school's reputation might be, your son's or daughter's learning experience will be directly dependent upon the

teacher standing in front of him or her. It is often left to the parent to determine the capability of their child's teachers and then decide whether or not to leave them in the care of a particular teacher. If signs point to an abusive or merely incompetent teacher, do not wait for the administration to act. The impact on your child's education and well being can be substantial.

Elementary level teachers who demand too much or too little of students, or who do not understand or manage classroom behavior well, are widespread. High school teachers who are asked to teach outside their area of expertise or who fail to do the work necessary to become minimally competent are also common. Unfortunately, new teachers are sometimes thrown into a classroom with very little support and that can result in problems over discipline or grading policies. Remember faculty difficulties occur in even the highest-rated schools.

When a problem does arise, meet with the teacher as soon as possible. Although one wants to hope for the best, look for signs that the teacher is disorganized or preoccupied with problems outside of the school environment. Talk with other parents to find out if the concern is a new one or if a pattern exists. If a serious problem exists, go to a guidance counselor and request a classroom or schedule change for your child. If this is not allowed, get the principal involved. Often, what appears to be an impossibility from the school's position becomes a reality if a parent is patient and does not give in to the first "No."

Let's hope incompetence is not an issue. Even so, meeting your child's teacher or teachers and letting them know that you are engaged in your son's or daughter's education is important. If a teacher already knows you, he or she will be more likely to contact you if need be. They will also be more inclined to engage your help in motivating your child before more serious problems occur. Most teachers really want students to succeed; if they feel that you are on their side, you will become an

important ally in their work.

We should also to remember to pray for our child's instructors. The group "Moms in Touch" does a great job of this. Most of all remember to be gracious; teachers have a remarkably difficult job and will appreciate anyone who supports them and acknowledges the importance of their work. We are ambassadors for Christ, even in our interactions with school personnel.

The Parent-Student Connection

It never seems to fail that you will hear how great all of your friends' children are doing in school just when your son or daughter is experiencing their most severe classroom difficulties. The pain parents can feel when their child is struggling in school can be profound. Problems can range from relationships with other students to cases of severe underachievement or rebellion. Unsolved, these problems can destroy an academic career and worse, destroy the self-confidence necessary for a child's success in life.

A strong parent-student connection is fundamental to avoiding major school problems. Contrary to popular belief, the need for this connection grows rather than diminishes as kids get older. High school students still need help in making critical decisions about class selection and extra-curricular activities, as well as occasional help in navigating the maze of modern high school life, and growth into adulthood.

Throughout a child's education one of the most important parental role is to be a good listener. Fortunately, most young children want to talk about school. Make it a practice to have a daily debriefing time. As children get older, particularly during the high school years, parents may need to be more patient and creative in order to stay informed.

Teenagers are much more likely to choose their own time to let

you into their life. The most important thing for parents is to be available when that time hits (often very late at night when you are exhausted). Teens, especially boys, seem to enjoy making provocative statements just to shock parents. Don't react to the first words that come out of their mouths; eventually they will learn to trust you and realize that you really do want to listen, not just preach a sermon they already have memorized.

Parents should be constant encouragers. This doesn't mean giving praise when it is not deserved, but rather praising real effort and pointing out signs of growing maturity and discipline. Parents should also offer personal support like helping a child to memorize a list of historical events or think through a geometry problem. Let your struggling student know that you are with him for the long haul, that together you can accomplish whatever school requires. If a student will not let you help, find an outside tutor who is acceptable. The money will be well spent.

In the rush for academic excellence, parents and guidance counselors can pile on advanced classes that crush even hard working students. Watch for signs of depression and irritability, and be ready to help your son or daughter out of a workload that may have become overwhelming.

Maintaining an honest and positive relationship with our children is essential if we are going to have much influence on their schoolwork. Compassion, humor, and loving guidance will go a long way towards keeping the door open to their mind and heart.

Summary

We have considered how parents can further their children's education by developing connections to their school and with their teacher or teachers, by taking the time to know their children's needs, and by being available to share their

educational burdens.

In closing, I would like to spend some time putting academic success into perspective. Parents sometimes blindly accept the notion that academic success is the answer to every problem. Historically, this has been the position of Enlightenment thinkers from Rousseau to John Dewey. If God is out of the picture, human reason—enhanced by education³/₄ is of paramount importance.

Christianity has always valued education because of the foundational nature of the Bible. Only a literate people could directly benefit from God's revelation. However, the Bible never teaches that education is the solution to humanity's problems. It is evidence of misplaced priorities if Christian parents stress academic achievements over all others. Ephesians 6:4 tells fathers to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. This is the only mandated education the Bible speaks about. If we push our children academically to the point where our relationship with them is in danger, we might just miss the opportunity to accomplish the Ephesians mandate successfully.

One extreme is to push talented students to achieve more and more, earlier and earlier. Often, these students find themselves academically burned out by college. I recently met a gifted student who took part in a program that placed her in a nearby college as a high school junior. From there she went on to study engineering at UC-Berkeley. Now as a college senior, she realizes that she doesn't even like engineering and is worn out by the rush to finish. I have met other students who worked very hard in high school only to lose interest in college.

At the other end of the spectrum are those students who are underachievers from elementary school on and seem to need constant attention and encouragement. If we communicate that education is the only thing that is really important, failure

in this area of their life can be catastrophic for both the child and the parent. Teenage suicide is one of the main causes of death among high school students and it becomes an option when a student feels trapped by rigid high expectations and sees no way out.

Our children need to know that God cares about school and their daily trials, and we need to pray with them about their schoolwork and the hard choices that they face everyday. However, He is even more concerned about the condition of their heart. As parents, our first priority is to teach our children to love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind.

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Privacy 2000

Introduction

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

As we cover this important issue of privacy and focus on a specific threats to our privacy I want to begin by highlighting how quickly our privacy is being lost and how

often it takes place without any debate.

