

Christianity, Zen and the Martial Arts

Zen and the Martial Arts

In the beginning of the movie *Enter the Dragon* Bruce Lee admonishes his young disciple to feel, not think! He wants to see “emotional content,” not anger, in developing his practice. Technique is like a finger pointing a way to the moon, but we must not focus on the finger or we will miss the heavenly glory. Lee sends his pupil away after several slaps on the head, convinced he has mastered the lesson.



This scene illustrates the close connection between the martial arts and Zen Buddhism. Lee’s lesson was entirely Zen in approach. Its object was the perfection of a kick technique with enthusiasm; a mere mechanical performance was insufficient. The student must feel his art as well as accurately execute it. This means the technique should be as natural and unconscious as breathing. It must become second nature. On the other hand, Lee’s object lesson was not really about kicking but feeling as a means to enlightenment or nirvana, a state of realization that the self does not exist.

But does practicing the martial arts mean we must also adopt Zen Buddhist practice as well? Can we separate the martial arts from Zen practice and belief and embrace a Christian approach? In order to do this we must first distinguish the goal of Zen from the martial arts and then see how the martial arts may be practiced from a Christian perspective.

Zen believes that words cannot adequately convey meaning. They

are only the sign posts on a map and not the destination, or the finger pointing to the moon but not the moon itself. Zen relies on flashes of insight connected to feelings or intuition. Zen adopts the Taoist view in world religions asserting that "he that knows does not speak and he that speaks does not know." This means that the truth or enlightenment they are seeking cannot be expressed in words. It cannot be found in a book such as the Bible in Christianity, the Koran in Islam, or the Torah in Judaism, or even the sutras found in other forms of Buddhism, but must be experienced. They have little place for theory, but stress action and encounter with the practical world. Buddha mind transmits only to Buddha mind. They do not just talk about Nirvana but viscerally pursue it.

Zen means a way of meditation, a method for attaining enlightenment, not gradually as in other sects of Buddhism, but suddenly through shock and illogic. Zen practitioners are the shock troops of Buddhism. Zen monks are known for their acts of irreverence by burning Buddhist scriptures or defacing statues of Buddha, all designed to demonstrate their protest against theoretical learning. Truth is found in ordinary life and the practical as illustrated by the movie *the Karate Kid* whose main protagonist must sand the floor or paint the fence and wax the car before he can learn to throw a punch. Karate was not something that could be learned from a book.

Zen in America

In their practicality Zen adherents are not unlike Americans, which explains Zen's popularity in the United States as part of the counter-culture movement of the 1960s. Americans do not like theory, metaphysics, and laborious arguments, but are practical, to the point; action oriented, not cerebral. Americans are pithy in their word usage and prefer axioms and pearls of wisdom succinctly stated as opposed to the long winded arguments of scholars and professors.

Zen relies on dialectical thinking or paradox to frustrate traditional logic in order to shock its followers into realization. Zen uses the *koan*, an insoluble riddle that can only be understood through persistent contemplation and application to one's life. For example, a famous koan asks, "what is the sound of one hand clapping?" The smart-alecky response of snapping your fingers together like Bart Simpson will earn you a smack on the head or a rap with a bamboo stick from the master and a seat at the back of the class.

Zen does not emphasize detachment from life, as earlier Buddhism did, but the embrace of life. People learn not by retreat but through immersion. There is no sacred and secular distinction as in traditional religions, a point a monk may prove by burning a statue of the Buddha and declaring, "there are no holy images."[{1}](#)

The koan is learned by intuition and cannot be articulated in words. Koans are not meant to have strict logical answers you can verbalize, but only understand for yourself in meditation. Pointing to a flag waving in a monastery, the monk says, "What is moving, the flag or the wind?" The answer is neither; the mind is moving.[{2}](#)

Zen appealed to soldiers in Japan and was adopted by the military creed known as Bushido where it was mixed with the martial arts around AD 1300.[{3}](#) It is this Japanese version that is most familiar to Americans. However, Zen originates with the Indian sage Bodhidharma who brought the message that cannot be spoken to China in AD 520.[{4}](#) In Zen we see a clear connection between Taoism, the ancient Chinese religion, and Hinduism. Both believe in a similar view of God as ultimate reality or the impersonal principle of the universe. In popular culture we know this as "the force" from *Star Wars*, the active energy of the universe that animates all things. In theological studies we call this pantheism or the belief that all things are God.

Separating Zen and the Martial Arts

Legendary history says Bodhidharma brought the martial arts with him in the spread of Zen across China, but modern scholarship notes that the martial arts were practiced in China prior to the coming of Bodhidharma.[\[5\]](#) The founders of the famous Shaolin monastery were probably military men who retired to monastic life in AD 497, and most monks came from the general population where the martial arts were already practiced before the spread of Buddhism. Monasteries were sources of wealth in ancient China and required defending. The martial arts scholar Donn Draeger also notes that the martial arts were established in Japan prior to the acceptance of Buddhism, and the joining of these two practices represents a modern innovation.[\[6\]](#) These historical facts lead to the conclusion that the martial arts were practiced centuries before the arrival of Zen.

The martial arts or fighting arts have a long and diverse history in ancient China, India, and Greece that certainly precedes Zen or the founding of Shaolin and long predates the Samurai by thousands of years. These arts include hand to hand fighting, wrestling, boxing, and weapons use such as sword fighting and even gladiatorial combat training.

There is certainly a synthesis created between Zen and the martial arts in Shaolin and later in the Code of the Samurai, but the fighting arts of all kinds precede Zen. Historically speaking there is no intrinsic connection between Zen and the martial arts. People practiced these arts before Zen and will continue to practice them without Zen today.

Also, philosophically speaking there is no necessary connection between Zen and the martial arts. Zen is a method to achieve enlightenment through shock and illogic that awakens followers into the realization of unity of essence with ultimate reality, which means emptying and loss of self. The martial arts, on the other hand, were developed for the

practical reason of self-defense, sport and warfare.

Given the austerity, paradox, practicality, and composure of Zen disciples in the face of death, the warrior appears naturally attracted to it as a philosophy. Draeger points out that Zen contributed to the fighting technique of the Samurai by helping him empty his mind of all distractions and prepare him for the rigors of military life. It enabled him to transcend mere physical technique.[\[7\]](#) However, there is nothing intrinsic to either system that makes their practice necessary to each other, any more than fencing and the fighting techniques of the knights of the Middle Ages must involve Christianity. Zen's contribution to the martial arts is a convenience or incidental and not a philosophical necessity. This means the two can be logically and practically separated without harm or inconsistency to either system. It is possible to engage in martial arts without eastern religious philosophy. What Christians are responsible for, is to find martial arts instructors who teach the techniques without the Zen aspect.

Christianity and Zen

A basic principle of apologetics is finding the common ground between two different systems. This includes similar things such as beliefs and morals. This allows for a conversation and friendship to develop. Do not underestimate the power of friendship and empathy. In the final analysis we are not about winning arguments, or breaking bones for that matter, but winning people, individuals whom God loves; the hardest hearts can be softened by a little kindness and understanding.

There may be many points of contact between Christianity and Zen such as love, truth, realism, and even paradox, but the one I find most interesting is individualism. Both beliefs place a strong emphasis on individuality and respect for individual dignity in terms of self-discipline and self-

defense, a common ground where both Christians and Zen Buddhists alike share their interests in the martial arts. And we must make it clear that the martial arts are not the sole province of Zen teachers. Christians and Zen Buddhists simply have a common interest in these techniques for the purpose of self-growth, exercise, and sport. One need not be either a Buddhist or Christian to perform the martial arts, but both may use them for their own purposes.

The second principle of apologetics is to define the differences between the two systems and seek for the resolution in Christ. There are many differences between Zen and Christianity. Zen is a faith that seeks enlightenment through self-realization that there is no self. Christianity does not pursue enlightenment, but salvation. Buddhism believes that the individual self is an illusion, but Christianity believes the self is very real and very sinful. Christianity seeks to reconcile the self to a personal God through Jesus Christ. Christianity does seek to empty the old sinful self and replace it with a new self made in the image of Christ. This is not accomplished through works or meditation or following the Eightfold Path, but strictly by faith.

Buddhists do not believe in a personal all powerful God, but an impersonal force. Christians believe in a personal creator God who stands outside of the created world, making reconciliation impossible in terms of human effort. Buddhism stresses the importance of human works, discipline and right attitude and actions to achieve Nirvana. Christianity says salvation is impossible unless God saves us. Buddhism wants to empty the mind and escape the world of change. Christianity wants to save the world for the glory of God and fill the mind with his word.

"The Buddha" means "one who is awakened," which suggests that his title is self-earned and self-appointed. All that the Buddha accomplished has come from "within," from his own

abilities and merit.

“The Christ” means “the chosen one,” which suggests that his title was given to him and not earned. It comes from grace and from “without” or “outside” of him. One man leads to a system of works and the other to a system of grace. This point should never be confused.

Christianity and the Martial Arts

The primary problem for Christians in approaching the martial arts is violence. The martial arts are fighting techniques that can be used for several purposes: the most obvious is self-defense, then exercise, and finally sport.

We approach these techniques with the same Christian principle that we use in our approach to any other subject: we are free in Christ! Paul declares that we are saved in Christ and the world is ours. “For all things belong to you, whether . . . the world or life or death or things present or things to come: all things belong to you and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God” (1 Cor. 3:21-23). This means we use the gifts and talents at our disposal not for self-glorification but for the glory of God. Remember the first principle of Christian love: “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength” (Matt. 22: 37). Practice the martial arts with a commitment that reflects love for God. “We do all things for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Let the two greatest commandments guide your behavior: love God and your neighbor as yourself.

These principles do include self-defense. It is not unloving to defend yourself or an innocent person from an unjust attack. Self-defense has been an accepted point in Christian theology for centuries. This principle has been part of “just war thinking” and simply means Christians are justified under certain conditions to defend themselves and innocent people

against aggressive parties who will take advantage of them. In fact, not to defend ourselves or the innocent through inaction when we are capable of intervening to stop or prevent assault is equally considered as wrong as the assault itself.

The martial arts present a much more suitable and even peaceful alternative to self-defense than say a handgun, whose ease of use can be lethal. In the martial arts one has the advantage of training and discipline that act as a hedge to immature and reckless behavior. It takes years to learn these skills and with it one is taught self-control, discipline, and values, especially the value of human life.

What is completely unacceptable is the idea of training remorseless killing machines, like the sensei from the *Karate Kid* movie who taught his pupils to crush their opponents and "show no mercy." Such a view will only lead to your own destruction. For it is not without reason that Jesus said, "Those who live by the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). But, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matt. 5: 7). Mercy is the hallmark of the Christian. We learn in order to serve, just as Jesus said, "The Son of Man has not come to destroy life but to save it" (Luke 9:56). Those pursuing martial arts should use their skills in the service of life to achieve discipline and protection and to offer themselves as role models of dignity and responsibility to the younger generation.

Notes

1. John Lewis, *Religions of the World Made Simple*, rev. ed., (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 49.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 50.
4. Houston Smith, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 128.

5. Salvatore Canzonieri, "History of Chinese Martial Arts: Jin Dynasty to the Period of Disunity." *Han Wei Wushu* (February-March 1998), 3 (9); Ibid., "The Emergence of the Chinese Martial Arts." *Han Wei Wushu* (23).

6. Donn F. Draeger, *Modern Bujutsu and Budo* (New York: Weatherhill, 1974), 128.

7. Donn Draeger and Robert W. Smith, *Comprehensive Asian Fighting Arts* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, LTD, 1980), 95.

© 2011 Probe Ministries

Judge Shows: Spiritual Reality TV

I've been listening to a lot of TV lately.

I'm a [calligrapher](#), and November/December is my busy season. I look for the kind of shows that don't need to be watched because I'm focused on my hand lettering. So I've been listening to quite a few of the courtroom shows: Judge Judy, Judge Alex, Judge Marilyn, Judge Lynn, Judge Joe, and the others.

Lessons to be learned from judge shows:

- Some people don't know how to communicate without interrupting and talking over each other where neither can hear what the other is saying.
- When people roll their eyes and spit out contempt for each other, it's okay.
- There's nothing like money to break up friendships and

family. Especially if you don't get _____ in writing.

- People go to court because there isn't an adult (read: parent) to mediate the way mom and dad used to referee sibling fights.
- People don't mind being exposed as foolish as long as they get their 15 minutes of fame on TV.
- People who watch judge shows will call into the program to give their opinion on a case that was closed long before it aired, and then listen to a sales pitch of their own free will.

I watch TV with a [biblical worldview filter](#) in place. I'm constantly comparing what I see and hear to what the Bible says. There's nothing like the judge shows to support a biblical view of people and of life in a fallen world. The brokenness of people doing life by their own rules, apart from God's wisdom and power, is just so *sad*.

People want to be loved and respected and valued and honored, and those are legitimate desires. But when they don't feel loved or respected, they'll act in unloving and disrespectful ways toward others.

People's hearts are hungry for what will fill them, but if they refuse to turn to the One who promised to "make their joy complete" (John 16:24), they will take the counterfeit of greed and materialism.

People haven't been taught biblical conflict resolution, and their pride often keeps them from taking responsibility for their part in a conflict and asking forgiveness for it.

Sin makes us messed up people, and part of the messed up-ness involves a willingness to make it public.

So these shows are a kind of painfully true "spiritual reality show."

How God must wince—and weep.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/judge_shows_spiritual_reality_tv
on Dec. 21, 2010.

How to Talk to Your Kids About Evolution and Creation – What Kids Should Know About Evolution

Sue and Dr. Ray Bohlin bring decades of Christian worldview thinking and a PhD in science to the important topic of communicating a balanced rational position to our children and teenagers on questions that they will encounter in our society.

This article is the transcript of a Probe radio program the Bohlins recorded. Sue's questions and comments are in italics, followed by Ray's answers.

Problems with Evolutionary Theory

Why is there a problem with evolution in the first place? Someone once asked you, "What should I believe?" Remember what you told them?

Basically I said you should only believe what there is evidence for. After spending years studying evolution in bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs, I can tell you that, first of all, there **is** evidence for small changes in

organisms as they adapt to small environmental fluctuations.

Second, there **is** evidence that new species do arise. We see new species of fruit flies, rodents, and even birds. But when the original species is a fruit fly, the new species is still a fruit fly. These processes do not tell us how we get horses and wasps and woodpeckers.

Third, in the fossil record, there are only a few transitions between major groups of organisms, like between reptiles and birds, and these are controversial, even among evolutionists. If evolutionary theory is correct, the fossil record should be full of them.

Fourth, there are no real evolutionary answers for the origin of complex adaptations like the tongue of the woodpecker; or flight in birds, mammals, insects, and reptiles; or the swimming adaptations in fish, mammals, reptiles, and the marine invertebrates. These adaptations appear in the fossil record with no transitions. And fifth, there is no genetic mechanism for these large-scale evolutionary changes. The theory of evolution from amoeba to man is an extrapolation from very meager data.

So the problem with evolution is that it is a mechanistic theory without a mechanism, and there is no evidence for the big changes from amoeba to man.

