

“Which Countries Deny Religious Freedom?”

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

Your list is accurate, but I think it might be better to list the countries that deny any form of freedom to their citizens. Each year Freedom House posts a list of the countries that are free, partially free, or not free. You can see the list and the map of the world on their Web site (www.freedomhouse.org).

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

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

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

Addendum added March 25, 2015:

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

*The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent federal advisory body the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) created to monitor religious freedom abuses abroad, released its 2014 Annual Report, and recommended that the State Department add eight more nations to its list of “countries of particular concern,” defined under law as countries where particularly severe violations of religious freedom are tolerated or perpetrated: **Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam.***

*USCIRF also recommended that the following eight countries be re-designated as “countries of particular concern,” or CPCs: **Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan.***

Kerby Anderson

“What’s Your Take on ‘Fifty Shades of Grey’?”

What’s Your Take on *Fifty Shades of Grey*?

The bottom line for me is that this verbal porn (and now visual as well, with the release of the movie) doesn't pass the "Philippians 4:8 test": "[W]hatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is any praise—dwell on these things."

But writer and speaker Dannah Gresh blogged about it so well, I'll just send you to it: "[I'm Not Reading Fifty Shades of Grey.](#)"

There are some disheartening comments on her blog post, which are reasonably rebutted:

"You shouldn't judge a book you haven't read." There's enough information out there about this book series to make an informed judgment. Consider God's command in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They didn't know evil personally and experientially, but God still commanded them to stay away from it. God wasn't going to buy the argument, "How can we decide whether or not to partake if we've never tasted evil?"

"I don't question my faith after reading these books." Okay, but did they bring you closer to the Lord and to His call to purity? How did they impact your view of God's standards for sexuality? If you enjoyed books that glorify what God calls sin, how do you not see the discrepancy for a Christ-follower?

"It's just a fictional book, for crying out loud!" This is the most disturbing of all, because it shows the writer doesn't understand the power of story. People's minds and hearts are not swayed by a list of facts and statistics nearly as much as they are by story, whether in a book or a film or video. The power of story is that it can slip past the "watchful dragons" of one's belief system and turn the heart, both for evil and for good. All we have to do is watch how the values of a TV audience change over time by watching certain TV shows. We

need to be *more* careful about novels and movies, not less.

Sue Bohlin

Added February 13, 2015:

My pastor answered the question “Is It Okay for a Christian to Go See Fifty Shades of Grey” in this 7-minute episode of *Real Truth Real Quick*:

Posted July 8, 2012; Updated Feb. 13, 2015

© 2012 Probe Ministries

“Dr. Laura is an Unsaved, Hypocritical Fool”

I read your [webpage on Laura Schlessinger](#) and I totally disagree with what you said. Laura is an unsaved, hypocritical, fool. The devil has more use for her than does the Lord. She should be at home with her child and under her husband’s authority just like the Word of God says so. Amen...

God Bless

Well, I thought I had explained that Dr. Laura is Jewish but not a believer. You are right, it would seem that she is unsaved. But she is having quite an impact on the culture, which is why I wrote an article examining what she says from a biblical perspective.

At Probe Ministries, we are big believers in helping people to develop discernment. My hope is that those who read my article would be able to sort through the good things she says from

the unscriptural things she says. When she says things that are true, the reason is that she's agreeing with God. After all, even a broken clock is accurate twice a day. . .

I hope you will join me in praying that the veil will fall away from her eyes and she will see the glory and majesty of the Lord Jesus, to know Him as her Messiah.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“It’s OK to Patronize Pro-Atheism Films to Provoke Christians to Action”

Regarding *The Golden Compass*, I agree, age-appropriate viewing along with informed parental guidance is required for the film, but I personally don't have a problem spending my money on this film. In fact I would pay double the cost to show my teenage children simply for the opportunity of “inoculating” them against the false perceptions of God, the church and sexuality that are pushed in these stories. I actually hope that the other movies are made so that Christians are forced to react INTELLIGENTLY regarding defending the Christian worldview. The war is already won! But we do need to pick up our swords and finish the battles.

But thank you for all your work for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, God bless!!

Thank you for your interest in my [Probe Alert article](#). I

commend you for your commitment to take advantage of opportunities to equip your children to recognize and respond to contrary worldviews pushed on us in our culture. As you know, I suggested this as one alternative in my article.