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

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

Some of the proposals were defeated, at least for now. The national ID card was defeated, for example, not because Congress debated the issue, but because thousands of Americans wrote letters and made phone calls. Most other issues, however, are moving ahead. Congress gave the FBI permission to use "roving wiretap surveillance." That means that the next time you use a pay phone at your local grocery store, it may be tapped merely because there's a criminal suspect within the area. One wiretap order in California authorized surveillance on 350 phones for over two years. In another case, five pay phones were tapped, intercepting 131,000 conversations.

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

establish some limits to this invasion of our privacy.

National ID Card

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

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

A little history is in order. Back in 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. This charged the federal Department of Transportation with establishing national requirements for birth certificates and driver’s licenses. Add to this the 1996 Kennedy-Kassebaum health-care law that implies that Americans may be required in the future to produce a state- issued ID that conforms to federal specifications.

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

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

The good news is that the work by Congressmen Ron Paul and Bob Barr paid off and the attempt to create a national ID card was

stopped, for now. But it is likely to surface again. After all there has been a push to establish a federal database for Americans and having each person carry an ID card would allow that information to be linked to a federal database. And while it would help the government catch illegal aliens, it could also be used to track law-abiding American citizens.

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

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

Carnivore

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

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

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

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

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

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

Encryption

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

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

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

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

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

your credit card purchases, and your e-mail messages to all of your friends and relatives.

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

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

Privacy and Your Life

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

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

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

give out. Be careful how much information you disclose.

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

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

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

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

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

private sector.

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Church and State

Introduction

Soon after assuming office as president, Thomas Jefferson received a letter from the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut containing warm congratulations for his victory. In January of 1802 Jefferson drafted a response of unpredictable importance. The contents of the letter have influenced the shape of the American debate over the place of religion in public affairs ever since. Addressing the Baptists, Jefferson wrote:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinion, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church and State. [\[1\]](#) (emphasis added)

The idea of a “high wall of separation” first entered into our nation’s judicial conscience in the 1947 *Everson v. Board of Education* case. Although the court decided to allow public funding for the transportation of Catholic school students, it invoked the “high wall” doctrine as a rule for determining the future use of public funds. Justice Hugo Black appealed to

Supreme Court precedent as well as the intent of the Founding Fathers in winning his 5-4 decision which included the “high wall” language. Justice Black wrote that our founders “reached the conviction that individual religious liberty could be achieved best under a government which was stripped of all power to tax, to support, or otherwise to assist any or all religions, or to interfere with the beliefs of any religious individual or group.”^{2} This 1947 decision became the catalyst for a growing debate in the last half of the 20th century regarding the relationship between faith and government in America.

The phrase *high wall of separation* has divided Americans into a number of different groups depending upon their theological and political leanings. Some feel that the high court drastically overstepped the original meaning of Jefferson’s words, going far beyond his original intent. Others applaud the Court’s attempt to separate once and for all this country’s bias towards Christianity, especially its Protestant wing. Since the question often revolves around the original intent of the Founding Fathers, many seek to determine whether or not the Founders supported a Christian state, a secular state, or something in between.

All of this points to a few important questions faced by Christians. How should individual believers and the church as a whole relate to the state and its various institutions? What about the role individuals should take in politics, efforts to reform government, and attempts to pass laws that make our society behave more “biblically”? In this article we will look at three different responses to these questions and examine some of the pros and cons of each. Since every believer is limited in both their time and resources, it is important to think carefully about where we focus our efforts in furthering God’s kingdom. The purpose of this discussion is not to question anyone’s commitment to Christ, but to merely step back and look at some of the underlying assumptions held by

each of these three positions.

Anti-Religious Separatists

Americans support the notion of separation of church and state by a small majority.^{3} Just what we mean by *separate* seems to be the real issue. Some go as far as to argue that any position on public policy that is motivated by a religious belief is out of bounds and should not receive a hearing. This group, who might be called “anti-religious separatists,” argues that religion is fine as long as it does not invade the public sphere. Religion must impact only private morality; if it leaks into the public square where policy making actually occurs, it is inappropriate at best. There are many examples of such anti-religious bias. Writing about a speech that Ronald Reagan made that included religious overtones, a *New York Times* article said, “You don’t have to be a secular humanist to take offense at that display of what, in America, should be private piety. . . . Americans ask piety in Presidents, not displays of religious preference. Mr. Reagan uttered not just an ecumenical summons to the spirit. He was pandering to the Christian right that helped to propel his national political career.”^{4} Another presidential candidate wrote, “No president should attempt to transform policy debates into theological disputes.”^{5} Some believe the separation of church and state to mean a complete separation of religious values from public policy debates.

It’s one thing to complain of inappropriate public piety, it is quite another to apply an anti-religious bias to court decisions and other actions that affect all Americans, religious or not. In one of the most important Supreme Court decisions on the separation of church and state in regards to education, Justices William Douglas and Hugo Black concurred that religious schools are by nature harmful. Writing specifically about Catholics schools they said:

The whole education of the child is filled with propaganda.

That, of course, is the very purpose of such schools, the very reason for going to all of the work and expense of maintaining a dual school system. Their purpose is not so much to educate, but to indoctrinate and train, not to teach Scripture truths and Americanism, but to make loyal Roman Catholics. The children are regimented, and are told what to wear, what to do, and what to think. {6}

Although this quote refers specifically to Catholic schools, its description could apply to many types of private religious schools. This caricature of private Christian schools, that they do not teach but indoctrinate, that they fail to convey Americanism (whatever that is), is still a concern of many who have observed and objected to the recent rapid growth in private schooling.