The Evolution of the Horse

I have our son's eighth-grade biology textbook here. Every textbook, including this one, has a story about the evolution of the horse. It is always offered as proof of evolution. What do you say?

It does not prove much about evolution at all. David Raup, with the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, says:

"Well, we are now about 120 years after Darwin and the

knowledge of the fossil record has been greatly expanded. We now have a quarter of a million fossil species but the situation hasn't changed much. The record of evolution is still surprisingly jerky and, ironically, we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transitions than we had in Darwin's time. By this I mean that some of the classic cases of darwinian change in the fossil record, such as the evolution of the horse in North America, have had to be discarded or modified as a result of more detailed information—what appeared to be a nice simple progression when relatively few data were available now appear to be much more complex and much less gradualistic. So Darwin's problem has not been alleviated in the last 120 years and we still have a record which does show change but one that can hardly be looked upon as the most reasonable consequence of natural selection."[{1}](#)

There is no chronological sequence of horse-like fossils. The story of the gradual reduction from the four-toed horse of 60 million years ago to the one-toed horse of today has been called pure fiction. All that can be shown is the transition from a little horse to a big one. This is not significant evolutionary change, and it still took some 60 million years. It does not say anything about how the horse evolved from a shrew-like mammal.

Homologous and Vestigial Organs

Homologous organs: What are they?

Homologous organs are organs or structures from different organisms that have the same or similar function. Evolutionists say this similarity is due to common ancestry. The important question is, Do these organs look and function the same because of common ancestry or because of a simple common design? In other words, do they look this way because they are related to one another, or were they designed to perform a similar function? Homology is not a problem for

creationists; we have a different but reasonable explanation. It is the result of common design, not common ancestry.

What about vestigial organs, the ones that are supposedly left over from the evolutionary past? I remember being taught that the coccyx, the tailbone, is left over from when we were monkeys. And the appendix, same thing—we needed it when we were evolving, but we do not need it now. Vestigial organs are unused leftovers from our evolutionary past. Since we do not use them, they have diminished; they have become vestiges of their past function—according to evolutionary theory.

Yes, according to evolution. But we have discovered that these structures do have a function. The prime example is the one you mentioned, the tailbone. The coccyx serves as a point of attachment for several pelvic muscles. You would not be able to sit very well or comfortably without a tailbone.

The appendix was also long thought to be a vestigial organ, having absolutely no function within our bodies, but now we find it is involved in the immune system. It does have a function. It is true that you can live without it. However, as we learn more about the appendix, we realize that if it remains uninfected, it may be serving a very useful purpose.

So in other words, “vestigial organs” are not necessarily useless; we just may not have discovered what their role is.

Yes, very often we have called these things “vestigial” because we never bothered to investigate their function because of their reduced stature. Now we find that things like the coccyx and the appendix really do have a function. And if they have a function, then we cannot call them vestigial; they are not leftovers from our evolutionary past.

I am looking at pictures of embryos in this textbook that are very similar. The explanation given in the book is that they are similar because they have a common evolutionary ancestor. Obviously, this is being advanced as evidence of evolution. Is

that what it is?

Definitely not. Embryological development does not follow the history of our evolutionary past. [That idea was proven wrong 50 or 60 years ago.](#) It is unfortunate that this error is still in the textbooks. Obviously, there are some similarities among species very early in embryological development; for instance, among mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds. That is because they all start from a single cell. As development progresses, they become less similar. That is exactly what you would expect from an evolutionist **or** creationist perspective.

The Early Atmosphere of the Earth

You know, I was pretty happy with how this particular textbook treated evolution. It does not even use the word evolution, and it treats it strictly as a matter of theory, not fact. But you came across another, newer high-school textbook that is stridently pro-evolution. I am concerned about some things I see in this chapter on the origin of life. It is talking about the earth's early atmosphere, and this statement is in bold print (so the students know it's going to be on the test, don't you know!) <smile>

"The earth's first atmosphere most likely contained water vapor, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide, nitrogen, hydrogen sulfide, and hydrogen cyanide."

Then in the very next section it talks about Stanley Miller's famous experiments in 1953. It says the atmosphere he was trying to recreate was made of ammonia, water, hydrogen, and methane. What is going on here?

This particular section is confusing at best and misleading at worst. Clearly they have described [Miller's classic experiment](#), but researchers today agree that the atmosphere used for that simulation did not exist. But yet Miller's experiment produced results. If you use the atmosphere that

the textbook describes as the real one, the results are much less significant. The textbook gives the impression that chemical evolution is easy to simulate. But this is far from the truth. One experimenter says:

At present, all discussions on principles and theories in the field [meaning the origin of life] either end in stalemate or in a confession of ignorance.[{2}](#)

But you would definitely not get that impression from reading this section of the book.

Phylogenetic Trees

I have another question. Here is this beautiful, tidy chart that shows how neatly different animals evolved from one common ancestor. This evolutionary tree has a crocodile-like animal at the bottom, and all these branches coming out from him, and we end up with turtles and snakes and reptiles and birds and mammals all descended from this one animal. Are we talking science fantasy here, or is there a problem with this evolutionary tree?

Evolutionary trees, or phylogenetic trees, are regularly misrepresented in high-school textbooks. The nice solid lines give the impression that there is plenty of evidence, plenty of fossils to document these transitions—but the transitions are not there. If we were to look at this same type of diagram in a college textbook, all those connecting lines—the transitions—would be dotted lines, indicating that we do not have the evidence to prove that these organisms are related. The transition is an assumption. They assume these organisms are related to each other, but the evidence is lacking. Stephen Gould, a paleontologist and evolutionist from Harvard, says,

“The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The

evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches. The rest is inference, however reasonable: not the evidence of fossils.”{3}

In other words, these charts make pretty pictures, but they’re not pictures of reality.

That’s correct.

Natural Selection and Speciation

In this same high-school biology text, I am looking at the chapter on evolution called “How Change Occurs.” The big heading for this section is “Evolution by Natural Selection.” Natural selection always seems to be linked inseparably to evolution. What is it?

Natural selection is a process where the organisms that are fit to survive and reproduce, do so at a greater rate than those that are less fit. It sounds circular, but it is a simple process, something you can easily observe in nature.

There are some pictures here of England’s famous peppered moths. Why do they keep showing up in science textbooks?

They keep showing up because the [peppered moth](#) was the first documented example of Darwin’s natural selection at work. There were two different color varieties of the same moth: a peppered variety and a dark black variety. The peppered variety was camouflaged on the bark of trees, but the black variety was conspicuous. As a result, the birds ate a lot of black moths. The most common variety, therefore, was the peppered variety. But then the bark of the trees turned dark or black because of pollution. Now the dark form was hidden, but the peppered variety stood out, so the birds ate up the peppered variety. The proportion of peppered moths to black moths shifted in response to the change in the environment.

So here was a change of frequency. At one time we had more peppered moths, and now we have more dark ones. A clear example of natural selection taking place. But the question is, Is this really evolution? I don't think so. It just shows variety within a form. This does not tell me anything as a biologist and a geneticist about how we have come to have horses and wasps and woodpeckers.

When we are looking at peppered moths, we are dealing with natural selection within the same species. What about a whole new species; for example, Darwin's [Galapagos finches](#) off the coast of Ecuador. Isn't that an evidence of evolution?

Here is another area where we need to be careful. Speciation is indeed a real process, but speciation only means that two populations of a particular species can no longer interbreed. The two populations get separated by a geographical barrier such as a mountain range, and after a time they are no longer able to interbreed or to reproduce between themselves.

But all we have really done is split up the gene pool into two different, separate populations; if you want to call them different species, that's fine. But even Darwin's finches, although there are some changes in the shape and size of the bill, are clearly related to one another. Drosophila fruit flies on the Hawaiian Islands—there are over 300 species—probably originated from one initial species. But they look very much the same. The primary way to distinguish them is by their mating behavior.

There is a lot of variety within the organisms God created, and species can adapt to small changes in the environment. But there is [a limit to how far that change can go](#). And the examples we have, like peppered moths and Darwin's finches, show that very clearly.

Responding to Evolutionary Theory

You have given a creationist's response to evolution in textbooks, but apart from the books there is a personal issue to deal with. How do you think Christian students ought to react when they get to evolution in a science curriculum in school?

First, don't panic. This should not be a surprise; you knew it was going to come eventually. Second, understand that evolution is a very important idea in society today. It is important to know about it and to understand it. Try to explain it to your kids in that way. You do not have to believe it or accept it, but you need to understand it, know what people mean when they talk about evolution.

What about answering a question on a test?

Here it can get a little sticky. You may feel that you have to lie in order to give the answer the teacher wants. But I do not think that is the case at all. What you are doing is simply addressing the issue of evolution; you are showing that you understand it. You do not have to phrase your answer in such a way that says, "I believe this is the way it is." It may come down to how you state your answer. But you are simply demonstrating your knowledge about evolution, not your acceptance of it.

It seems to me that when you show you understand the concept of evolution, you are demonstrating respect for the teacher and really for the theory too, as the prevalent theory of our day, without having to make a statement of, "Yes, I believe this!"

Sure. The concept of respect, I think, is extremely important, because you have to realize that as a middle-school or high-school student, you are dealing with teachers who have studied or taught evolutionary theory for many years. Their level of

understanding is much deeper than yours. You cannot simply go in there and try to convince the class that the teacher is wrong, or that evolution is wrong; you need to play the role of a student. And the role of a student is to learn, to try to understand and comprehend the ideas being discussed. But you do not have to communicate in such a way that you appear to believe evolutionary theory.

I found this page in the textbook we have been looking at, right after the chapters on evolution. It is a message from the authors to the students. It says,

“Evolutionary theory unites all living things into one enormous family—from the tallest redwoods to the tiniest bacteria to each and every human on Earth. And, most importantly, the evolutionary history of life makes it clear that all living things—all of us—share a common destiny on this planet. If you remember nothing else from this course ten years from now, remember this, and your year will have been well spent.”{4}

I have never seen a message like this before, from the authors to the student. This textbook obviously has a very strong evolution bias.

Here we have to realize that what is being taught is not science anymore; this is a worldview. This is a statement of naturalism. Obviously, evolution is extremely important to the naturalistic worldview, and the authors are trying to communicate its significance. We are going to see [more and more of this bias in textbooks.](#)

Before Christian parents can talk to our kids about evolution, we first must have an understanding of evolution itself, as well as an understanding of the problems with it. We don't need to be afraid of this powerful theory; we do, however, need discernment, in sifting through the rhetoric and distinguishing it from the truth about God's world.

Genesis 1

Typically, if a child spends any time at all in Sunday school, he gets to the point where he realizes, "Hey, this doesn't relate at all to what I'm learning in school!" Our hope is that we can help parents integrate the truth of Scripture with what is known about origins in the world. As Christians, our starting point for thinking about origins is Genesis 1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." From that point on, though, there are a lot of different perspectives explaining the rest of the chapter.

That is true, and unfortunately it not only gets confusing for many of us, but it gets very confusing for many of the academics and the scholars as well. There are a number of different ways to interpret Genesis 1. Let me just run through [three of the most prominent views](#) among evangelicals today.

The first is the **literal** or the **very recent** creation account. Some people would call the proponents of this view "young earth creationists." They believe that each of the six days of creation was a twenty-four hour period similar to our days today. These days were consecutive and in the recent past, probably ten to thirty thousand years ago. They hold that the flood was a world-wide and catastrophic event and that all the sedimentary layers were a result of Noah's flood. All the fossils, therefore, are a result of the flood of Noah.

The second way of looking at Genesis 1 is the **Day Age Theory**, sometimes called **Progressive Creation**. Here, each of the six days of creation is a very long period of time, perhaps hundreds of millions of years. God would have created progressively through time, not all at once. The flood was a local event in Mesopotamia or perhaps even a world-wide, but tranquil flood. Therefore, the flood did not leave any great scars or sediments across the earth.

The third view understands Genesis 1 as a **Literary Framework**.

This view suggests that Genesis 1 was not meant to communicate history. Peoples of the Ancient Near East used a similar literary device to describe a complete or perfect work; in this case, a perfect creation. God could have created using evolution or progressive creation; the point is that there is really no concordance between earth history and the days of Genesis 1.

We need to explain to our children the view that makes the most sense to us, but at the same time let them know that there is some disagreement between evangelicals. You may even be confused yourself, and it is okay to communicate to your children that you do not know, either, and that not knowing is all right. We need to give direction but leave the doors open for other options.

Can we know which one is the correct interpretation?

Creation is a mystery. We need to show respect, not only for the mystery, but also for those people holding different views. Evangelicals with backgrounds in Hebrew and Greek differ on their understanding of Genesis 1. So how can we expect a ten-year-old to grasp the problem and make an actual decision?

When we explain the creation account in Genesis 1, we need to communicate to our children that different scholars, all committed to the Bible as God's Word, interpret Scripture differently. The important thing is that we stress that God created the earth, the universe, and every living thing, especially humans.

Early Human History

Now we are going to look at some specific issues that arise from Genesis in terms of early human history. Let's start with Adam and Eve. Were they real people?

This is a very important question, and I think it is one that

most evangelical scholars can agree on. Adam and Eve were real people, and almost all evangelical scholars agree that they were created by God. The reason is that this is the one creation event where God gives us details as to how He went about it. When He created the other mammals and the sea creatures and the birds, He *made* them or He *created* them or He *formed* them, but we are given details about Adam and Eve's creation. We are told how God did it. Adam was formed from dust, and Eve was created from a rib taken out of Adam's side. It is clear that humans do not have an evolutionary origin.

What about australopithecines, those supposed ape-like human ancestors?

Australopithecines most likely are simply extinct apes. Some quibble as to whether they walked upright and therefore may have been on their way to developing into human beings, but even if they did walk upright, that is not a real problem. They are still extinct apes, and they really had no human qualities whatsoever. There is a very good book that you may want to look at called *Bones of Contention*. There are a couple of books called *Bones of Contention*, but this is a recent one by Marvin Lubenow. Lubenow goes into great detail about the actual fossil finds—what they mean, where they fit—all from a creationist's perspective, and he does a very good job. He talks about the fact that human remains seem to span the whole era of supposed human evolution from four million years ago to the present, and that even the one particular type of fossil called *homo erectus* covers a very broad range. *Homo erectus* does not really fit where he is supposed to, and the fossils seem to contradict evolutionary theory rather than support it.

There is one more question that keeps coming up again and again. Where did Cain's wife come from?

In some ways it is surprising that this question seems to be so perplexing to people, but in another way I really understand it. Clearly, Cain married a sister. We react

against that idea today because of the many laws we have today concerning incestuous relationships. We have laws against incest because the children that result from that type of relationship are often afflicted with a genetic disease. This is because all of us carry detrimental recessive genes within our chromosomes. Closely related family members may carry similar if not the same set of recessive genes. When we marry within the family, those recessives can pair up and result in a child who is genetically handicapped. But in the original creation, there was no such problem. These were the originally created beings, there were no genetic mutations to worry about.

When it comes to human origins, the Bible gives no room for anything other than God's personal fashioning of Adam and Eve. It is the fact that God personally created mankind that gives us such intrinsic value.