However, I don't agree with the idea that we should encourage more of these movies to be made by supporting them financially (especially, when we can read the books and watch the movies in ways that do not directly benefit the author and producers). Let me summarize several reasons I am taking this position:

Most of the children and young adults who would view the movie and/or read the books will not have a parent discuss the worldview implications or issues with them. On the contrary, most of them will strongly identify with the protagonists in their battle against the authority of God. Without critically evaluating their feelings, this emotional experience can influence how they perceive their relationship with God. As we have witnessed over the last forty years, movies and television have helped move the norms of our society further and further away from holiness and purity.

Phillip Pullman openly states his intent is to influence people to view Christianity as misguided and damaging. Providing him with more resources to support this objective does not seem to be a prudent use of the financial resources entrusted to us.

Early financial success will lead to more advertising and greater distribution of these books to a largely unchaperoned audience. It will probably also encourage New Line Cinema to take a more anti-Christian approach in the production of the sequels.

This trilogy and any associated movies are not going to single-handedly convert our culture to atheism. However, they reflect the greater and more public antagonism to religion

being espoused in our society. In general, we should not encourage these attacks through our financial support. At the same time, we should not be on the defensive. When these attacks do occur, we can use them as opportunities to share Christ whose position as the Way, the Truth, and the Life is not threatened by the imaginations of those who oppose Him.

Steve,

Well said; I admit my pro-atheism movies position may be a bit naive; I do see the value of your arguments. Maybe I take this extreme view just to provoke my fellow Christians to take up arms and not be afraid of the fight as I find so many from my (reformed) Christian circles tend to take isolationistic approach rather than see logical and reasonable discourse as a legitimate means to answering a fool according to his folly or casting down every lofty thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

Thanks for your reply, I really appreciate the attention to individual concerns, (even though I probably agree with almost everything you said).

I recommend Probe.org, Stand to Reason (str.org) and others to all my friends.

Keep up the good work!!

© 2007 Probe Ministries

“Can You Rebut the Google

Video 'Zeitgeist'?"

Please have someone watch the Google video "Zeitgeist" (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5547481422995115331>) and provide an answer to this. If you have any energy to do this, you will be activating it from a deeper source. Please. Someone tell me why I should believe—or you for that matter!

I just finished watching the movie as you requested of someone at Probe Ministries.

I took several pages of notes but eventually stopped because the information and misstatements flowed much too rapidly. I stopped about 2/3 of the way through. But I watched till the bitter end.

Let's start with the attack on Christianity. A quick Google search of Horus, the Egyptian Sun god whom Jesus and almost all other "savior" types are supposedly modeled after, is misrepresented in the film. He was the Falcon god and only later became known as the Sun god. [<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/horus.htm>] Nothing is said about being born on Dec 25th or having twelve disciples, or being born of a virgin, or dying and being raised three days later.

Sirius has never been known as the supposed star of Bethlehem, another astrological reference touted in the film. They also mention that somehow the Southern Cross constellation played a role in identifying the time of Jesus' birth. That's impossible since the Southern Cross is only visible in the Southern Hemisphere. Israel is simply not far enough south to ever have The Southern Cross visible. I have seen it once, from the Equator off the Galapagos Islands.

They summarily dismiss the testimony of Roman historians Tacitus and Pliny the Younger who only speak of the Christ, not Jesus. They also show a quick list (where is that from?)

of numerous 1st century historians who say nothing about him. Well, of course! Christianity was barely on anybody's radar screen in that first century. Nero just found them a convenient scapegoat for the burning of Rome precisely because there were so few and hardly anybody knew much about them. Josephus is a reliable historian in just about everything he writes about 1st century Judaism. The forgery spoken of is known, but it is a forgery of added phrases in a reliable entry about Jesus. What was added was Josephus' claims that this Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. Other entries about Jesus say nothing about that. Also the film ignored the entries in the Jewish Talmud about Jesus from their perspective. Even critical historians today DO NOT dispute that there was a real man Jesus of Nazareth who his followers claimed was the Messiah.