Those who hold an “anti-religious separatist” viewpoint often talk positively of an American civil religion. The idea is that some religion might be better than no religion at all, but it must never actually enter into policy decisions. A thin veneer of religion is all that is needed. An example might be President Dwight Eisenhower urging Americans to spend the first Fourth of July holiday of his administration in prayer and penance. He then proceeded to fish in the morning, go golfing in the afternoon, and play cards all evening. {7}

When Christians advocate such a vague form of public religion, they do great harm to the faith. A lukewarm civil religion does not address the redeeming sacrifice that makes Christianity what it is. Nor does it value the revealed knowledge found in the Bible. The idea of providing America with a non-preferential treatment of religion is legitimate. The danger lies in the promotion of religious activity that waters down the beliefs of the various faiths, both Christian and non-Christian.

Christian America

It is a popular notion among Christians that America was founded as a Christian nation, and that the goal of believers everywhere should be to place our government back into the hands of committed Christians who hold acceptable views on theological and moral issues. As a corollary to this position, it follows that our nation's institutions, its schools, courts, regulatory commissions, etc, should be established on Christian principles. Various Christian groups use language that supports this view. The Christian Coalition, Eagle Forum, Concerned Women for America, and others often present this perspective. Jerry Falwell has stated, "Any diligent student of American history finds that our great nation was founded by godly men upon godly principles to be a Christian nation."[\[8\]](#) John Whitehead, in his 1977 book *The Separation Illusion*, wrote, "In recent years Christians and non-Christians alike have been questioning whether America was ever a Christian nation. Without doubt it was, but secular historians have eradicated as much Christian influence as possible from history."[\[9\]](#)

Pat Robertson began the Christian Coalition in response to this perceived conspiracy to purge our history and government from Christianity. Stating its goals, its executive director said, "What Christians have got to do is take back this country, one precinct at a time, one neighborhood at a time, and one state at a time, I honestly believe that in my lifetime we will see a country once again governed by Christians . . . and Christian values."[\[10\]](#)

This view has much to commend itself in the actual words used by our Founding Fathers. John Eidsmoe, Peter Marshall, Marshall Foster, and David Barton have provided a wealth of examples in their writings of how the Founders used Christian ideas and terminology to describe their efforts to create a new nation.

Those who hold to this view are comfortable with making Christianity the semi-established religion of America. Everywhere the government is involved in our lives would take on a Christian flavor. Every citizen, regardless of religious affiliation, would be responsible for understanding and adjusting to this ubiquitous Christian culture.

To many, this would be doing to those of other faiths, including atheists, just what we have been accusing them of doing to Christians. Forcing people to separate their public lives from their beliefs and thus denying them their first amendment freedom of religion. Another question that arises is, What are Christians going to do if they fail to muster the necessary votes to put into place the people and legislation that they desire?

This line of thinking can easily lead to a "whatever it takes" mentality to return the nation to its Christian roots, including armed revolt if necessary. This form of Christian ethnocentricity discounts the importance of Christians in other countries and the possibility that God might use other nations as well as the U.S. to accomplish His purposes.

There is no question that we have been blessed as a nation because our Founding Fathers built our government on Christian principles regarding human nature and a theistic view of reality. We enjoy common grace as a people when our laws conform to God's standard of justice. The question that we must ask is, Can we as Christians can impose a biblical culture on a majority who no longer acknowledge the authority of Scripture? Since only 32 percent of Americans agree that "The government should take special steps to protect the Judeo-Christian heritage," this question is more than theoretical.^{11} Perhaps a better goal would be to work for a government based on the concepts of freedom and neutrality with regards to religion.

Positive Neutrality

The idea of positive neutrality begins with the assumption that both religious structures and the state possess a certain degree of sovereignty over their respective domains. Each possess certain rights and responsibilities and should be free to operate without interference from the other. As the Dutch Protestant Abraham Kuyper stated it: “The sovereignty of the State and the sovereignty of the Church exist side by side, and they mutually limit each other.”^{12} Christians can find support for this view in biblical passages that describe both the church and the state as divinely ordained realities (1 Peter 2 and Romans 13).

Positive neutrality argues that religious organizations have both rights and responsibilities. According to Stephen Monsma, author of *Positive Neutrality*, religious groups have the right to develop and teach their core beliefs, to shape their member’s behavior and attitudes, to provide a wide range of services to members and non-members, and to participate in the policy making process of our republic. On the responsibility side, religious organizations must both accept and seek to enhance the authority and legitimacy of the state and encourage its members to obey its lawful decisions. Religious groups should also seek to develop civic virtue that enhances public life and not attempt to take over those things given to the state to perform. This does not mean that religious groups do not have the right to criticize the state; it means that they may not work to remove its legitimacy.

According to the notion of positive neutrality, the state also has certain rights and responsibilities. The government should make decisions that coordinate, protect, encourage, and empower society’s various spheres of influence (including the religious sphere) with the goal of promoting justice, the public interest, the common good, or some other similar goal. The state is not to transgress the sovereignty of the other

spheres although there are times when it is appropriate for the state to give material aid, in a neutral manner, to organizations in another sphere.

The immediate impact of moving towards a system of positive neutrality would be reflected in three areas. First, our political system would have to tolerate and accommodate a wider range of religious practices. Second, the state would have to protect the right of religious groups to influence public policies. And finally, rather than working only through secularly based groups and programs, the government would fund the activities of both religious and secular groups for the purpose of providing needed social programs. These changes may be possible only by dropping the "secular purpose" part of what is known as the Lemon test, a three part test for appropriate government spending resulting from the *Lemon v. Kurtzman* Supreme Court case in 1971.

What this means, in effect, is that when the government gives financial aid to schools, homeless shelters, day care, or other agencies, it cannot discriminate against religiously based organizations. To continue to do so shows a bias towards secular organizations, motivations, and ideals.

Conclusion

We have considered three views of how the church and the state should relate to each other. The first was the anti-religious separatists. This group included those who desire what could be called a naked public square, naked of any religious influence. The second was the Christian America perspective; it advocates a sacred public square and the semi-establishment of the Christian religion. The third view is called positive neutrality, which argues for an open public square. The first two positions discriminate against the religious rights of Christians or non-Christians, the last treats all religious groups equally and does not favor secular organizations over religious ones.