Noah's Flood

The flood of Noah is extremely important because several New Testament teachings depend on it. The Lord Jesus told us that the time right before He returns will be just like it was in the days before the flood. Peter reminds us that God's judgment fell once on the earth and He has promised to do it again. If the first judgment was not real, what are we to think of the second one?

But all too often what comes to mind when we think of Noah's flood is the image of a cute little round boat with the heads of fluffy sheep and tall giraffes and friendly elephants sticking out of it. We think of it as a harmless bedtime story like Cinderella or Scuffy the Tugboat, a remnant of childhood Bible lessons and storybook times. Did the flood of Noah really happen?

We are talking about an historical event and one that is very serious. It is spoken of in Genesis in a historical narrative.

But evangelicals do disagree as to just how it happened. There are basically three different views.

One is the universal catastrophic flood account, where the flood was a world-wide event. It did indeed cover all the high mountains at that time, and it was catastrophic—lots of tidal waves and breaking up of the fountains of the great deep.

The other view is that the flood was universal—it covered the whole earth—but it was a tranquil event and probably did not leave any scars or sediments on the earth.

And the third view is that the flood was just in the Mesopotamian area. Since its intent was to destroy mankind, and mankind had not spread very far, the flood only had to cover the Mesopotamian area. Again, as with the creation account, we need to tell our kids what our conviction is. What do we think about it? And again, if you are not certain, if you are not sure about your view, go ahead and communicate your uncertainty as well. It is okay to be uncertain about some of these things; scholars do not really know everything about them, either. And we have to be ready to realize that the kids might not even like our particular interpretation, or they may have heard things in school, Sunday school, or church that may differ with our view. But it is okay to give our kids a little bit of room on these kinds of issues.

With all of these different interpretations of the flood, what can we feel safe telling our children? What is the point of the flood? What is the bottom line of this event?

The purpose of the flood of Noah was to destroy mankind as it existed at that time. Where scholars differ is just how far mankind had spread. Some suggest that the human population may only have been a couple hundred thousand, so they may have been contained in the Mesopotamian area. But if humans had been around for four or five thousand years, and they had a chance to multiply and grow, there may have been several

millions or tens of millions of people spread across the earth. That may be why some suggest that, in order to destroy mankind, the flood had to be universal. But we still do not know whether the flood was a catastrophic or a tranquil event, and so there is some room for discussion. I think all these different theories are helpful because they allow us to investigate God's Word to the best of our ability and try to determine what it really means.

There is one view of the flood—the universal catastrophic flood model—that has really captured the attention of much of the Christian community. Several organizations propose this model. In fact, you spent a couple of weeks in the [Grand Canyon](#) with one of these organizations investigating the flood model for the formation of the canyon. We want to address a few specifics about this catastrophic model of the flood of Noah. Would you give just a brief outline of this model?

This catastrophic model definitely suggests a very different scenario than the cute animals or the little round boat. We are talking about the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep and huge amounts of water rocking back and forth across the earth. The young earth creationists suggest that most of the sedimentary layers were formed during the flood. Most of the fossils that we find in those sedimentary layers, therefore, would have been laid down as a result of the flood of Noah. There should also be evidence around the earth of the catastrophic formation of all these sedimentary layers.

How close to the truth is this model? Does it explain everything?

There are a lot of things that it does explain. There is evidence for catastrophic origin for most, if not all, sedimentary layers. Organisms seem to require a very rapid burial in order for them to be formed as fossils. But there are problems with this model as well, and I think it is important that we recognize what those are. For instance, all

the different types of sediment would have to be the result of just one event, a catastrophic flood. When we look at these sedimentary layers, we have sandstone, limestone, mudstone, shale—all different types of rocks—but they all would have had to come from the same event, and that is a bit of a problem. The majority of Christian geologists believe that the strata are due to other events like river floods, deposits from big storms or hurricanes that occurred periodically or, in some cases regarding the sandstones, even desert sand dunes. While the catastrophic model is a captivating idea, I do not see a need to force ourselves to accept it or reject it at this time.

There is a lot of work to be done concerning this model. If you have a curious, science-oriented child, why not encourage him or her to pursue a career in science and become a part of the group that tries to investigate it?

Cavemen

Another question the kids are often curious about: Where do cavemen fit into the Bible?

Most creationists believe cavemen were the early survivors of the flood. Remember, if the purpose of the flood was to destroy mankind, then most of these fossils would be individuals who survived the flood or lived soon afterwards. Cro-Magnon man and Neanderthal man, and probably even fossils described as *homo erectus*, are all post-flood humans, descendants of Noah's three sons. The so-called primitive characteristics could be due to genetic in-breeding, faulty diets, and life in a harsh environment.

Racial Differences

Where do the different races come from? If we are all descended from one couple, Adam and Eve, why are there

different colors of skin?

Races would have originated with Noah's three sons and their wives. Several sets of genes produce the wide variety of skin color present in the current population. It is not difficult at all to envision genetically-similar populations becoming isolated after the flood and being the progenitors of the different races. Much of this genetic variability may have been contained in Noah's sons' wives, arising from genetic segregation that took place since the creation of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were probably people of intermediate skin color with most, if not all, of the genetic variability present in their genes.

Dinosaurs

We cannot talk about explaining creation to our kids without addressing the inevitable question of the dinosaurs. Where do dinosaurs fit into the Bible?

There is no question that kids today, particularly boys, are really enamored of dinosaurs. The answer depends on what your approach is.

If you are approaching creation from an old earth perspective, then the dinosaurs have been extinct for seventy or so million years and there is no reason to expect them to be mentioned in the Bible at all. Men and dinosaurs never existed together.

If, however, you are approaching creation from a young earth model, where everything was created in the fairly recent past, then dinosaurs must have existed at the same time as man because they were created on the same day, only ten to thirty thousand years ago. And that raises the question as to whether Noah took dinosaurs on the ark.

It is difficult to imagine a brontosaurus getting on the ark, and most creationists answer that by suggesting he probably did not take adult dinosaurs on the ark, just juveniles or

small babies. The extinction of the dinosaurs then was probably due to the flood. Even if Noah did take some on the ark, apparently the climate and ecology of the earth had changed dramatically as the result of the flood and they were not able to survive following the flood.

But it also raises the very distinct possibility that some dinosaurs may still exist in small, isolated pockets around the world. I do not want to add too much credence to this, but there are very intriguing stories—and I just want to call them stories for right now, not fact—from the Congo of different kinds of dinosaurs being reported by villagers and even some missionaries seeing very large reptile-like creatures out in the swamps. We have cave paintings from South America of dinosaur-like creatures. We have legends from all over the world about dragons, in China and the East and in Europe during the Middle Ages. We seem to have it in our heads that big reptiles are out there somewhere. It is a lot easier to think of them as being left-overs from the flood rather than having existed in small pockets for sixty or so million years since they became extinct in an evolutionary perspective. It is also feasible that dinosaurs could be mentioned in the Bible.

You mean under a different name?

Yes. For instance, Job 40 talks of a creature called “behemoth” in verses 15 to 24. He feeds on grass, he has strength in his loins,

What we have tried to do in this discussion is help parents understand the biblical accounts of creation in the early earth so that they can explain it to their children. Although we have presented a few options instead of absolutes, we can still tell our kids that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and that the flood was a real event, although some of the details of how these things happened may escape us at this time. This approach allows us to communicate clear

biblical truth while at the same time encouraging a child's curiosity and desire to investigate God's world. This is our Father's world, and it delights Him when His children want to discover it and search out the mysteries of the past, of history, of His story.

Notes

1. David Raup, "Conflicts Between Darwin and Paleontology," *Field Museum of Natural History Bulletin*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1979): 25.
2. Kraus Dose, "The Origin of Life: More Questions Than Answers," *Interdisciplinary Science Review* 13 (1988): 348-56.
3. Stephen J. Gould, *The Panda's Thumb* (New York: Norton, 1980), 181.
4. Kenneth Miller and Joseph Levine, *Biology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1991), 335.

© 1993 Probe Ministries

See Also:

- [Pictures and Account of Ray and Sue Bohlin's Visit to the Galapagos Islands](#)
- [All the Probe articles on Origins](#)

Examining Our Cultural Captivity – A Christian Look at the Impact of Popular

Thought on the Church

Steve Cable looks at the current epidemic of cultural captivity as a repeat of the concerns introduced by the Apostle Paul in the second chapter of Colossians. When Christians give up their biblical worldview and take on the ideas of the culture around them it weakens their witness to a dying world. He offers practical ideas to combat the types of captivity identified: carnal, confused, compromised and contented.

A common theme of many science fiction tales is mass delusion. From *The Matrix* to *The Truman Show*, we find fictional characters who think they are making decisions on their own volition based on an accurate perception of their situation. In each of these cases, the people are actually experiencing a false reality manipulated by outside forces using them for their own purposes.

Sadly, many of us are unwittingly being manipulated by distorted perceptions of reality. And, just as in these fictional tales, these distortions are not an accident. They are promoted by the spiritual forces of darkness to keep us from being effective agents of light in this world.

As the Apostle Peter explained, to fulfill our purpose of proclaiming Christ in a world of darkness, we must

Keep (our) behavior excellent . . . so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Pet. 2:12)

Distinctive thoughts produce distinctive behavior. Only by applying Christ to every aspect of life will we be able to “keep our behavior excellent” even as we are being slandered by the world. This is why Paul commands us:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. (Col. 2:8-9)

Paul is not talking about physical bars or chains. He is warning us about invisible chains constraining our minds to think like the world. Whenever we assume that the perspective of the world overrides the truth of Christ in some aspect of life, we are allowing ourselves to be taken captive. Paul also says that “in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3) Since that is true, we need to filter all truth claims through biblical revelation about the nature of God, man and the universe.

Let’s be honest. Most of us are oblivious to the invisible bars of cultural captivity. We think we are A-OK in balancing our spiritual beliefs with our everyday lives. However, most of us must be captive to some degree or the church would not be conforming to a degraded culture. As believers, we have the resources to escape from cultural captivity, but we need to make it a priority.

In this article we look at four types of captive believers: ***carnal, confused, compromised*** and ***contented***.

As we consider these different manifestations of captivity, let’s ask God to make us aware of areas of captivity in our own lives.

Carnal Christians

Just as there are different types of prisons, there are different ways that captivity can affect the lives of believers. **Carnal Christians** are believers who have misplaced priorities. As citizens of heaven,[\[1\]](#) they are living as if they are citizens of earth. The apostle Paul introduces us to these believers in his first letter to the Corinthians:

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. . . . For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? (1 Cor 3:1-3 NKJV)

The word *carnal* comes from the Greek word that literally means *fleshly*. These are believers who are focused on serving their flesh rather than on using their flesh to serve God. The carnal Christian looks upon salvation as an opportunity to cater to the flesh while avoiding eternal consequences.

For example, carnal Christians view marriage as a means to meet their needs. As one young husband told his pastor, “God wants me to be happy. I am not happy in my marriage. So, God must want me to get a divorce.”^{2} A 2008 survey found the divorce rate among “born again” Christians was the same as the rate among the population as a whole: about one in three (33%).^{3} However, the rate of divorce among those who regularly attend church is much lower, about 1 in 4.^{4,5} And my personal observation among actively growing Christians is a rate of less than 1 in 10.

Another area where carnality is evident is in business practices. We all drop our heads when we read about a “respected” church member who has been caught applying unethical and sometimes illegal business practices. It is highly likely that these individuals viewed the Scriptures as supporting their unethical attempts for temporal riches.

As Paul points out, minds that view the world through a fleshly perspective often lead to division and strife within the church. In fact, if the church is dominated by carnal Christians it may be worse than the world as “cheap grace” turns into license.

Let’s examine ourselves. Do we elevate the temporal above the eternal? What do our daily decisions reveal about our

perspective? Is it carnal or spiritual?

A Christian struggling with a carnal perspective needs to start asking the question, “Which decision or course of action has the most positive benefits for eternity?” In Christ, we are no longer slaves to our flesh, so when we start turning control over to the Holy Spirit, the flesh cannot keep its control over us.

[For helpful articles on divorce: [Probe's Marriage and Family section](#)

On business: [Business and Ethics](#) and [Can the Just Succeed?](#)]

Confused Christians

Confused Christians desire to please God, but they are confused about what God wants. Unlike the carnal Christian, confused Christians are concerned about the spiritual life. However, instead of being grounded in the Bible, they create their own spiritual truth from multiple sources.

Two thousand years ago, Paul warned believers that people will try to “delude you with persuasive arguments” (Col. 2:5) based on “the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4:14). Today, believers are still bombarded with deceptive ideas designed to prevent them from living in a way that exalts Christ.

Recent surveys by the Barna Group show that this approach is prevalent among those between the ages of 18 and 25. According to their surveys, 78% of young adults identify themselves as Christians,^{6} but more than half of them believe that the Qur'an and Book of Mormon offer the same spiritual truths as the Bible.^{7} Is it any wonder that many sincere believers are confused?

Confused Christians are often influenced by those who offer to enhance their Christian experience with new insights.

Recently, Oprah hosted a popular webinar with Eckhart Tolle. His repackaged Eastern mysticism is counter to the teachings of Christ on almost every topic. However, many of the participants were Christian women duped into believing that this false teaching was what Jesus was really trying to say all along.

One woman asked, "It's really opened my eyes up to a new way of thinking; . . . that doesn't always align with the teachings of Christianity. . . . Oprah, how have you reconciled these spiritual teachings with your Christian beliefs?"

In part, Oprah's reply was "I took God out of the box. . . I'm a free-thinking Christian who believes in my way, but I don't believe that it's the only way," In other words, "I am going to abandon the God of the Bible and create my own God who thinks like me."

Confused Christians often misapply God's character of love and compassion. We see this confusion in the debates on abortion, same sex marriage and homosexual clergy.

[For more information on these issues see these Probe articles:

[Abortion](#)

[Arguments Against Abortion](#)

[The Dark Underside of Abortion](#)

[Same Sex Marriage: A Facade of Normalcy](#)

[Answering Arguments for Same Sex Marriage](#)]

Once again, we need to examine ourselves. Am I confident that my beliefs are based on the principles revealed in the Bible? Am I confusing the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of Christ?

The primary prescription for a confused Christian is a steady dose of God's word through personal study and trusted teachers

who understand the Bible as the ultimate source of truth.

Compromised Christians

Compromised Christians profess a set of beliefs generally consistent with a biblical worldview, but compromise those beliefs by living like the world in one or more areas.

Jesus may have been referring to compromised Christians when He said,

And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (Mark 4:18-19)

Knowing that they are called to a fruitful life, they allow the pressures and the temptations of the world to take precedence over the truth of Christ. They have allowed their concern for the things of the world to compromise their walk.

Some Christians are compromised by the desires of the flesh, addictions to alcohol, drugs or pornography. The high percentage of Christian men struggling with pornography is an example. Satan promotes the lie that this is a secret sin that can be kept from compromising one's public witness for Christ. Yet, anytime we consistently make provision for the flesh, it is going to result in a compromised walk. I distinctly remember the day my friend and fellow church leader who had been struggling with pornography had to confess to his wife that he had committed adultery. Even with his sincere heart for restoration and reconciliation, the healing process was painful.