The 9/11 conspiracy talk is also out of line. For online versions of a *Popular Mechanics* article debunking many of the conspiracy myths of 9/11 see:

[Debunking 9/11 Myths: About the Airplanes](#)

[Debunking the Myths About the 9/11 Attack on the Pentagon](#)

[Debunking the 9/11 Myths: Special Report – The World Trade Center](#)

These *Popular Mechanics* editors consulted scientists, engineers, and other experts. They are neutral. Their list of experts is impressive. You'll find evidence against conspiracy contentions about the collapse of the towers, what hit the Pentagon, and why fighters did not shoot them down.

You can also check this out:
www.minutemanreview.com/9-11-myths-debunked/.

I have no doubt there is a conspiracy, but it's a satanic conspiracy that is millennia old. These types of films—"Loose Change" is another older 9/11 conspiracy film—prey on fear and

paranoia. There is much more that could be said about all their claims but I just don't have the time right now.

Friend, the Gospels are reliable: Jesus is the incarnate God who died for our sins and rose on the third day. Astrology is forbidden in the Bible, it's not founded on it. If you have a copy, read Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.
Probe Ministries

© 2007 Probe Ministries, updated 12/20/2018

“How Do I Answer My Friends’ Questions About The Da Vinci Code?”

I am a Graduate Student of Chemical Engineering at _____ and I hail from India. I was born in a Christian Family and I am a believer.

The book *The DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown has caught the attention of lot of Indians who are unaware of Jesus and the true meaning of Christianity.

Some of these Indians are my friends and are predominantly Hindus. As a rule I haven't read the book but when they tell me that the book is compelling and “real”, I have no answers to the questions that are posed to me. I must confess that I am not as well versed with the Bible and the history of Christianity as I ought to be.

How do I read *The DaVinci Code* knowing the facts and not getting fascinated by the fictional “facts”?

Thank you for writing, and I understand your dilemma.

First, Probe has an article by Michael Gleghorn which addresses many of the issues in the book. See www.probe.org/redeeming-the-da-vinci-code-2.

Second, the book is definitely an entertaining read. It's worth it as long as you can separate the fact from fiction.

Third, look at the bright side. Your Hindu friends are asking questions about the Bible and Jesus. See it as an evangelistic opportunity, and we can thank Dan Brown rather than curse him.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, PhD
Probe Ministries

Addendum from Probe Webservant:

You can now download Powerpoints of four Probe lectures in our “Decoding *The DaVinci Code*” series [here](#).

“Why Are You Trying to Redeem Darwin?”

I am curious, why do you call this effort “Redeeming Darwin”? What exactly about Darwin are you attempting to redeem?

Thanks for your question. [Redeeming Darwin](#) is a part of our *Redeeming the Culture* series of studies. In this series, we

take topics that are counter to and/or hostile to Christianity and educate Christians on how to use these topics defend their faith and to share the gospel. (Our first project was "[Redeeming The Da Vinci Code](#).") By equipping Christians to use a negative topic as a bridge to share the gospel, we are in a sense redeeming that topic. So the title does not imply that we are in some way redeeming the *person* of Darwin, but rather using the *topic* of Darwinism as a tool to accomplish a redemptive purpose.

Best regards,
Steve Cable

© 2007 Probe Ministries

“What’s Up With Animal Rights?”

My question is partially about the ‘animal rights’ movement that seems very popular these days. I was curious to know what you thought about the idea of giving animals rights. I have recently read a book about postmodernism and culture by Peter Augustine Lawler – it is not about animal rights, but he makes the statement that: “At the end of history, human distinctiveness is negated. The laughably incoherent ‘animal rights’ movement exists for a moment before the nonexistence of rights.” I don’t know much about the subject of rights, but I was hoping you could possibly recommend some book that touched on the subject from a Christian perspective – not necessarily animal rights, just the philosophy of rights in general- or maybe tell me what you think about what rights are and who has them and so forth.

Former Probe staff member Rich Milne authored an [article on animal rights](#). You are essentially correct that post-modernism dictates an equalization of rights between animals and humans. We are after all just another animal. Non-human animals should be treated no differently than we wish to be treated. Animal rights ethicist Peter Singer now holds a professorship of ethics at Princeton University and is continuing to humiliate himself with the logic of his own position by recently suggesting that bestiality was OK! What else can he say and remain consistent?

Not being a philosopher, I am not familiar with the literature on human rights, but Probe published a book with Zondervan in the 70s which is now out of print titled, *Human Rights and Human Dignity* by John Warwick Montgomery. Montgomery now has the rights to this book and he may have republished it so you may want to do a search on Amazon or elsewhere on the net to find it or a book like it.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Will Computers Take Over Humanity to Produce Spiritual Machines?”