Let's look at the specific issue of religion in our schools and see how the notion of positive neutrality might change what we consider to be constitutional and what isn't. Currently the Court uses a three part test to determine constitutionality. First, a program must have a secular purpose. Second, it cannot further a religious effect, and finally, it may not cause excessive entanglement between religion and the state. In its attempt at applying these rules, the Court has created a very unclear line of what is permissible and what isn't. It has forbidden state-composed prayers, Bible reading, reading of the Lord's Prayer, posting the Ten Commandments, a minute of silence for meditation and prayer, mandating the teaching of evidence for creationism, and certain types of prayers at graduation ceremonies. However, it has permitted release time programs held off campus for religious instruction, teaching about religion, transportation for private school children, a minute of silence for meditation, and voluntary, student-led and -initiated religious clubs.

The obvious result of the Lemon test has been a bias against the religious and for the secular, not neutrality. In trying to account for local religious practices, some justices have argued that prayer and religious celebrations are actually secular and traditional activities rather than acts of worship. This tactic satisfies no one. Positive neutrality argues for a full and free play of all religious groups and of both religion and secularism. True neutrality is achieved by welcoming and encouraging all religions and secular philosophies to participate in the open marketplace of ideas on campus.

True neutrality could be accomplished in our public schools by applying the equal access principle the Court used in *Westside Community Schools v. Mergen*. This decision treated all extracurricular clubs, both religious and secular, with neutrality. This principle could be applied to prayer, the

study of origins, and the posting of the Ten Commandments. In effect, this would remove some of the anti-religious bias that pervades public schools.

Neutrality is also enhanced when the government encourages educational choice by funding private schools regardless of their religious or non-religious nature. By allowing vouchers for parents to use to send their children to religious schools of their choice, the government would be treating religious and non-religious schools in a neutral manner.

Positive neutrality insists that religious ideas should never be forced to hide themselves behind secular ones in order to participate in the public square. The government is not being neutral when it endorses a secular idea over a religious one in our schools or in other social programs. While many Americans are unhappy with the government's current bias against religious beliefs, it remains to be seen if they are ready for real religious freedom that would allow full participation in the public realm by all faiths and philosophies.

Notes

1. Edwin Gaustad, *Sworn On The Altar Of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 99.

2. Wayne House, ed., *Restoring The Constitution* (Dallas, TX: Probe Books, 1987), 298.

3. Stephen V. Monsma, *Positive Neutrality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 57.

4. *Ibid.*, 63.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, 71.

7. George Will, "Who Put Morality In Politics?" *Newsweek*, 1980.
8. Monsma, 73.
9. John Whitehead, *The Separation Illusion* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1977), 17.
10. Monsma, 73.
11. Ibid., 57.
12. Ibid., 179.

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The Moral Fallout of the '98 Elections

Now that the November elections have passed, it is time to apply a little 20/20 hindsight to the results. An initial observation is that even the experts were surprised by the outcome, as Democrats gained five seats against the Republican majority in the House, while drawing even in the Senate. Less than a month before the elections, the political director of the Democratic National Committee stated that losing less than twenty-six House seats and less than six Senate seats would be a victory for Democrats. Even moderate political analysts believed that Republicans would secure net gains of eight House seats, three Senate seats, and three governorships. Yet, this election was the first one since the presidency of FDR in which the party of the president did not lose seats in a

congressional election. It would seem that these elections deserve special consideration.

The reason why so many had expected poor election results for the Democrats was obviously the scandal that has enveloped the Clinton presidency in the last year. Many Republican leaders seemed to regard the election as a referendum on the President, discounting polls which suggested otherwise. The question is, How could so many "experts" have so misread this election?

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of this year's results has to do with the vote of religious conservatives. By comparing this year's vote with the elections of 1994, when Republicans regained control of the House after years of a Democratic majority, we notice a major shift in the voting activity of the so-called "religious right." In 1994, 67 percent of self-described religious conservatives voted Republican for Congress, while only 20 percent voted for Democrats. In the 1998 elections, however, 54 percent of religious conservatives voted Republican, and 31 percent voted for Democrats, a significant 24 percent swing.

This, in itself, helps explain the strong showing of Democrats, but prompts the question, Why did religious conservatives have such a dramatic shift in voting patterns? Several attempts will be made here to answer this question.

Earlier this year, James Dobson of *Focus on the Family* issued a kind of ultimatum to the Republican Party leadership. Expressing frustration at the failure of Republicans to pass significant legislation in areas such as abortion, he threatened to take as many of his radio listeners as he could away from the Republican Party if they did not make more of an effort to focus on social issues important to evangelicals. Immediately after that threat, there was a sudden emphasis by Republican leaders on abortion and homosexuality, and once again the ban on partial-birth abortions was brought to a

vote. However, it was again vetoed by President Clinton. Even though, in that respect, Republicans have made an effort to reflect the social concerns of evangelical Christians, their failure to make any progress even with a majority may have left many supporters alienated.

Another factor may have been the failure of Republicans to stand up to President Clinton in the last-minute budget negotiations in October. Instead of pressing for their own agenda months earlier, when Mr. Clinton was at his weakest, Republicans were pressed into a corner by the threat of another government shutdown. Their failure to acknowledge that their constituents were concerned with more than just President Clinton's behavior ultimately seems to have backfired. The main message this year was that conservatives themselves sent a message to Republicans that they can no longer be counted on to simply vote anti-Democrat. As Steve Forbes has said, "A party that loses sight of its values and principles loses its base."

Presidential Scandal and the '98 Elections

Republicans and Democrats alike had anticipated major gains for the Republicans in the House, mainly because of the scandal involving President Clinton. House Speaker Newt Gingrich had predicted a gain of as many as thirty seats. Yet when the votes were tallied, Democrats had actually gained five seats, and Newt Gingrich has now resigned his position as Speaker of the House. Does this mean that voters rejected an agenda favorable to religious conservatives?