Other Christians are compromised by their pride or desire for earthly success. As Jesus warned the Jewish leaders,

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? (John 5:44-45)

They rationalize unethical practices, questionable morals and exploitation of others as worth the price to achieve success. These Christians embrace the sacred/secular split described by Nancy Pearcey in her book *Total Truth*. They partition their lives and their minds so that biblical truth only applies to their spiritual, church life while pragmatism determines what is true for every other aspect.

Let's examine our lives to see if we are rationalizing un-Christlike behavior to satisfy our own selfish desires. Are we choosing to conform to the world because we think we will enjoy that more than conforming to Christ?

If you are struggling with compromise, look for others who can help hold you accountable, mature believers who can join with us in allowing God's Spirit to "destroy fortresses and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God."[\[8\]](#)

Contented Christians

Contented Christians are actively choosing the truth of Christ for their own lives, yet they are content to allow others to continue in cultural captivity. Either from fear of persecution or concern with hurting others or time pressures, these Christians avoid confronting others to unmask the deceptive, destructive ideas crippling their witness.

Although the apostle Paul was always content despite his physical circumstances,[\[9\]](#) he was never satisfied with the spiritual condition of the world. Paul said:

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving

according to His power, which mightily works within me.
(Col. 1:28-29)

Mature Christians are called to impart their understanding to others, particularly carnal, confused and compromised Christians. The fact that we have not been doing so in recent decades can be seen in the diminished influence of the church on public life.

For example, over 87% of Congress members are affiliated with a Christian denomination. Yet, this Congress recently passed so-called "hate crimes" legislation which will limit the ability of Christians to speak biblical truth on sexuality. While abhorring any crimes, we realize that one of the most loving things we can do is to point out to others when they are engaged in destructive behavior. Yet contented Christians stood by as a nation with a Christian majority elected national leaders who seem to be carnal, confused and compromised.

As contented Christians, we have let family hour on television move from "Father Knows Best" to "The Secret Life of Teenagers" which feeds American youth a constant diet of promiscuity and disrespect for authority.

As contented Christians, we have let carnal, confused and compromised believers set the example for our younger generations. Is it any wonder that these generations are largely confused about their beliefs? Recent surveys indicate that although over one in three young adults can be identified as born again, less than one in a hundred has beliefs consistent with a biblical worldview.

So let's examine ourselves. Do I sit on the sidelines watching other believers conforming to the world without attempting to intervene?

We are not spectators seeking to keep from getting stains on our white, linen knickers; instead, we are called to be

warriors in the battle for the fate of our fellows. If we do not stand firm and confront error, we are just as much captives of our culture as the others.

Notes

1. Philippians 3:20
2. Al Janssen, *The Marriage Masterpiece* (Colorado Springs: Focus Publishing, 2001).
3. Barna Group, New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released, March 31, 2008, www.barna.org/barna-update/article/15-familykids/42-new-marriage-and-divorce-statistics-released
4. Ibid.
5. Bradley Wright, Divorce Rates Among Christians by Church Attendance, December 4, 2006, brewright.blogspot.com/2006/12/divorce-rates-among-christians-by.html
6. Barna Group, Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years, www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/147-most-twenty-somethings-put-christianity-on-the-shelf-following-spiritually-active-teen-years
7. Barna Group, New Research Shows How Different Generations View and Use the Bible, October 19, 2009, www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/317-new-research-explores-how-different-generations-view-and-use-the-bible
8. 2 Corinthians 10:4
9. Philippians 4:11-13

© 2010 Probe Ministries

Hume's Critique of Miracles

Michael Gleghorn examines Hume's influential critique of miracles and points out the major shortfalls in his argument. Hume's first premise assumes that there could not be miracles and his second premise is based on his distaste for the societies that report miracles. As a Christian examining these arguments, we find little of value to convince us to reject a biblical worldview saying that God can and has intervened in natural history to perform miracles.

Introduction

One of the most influential critiques of miracles ever written came from the pen of the skeptical Scottish philosopher David Hume. The title of the essay, "Of Miracles," originally appeared in Hume's larger work, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, first published in 1748. This was the Age of Enlightenment, a time in which skepticism about miracles was becoming increasingly widespread among the educated elite.[\[1\]](#) So what were Hume's arguments, and why have they been so influential in subsequent scholarly discussions of this topic?

Hume essentially "presents a two-pronged assault against miracles."[\[2\]](#) He first argues that "a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature." But since "a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle," he says, "is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."[\[3\]](#) In other words, given the regularity of the laws of nature, Hume contends that miracles are exceedingly improbable events. But this is not all. He also argues that since miracle reports typically occur among uneducated, barbarous peoples, they are inherently untrustworthy and, hence, unworthy of our belief.[\[4\]](#)



Now clearly, if Hume is correct, then this presents a real

problem for Christianity. For Christianity is full of miracles. According to the New Testament, Jesus walked on water, calmed raging storms, healed diseases, exorcised demons, and brought the dead back to life! But if miracles are really as utterly improbable as Hume maintains, and if reports of miracles are completely lacking in credibility, then it would seem that the New Testament's accounts of miracles are probably unreliable and that Christianity itself is almost certainly false!

So how compelling are Hume's arguments? Should believers be quaking in their boots, fearful that their most cherished beliefs are a lie? Not at all! As philosopher of science John Earman observed in a scholarly critique of Hume's arguments, Hume's essay is not merely a failure; it is "an abject failure." He continues, "Most of Hume's considerations are unoriginal, warmed over versions of arguments that are found in the writings of predecessors and contemporaries. And the parts of 'Of Miracles' that set Hume apart do not stand up to scrutiny. Worse still, the essay reveals the weakness and the poverty of Hume's own account of induction and probabilistic reasoning. And to cap it all off, the essay represents the kind of overreaching that gives philosophy a bad name."[\[5\]](#) Now admittedly, these are strong words. But Earman argues his case quite forcefully and persuasively. And in the remainder of this article, I think the truth of his remarks will become increasingly evident.

Hume's Argument from the Laws of Nature

What are we to say to Hume's argument that "a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature" and that "the proof against a miracle...is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined"?

First, we might question whether miracles *should* be defined as violations of the laws of nature. According to Christian

philosopher Bill Craig, "An examination of the chief competing schools of thought concerning the notion of a natural law...reveals that on each theory the concept of a violation of a natural law is incoherent and that miracles need not be so defined."[\[6\]](#) Thus, we might object that Hume's definition of a miracle is simply incoherent. But this is a debated point, so let's instead turn our attention to a more pressing matter.

When Hume says that the laws of nature are established upon "a firm and unalterable experience," is he claiming that the laws of nature are never violated? If so, then his argument begs the question, assuming the very thing that needs to be proved. It would be as if he argued this way:

- *A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature.*
- *Experience teaches us that the laws of nature are never violated (i.e. that miracles never occur).*
- *Therefore, experience teaches us that miracles never occur.*

Such an argument is clearly fallacious. Hume would be assuming "as a premise for his argument the very conclusion he intends to prove."[\[7\]](#) But this is probably *not* what Hume intended.

As Earman observes, Hume's view rather seems to go something like this: "When uniform experience supports" some lawlike regularity "that is contradicted by testimony," then one must set "proof against proof," and judge which of the two is more likely. The result of this new formulation, however, is that "uniform experience does *not* furnish a proof against a miracle in the sense of making the . . . probability of its occurrence flatly zero."[\[8\]](#)

This is an important point. After all, there is a great deal of human testimony that solemnly *affirms* the occurrence of miracles. Thus, the only way that Hume can maintain that the uniform experience of mankind is against the occurrence of

miracles is by *assuming* that all miracle reports are false. But *this* assumption, as we'll see, is completely untenable when miraculous events are attested by numerous, independent witnesses.

Hume's Argument Against the Reliability of Human Testimony

In Part II of "Of Miracles," David Hume argues that there has never been the kind of testimony on behalf of miracles which would "amount to entire proof."[{9}](#) He offers four reasons for this claim.[{10}](#)

First, no miracle on record has a sufficient number of intelligent witnesses, of good moral character, who testify to a miraculous event that occurred in public and in a civilized part of the world. Second, human beings love bizarre and fantastic tales, and this irrationally inclines them to accept such tales as true. Third, miracle reports are usually found among barbarous peoples. And finally, the miracle reports of different religions cancel each other out, thus making none of them effective for proving the truth of their doctrines.

What should we say in response to these arguments? While all of the points have merit, nevertheless, as Bill Craig observes, "these general considerations cannot be used to decide the historicity of any particular miracle."[{11}](#) The only way to determine if a miracle has actually occurred is by carefully examining the evidence. How many witnesses were there? Are they known to be honest, or are they generally unreliable?

These questions are particularly important when one considers the cumulative power of independent witnesses for establishing the occurrence of some highly improbable event like a miracle. By "independent witnesses" I simply mean witnesses whose testimony to an event comes from firsthand experience and is *not dependent* on the testimony of others.

As Charles Babbage demonstrated in his *Ninth Bridgewater Treatise*, if one can find enough independent witnesses to a miraculous event, who tell the truth more often than not, then one can always show that the occurrence of the miracle is more probable than not.[{12}](#) Craig explains the matter this way: "If two witnesses are each 99% reliable, then the odds of their both independently testifying falsely to some event are only . . . one out of 10,000; the odds of three such witnesses being wrong is . . . one out of 1,000,000." "In fact," he says, "the cumulative power of independent witnesses is such that individually they could be *unreliable* more than 50% of the time and yet their testimony combine to make an event of apparently enormous improbability quite probable in light of their testimony."[{13}](#)

So while Hume's arguments should make us cautious, they cannot prevent human testimony from plausibly establishing the occurrence of miracles. And the only way to determine if the testimony is plausible is to carefully examine the evidence.

Hume and Probability Theory (Part 1)

Hume argues that since miracles run contrary to man's uniform experience of the laws of nature, no testimony can establish that a miracle has occurred unless "its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish."[{14}](#) Although Hume makes it sound as though establishing one miracle would require an even greater miracle, all his statement really amounts to, as John Earman rightly notes, is that no testimony is good enough to establish that a miracle has occurred unless it's sufficient to make the occurrence of the miracle more probable than not.[{15}](#)

But in Hume's view this is virtually impossible. No testimony is really ever sufficient to establish that a miracle has occurred. And this is problematic. For it can be perfectly reasonable to accept a highly improbable event on the basis of

human testimony. In fact, we do it all the time.

Suppose the evening news announces that the number picked in the lottery was 8253652. As Craig observes, “this is a report of an extraordinarily improbable event, one out of several million.”[{16}](#) If we applied Hume’s principle to such a case, it would be irrational for us to believe that such a highly improbable event had actually occurred. So something is clearly wrong with this principle. But what?

The problem, says Craig, is that Hume has not considered all of the relevant probabilities. For although it might be highly improbable that just this number should have been chosen out of all the possible numbers that *could* have been chosen, nevertheless one must also consider the probability that the evening news would have reported just *this* number if that number had *not* been chosen. And this probability is “incredibly small,” for the newscasters would have no reason to report just this number unless it had, in fact, been chosen![{17}](#)

So how does this relate to the question of miracles? When it comes to assessing the testimony for a miracle, we cannot simply consider the likelihood of the event in light of our general knowledge of the world.[{18}](#) This was Hume’s mistake. Instead, we must also consider how likely it would be, if the miracle had *not* occurred, that we would have just the testimony and evidence that we have.[{19}](#) And if it is highly unlikely that we would have just this evidence if the miracle had *not* occurred, then it may actually be *highly probable* that the miracle did, in fact, occur. Even if a miracle is highly *improbable* when judged against our general knowledge, it may still turn out to be highly *probable* once all the specific testimony and evidence for the miracle is taken into account.[{20}](#)

Hume and Probability Theory (Part 2)

There's still another problem with Hume's critique, namely, that he never actually establishes that a miracle is highly improbable in light of our general knowledge of the world. He simply assumes that this is so. But the problem with this becomes evident when one reflects upon the fact that, for the Christian, part of what's included in our "general knowledge of the world" is the belief that God exists. What's more, as believers we have at our disposal a whole arsenal of arguments which, we contend, make it far more plausible than not that this belief is really true.

But notice how this will influence our estimation of the probability of miracles. If belief in God is part of our general knowledge of the world, then miracles will be judged to at least be possible. For if an all-powerful God exists, then He is certainly capable of intervening in the natural world to bring about events which would never have occurred had nature been left to itself. In other words, if God exists, then He can bring about miracles! Thus, as Bill Craig observes, whether or not a miracle is considered highly improbable relative to our general knowledge of the world is largely going to depend on whether or not we believe in God. So the question of God's existence is highly relevant when it comes to assessing the probability of miracle claims.[\[21\]](#) While those who believe in God may still be skeptical of most miracle reports, they will nonetheless be open to the *possibility* of miracles, and they will be willing to examine the evidence of such reports on a case-by-case basis.

To conclude, although Hume's critique of miracles is one of the most influential ever written, it really doesn't stand up well under scrutiny. Indeed, John Earman concludes his devastating critique of Hume's arguments by noting his astonishment at how well posterity has treated Hume's essay, "given how completely the confection collapses under a little

probing.”^{22} Although Hume was doubtless a brilliant man, his critique of miracles is simply unconvincing.

Notes

1. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 248.
2. Ibid., 250.
3. David Hume, “Of Miracles,” in *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Charles W. Hendel (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), 122.
4. Ibid. See Hume’s discussion in Part II of his essay.
5. John Earman, *Hume’s Abject Failure: The Argument against Miracles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.
6. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 261.
7. Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 65.
8. Earman, *Hume’s Abject Failure*, 32
9. Hume, “Of Miracles,” 124.
10. See *ibid.*, 124-41.
11. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 277.
12. This sentence is a paraphrase of a statement from Babbage’s treatise cited in Earman, *Hume’s Abject Failure*, 54.
13. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 272, n. 26.
14. Hume, “Of Miracles,” 122-23.
15. Earman, *Hume’s Abject Failure*, 41.
16. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 270.

17. Ibid., 271.

18. Jason Rennie, "Epistemology and the Resurrection: An Interview with William Lane Craig," in Sci-Phi Show Outcasts, 2006, available in the "Interviews" section at bit.ly/9SSrWU (note: this page is accessible by members only. We urge you to register free of charge to access this and many excellent resources. The link is down the page underneath the "Closer to Truth" links.)

19. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 270.

20. Rennie, "Epistemology and the Resurrection."

21. Ibid. See also the discussion in Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 274-76.

22. Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure*, 71.

© 2010 Probe Ministries

What Do We Make of the Stem Cell Debate? A Biblical Perspective

Heather Zieger looks at the stem cell debate from a biblical worldview perspective. This Christian perspective recognizes the true source of life and the difficulties with destroying many young lives for the hope of being able to save a few older lives.

What Are Stem Cells?

If science had a tabloid magazine, then stem cells would grace the cover. And much like the Hollywood celebrities, stem cells are at the center of controversy. How is a Christian to respond to conflicting reports and confusing science? In this article we will discuss the differences between adult and embryonic stem cells, look at some media myths, and evaluate the worldview issues behind the controversy.