I would appreciate hearing your views on *The Age of Spiritual Machines* by Ray Kurzweil. If you've not yet seen it, this is a rather disturbing book which was brought to my attention at a recent dinner I attended on campus last month. During the

dinner conversation I heard discussion between Dr. Rita Colwell (Director of the National Science Foundation) and Larry Smarr (Director of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications) that really took me by surprise. To hear some of today's most influential scientists discussing the reality of software taking over humanity within the next century was a more than a little disturbing. Their consensus seemed to be that "the software takeover is inevitable." The discussion was prompted by a recent article by Bill Joy in *Wired* Magazine titled "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us." You can read the article online at <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy.html> (Bill Joy is the cofounder and Chief Scientist of Sun Microsystems).

I'd really appreciate some clear thinking from a Christian-minded perspective on this subject.

Thank you for your e-mail about "The Age of Spiritual Machines." I have not read this article by Ray Kurzweil, but plan to do so in the future. That is an ominous statement about software taking over humanity.

In the meantime, I thought I might forward a portion of my recent book on a related subject. In *Moral Dilemmas*, I have a chapter on technology and address the issue of computers and the computer revolution. Here is section I wrote on the interface of computers and human intelligence:

Fourth, computers should not replace human intelligence. In *The Society of Mind* Marvin Minsky, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that "the mind, the soul, the self, are not a singly ghostly entity but a society of agents, deeply integrated, yet each one rather mindless on its own." (Richard Lipkin, "Making Machines in Mind's Image," *Insight*, 15 February 1988, 8-12). He dreams of being able ultimately to reduce mind (and therefore human

nature) to natural mechanism. Obviously this is not an empirical statement, but a metaphysical one that attempts to reduce everything (including mind) to matter.

The implications, however, are profound. Besides lowering humans to the material process, it begins to elevate machines to the human level. One article asked the question, Would an Intelligent Computer Have a "Right to Life?" (Robert Mueller and Erik Mueller, "Would an Intelligent Computer Have a 'Right to Life?'" *Creative Computing*, August 1983, 149-161). Granting computer rights might be something society might consider since many are already willing to grant certain rights to animals.

In a sense the question is whether an intelligent computer would have a soul and therefore access to fundamental human rights. As bizarre as the question may sound, it was no doubt inevitable. When seventeenth-century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz first described a thinking machine, he was careful to point out that this machine would not have a soul—fearful perhaps of reaction from the church. (Danny Hillis, "Can They Feel Your Pain?" *Newsweek*, 5 May 1997, 57). Already scientists predict that computer intelligence will create "an intelligence beyond man's" and provide wonderful new capabilities. (Robert Jastrow, "Toward an Intelligence beyond Man's," *Time*, 20 February 1978, 59). One of the great challenges in the future will be how to manage new computing power that will outstrip human intelligence.

The Bible teaches that humans are more than bits and bytes, more than blood and bones. Created in the image of God, human beings have a spiritual dimensions. They are more than complex computers. Computers should be used for what they do best: analyze discrete data with objective criteria. Computers are a wonderful tool, but they should not replace human intelligence and intuition.

Thanks for writing. I will continue this discussion in the future.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

“What About the Super-Secret Skull and Bones Society at Kerby Anderson’s Alma Mater Yale?”

Both George W. Bush and John Kerry are members of a satanic secret society known as Skull and Bones. When both George W. Bush and John Kerry were asked about their involvement in Skull and Bones on the Tim Russert – Meet The Press show, both laughed it off as it was too secret to talk about... What are they hiding???

I wonder since Mr. Kerby Anderson is a Yale University graduate, will he dismiss the Skull & Bones secret club on Yale University as just a frat house like all the others fraternities??

Thank you for your question about Skull and Bones. From time to time we have received questions about this organization. When I was at Yale University, I passed by the building but never really knew much about the organization.

Fortunately, David Aikman (former Senior Correspondent for *Time Magazine*) has written a book *A Man of Faith: The Spiritual Journey of George W. Bush*. The following is an excerpt from

his book about George Bush's involvement with Skull and Bones.