Many Christians have been dismayed by the apparent lack of voters who were willing to punish Mr. Clinton for his actions. Of course, Mr. Clinton himself was not running for office, but it was thought that, by voting against Democrats, voters would signal their disapproval of President Clinton's behavior.

Instead, it appears that voters voted for candidates on their own merits; it would seem that voters were in most respects voting *for* candidates and issues, not just *against* Mr. Clinton.

Some, associating the Democratic Party with the Lewinski scandal, have suggested that the positive gains of Democrats indicates that Americans are less and less concerned about the morality of their political leaders. Several factors have to be considered before making that judgment. In the first place, no single party has a monopoly on morality. This became especially evident when it was revealed in recent months that several prominent Republicans had been involved in sexual affairs in the past. And even though the current legal issue against Mr. Clinton is all about perjury under oath and suborning of perjury, as well as possible obstruction of justice, it is impossible to separate these issues from President Clinton's involvement with Ms. Lewinski. Consequently, the emphasis in the press on the sexual nature of the scandal has led many to conclude that Mr. Clinton's behavior is not unique.

Another key factor in how the American people have reacted to the Lewinski scandal is a simple psychological response to the long period between President Clinton's denial of an affair and his eventual admission of an "inappropriate relationship." In the eight months between those two speeches, most Americans had gradually become convinced that the President lied in his initial denial. Consequently, when President Clinton admitted he had misled the public, the shock factor was absent—many people had already concluded that he wasn't telling the truth. And the constant emphasis in the news about the story eventually led many to conclude that our elected officials were obsessed with the scandal. Though it has been suggested that the reluctance to condemn Mr. Clinton's actions is indicative of a nation that has lost its moral compass, it could be that it also points to a sense of morality that is

repulsed by publicly discussing private matters.

Exit polls indicate that over half of all voters did not consider President Clinton an issue in the election. Some candidates and issues which he supported won, and some lost. It seems what was most significant was that Republicans in this session of Congress failed to establish an agenda of their own that emphasized traditional conservatism. As we will see in the next section, it is evident that voters did not reject the social and moral concerns of Christians, but rather the failure of some Republicans to make a principled stand on the issues.

Major Victories for Christian Conservatives

The mainstream press has attempted to portray the lack-luster performance of Republicans at the national level as a major blow to the religious right, yet exit polls indicate that the major difference this year was that it was the religious right itself that shifted its allegiance away from the Republican Party. The clear message is that Republicans cannot expect religious conservatives to slavishly vote Republican every time. Voters seem much more willing to look at each individual candidate on his or her own merit, rather than simply following a party line. It would appear that some of its strongest supporters are attempting to send Republican Party leaders a message.

Christians and other religious conservatives who are concerned that the elections indicate a major shift away from traditional morality may be focusing too strongly on their reaction to the Clinton scandal. Whereas 20 percent of voters went to the voting booth with the clear intent of voting against Mr. Clinton, another 20 percent voted with support of the President in mind. Those two groups thus canceled each other out. The other 60 percent of voters maintained that they

voted with no thought of President Clinton. And since many Democrats attempted to distance themselves from President Clinton during their campaigns, it would be a stretch to suggest that those who voted Democrat were voting for the President. And when we consider the issues which were voted on this past November, we can't help but notice that major victories were won in areas important to Christians.

Perhaps one of the most defining moments of these elections was the banning of same-sex marriage in both Hawaii and Alaska. Of course, the silence from the major media has been deafening, especially when it had been suggested just two years ago by gay activists that Hawaii would open the floodgates for same-sex marriage. Even though homosexual activists poured considerable amounts of money and energy into their campaigns, nearly 70 percent of both Alaskan and Hawaiian voters affirmed marriage as being between one man and one woman. In a related issue, Republicans had high hopes that Matt Fong would defeat liberal Senator Barbara Boxer in California, but Fong shocked many conservative supporters late in the campaign by making concessions to the gay and lesbian community. Needless to say, Fong lost, mainly due to his failure to take a principled stand.

Also, another major issue for Christians has been the emphasis on the sanctity of life. In the home state of Jack Kevorkian, Michigan voters defeated doctor-assisted suicide by a wide margin. Colorado voters also placed a limitation on abortion by requiring parental consent for teenagers seeking abortion. Unfortunately, Colorado and Washington both refused to outlaw partial-birth abortions, although the votes were very close.

In sum, while conservatives seem to be laying all their bets on the Republican Party, and because Republicans didn't do as well as expected, there has been a tendency to say conservatism, and especially religious conservatism, was a big loser on election day. But when we look at the results of particular races, we see that only a handful of true

conservatives lost at the national level, and many referendums were won. Any attempt to view the elections as an outright rejection of a conservative religious worldview cannot be supported by the facts.

Moral Judgment and the Sexual Revolution

As we have examined the November elections, we have concluded that the attitude of most Americans toward President Clinton was left out of the ballot box. President Clinton was not running for office, and the major shift in voting patterns was demonstrated by religious conservatives, who appear to have punished Republicans for failing to act like the majority in Congress. Probably the best way to gauge how Americans view the President is to recall the polls that have been taken since the Lewinski matter erupted in January of 1998.

Certainly one of the most curious aspects of this political year has been the consistently high job approval ratings the President has enjoyed, while at the same time he is considered a poor role model by a majority. The very fact that people have made a moral judgment of the President is once again a positive indication that American society is not simply concerned with pragmatism. But on the other hand, the majority of Americans seem to be willing to forgive Mr. Clinton and simply want the issue to go away. In this respect, Americans seem perfectly content to ignore the scandal as long as there is peace abroad and economic prosperity at home. Besides, it is the opinion of many that the scandal is "just about sex." If anything, it is that small phrase which should be of concern for society, since it seems to imply that sexuality is of little importance. A biblical worldview is entirely opposed to such a notion.