First, let's define stem cells. Stem cells are cells that serve as the body's carpenters and mechanics to other cells. Their name comes from the stem of a plant. Think of a rose. From the stem grow the leaves, the thorns, and the flower. The flower does not produce leaves, nor do the thorns produce a flower, but the stem produces all of these things. However, the stem of the rose is still part of the plant. In the same way, stem cells are themselves cells and they produce other cells.

Stem cells can be found throughout our body. Think about when you give blood. Your body will resupply the blood that you lost. It does this by using blood stem cells. When your body needs more blood, signals tell the blood stem cells to make red blood cells, white blood cells and plasma cells. Another example is our skin. We lose skin every day, but our body has very active skin stem cells that grow new layers. Keep skin stem cells in mind, because scientists have been able to do some amazing things with skin stem cells.

Blood and skin stem cells are examples of adult stem cells, which are different from another type of stem cell called embryonic stem cells. Embryonic stem cells are only found in the inner cell mass of a 5- to 8-day-old embryo. These cells end up making every cell in the human body and can divide indefinitely. They are believed to be much more versatile than adult stem cells. Because of this ability, scientists describe embryonic stem cells as *pluripotent*. Adult stem cells are

programmed to only make certain types of cells (like our example of blood stem cells), and adult stem cells have a limited number of cell divisions. Because of this, they are described as *multipotent*.

As we look at some of the scientific research on stem cells, we will find that adult stem cells are more versatile than we once thought, and embryonic stem cells have limitations that scientists still need to overcome.[\[1\]](#)

Adult Stem Cells: The Underreported Medical Successes

One of the two main types of stem cells is adult stem cells. Adult stem cells are named for their abilities, not for their source. We find very helpful adult stem cells in umbilical cord blood and the placenta even though these sources are not from adults. One of the most studied adult stem cell sources is bone marrow. The first bone marrow transplant was performed in 1968. But it wasn't until 1988 that scientists identified the stem cells within bone marrow that caused the transplants to work.[\[2\]](#)

Bone marrow transplants demonstrate one of the biggest advantages of adult stem cells. Scientists did not know what a stem cell was, let alone how they worked, but the bone marrow transplants were still successful. The stem cells knew where to go in the body to repair the right tissues. This ability to automatically go to the location of repair is characteristic of all adult stem cells.

Bone marrow transplants also demonstrate one disadvantage to adult stem cell therapy. Just like an organ transplant, the stem cell donor must be an exact match to the patient. And the patient will need to take immuno-suppressant drugs for the rest of his life.

However, recent findings with umbilical cord blood have shown that the donor does not have to be an exact match when cord blood is used, meaning that a patient has a better chance of finding a donor. One of the first umbilical cord treatments was for sickle cell disease in a twelve-year-old boy.[\[3\]](#) He responded so well to treatment that a year later doctors declared him cured of sickle cell disease. He does have to take immune suppressant drugs, but does not display sickle cell symptoms.

One way around the donor problem is to use the patient's own healthy stem cells to repair other damaged cells. Parents now have the choice to bank their child's umbilical cord blood in the event that the child may need it. This technique was successfully used to help a child with her cerebral palsy symptoms.[\[4\]](#) Other adult stem cell successes include rebuilding bone, alleviating some cancers and auto-immune diseases, relieving Parkinson's symptoms, and treatments for Type I diabetes.[\[5\]](#)

All of these therapies have happened in real people using stem cells that do not involve the destruction of an embryo, and would be perfectly ethical within a Christian worldview.

What is the Promise of Embryonic Stem Cells?

The second type of stem cell is embryonic stem cells. Embryonic stem cells come from the inner cell mass of a 5- to 8-day-old embryo. Embryos are formed after the egg and sperm have united, which initiates a directional process that, given proper conditions, can eventually form a baby. At the 5- to 8-day stage, there are only a few cells within the embryo, but these cells are capable of making all of the cells in the human body. To obtain these cells, scientists penetrate the outer protective layer of the embryo and remove the cells. This procedure destroys the embryo.

It is still only a theoretical possibility that human embryonic stem cells can cure diseases. There is one FDA approved human trial that was announced in January 2009 for patients with a recent spinal cord injury.[\[6\]](#) We will have to wait to find out the results of this treatment. In other parts of the world, people have sought embryonic stem cell therapy as a desperate measure. One man in China had embryonic stem cells injected into his brain to relieve his Parkinson's symptoms. Unfortunately, the cells spun out of control and continued to make new cells of varying cell types. They eventually formed a large brain tumor consisting of different kinds of cells [a teratoma], such as skin cells, hair cells, and blood cells.[\[7\]](#) Another boy in Israel had a disease that attacked his spinal cord. His parents took him to Russia for several treatments with embryonic stem cells. Four years later, doctors found tumors in his spine that they confirmed came from the embryonic stem cell therapy.[\[8\]](#)

One of the most difficult hurdles for embryonic stem cell research is trying to program the stem cell to become the particular cell type that they need. The second hurdle is then telling the cell to stop multiplying before it forms a tumor. The signals and mechanisms for this are still being researched; however, one recent study involving the rebuilding of mouse muscles using embryonic stem cells shows some progress in this area.[\[9\]](#)

While embryonic stem cells may theoretically have promise, they have not shown this in reality. Time will tell if they actually deliver. However, the ethical issue from a Christian perspective is not whether this research has a practical use, but whether we want to go down the path of using the parts of one human being, deemed less worthy of life, for another.

Media Myths

Unfortunately, the stem cell debate has turned into a media

poster child for the next big scientific miracle. And stem cells have been hot science topics in the political realm. What is striking in all of this are the misconceptions that are repeated in the media.

Let's go over three media myths in the stem cell debate.

The first myth is that President Bush restricted stem cell research. Actually, President Bush was the first president to specifically allow federal funding for embryonic stem cell research.[{10}](#) However, he did put limits on how far they can take that funding. Furthermore, what is often omitted is that private companies have always been allowed to invest in embryonic stem cell research.

The second myth often repeated by the media is that embryonic stem cells have the potential to cure all types of diseases including spinal cord injuries,[{11}](#) Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. So far, the only successful stem cell treatments of spinal cord injuries or of Parkinson's symptoms[{12}](#) have been with adult stem cells.

I want to emphasize that *Alzheimer's will never be cured by stem cell therapy of any kind*. Alzheimer's causes the death of many types of brain tissues. Stem cells might be able to replace some dead tissue, but tissue death is a symptom, not the cause. Alzheimer's affects the whole brain so deeply and quickly that it really isn't an issue of replacing cells. Therefore, scientists must look to other areas for cures for Alzheimer's.[{13}](#) The perpetuation of the myth that stem cells will cure Alzheimer's is either a cruel misrepresentation in order to sell a story, or else demonstrates a complete lack of understanding on the subject.

The third misrepresentation is the blatant lack of media coverage for adult stem cells. There have been over 70 different diseases, disorders, or injuries that have been helped or cured with adult stem cells in human trials,[{14}](#) yet

this has hardly been covered by the media. We have discussed the successes of bone marrow and umbilical cord blood, but where is the media coverage of the latest findings with skin stem cells?[{15}](#) Scientists have found ways to coax a patient's own skin stem cells into acting just like an embryonic stem cell. In other words, these cells have the potential to become almost any cell in the body and they are from the patient's skin. No use of embryos, no immuno-suppressant drugs, and the technique has been refined for patient safety.[{16}](#)

Why this bias? There is a worldview issue at the heart of the matter.

Stem Cells from a Christian Worldview

We have looked at the differences between embryonic and adult stem cells. We have seen the double standard the media has in reporting these types. But the question remains, with all of the successes of adult stem cells, including the ability to create embryonic-like stem cells from the patient's own skin, why insist on continuing embryonic stem cell research? Why does the debate continue?

I believe a major part of the problem is the answer to the question, Who is in authority? There are two broad options: a God-centered authority or a man-centered authority. The man-centered authority in this case is called scientism. It is the idea that science will save us from our problems and tell what we need to know about life, including what is right and wrong.

Don't misunderstand me, I am trained as a scientist, and I think studying nature and pursuing scientific questions is important. But when we prioritize science as the only means of gaining knowledge and make it the guide for our lives and the decisions we make, we aren't studying the world around us, we have essentially invented a religion.

The other perspective is a God-centered authority. In this

case all of nature, technology and our decisions are under God's authority. In other words, we determine what is right and wrong from the Bible because it is God's revealed word.

Scientists want to continue studying embryonic stem cells, because they want to explore all possibilities, and they see no reason why they shouldn't. From their worldview, they are in authority. There is no reason to put moral limitations on research. Many people latch onto this idea because they believe science will save them. They have faith in science. Some even believe this to the point of claiming stem cells will cure diseases and ailments that no stem cell therapy could ever do.[{17}](#)

Some scientists argue that we need to study embryos to better understand how a disease can develop in the earliest cells. These studies have been done in animals, but scientists would prefer to use humans because there are several developmental differences between humans and other animals.[{18}](#)

As Christians, we believe scientific study and finding cures for diseases is a great endeavor. But just because we *can* do something, doesn't always mean we *should*. We know what we should do from God's word. He values the unborn, and values human beings as having inherent dignity because we are made in his image. We therefore cannot judge some humans less valuable than others, and we certainly cannot destroy them for research observations or for removal of their parts. From this perspective, adult stem cell research is ethical, but embryonic stem cell research is not.

Notes

1. An excellent documentary on the basics of stem cells and the controversy around embryonic and adult stem cells: *The Lines that Divide: The Great Stem Cell Debate*. Dir. Brian Godwana. The Center for Bioethics and Culture Network, 2009. See this link for a clip:

www.thecbc.org/redesigned/research_display.php?id=373.

2. "Purification and characterization of mouse hematopoietic stem cells." GJ Spangrude, S Heimfeld, IL Weissman, *Science* Vol. 241, Issue 4861, 58-62.

3. www.nationalcordbloodprogram.com

4. www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,392061,00.html

5. www.stemcellresearch.org

6. www.geron.com/grnopclclearance/

7. "Survival and proliferation of non neural tissues, with obstruction of cerebral ventricles in a Parkinsonian patient treated with fetal allografts." *Neurology*, Vol 46, Issue 5, May 1, 1996.

8. www.plosmedicine.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000029

9. "Functional skeletal muscle regeneration from differentiating embryonic stem cells." *Nature Medicine* 14, 134-143, 2008.

10. See Executive Order 13435; for an excellent article on the politics of stem cell research from a Christian worldview, see "Responsible Science & ESCR" by Greg Koukl in *Solid Ground* May/June 2009 (a publication of Stand to Reason).

11. www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1864811 (*Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine* 29, 191-203, July 2006).

12. www.lifenews.com/bio2751.html;

www.bio-medicine.org/medicine-technology-1/Groundbreaking-Paper-Publishes-Long-Term-Results-of-a-Successful-Phase-I-Clinical-Trial-Using-Autologous-Neural-Stem-Cells-to-Treat-Parkinsons-Disease-3848-1/;

www.bentham-open.org/pages/content.php?TOS CJ/2009/00000001/00000001/20TOS CJ.PDF

13. For an excellent overview of Alzheimer's, see the Alzheimer's association website at www.alz.org; for their statement on stem cell research see:

www.alz.org/national/documents/statements_stemcell.pdf.

14. "A 37-year-old-spinal-cord-injured female patient, transplanted of multipotent stem cells from hum UC blood, with

improved sensory perception and mobility, both functionally and morphologically: a case study." *Cythotherapy* 7, Issue 4, 368-373, 2005.

15. One person in the popular media who did mention skin stem cells was Dr. Mehmet Oz on the Oprah Winfrey Show:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDFJ0zu9SyM.

16. K. Takahashi, et al., *Cell* doi: 10.1016/j.cell.

2007.11.019; 2007; J. Yu, et al., *Science* doi:

10.1126/Science. 1151526; 2007.

17. See Joseph Bottum and Ryan T. Anderson's article in *First Things* for an excellent reference on the history of stem cell research:

www.firstthings.com/article.php?year=2008&month=10&title_link=001-stem-cells-a-political-history-27. Also see Anderson's

article in the *Weekly Standard* for reasons scientists still want to study embryonic stem cell research:

www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/016/258hdaij.asp?pg=1.

18. The scientists who conducted the research on skin stem cells that were coaxed into acting like embryonic stem cells did use knowledge from embryonic stem cell research to help identify the general markers for pluripotency. However, it is unclear that it is necessary to use human embryonic stem cells for this, because the markers for pluripotency were first identified in mouse embryonic stem cells.

© 2009 Probe Ministries

"Your Article on Edgar Cayce

Can Hurt Christian Believers!"

I had previously ignored the anti-Cayce article on your web site, assuming that you had a right to your opinion and that you probably would not want to hear mine. It has come to my attention, however, that this propaganda has the potential to create harm and confusion for believers who might otherwise be helped by the Edgar Cayce readings.

While some of the things in your article are relatively true, some of your facts are patently false. It is shameful for a ministry that claims to do research to post an article that relies almost exclusively on secondary sources while completely ignoring what was actually said in the Cayce readings-a body of information that is readily available to anyone.

Probably the most egregious statement is: Cayce came to believe that Jesus was not the unique Son of God. Here is a quote (similar to thousands of other quotes) from a typical reading:

As to how to meet each problem: Take it to Jesus! He is thy answer. He is Life, Light and Immortality. He is Truth, and is thy elder brother. Will ye open and let Him in? For in Him is strength, not in the law, not in the man, not in the multitudes of men, nor of conditions or circumstance. For He ruleth, He maketh them-every one. For hath it not been given or told thee, hath it not been known in thine experience that "He is the Word, He maketh all that was made, and without Him there was nothing made that was made"? And He liveth in the hearts and the souls of those who seek to do His biddings. This, then, is not idealistic-but an ideal! What would Jesus have me do regarding every question in thy relationships with thy fellow man, in thy home, in thy problems day by day. This

rather should be the question, rather than What shall I do?
Cayce reading #1326-1

I believe that thousands of people have come to a closer walk with Jesus through the encouragement given in these readings. I would agree that these things should be approached with a gift of discernment and tested for their fruits. But how can you shamelessly attempt to associate this work (as many others have done) with occultic, Spiritualistic, channeling, doctrines of demons, etc,? Surely you dont need to be warned not to speak against gifts of the Spirit. If Cayces gift was actually a gift of the Holy Spirit, then to call it demonic or Satanic would put a person in danger of being like those who accused Jesus of being demon possessed. You might at least invoke the wisdom of old Gamaliel (See Acts 5:22-42) and be careful that you are not fighting against God.

You have a wonderful opportunity to speak to many people. If you do keep Lou Whitworths article on your web site I would urge you to at least post this message along with those of others who have responded to it. I will be looking forward to hearing from you.

Wishing you many blessings in Christ,

Thank you for your letter. And thank you for the respect with which it is written. Lou Whitworth is no longer with Probe Ministries. However, I am sending your letter to someone who can decide whether or not to keep Lou's article on our website. This is not a decision that I can make.