Kerby Anderson

In his junior year, George W. was "tapped" (invited by existing membership) for Skull and Bones, the well-known Yale senior-year secret society that was founded in 1832 and has been the focus of wild, indeed sometimes paranoid, conspiracy theories ever since. Skull and Bones is the most famous of the Yale societies, which admit a dozen or so juniors as lifetime members. Since the intake is so small, there are only around eight hundred Bonesmen (women were admitted for the first time in 1992) at any time, and Yale being already an elite institution, it is hardly surprising that Bonesmen have risen to be United States cabinet secretaries, Supreme Court justices, and even, on three occasions, presidents of the United States—most recently, Bush Senior and George W.

The prestige of Skull and Bones membership and the fear of its alleged power among many of the society's critics are products of the secrecy in which the society has operated from the outset and the unmistakable achievement of generation upon generation of Bonesmen. President and Supreme Court Justice Howard Taft, Ambassador W. Averill Harriman, Secretary of State Henry Stimson, Massachusetts senator and Democratic presidential aspirant John Kerry, conservative political commentator and author William F. Buckley, and of course Bush Senior's father, Prescott Bush, later himself a U. S. Senator, were all Bonesmen. But while the first century and more of the Skull and Bones tradition was heavily WASPish from the 1950s onward, both African Americans and foreigners were admitted.

Among those tapped along with George W. were an Orthodox Jew and a Jordanian Arab. Bonesmen traditionally are supposed to leave the room anytime a "barbarian" (i.e., non-Bonesman) even mentions the name of the society or the numeral by which it is also sometimes known, 322, In A Charge to Keep, George

W. is dutifully reticent, writing, "My senior year I joined Skull and Bones, a secret society, so secret I can't say anything more. It was a chance to make fourteen new friends."

The Skull and Bones initiation ritual—which appears never to have been fully and credibly penetrated by outsiders—does seem to involve some hocus-pocus ceremonials, but almost certainly not of any genuinely "spiritual" significance. It focuses on stripping initiates of any pretense or barriers of reserve about who they really are—a process that, in its turn, is likely to reinforce a sense of bonding among the fifteen "knights," as the newly tapped members are called, for the rest of their time at Yale and, for many Bonesmen, for the rest of their lives.

*In his important 1951 book, *God and Man at Yale*, William F. Buckley, a Bonesman, denounced the socialist and atheistic leanings of much of the Yale faculty, even as several bonesmen from earlier classes vigorously defended the university against Buckley's attack. They included McGeorge Bundy and none other than William Sloan Coffin, later to be a thorn in the flesh of freshman George W. In effect, if there had ever been some nefarious, anti-Christian plot cooked up within the "Tomb," as the Skull and Bones building is called, it does not seem to have made much imprint in the Bonesmen of the late twentieth century.*

As for George W. Bush, Bonesmen reportedly never saw him return to the Tomb for reunions or dinners, unlike his father who was at a Bones Tomb celebration as recently as 1998. Though George W. certainly kept in touch with some of his fellow Bonesmen, he has affected an almost insouciant unawareness of the institution's recent or current activities. According to Alexandra Robbins in her informative history of Skull and Bones George W. responded to a question about Bones by ABC News by saying "Does it still exist? The thing is so secret that I'm not even sure it still exists."

Bush's ambivalence about Skull and Bones probably is in part explained by the general suspicion of alleged East Coast supra-governmental conspiracies against American freedoms concocted by Ivy League elitists like Bonesmen, by members of the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, or by the Trilateral Commission. When Bush Senior was running for U.S. Senate from Texas in 1964, critics said that he seemed tarred with the brush of East Coast elitism. The same charge—hardly possibly to disprove—was later to be used against George W. when he ran unsuccessfully for Congress in Texas in 1978.

There are two other possible explanations for Bush's seeming lack of interest in the secret society of his senior year at Yale. One is that his own Christian experience later in life, an experience replete with deep and lasting spiritual relationships over many years with close Christian friends, has eclipsed whatever friendship bonding occurred at Skull and Bones. The second is George W.'s apparently lifelong distaste for the pretensions of much of the predominantly liberal world-view of many of the students and faculty on Ivy League campuses.

"I always felt that people on the East Coast tended to feel guilty about what they were given," he told an interviewer years later. "Like, 'I'm rich; they're poor.' Or 'I went to Andover and got a great education, and they didn't.' I was never one to feel guilty. I feel lucky. People who feel guilty react like guilty people."