According to Genesis 2, God's desire is that one man and one woman should become "one flesh" in the act of marriage—a euphemism for sexual union. But since the beginning of time, humanity has rejected God's plan, and the consequences have

been devastating. In the United States, there has been a concerted effort since the 1960's to overcome any social restrictions against sex outside of marriage, all in the name of personal freedom. But in fact, many of the social pathologies in this country can be traced to a distorted view of sexuality. When men and women reject the sacredness of sexuality and view sex as simply recreational, the natural results are obvious: unwanted pregnancies, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, divorce, single-motherhood, and poverty. Not so obvious is another related issue. When young men grow up without fathers, they typically learn conceptions of manhood from other youth, rather than learning from their fathers. Violent gangs are often the only families that some young men ever identify with. Thus, to speak of sexuality as though it is of little import is a tragic mistake.

Of course, because the sexual revolution has had such a powerful grip on society, it is easy to see why so many are able to separate President Clinton's personal life from his public duties. When any society loosens its attitude toward a particular activity, the members of that society will feel less ashamed for engaging in that activity. As a consequence, those who engage in that activity will be much less likely to condemn anyone who does the same thing, since to do so would necessarily be a condemnation of themselves. More than likely, the willingness for many to simply ignore the Lewinski matter is a residue of a casual view of sexuality. However, the American people must remember that the issue before them is not only a sexual scandal, but a question of the rule of law. That issue has broader implications for us all.

The Case for the Common Good

As we have been considering the recent national elections and the surprising results, we have considered the possible connection between the results and the public's reaction to President Clinton and the Lewinski scandal. We have noted that

exit polls indicate that candidates were typically judged on their own merits. Thus, overall results cannot be said to reflect favorably or negatively on Mr. Clinton. We also noted that the sexual revolution has lessened the tendency of Americans to judge anyone for sexual indiscretions. But, what must now be emphasized is that the President's impeachment hearings are based on allegations of perjury and obstruction of justice. That many Americans are willing to dismiss such an offense should be of concern to all of us.

Perhaps the first thing that should be acknowledged by all is that President Clinton is well-liked by many Americans. Consequently, this case is similar to the O.J. Simpson trial, where a well-known and well-liked celebrity won a trial of public opinion. In this situation, millions of Americans are sympathetic toward the President. Unfortunately, many Americans have construed their affection for the President as being admissible as evidence in a court of law. In reality, juries are not simply allowed to determine a person's fate by majority rule. And contrary to what has been stated recently by media friends of President Clinton such as Geraldo Rivera, perjury is a criminal offense. To simply ignore its possibility in this case would be devastating for our legal system.

When we consider that this country's government is founded on an intricate system of checks and balances, we must ultimately recognize that the rule of law is essential to a just society. When people are discriminated against, or granted special favors in the legal system, the result is injustice. President Clinton himself recognizes this, as he is the top law enforcement officer in the land. In addition, the following statement is found in the Justice Department's manual for federal prosecutors: "Because false declarations affect the integrity of the judicial fact-finding process, all offenders should be vigorously prosecuted."

Unfortunately, contemporary society tends to denigrate public

service, and place a premium on the comforts of private and family life. Consequently, many people are willing to ignore the legal case against President Clinton since they assume it does not directly concern them. But, as Alexis de Tocqueville reminded us over 150 years ago in his great work *Democracy in America*, one of the dangers of democracy is that it can flatten people's personalities, making them "creatures of mass opinion and enslaving them to the drive for material security, comfort and equality." But if the American people are willing to forfeit the integrity of the law out of a desire for convenience or prosperity, it demonstrates not so much the lack of a moral compass as it indicates that many Americans no longer recognize the concept of the common good.

When a government becomes too powerful, de Toqueville warns, its citizens are willing to sacrifice freedom for comfort. Should contemporary society assume that President Clinton should not have to be held accountable for perjury, it would establish a legal precedent that would call into question the rule of law in our society. To that extent our elected congressional leaders must remember that their first responsibility is to the laws which they as a body have sworn to defend. While the spectacle of impeachment hearings is a sad prospect, even more tragic would be the cynicism that would be the result of ignoring this case for reasons of political expediency.

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Christian View of Government

and Law

Kerby Anderson helps us develop a biblically based, Christian view of both government and the laws it enforces. Understanding that the New Testament does not direct a particular type of government, Kerby leads us to understand how the principles of the New Testament will help us select governmental models that are conducive to Christian life and witness.

Christian View of Government

Government affects our lives daily. It tells us how fast to drive. It regulates our commerce. It protects us from foreign and domestic strife. Yet we rarely take time to consider its basic function. What is a biblical view of government? Why do we have government? What kind of government does the Bible allow?

Developing a Christian view of government is difficult since the Bible does not provide an exhaustive treatment of government. This itself is perhaps instructive and provides some latitude for these institutions to reflect the needs and demands of particular cultural situations. Because the Bible does not speak directly to every area of political discussion, Christians often hold different views on particular political issues. However, Christians are not free to believe whatever they want. Christians should not abandon the Bible when they begin to think about these issues because there is a great deal of biblical material that can be used to judge particular political options.

The Old Testament teaches that God established government after the flood (Gen. 9:6). And the Old Testament provides clear guidelines for the development of a theocracy in which God was the head of government. These guidelines, however, were written for particular circumstances involving a covenant

people chosen by God. These guidelines do not apply today because our modern governments are not the direct inheritors of the promises God made to the nation of Israel.

Apart from that unique situation, the Bible does not propose nor endorse any specific political system. The Bible, however, does provide a basis for evaluating various political philosophies because it clearly delineates a view of human nature. And every political theory rests on a particular view of human nature.