I have also written an article entitled, ["The Worldview of Edgar Cayce"](#). Although I also had to rely on some secondary source material, this material was almost entirely from a "pro-Cayce" perspective. And all of it (I think) would be endorsed by the A.R.E.

I'm sure you've done a great deal of research in this area.

However, my own study convinced me that the only way I could affirm that the worldview revealed in the Edgar Cayce readings was Christian would be to redefine “Christianity” to mean something other than what all the orthodox creeds and confessions of the Christian church have understood it to mean. I’m afraid that I honestly do not believe that the worldview of the readings is consistent with biblical Christianity.

If you happen to embrace an “unorthodox” understanding of Christianity (defined relative to the historic orthodoxy represented in the creeds and confessions shared by virtually all conservative Christian denominations – e.g. Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and the various Protestant groups), then of course our disagreement will really be about Christianity – not Edgar Cayce. If this is the case, I’m afraid there won’t be much point in dialogue. I’m already convinced that the “orthodox” understanding of Christianity is true (e.g. The Nicene Creed, etc.) – and am already quite familiar with the unorthodox forms and expressions of “Christianity.”

Thanks again for writing. I sincerely wish you well.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

Confucius – A Christian

Perspective

Dr. Patrick Zukeran considers the teachings of the greatest Eastern philosopher from a Christian perspective, analyzing their commonalities and differences.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

The Life of Confucius

Born in 550 B.C., Confucius is considered the greatest of all Eastern philosophers. His teachings are foundational to Asian cultures. His writings, *The Five Classics*, a collection of ancient Chinese literature, and *The Four Books*, a collection of his and his disciples' teachings, were for centuries the standard curriculum for Chinese education.

Confucius' teachings and biography were written many years after his death and were edited by his disciples. Although historians present various accounts of his life, there are some basic facts about which we are reasonably sure. From these basic facts, it is possible to outline the major events of his life.

Confucius lived during the Chou Dynasty (1100 B.C. to 256 B.C.) He was born in northern China in the Lu province into a family of humble circumstances. His father died at a young age. Confucius began studying under the village tutor and, at the age of fifteen, devoted his life to study. He married at twenty but soon divorced his wife and had an aloof relationship with his son and daughter. In his twenties, he became a teacher and gathered a group of loyal disciples.

At this time, the land was divided among feudal lords. The moral and social order was in a state of decay. Confucius sought a way to restore both cultural and political order. He believed that reform would be accomplished by educating the

leaders in the classics and his philosophy. He therefore sought a political position of influence, from which he could implement his principles.

When Confucius was fifty years old, tradition teaches that the Duke of Lu appointed him to a cabinet position. Several historians believe he eventually ascended to higher positions of public office. Due to political disagreements and internal conflicts, he resigned his post at fifty-five and left the province of Lu. He then traveled from state to state for thirteen years, seeking to persuade political leaders to adopt his teachings. Although many lords respected him, no one gave him a position. Discouraged by the lack of response, he devoted his final years to teaching and writing. Before his death in 479 B.C., he expressed his discouragement and disillusionment regarding his career.

However, his disciples were able to gain significant positions in government after his death. They modified his teachings and added their own insights and centuries such that Confucianism later shaped Chinese culture by becoming the official religion of China. The values he espoused of education, family loyalty, work ethic, value of traditions, conformity to traditional standards, honoring of ancestors, and unquestioning obedience to superiors remain entrenched in Asian culture.

There is much to appreciate regarding the life and teachings of Confucius. Christians would agree with his philosophy of ethics, government responsibility, and social conduct on several points. These similarities provide bridges upon which we can build meaningful dialogue with those in East Asian Cultures. These values make East Asian people open to the message of Christ. Despite the similarities in ethics, there are some major differences between Christianity and Confucianism that are important to identify. This work will highlight these differences and provide ways we can effectively share Christ with those in East Asian cultures.

The Metaphysics of Confucius

Confucianism, as its founder taught, is not a religion in the traditional sense; rather, it is an ethical code. Chinese culture was steeped in the religion of animism, a belief that gods and spirits dwelt in natural formations. Along with an animistic worldview, there was a belief in ancestor worship. The spirits of the dead needed to be honored and cared for by the living family members.

However, Confucius avoided spiritual issues in his teachings. Although he believed in spirits and the supernatural, he did not feel the need to devote extensive efforts in teaching about them. Rather, he was humanistic and rationalistic in his outlook. According to David Noss, author of *A History of the World's Religions*, Confucius' "position on matters of faith was this: whatever seemed contrary to common sense in popular tradition and whatever did not serve any discoverable social purpose, he regarded coldly."[\[1\]](#) The answer to the cultural and social problems was found in humanity itself, not in anything supernatural. This is further exhibited in the following three references:

- 1) A disciple of Confucius wrote, "The master never talked of prodigies, feats of strength, disorders or spirits"[\[2\]](#)
- 2) Confucius himself stated, "To devote oneself earnestly to one's duty to humanity, and while respecting the spirits, to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom."[\[3\]](#)
- 3) In the Waley translation of the *Analects*, Confucius stated, "Our master's views concerning culture and the outward insignia of goodness, we are permitted to hear; but about man's nature and the ways of heaven, he will not tell us anything at all."[\[4\]](#)

In the Confucian system a divine being does not have a significant role; his philosophy is man-centered and relies on

self-effort. Man is sufficient to attain the ideal character through education, self-effort, and self-reflection. His system articulated the proper conduct in relationships, ceremony, and government. The core problem of mankind according to Confucius is that people are not educated and do not know how to conduct themselves properly in their societal roles. The chief goal of life is to become educated and live a moral life.

However, Confucius acknowledges a supreme power which established the moral order of the universe. This he refers to as the "Mandate of Heaven." The "Mandate of Heaven" may also refer to fate and events occurring in life which are beyond the control of the individual. The just rule and the virtuous man live in accord with this moral order. This is the moral order that lies behind the Confucian ethical system. One must be careful not to violate the will of heaven. Confucius wrote, "He who put himself in the wrong with Heaven has no means of expiation left."[\[5\]](#) Some scholars believe the uses of the term reveals that Confucius was referring at times to a supreme being.[\[6\]](#) After his death, Confucianism evolved, combining with Chinese traditional religions and Buddhism to add a spiritual component.

In contrast, Christianity is God-centered. It is built on a relationship with a personal God who is involved in the world. Confucius focused on life here on this earth. Jesus focused on life in eternity. For Jesus, what happens in eternity has ramifications for life here on earth. In Matthew 6:19 Jesus stated, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal." Here we see a contrast in the perspectives of Jesus and Confucius.

The Ethics of Confucius

Three key principles are emphasized in the teachings of Confucius: the principle of Li, the principle of Jen, and the principle of Chun-Tzu. The term Li has several meanings which are often translated as propriety, reverence, courtesy, ritual, or the ideal standard of conduct. It is what Confucius believed to be the ideal standard of religious, moral, and social conduct.

The second key concept is the principle of Jen. It is the fundamental virtue of Confucian teaching. Jen is the virtue of goodness and benevolence. It is expressed through recognition of value and concern in others regardless of their rank or class. In the *Analects*, Confucius summarizes the principle of Jen in this statement often called the silver rule: "Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you."[\[7\]](#) Li provides the structure for social interaction; Jen makes it a moral system.

The third important concept is that of Chun-Tzu, the idea of the true gentleman. It is the man who lives by the highest ethical standards. The gentleman displays five virtues: self-respect, generosity, sincerity, persistence, and benevolence.[\[8\]](#) His relationships are described as follows: as a son he is always loyal, as a father he is just and kind, as an official he is loyal and faithful, as a husband he is righteous and just, and as a friend, he is faithful and tactful.[\[9\]](#) If all men lived by the principles of Li and Jen and strove to the character of the true gentlemen, justice, and harmony would rule the empire.

The Christian would find himself in agreement with many of Confucius' ethical principles and virtues. A Christian would also agree with many of the character qualities of the true gentleman and seek to develop those qualities.

What accounts for the similarity in ethics in Confucianism and

other religious systems is that which Paul states in Romans 2: within every man there exists a God-given conscience or natural law that guides our moral conduct. This is because we are created in the image of God, and thus we reflect His character. However, similarity in ethical codes does not mean the religions are the same.

The key difference can be identified by examining the silver rule of Confucius in contrast with the greatest commandment of Christ. Confucian law is summarized by the silver rule; however, Jesus summarizes his teachings this way: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:38.) Confucius believed that in order to truly achieve the principles of Li, Jen, and the character of the true gentleman, one must look within oneself. Jesus takes His teaching a step further. All His principles revolve first around a relationship with God. We only truly love our fellow man and live the righteous life God calls us to after our nature is transformed by the work of God's Holy Spirit which comes to indwell all who trust in Christ.

Nature of Man

The Confucian philosophy is built on the foundational belief in the goodness of human nature.^{10} The *Analects* state, "The Master said, 'Is goodness indeed so far away? If we really wanted goodness, we should find that it was at our side.'" ^{11} He further taught that all individuals are capable of attaining the highest virtue. He stated, "Has anyone ever managed to do Good with his whole might even as long as the space of a single day? I think not. Yet I for my part have never seen anyone give up such an attempt because he had not the strength to go on." ^{12} In other words, all individuals are capable through self-effort to attain the ideal goodness.

Confucian disciple Mencius further develops this stating,

“Man’s nature is naturally good just as water naturally flows downward.”[{13}](#) This innate goodness can be developed and actualized through education, self-reflection, and discipline. Study in the six arts, which include ceremony, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics, develop one’s character.

However, despite man being naturally good, Confucius faced reality honestly. He questioned whether it was possible to ever truly attain to the level of the true gentleman. Confucius stated, “I for my part have never yet seen one who really cared for goodness, nor one who really abhorred wickedness.”[{14}](#) He said of himself, “As to being a divine sage or even a good man, far be it from me to make any such claim.”[{15}](#) He further stated, “The master said, the ways of the true gentleman are three. I myself have met with success in none of them.”[{16}](#) However, if man by nature is good, why can we not attain that which should be natural to us?

The Bible is built on a contrasting view of man. It teaches that man is created in the image of God and was thus originally good. However, because of the fall in Genesis 3, man is now sinful and in rebellion toward God. Therefore, his natural tendency is to disobey the commandments of God, and he is driven to please himself. Paul states in Romans 7:18, “I have the desire to do good, but I cannot carry it out.” As Confucius observed, no man is able to live up to the standards of the “True Gentleman” or God’s commands because man’s nature is sinful and in need of transformation.

According to the Bible, good education is a positive step toward helping man change, but it falls short. Man is in need of a heart transformation. Life transformation occurs when a person enters into a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. One’s nature is transformed because God’s Spirit indwells an individual. Although the Christian is not capable of living out the principles of God’s law flawlessly, he is not left to live a holy life on his own

strength. God provides man the indwelling of His Holy Spirit to enable man to live in obedience to God's law.

Relationships

Central to Confucius' teaching are relationships and social roles. There are five great relationships.[\[17\]](#) If these attitudes are practiced, there will be harmony among all:

1. Kindness in the father and obedient devotion in the son
2. Gentility in the eldest brother and humility and respect in the younger
3. Righteous behavior in the husband and obedience in the wife
4. Humane consideration in elders and deference in juniors
5. Benevolence in rulers and loyalty of ministers and subjects

The most important relationship is the family as it is the basic unit of all humanity. Consistent with the pantheistic world view, he did not believe in an individual self or soul. Rather, roles and relationships define a person. The goal of living is to achieve harmony by acting appropriately within those roles and relationships because the harmony of relationships within the family can extend into the life of the community and the world. The way individuals relate to their family members influences how they treat members of the community. This, in turn, affects relationships beyond the community. Thus, harmonious family relationships lead to harmonious relationships in the community. If there is discord in the family, this will likewise carry over into the community.

In the family unit, the father is the key figure. He must be a good example to his sons. It is the son's duty to obey without questioning and honor his father even after his father's death. When the father dies, obedience is then given to the

oldest brother. Confucius stated, "Meng I Tzu asked about the treatment of parents. The Master said, 'Never disobey! . . . While they are alive, serve them according to ritual. When they die, bury them according to ritual and sacrifice to them according to ritual.'" [\[18\]](#)

Confucius taught that government should be for the people. Feudal lords are to be responsive to the needs of the people they govern. If the rulers lived by the highest principles, the people would then follow, and there would be reform from the greatest to the least. The duty of those in subordinate positions is to be unquestioningly loyal to their superior. Confucius stated, "It is said that if good people work for a country for a hundred years, it is possible to overcome violence and eliminate killing. This saying is indeed true." [\[19\]](#) Confucius believed that a good society would be achieved through education.

There are points of agreement between Confucius and the Bible. Confucius believed the virtues he espoused are lived out in relationships. The same is true for Christianity; our relationship with God is reflected in our relationships with one another. The truth of the Christian life is lived out in a community, not in isolation. The family is the key social unit, and the father is the leader of the family. However, Christianity takes relationships one step further than Confucius. Not only can we have the five relationships espoused by Confucius, we can also have a personal relationship with God. It is from this connection that our earthly relationships find their greatest meaning.

A Final Critique

There is much in the teachings of Confucius that I have found commendable. His moral values often parallel those taught in the Bible. As previously mentioned, the Bible teaches that we are created in the image of God, and, therefore, we reflect His moral character. His moral law code is embedded on our

hearts (Rom. 2). Most people of Asian descent may not be strict adherents to Confucianism, but they are all influenced by his philosophy. Anyone seeking to serve in Asian cultures would find it worthwhile to read his works. Confucianism is very adaptable and fluid in its structure. That has been a weakness, but it has also a strength of the system since it allows Confucianism to join other inclusive religious systems. There are several significant differences, and, I believe, deficiencies within Confucian philosophy.

First, Confucianism falls short as a comprehensive life view because it fails to address several key issues. The Confucian system does not answer the key questions such as, Why does the universe exist? How do we explain its origin? What is the meaning of mankind's existence in the universe? What happens after death? These are universal questions that must be addressed. Man is a spiritual being, and this philosophy leaves one spiritually void. The Bible teaches that God has set eternity in the heart of men (Eccl. 3:11.) The longing for spiritual answers is a universal need. For this reason, Confucian philosophy eventually combined with Chinese Folk religion and Buddhism. Nonetheless, it still fails to provide complete answers.

Second, Confucius taught there was an overarching morality and will called the "Mandate of Heaven" which guided the universe. The Mandate of Heaven is the moral order established by heaven. Some believe Confucius was referring to an impersonal force; others believe he was referring to a personal being. In either case, Confucius felt the heavens (or the one in heaven) do not communicate with people. Confucius stated, "Heaven does not speak; yet the four seasons run their course thereby, the hundred creatures, each after its kind, are born thereby. Heaven does no speaking!"[\[20\]](#) in contrast, the Bible teaches that we can have a relationship with the one who established the moral order. God is involved with creation and has made the way for a relationship with Him possible through His son

(Jn. 3:16). The creator of all things has communicated with us through His Word and His Son. He also invites us to commune with Him in prayer and intimate fellowship. The imagery of the Shepherd and His sheep found in Psalm 23 and John 10 reflect His desire for a close relationship with us.