The Bible describes two elements of human nature. This viewpoint is helpful in judging government systems. Because humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27), they are able to exercise judgment and rationality. However, humans are also fallen creatures (Gen. 3). This human sinfulness (Rom. 3:23) has therefore created a need to control evil and sinful human behavior through civil government.

Many theologians have suggested that the only reason we have government today is to control sinful behavior because of the Fall. But there is every indication that government would have existed even if we lived in a sinless world. For example, there seems to be some structuring of authority in the Garden (Gen. 1–2). The Bible also speaks of the angelic host as being organized into levels of authority and function.

In the creation, God ordained government as the means by which human beings and angelic hosts are ruled. The rest of the created order is governed by instinct (Prov. 30:24–28) and God's providence. Insect colonies, for example, may show a level of order, but this is due merely to genetically controlled instinct.

Human beings, on the other hand, are created in the image of God and thus are responsible to the commands of God. We are created by a God of order (1 Cor. 14:33); therefore we also seek order through governmental structures.

A Christian view of government differs significantly from views proposed by many political theorists. The basis for civil government is rooted in our created nature. We are rational and volitional beings. We are not determined by fate, as the Greeks would have said, nor are we determined by our environment as modern behaviorists say. We have the power of choice. Therefore we can exercise delegated power over the created order. Thus a biblical view of human nature requires a governmental system that acknowledges human responsibility.

While the source of civil government is rooted in human responsibility, the need for government derives from the necessity of controlling human sinfulness. God ordained civil government to restrain evil (cf. Gen. 9). Anarchy, for example, is not a viable option because all have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and are in need of external control.

Notice how a Christian view of human nature provides a basis to judge various political philosophies. For example, Christians must reject political philosophies which ignore human sinfulness. Many utopian political theories are based upon this flawed assumption. In *The Republic*, Plato proposed an ideal government where the enlightened philosopher-kings would lead the country. The Bible, however, teaches that all are sinful (Rom. 3:23). Plato's proposed leaders would also be affected by the sinful effects of the Fall (Gen. 3). They would not always have the benevolent and enlightened disposition necessary to lead the republic.

Christians should also reject a marxist view of government. Karl Marx believed that human nature was conditioned by society, and in particular, the capitalist economy. His solution was to change the economy so that you would change human nature. Why do we have greed? Because we live in a greedy capitalist society. Marx taught that if society changed the economy from capitalism to socialism and then communism, greed would cease.

Christians should reject the utopian vision of marxism because it is based upon an inaccurate view of human nature. The Bible teaches that believers can become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) through spiritual conversion, but that does not mean that the effects of sin are completely overcome in this life. The Bible also teaches that we will continue to live in a world tainted by sin. The view of Karl Marx contradicts biblical teaching by proposing a new man in a new society perfected by man's own efforts.

Since civil government is necessary and divinely ordained by God (Rom. 13:1-7), it is ultimately under God's control. It has been given three political responsibilities: the sword of justice (to punish criminals), the sword of order (to thwart rebellion), and the sword of war (to defend the state).

As citizens, Christians have been given a number of responsibilities. They are called to render service and obedience to the government (Matt. 22:21). Because it is a God-ordained institution, they are to submit to civil authority (1 Pet. 2:13-17) as they would to other institutions of God. As will be discussed later, Christians are not to give total and final allegiance to the secular state. Other God-ordained institutions exist in society alongside the state. Christians' final allegiance must be to God. They are to obey civil authorities (Rom. 13:5) in order to avoid anarchy and chaos, but there may be times when they may be forced to disobey (Acts 5:29).

Because government is a divinely ordained institution, Christians have a responsibility to work within governmental structures to bring about change. Government is part of the order of creation and a minister of God (Rom. 13:4). Christians are to obey governmental authorities (Rom. 13:1-4, 1 Peter 2:13-14). Christians are also to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16) in the midst of the political context.

Although governments may be guilty of injustice, Christians should not stop working for justice or cease to be concerned about human rights. We do not give up on marriage as an institution simply because there are so many divorces, and we do not give up on the church because of many internal problems. Each God-ordained institution manifests human sinfulness and disobedience. Our responsibility as Christians is to call political leaders back to this God-ordained task. Government is a legitimate sphere of Christian service, and so we should not look to government only when our rights are being abused. We are to be concerned with social justice and should see governmental action as a legitimate instrument to achieve just ends.

A Christian view of government should also be concerned with human rights. Human rights in a Christian system are based on a biblical view of human dignity. A bill of rights, therefore, does not grant rights to individuals, but instead acknowledges these rights as already existing. The writings of John Locke along with the Declaration of Independence capture this idea by stating that government is based on the inalienable rights of individuals. Government based on humanism, however, would not see rights as inalienable, and thus opens the possibility for the state to redefine what rights its citizens may enjoy. The rights of citizens in a republic, for example, are articulated in terms of what the government is forbidden to do. But in totalitarian governments, while the rights of citizens may also be spelled out, power ultimately resides in the government not the people.

A Christian view of government also recognizes the need to limit the influence of sin in society. This is best achieved by placing certain checks on governmental authority. This protects citizens from the abuse or misuse of governmental power which results when sinful individuals are given too much governmental control.

The greatest threat to liberty comes from the exercise of

power. History has shown that power is a corrupting force when placed in human hands. In the Old Testament theocracy there was less danger of abuse because the head of state was God. The Bible amply documents the dangers that ensued when power was transferred to a single king. Even David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), abused his power and Israel experienced great calamity (2 Sam. 11–21).

Governmental Authority

A key question in political theory is how to determine the limits of governmental authority. With the remarkable growth in the size and scope of government in the 20th century, it is necessary to define clearly the lines of governmental authority. The Bible provides some guidelines.

However, it is often difficult to set limits or draw lines on governmental authority. As already noted, the Old Testament theocracy differed from our modern democratic government. Although human nature is the same, drawing biblical principles from an agrarian, monolithic culture and applying them to a technological, pluralistic culture requires discernment.

Part of this difficulty can be eased by separating two issues. First, should government legislate morality? We will discuss this in the section on social action. Second, what are the limits of governmental sovereignty? The following are a few general principles helpful in determining the limits of governmental authority.

As Christians, we recognize that God has ordained other institutions besides civil government which exercise authority in their particular sphere of influence. This is in contrast to other political systems that see the state as the sovereign agent over human affairs, exercising sovereignty over every other human institution. A Christian view is different.

The first institution is the church (Heb. 12:18–24; 1 Pet.

2:9–10). Jesus taught that the government should work in harmony with the church and should recognize its sovereignty in spiritual matters (Matt. 22:21).

The second institution is the family (Eph. 5:22–32, 1 Pet. 3:1–7). The family is an institution under God and His authority (Gen. 1:26–28, 2:20–25). When the family breaks down, the government often has to step in to protect the rights of the wife (in cases of wife abuse) or children (in cases of child abuse or adoption). The biblical emphasis, however, is not so much on rights as it is on responsibilities and mutual submission (Eph. 5:21).

A third institution is education. Children are not the wards of the state, but belong to God (Ps. 127:3) and are given to parents as a gift from God. Parents are to teach their children (Deut. 4:9) and may also entrust them to tutors (Gal. 4:2).

In a humanistic system of government, the institutions of church and family are usually subordinated to the state. In an atheistic system, ultimately the state becomes a substitute god and is given additional power to adjudicate disputes and bring order to a society. Since institutions exist by permission of the state, there is always the possibility that a new social contract will allow government to intervene in the areas of church and family.

A Christian view of government recognizes the sovereignty of these spheres. Governmental intervention into the spheres of church and family is necessary in certain cases where there is threat to life, liberty, or property. Otherwise civil government should recognize the sovereignty of other God-ordained institutions.

Moral Basis of Law

Law should be the foundation of any government. Whether law is

based upon moral absolutes, changing consensus, or totalitarian whim is of crucial importance. Until fairly recently, Western culture held to a notion that common law was founded upon God's revealed moral absolutes.

In a Christian view of government, law is based upon God's revealed commandments. Law is not based upon human opinion or sociological convention. Law is rooted in God's unchangeable character and derived from biblical principles of morality.

In humanism, humanity is the source of law. Law is merely the expression of human will or mind. Since ethics and morality are man-made, so also is law. Humanists' law is rooted in human opinion, and thus is relative and arbitrary.

Two important figures in the history of law are Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) and William Blackstone (1723-1780). Rutherford's *Lex Rex* (written in 1644) had profound effect on British and American law. His treatise challenged the foundations of 17th century politics by proclaiming that law must be based upon the Bible, rather than upon the word of any man.

Up until that time, the king had been the law. The book created a great controversy because it attacked the idea of the divine right of kings. This doctrine had held that the king or the state ruled as God's appointed regent. Thus, the king's word had been law. Rutherford properly argued from passages such as Romans 13 that the king, as well as anyone else, was under God's law and not above it.

Sir William Blackstone was an English jurist in the 18th century and is famous for his *Commentaries on the Law of England* which embodied the tenets of Judeo-Christian theism. Published in 1765, the *Commentaries* became the definitive treatise on the common law in England and in America. According to Blackstone, the two foundations for law are nature and revelation through the Scriptures. Blackstone

believed that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, and thus taught that God was the source of all laws. It is interesting that even the humanist Rousseau noted in his *Social Contract* that one needs someone outside the world system to provide a moral basis for law. He said, "It would take gods to give men laws."

Unfortunately, our modern legal structure has been influenced by relativism and utilitarianism, instead of moral absolutes revealed in Scripture. Relativism provides no secure basis for moral judgments. There are no firm moral absolutes upon which to build a secure legal foundation.

Utilitarianism looks merely at consequences and ignores moral principles. This legal foundation has been further eroded by the relatively recent phenomenon of sociological law. In this view, law should be based upon relative sociological standards. No discipline is more helpless without a moral foundation than law. Law is a tool, and it needs a jurisprudential foundation. Just as contractors and builders need the architect's blueprint in order to build, so also lawyers need theologians and moral philosophers to make good laws. Yet, most lawyers today are extensively trained in technique, but little in moral and legal philosophy.

Legal justice in the Western world has been based upon a proper, biblical understanding of human nature and human choice. We hold criminals accountable for their crimes, rather than excuse their behavior as part of environmental conditioning. We also acknowledge differences between willful, premeditated acts (such as murder) and so-called crimes of passion (i.e., manslaughter) or accidents.

One of the problems in our society today is that we do not operate from assumptions of human choice. The influence of the behaviorist, the evolutionist, and the sociobiologist are quite profound. The evolutionist and sociobiologist say that human behavior is genetically determined. The behaviorist says

that human behavior is environmentally determined. Where do we find free choice in a system that argues that actions are a result of heredity and environment? Free choice and personal responsibility have been diminished in the criminal justice system, due to the influence of these secular perspectives.

It is, therefore, not by accident that we have seen a dramatic change in our view of criminal justice. The emphasis has moved from a view of punishment and restitution to one of rehabilitation. If our actions are governed by something external, and human choice is denied, then we cannot punish someone for something they cannot control. However, we must rehabilitate them if the influences are merely heredity and environmental. But such a view of human actions diminishes human dignity. If a person cannot choose, then he is merely a victim of circumstances and must become a ward of the state.

As Christians, we must take the criminal act seriously and punish human choices. While we recognize the value of rehabilitation (especially through spiritual conversion, John 3:3), we also recognize the need for punishing wrong-doing. The Old Testament provisions for punishment and restitution make more sense in light of the biblical view of human nature. Yet today, we have a justice system which promotes no-fault divorce, no-fault insurance, and continues to erode away the notion of human responsibility.

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