Third, Confucius built his philosophy on the belief that man is basically good. However, despite this, Confucius honestly admitted that no one had attained the level of the true gentleman. Confucius stated, "I for my part have never yet seen one who really cared for goodness, nor one who really abhorred wickedness."[\[21\]](#) He said of himself, "...the Ways of the true gentleman are three. I myself have met with success in none of them."[\[22\]](#) If man is good by nature, we must ask why we cannot attain what should be natural to us.

The Bible is built on a contrasting view of man. It teaches that man is created in the image of God but fallen in sin and rebellious toward God. Therefore, his natural tendency is to disobey the commandments of God and please himself. Paul states in Romans 7:18, "I have the desire to do good, but I cannot carry it out." Good education is a positive step toward helping man change, but it falls short. Man is in need of a heart transformation. Life transformation occurs when a person enters into a personal relationship with God and God's Spirit transforms one's nature through the indwelling and enabling power of His Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Confucius teaches many valuable ethical principles that are consistent with Biblical teaching. This offers Christians a good way to build bridges with many in East Asian cultures. However, the spiritual void in Confucianism is a great weakness; however, it provides a wonderful opportunity to present the case for Christianity.

Christianity offers a comprehensive life view, for it explains

the nature of God, our relationship to Him, the origin of creation, and what happens after death. In Confucian teaching, one cannot communicate with the creator, but in Christianity, the Creator invites us and makes the way possible for a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus. Finally, true transformation of one's nature will not occur through education, but rather through the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer in Christ.

Notes

1. David Noss, *A History of the World's Religions* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 298.
2. *Analects of Confucius*, trans. Arthur Waley, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 7:20.
3. *Analects* 6:20
4. *Analects* 5:12
5. *Analects* 3:13.
6. Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Volume 1 (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 57-8.
7. *Analects* 15:23.
8. *Analects* 17:6.
9. Noss, 297.
10. Stephen Schuhmacher & Gert Woerner, *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994), 80.
11. *Analects* 7:9.
12. *Analects* 4:6.
13. Mencius XI:2, trans. David Hinton, (Washington D.C.:

Counterpoint, 1998), 197.

14. *Analects* 4:6

15. *Analects* 7:33.

16. *Analects* 14:30.

17. Noss, 293.

18. *Analects* 2:5.

19. *Analects* 13:11.

20. *Analects* 17:19.

22. *Analects* 4:6.

22. *Analects* 14:30.

Bibliography

Analects of Confucius. Translated by Arthur Waley. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992.

Anderson, Norman. *The World's Religions*. Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975.

Chung, Tsai. *Confucius Speaks*. New York: Anchor Books, 1996.

Cleary, Thomas. *The Essential Confucius*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992.

Halverson, Dean. *The Compact Guide to World Religions*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996.

I Ching. Translator: Richard Wilhelm. New York: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Noss, David. *A History of the World's Religions*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994.

Parrinder, Geoffrey. *World Religions*. New York: Facts on File

Publications, 1983.

Schuhmacher, Stephen & Woerner, Gert. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994.

Smith, Jonathan, ed. *Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995.

Wilson, Epiphanius. *The Wisdom of Confucius*. New York: Avenel Books, 1982.

Yamamoto, Isamu. *Buddhism, Taoism, and Other Eastern Religions*. Grand Rapids, MI.:Zondervan Publishing House, 1998.

Yu-lan, Fung. *A History of Chinese Philosophy, Volume 1*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1983.

© 2009 Probe Ministries

Rome and America – Comparing to the Ancient Roman Empire

Kerby Anderson looks at the comparisons between modern America and ancient Rome, i.e. the Roman Empire. Do Americans have a worldview more like ancient Romans than the biblical worldview spelled out in the Bible? In some ways, yes, and in other ways, not so much.

Similarities

The philosopher George Santayana once said: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” To which I might add that those who remember Santayana’s maxim also seem

condemned to repeat the phrase.

✖ Ask anyone if they see similarities between Rome and America, and they are likely to respond with a resounding, “Yes!” But I have also found that people who see similarities between Rome and America see different similarities. Some see similarities in our moral decay. Others see similarities in pride, arrogance, and hubris. But all seem to agree that we are repeating the mistakes of the past and need to change our ways.

In his book *Are We Rome?*, Cullen Murphy argues that there are many similarities between the Roman Empire and America.^{1} But he also believes that the American national character couldn't be more different from Rome. He believes those differences can help us avoid Rome's fate.

Let's begin by looking at some of the political, geographical, and demographic similarities.^{2}

1. Dominant powers: “Rome and America are the most powerful actors in their world, by many orders of magnitude. Their power includes both military might and the ‘soft power’ of language, culture, commerce, technology, and ideas.”

2. Approximately equal in size: “Rome and America are comparable in physical size—the Roman Empire and its Mediterranean lake would fit inside the three million square miles of the Lower Forty-eight states, though without a lot to spare.”

3. Global influence: “Both Rome and America created global structures—administrative, economic, military, cultural—that the rest of the world and their own citizens came to take for granted, as gravity and photosynthesis are taken for granted.”

4. Open society: “Both are societies made up of many peoples—open to newcomers, willing to absorb the genes and lifestyles and gods of everyone else, and to grant citizenship

to incoming tribes from all corners of the earth.”

5. Culturally similar: “Romans and Americans can’t get enough of laws and lawyers and lawsuits. . . . They relish the ritual humiliation of public figures: Americans through comedy and satire, talk radio and Court TV; the Romans through vicious satire, to be sure, but also, during the republic, by means of the *censorial nota*, the public airing, name by name, of everything great men of the time should be ashamed of.”

6. Chosen people: “Both see themselves as chosen people, and both see their national character as exceptional.”

While there are many similarities, there are also profound differences between Rome and America. Before we look at the six major parallels that Murphy talks about, we need to remind ourselves that there are many distinct differences between Rome and America.

Differences

It is no real surprise that people from different political and religious perspectives see similarities between Rome and America. While some see similarities in moral decay, others see it in military might or political corruption. Although there are many similarities between Rome and America, there are some notable differences.

Cullen Murphy points out these significant differences.[\[3\]](#)

1. Technological advancement: “Rome in all its long history never left the Iron Age, whereas America in its short history has already leapt through the Industrial Age to the Information Age and the Biotech Age.”

2. Abundance: “Wealthy as it was, Rome lived close to the edge; many regions were one dry spell away from famine. America enjoys an economy of abundance, ever surfeit; it must

beware the diseases of overindulgence.”

3. Slavery: “Rome was always a slaveholding polity with the profound moral and social retardation that this implies; America started out as a slaveholding polity and decisively cast slavery aside.”

4. Government: “Rome emerged out of a city-state and took centuries to let go of a city-state’s method of governance; America from early on began to administer itself as a continental power.”

5. Social classes: “Rome had no middle class as we understand the term, whereas for America the middle class is the core social fact.”

6. Democracy: “Rome had a powerful but tiny aristocracy and entrenched ideas about the social pecking order; even at its most democratic, Rome was not remotely as democratic as America at its least democratic, under a British monarch.”

7. Entrepreneurship: “Romans looked down upon entrepreneurship, which Americans hold in the highest esteem.”

8. Economic dynamism: “Rome was economically static; America is economically transformative.”

9. Technological development: “For all its engineering skills, Rome generated few original ideas in science and technology; America is a hothouse of innovation and creativity.”

10. Social equality: “On basic matters such as gender roles and the equality of all people, Romans and Americans would behold one another with disbelief and distaste.”

While it is true that Rome and America have a vast number of similarities, we can also see there are significant differences between the two. We therefore need a nuanced view of the parallels between the two civilizations and recognize that these differences may be an important key in

understanding the future of the United States.

Six Parallels

Murphy sees many parallels between the Roman Empire and America in addition to the above.[{4}](#) The following are larger, more extensive, parallels.

The first parallel is perspective. It actually involves “the way Americans see America; and more to the point, the way the tiny, elite subset of Americans who live in the nation’s capital see America—and see Washington itself.”

Like the Romans, Americans tend to see themselves as more important than they are. They tend to have an exaggerated sense of their own presence in the world and its ability to act alone.

A second parallel involves military power. Although there are differences, some similarities stand out. Both Rome and America start to run short of people to sustain their militaries and began to find recruits through outside sources. This is not a good long-run solution.

A third parallel can be lumped under the term privatization. “Rome had trouble maintaining a distinction between public and private responsibilities.” America is currently in the midst of privatizing functions that used to be public tasks.

A fourth parallel concerns the way Rome and America view the outside world. In a sense, this is merely the flip side of the first parallel. If you believe your country is exceptional, you tend to devalue others. And more importantly, you tend to underestimate another nation’s capabilities. Rome learned this in A.D. 9 when three legions were ambushed by a smaller German force and annihilated.[{5}](#) The repercussions were significant.

The question of borders is a fifth parallel. The boundary of

Rome “was less a fence and more a threshold—not so much a firm line fortified with ‘Keep Out’ signs as a permeable zone of continual interaction.” Compare that description to our border with Mexico, and so can see many similarities.

A final parallel has to do with size and complexity. The Roman Empire got too big physically and too complex to manage effectively. The larger a country or civilization, the more “it touches, and the more susceptible it is to forces beyond its control.” To use a phrase by Murphy: “Bureaucracy is the new geography.”[\[6\]](#)

Cullen Murphy concludes his book by calling for greater citizen engagement and for us to promote a sense of community and mutual obligation. The Roman historian Livy wrote, “An empire remains powerful so long as its subjects rejoice in it.” America is not beyond repair, but it needs to learn the lessons from the Roman Empire.

Decline of the Family

What about the moral decline of Rome? Do we see parallels in America? I have addressed this in previous articles such as “[The Decline of a Nation](#)” and “[When Nations Die](#).”[\[7\]](#) Let’s focus on the area of sexuality, marriage, and family.

In his 1934 book, *Sex and Culture*, British anthropologist Joseph Daniel Unwin chronicled the historical decline of numerous cultures, including the Roman Empire. He found that cultures that held to a strong sexual ethic thrived and were more productive than cultures that were “sexually free.”[\[8\]](#)

In his book *Our Dance Has Turned to Death*, Carl Wilson identifies the common pattern of family decline in civilizations like the Roman Empire.[\[9\]](#) It is significant how these seven stages parallel what is happening in America.

In the first stage, men ceased to lead their families in

worship. Spiritual and moral development became secondary. Their view of God became naturalistic, mathematical, and mechanical.

In the second stage, men selfishly neglected care of their wives and children to pursue material wealth, political and military power, and cultural development. Material values began to dominate thought.

The third stage involved a change in men's sexual values. Men who were preoccupied with business or war either neglected their wives sexually or became involved with lower-class women or with homosexuality. Ultimately, a double standard of morality developed.

The fourth stage affected women. The role of women at home and with children lost value and status. Women were neglected and their roles devalued. Soon they revolted to gain access to material wealth and also freedom for sex outside marriage. Women also began to minimize having sex relations to conceive children, and the emphasis became sex for pleasure.

In the fifth stage, husbands and wives competed against each other for money, home leadership, and the affection of their children. This resulted in hostility and frustration and possible homosexuality in the children. Many marriages ended in separation and divorce.

In the sixth stage, selfish individualism grew and carried over into society, fragmenting it into smaller and smaller group loyalties. The nation was thus weakened by internal conflict. The decrease in the birthrate produced an older population that had less ability to defend itself and less will to do so, making the nation more vulnerable to its enemies.

Finally, unbelief in God became more complete, parental authority diminished, and ethical and moral principles disappeared, affecting the economy and government. Because of

internal weakness and fragmentation, the society came apart.

We can see these stages play out in the decline of the Roman Empire. But we can also see them happening before our eyes in America.

Spiritual Decline

What about the spiritual decline in Rome and America? We can actually read about the spiritual decline in Rome in Paul's letter to the church in Rome. In the opening chapter he traces a progression of spiritual decline that was evident in the Hellenistic world of his time.

The first stage is when people turn from God to idolatry. Although God has revealed Himself in nature to all men so that they are without excuse, they nevertheless worship the creation instead of the Creator. This is idolatry. In the past, this took the form of actual idol worship. In our day, it takes the form of the worship of money or the worship of self. In either case, it is idolatry. A further example of this is a general lack of thankfulness. Although they were prospered by God, they were ungrateful. And when they are no longer looking to God for wisdom and guidance, they become vain and futile and empty in their imaginations. They no longer honor God, so their foolish hearts become darkened. In professing to be wise, they have become fools.

The second stage is when men and women exchange their natural use of sex for unnatural uses. Here Paul says those four sobering words, "God gave them over." In a society where lust-driven sensuality and sexual perversion dominate, God gives them over to their degrading passions and unnatural desires.

The third stage is anarchy. Once a society has rejected God's revelation, it is on its own. Moral and social anarchy is the natural result. At this point God has given the sinners over to a depraved mind and so they do things which are not proper.

This results in a society which is without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful.

The final stage is judgment. God's judgment rightly falls upon those who practice idolatry and immorality. Certainly an eternal judgment awaits those who are guilty, but a social judgment occurs when God gives a nation over to its sinful practices.

Notice that this progression is not unique to the Hellenistic world the apostle Paul was living in. The progression from idolatry to sexual perversion to anarchy to judgment is found throughout history.

In the times of Noah and Lot, there was the idolatry of greed, there was sexual perversion and promiscuity, there was anarchy and violence, and finally there was judgment. Throughout the history of the nation of Israel there was idolatry, sexual perversion, anarchy (in which each person did what was right in his own eyes), and finally judgment.

Are there parallels between Rome and America? I have quoted from secular authors, Christian authors, and a writer of much of the New Testament. All seem to point to parallels between Rome and America.

Notes

1. Cullen Murphy, *Are We Rome? The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).
2. Ibid., 14-15.
3. Ibid., 16-17.
4. Ibid., 18-20.
5. Ibid., 122.
6. Ibid., 135.
7. Kerby Anderson, ["The Decline of a Nation,"](#) Probe Ministries, 1991, and ["When Nations Die,"](#) 2002; both available on Probe's Web site, www.probe.org.
8. J.D. Unwin, *Sex and Culture* (London: Oxford University,

1934).

9. Carl Wilson, *Our Dance Has Turned to Death* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1981), 84-85.

© 2009 Probe Ministries

Charity and Compassion: Christianity Is Good for Culture

Byron Barlowe looks at the impact of Christianity on the world. He concludes that applying a Christian, biblical worldview to the issues that we face in our world has resulted in a great amount of good. Apart from the eternal aspect of Christianity, people applying Christian principles to worldly issues have benefited all mankind.

Christian Religion: Good or Bad for Mankind?

Standing on the jetway boarding a flight out of Cuzco, Peru, I overheard an American college student say to his companion, "See that older guy up there? He's a professor. Came here to give lectures on Christianity. Can you believe that?" In an apparent reference to abuses perpetrated on local Indians by the *conquistadors* centuries earlier, he added, "Haven't Christians done enough to these people?"

He didn't know that I was the professor's companion. Turning around, I said, "Excuse me, I couldn't help but overhear. I'm with the professor and, yes, we were giving lectures at the university from a Christian worldview. But did you know that

all these people in between us were helping with humanitarian aid in the poorest villages around here all week?"

He sheepishly mumbled something about every story having two sides. But his meaning was clear: what good could possibly come from Christians imposing their beliefs on these indigenous people? Their culture was ruined by their kind and should be left alone. Popular sentiments, but are they fair and accurate?

The church—and those acting in its name—has had its moments of injustice, intrigue, even murder. Unbiblical excesses during the Inquisitions, the Crusades, and other episodes are undeniable. Yet these deviations from the teachings of Christ and the Bible are overwhelmingly countered by the church's good works and novel institutions of care, compassion, and justice.

Carlton Hayes wrote, "From the wellspring of Christian compassion, our Western civilization has drawn its inspiration, and its sense of duty, for feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, looking after the homeless, clothing the naked, tending the sick and visiting the prisoner." As one writer put it, missionaries and other Christians lived as if people mattered.[\[1\]](#) Revolutionary!

Christianity exploded onto a brutal, heartless Greco-Roman culture. Believers in this radical new religion set a new standard for caring for the ill, downtrodden, and abused, even at risk of death. Through their transformed Christlike outlooks, they established countercultural ways that lead to later innovations: orphanages, hospitals, transcendent art and architecture, and systems of law and order based on fairness, to name a few. In the early church, every congregation had a list of needy recipients called a *matriculum*. Enormous amounts of charity were given.[\[2\]](#) "Pagan society, through its excesses, teetered on the brink of extinction. Christianity, however, represented . . . a new way."[\[3\]](#)

Compassion and charity are biblical ideals. “Early Christians set a model for their descendents to follow, a model that today’s modern secular societies try to imitate, but without Christian motivation.”[\[4\]](#) We take for granted the notion that it’s good to help the needy and oppressed, but wherever it’s found, whether in religious or secular circles, it can be traced right back to Jesus Christ and His followers.

Answering Atheists: Is Religion Evil?

“Religion poisons everything,” carps militant atheist Christopher Hitchens. Fellow atheist Richard Dawkins claims that “there’s not the slightest evidence that religious people . . . are any more moral than non-religious people.” True? Not according to social scientists from Princeton and other top universities.

As citizens, religious people generally shine. According to Logan Paul Gage, “for every 100 altruistic acts—like giving blood—performed by non-religious people, the religious perform 144.” Also, those active in religion in the U.S. volunteer in their communities more.[\[5\]](#) A Barna study reports that “more than four out of five (83%) gave at least \$1000 to churches and non-profit entities during 2007, far surpassing . . . any other population segment studied...”[\[6\]](#) This echoes studies from the past few decades.

Furthermore, studies show that religious youth have more self-control against cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. “Religion also correlates with fewer violent crimes, school suspensions and a host of other negative behaviors.”[\[7\]](#)

It appears that Dawkins is very wrong. He lamented that “faith is . . . comparable to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate.” People who care about our culture will hope he’s right about how hard religion is to eliminate, especially Christianity.[\[8\]](#)

So, what about the evil perpetrated by the church? Early Christians were admirable in their display of compassion and charity. But haven't the centuries since witnessed a parade of continual religious wars (including "Christian wars"), persecutions, and mayhem? Among Christianity's sins: forced conversions, expansion by so-called "Christian states" mingled with genocide, execution of accused heretics and witches, and the ever infamous Crusades. Regrettable, inexcusable, but largely overblown.

Dinesh D'Souza writes that this popular refrain also "greatly exaggerates [crimes of] religious fanatics while neglecting or rationalizing the vastly greater crimes committed by secular and atheist fanatics."[{9}](#) Historian Jonathan Riley-Smith disputes that the Crusaders were rapists and murderers. He and other historians document that they were pilgrims using their own funds to liberate long-held Christian lands and defend Europe against Muslim invaders.[{10}](#)

What about heretics who were burned at the stake? Author Henry Kamen claims that "much of the modern stereotype of the Inquisition is essentially made up. . . . Inquisition trials . . . were fairer and more lenient than their secular counterparts."[{11}](#)

Atheism is associated with far more death and destruction than religion is, particularly Christianity. In *Death by Government*, R.J. Rummel writes "Almost 170 million men, women and children have been shot, beaten, tortured, knifed, burned, starved, frozen, crushed or worked to death; buried alive, drowned, hung, bombed or killed in any other of a myriad of ways governments have inflicted death on unarmed, helpless citizens and foreigners."[{12}](#) Rummel directly attributes eighty-four percent of these to atheistic "megamurderers" like Stalin, Hitler, and Mao.

For perspective, consider that "the Crusades, Inquisition and the witch burnings killed approximately 200,000 people" over

five hundred years. These deaths, tragic and unjust as many were, only comprise one percent of the deaths caused by atheist regimes during a few decades. That's a ninety-nine to one ratio of death tied directly to the atheist worldview.[\[13\]](#)

History shows that atheism, not Christianity, is the view that is bad—even murderous—for society.

Compassion: Christian Innovation in a Cruel World

Christianity is unique. No other religion or philosophy values *and practices wholesale* taking care of the young, sick, orphaned, oppressed, and widowed, hands-on and sacrificially.

To ancient Greeks and Romans, life was cheap. Infanticide—baby killing— was “condoned and practiced for centuries without guilt or remorse [and] extolled by Greco-Roman mythologies.” This ungodly practice was opposed by Christians, whose compassionate example eventually caused Roman emperors to outlaw it.[\[14\]](#) First-century art shows believers rescuing unwanted Roman babies from the Tiber River. They raised them as their own.

Emperors pronounced death sentences on a whim, even beyond gladiatorial games. This was the ultimate extension of *paterfamilias*: a father had the right to kill his own child if she displeased him. Life was expendable, even among families![\[15\]](#)

Abortion, human sacrifice, and suicide were also part of societies unaffected by God's love. How different from the scriptural doctrine that all are made in God's image and deserve life and dignity.

Slaves and the poor were on their own. One exhaustive survey of historical documents “found that antiquity has left no trace of organized charitable effort.”[\[16\]](#)

The ancient code was: “leave the ill to die.” Roman colonists in Alexandria even left their friends and next of kin behind during a plague.[{17}](#) Japanese holy men kept the wealthy from relieving the poor because they believed them to be “odious to the gods.”[{18}](#)

By contrast, Jesus expanded the Jewish obligation of compassion well beyond family and tribe even to enemies. His parable of the Good Samaritan exploded racial and social boundaries.[{19}](#) Scripture says that Jesus “had compassion on them and healed their sick.” Christ’s disciples went around healing and teaching as their master had. Believers were instructed to care for widows, the sick, the disabled and the poor, and also for orphans. “Justin Martyr, an early defender of Christianity, reveals that collections were taken during church services to help the orphans,” writes Alvin Schmidt. By the time of Justinian, churches were operating old folks’ homes called *gerontocomia*. Before Christianity, homes for the aged didn’t exist. Now, such nursing homes are taken for granted.[{20}](#)

Schmidt notes that “Christianity filled the pagan void that largely ignored the sick and dying, especially during pestilences.” Greeks had diagnostic centers, but no nursing care. Roman hospitals were only for slaves, gladiators, and occasionally for soldiers. Christians provided shelters for the poor and pilgrims, along with medical care. Christian hospitals were the first voluntary charitable institutions.[{21}](#)

A pagan Roman soldier in Constantine’s army was intrigued by Christians who “brought food to his fellow soldiers who were afflicted with famine and disease.” He studied this inspiring group who displayed such humanity and was converted to the faith. He represents much of why the early church grew despite bouts of severe persecution.[{22}](#)

Basic beliefs—or worldviews—lead to basic responses. The

Christian response to life and suffering changed the world for good.

Early Church Charity vs. Self-Serving Greco-Roman Giving

In ancient Greece and Rome, charity was unknown, except for gaining favors and fame. This stood in stark contrast to Jesus' thinking. He rebuked the Pharisees, whose good deeds were done for public acclaim. Christ's ethic of sharing with any and all and helping the underprivileged brought a revolution that eventually converted the entire Roman Empire.

Caritas, root word of *charity*, "meant giving to relieve economic or physical distress without expecting anything in return," writes Schmidt, "whereas *liberalitas* meant giving to please the recipient, who later would bestow a favor on the giver."[\[23\]](#) Pagans almost never gave out of what we today would ironically call true *liberality*.

In contrast, for Christ-followers part of worship was hands-on charity. They celebrated God's redemption this way, giving and serving both individually and corporately. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem in the fifth century, sold church ornaments to feed the poor. (Another contrast: the Hindu worldview assumes that neediness results from bad deeds in a past life.)

Ancient culture was centered on elitism. The well-off and privileged gave not out of any sense of caring, but out of what Aristotle termed "liberality, in order to demonstrate [their] magnanimity and even superiority." They funded parks, statues, and public baths with their names emblazoned on them. Even the little philanthropy the ancients did was seldom received by the needy. Those who could pay back in some way received it.[\[24\]](#)

Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette noted that early Christians

innovated five ways in their use of their own funds for the general welfare:

First, those who joined were *expected to give* to their ability level, both rich and poor. Christ even called some to give all they had to the poor. St. Francis of Assissi, Pope Gregory the Great, and missionary C.T. Studd all did as well.

Second, they had a *new motivation*: the love for and example of Christ, who being rich became poor for others' sakes (2 Corinthians 8:9).[{25}](#)

Third, Christianity like Judaism, created *new objects of giving*: widows, orphans, slaves, the persecuted.

The fourth Christian innovation was *personalized giving*, although large groups were served. Also, *individuals* did the giving, not the government. "For the most part, the few Roman acts of relief and assistance were isolated state activities, 'dictated much more by policy than by benevolence'."[{26}](#)

Last, Christian generosity was not solely for insiders.[{27}](#) This was truly radical. The emperor known as Julian the Apostate complained that since Jews never had to beg and Christians supported both their own poor and those outside the church, "those who belong to us look in vain for the help we should render to them."[{28}](#)

Believers sometimes fasted for charity. The vision was big: ten thousand Christians skipping one hundred days' meals could provide a million meals, it was figured. Transformed hearts and minds imitated the God who left the throne of heaven to serve and die for others.[{29}](#)

Even W.E. Lecky, no friend to Christianity, wrote, "The active, habitual, and detailed charity of private persons, which is such a conspicuous feature in all Christian societies, was scarcely known in antiquity."[{30}](#) That is, until Christians showed up.

Medieval and Modern Manifestations

This way of thinking and living continued in Medieval times. Third century deacon St. Laurence was ordered by a Roman official to bring some of the treasures of the church. He showed up with poor and lame church members. For this affront to Roman sensibilities, he was roasted to death on a gridiron. Today, a Florida homeless shelter named after St. Laurence provides job help and basic assistance to the downtrodden.

The Generous Middle Ages

The Middle Ages saw Christian compassion grow. In the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, Italian clergy “zealously defended widows and orphans.”[\[31\]](#) Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester in the tenth century “sold all of the gold and silver vessels of his cathedral to relieve the poor who were starving during a famine.”[\[32\]](#)

Furthermore, according to Will Durant,

The administration of charity reached new heights in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. . . . The Church shared in relieving the unfortunate. Almsgiving was universal. Men hopeful of paradise left charitable bequests. . . . Doles of food were distributed [three times a week] to all who asked. . . . In one aspect the Church was a continent-wide organization for charitable aid.[\[33\]](#)

From Hospitals to the Red Cross

Christian hospitals spread to Europe by the eighth century. By the mid-1500s, thirty-seven thousand Benedictine monasteries cared for the ill. Arab Muslims even followed suit. Christianity was changing the world, even beyond the West.

The much-maligned Crusaders founded healthcare orders, helping Muslims *and* Christians. This led to the establishment of

insane asylums. By the 1400s, hospitals across Europe were under the direction of Christian bishops who often gave their own money. They cared for the poor and orphans and occasionally fed prisoners—an all-purpose institution of care.

“Christian aid to the poor did not end with the early church or the Middle Ages,” says Schmidt.[{34}](#) By the latter years of the nineteenth century, local Christian churches and denominations built many hospitals.

Medical nursing, a Christian innovation in ancient times, took leaps forward through the influence of Christ-follower Florence Nightingale. In 1864, Red Cross founder Jean Henri Dunant confessed on his deathbed, “I am a disciple of Christ as in the first century, and nothing more.”[{35}](#)

Child Labor Laws

The Industrial Revolution in England ushered in a shameful exploitation of children, even among those naming the Christian faith. Kids as young as seven worked in horrible conditions in coal mines and chimneys.

Compassionate believers like William Wilberforce and Charles Dickens rallied their callous countrymen to pass Parliamentary laws against the worst child labor. The real superman of this cause was Lord Shaftesbury, whose years of tireless “pleadings, countless speeches, personal sacrifices and dogged persistence” resulted in “a number of bills that vastly improved child labor conditions.” His firm faith in Christ spurred him and a nation on to true compassion.[{36}](#) This had a ripple effect across Western nations. Child labor has been outlawed in the West but continues strongly in nations less affected by Christian culture.

And Still Today . . .

This attitude of charity and compassion continues today in Christian societies like the Salvation Army and Christian

groups who aided Hurricane Katrina victims so much better than the government.{37} Many more can be named. As someone said, “‘Christian ideals have permeated society until non-Christians, who claim to live a “decent life” without religion, have forgotten the origin of the very content and context of their “decency”.”{38}

Notes

1. Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004) 147-148.
2. Ibid, 127.
3. Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville: Word/Thomas Nelson, 1995) 40.
4. Schmidt, pg. 148.
5. Logan Paul Gage, *Touchstone*, January/February 2008.
6. “New Study Shows Trends in Tithing and Donating,” Barna Research Group, April 14, 2008, www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrowPreview&BarnaUpdateID=296.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Dinesh D’Souza, *What’s So Great About Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2007), 204.
10. Ibid, 205.
11. Ibid, 207.
12. R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (Transaction Publishers, 1994), quoted in *The Truth Project* DVD-based curriculum, Focus on the Family, 2006.
13. D’Souza, 215.
14. Schmidt, 71.
15. Schmidt, 100.
16. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994) 29.
17. Schmidt, 129.
18. Schmidt, 131.
19. Christopher Price, “Pagans, Christianity, and Charity,”

CADRE (Christian Colligation of Apologetics Debate Research & Evangelism),

www.christiancadre.org/member_contrib/cp_charity.html.

20 Schmidt, 136.

21. Schmidt, 155-157.

22. Schmidt, 130.

23. Schmidt, 126.

24. D'Souza, 64.

25. 2 Corinthians 8:9.

26. Lecky, quoted in Schmidt, 128.

27. Kennedy and Newcombe, 30.

28. Shelley, 36.

29. Schmidt, 126.

30. Quoted in Kennedy and Newcombe, 32.

31. Schmidt, 131-134.

32. Schmidt, 126.

33. Will Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 31, quoted by Christopher Price: www.christiancadre.org/member_contrib/cp_charity.html.

34. Schmidt. 137.

35. Schmidt, 155-166.

36. Schmidt, 143.

37. Schmidt, 142-144.

38. Schmidt, 131.

© 2008 Probe Ministries