

Globalization and the Internet – A Christian Considers the Impact

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Challenge of the Internet

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Internet Regulation

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

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

Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu, in their book, *Who Controls the Internet?*, describe the various ways foreign governments have exercised their authority.[\[6\]](#)

- France requires Yahoo to block Internet surfers from France so they cannot purchase Nazi memorabilia.[\[7\]](#)
- The People’s Republic of China requires Yahoo to filter materials that might be harmful or threatening to Party

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government and Intermediaries

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

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

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

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

More than a decade ago, the German government raided the

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

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

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

Globalization and Government

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

1. Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).
2. Al Gore, Speech on U.S. Vision for the Global Information Infrastructure, World Telecommunications Development Conference, Buenos Aires, March 1994, www.goelzer.net/telecom/al-gore.html.
3. Jerry Ropelato, "Internet Pornography Statistics," internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html.
4. Julian Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace," *Village Voice*, 23 Dec. 1993, 37.
5. Communications Decency Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-104, tit. v, 110 Stat. 56, 133-143.
6. Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu, *Who Controls the Internet?* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).
7. Troy Wolverton and Jeff Peline, "Yahoo to charge auction fees, ban hate materials," CNet News.com, 2 Jan. 2001, news.com.com/2100-1017-25-452.html?legacy=cnet.
8. Goldsmith and Wu, *Who Controls the Internet?*, 9.
9. "Yahoo accused of helping jail China Internet writer," Reuters News Service, 19 Apr. 2006, www.infoshop.org/inews/article.php?story=20060420105508121.
10. Clarence Page, "Google caves to China's censors," *Chicago Tribune*, 16 Apr. 2006, www.chicagotribune.com/news/columnists/chi-0604160321apr16,0,4616158.column
11. Goldsmith and Wu, *Who Controls the Internet?*, 67.
12. Ibid., 68.
13. Ibid., 72.
14. Edmund L. Andrews, "Germany Charges Compuserve Manager," *New York Times*, 17 Apr. 1997.

15. John Carvel, "Prison Terms for Illegal Adoptions: Internet Babies Case Prompts Tough New Sanctions," Guardian (UK), 15 March 2001.
16. Jonathan Zittrain, "Internet Points of Control," 44 B.C.L. Rev. 653, 664-69 (2003).
17. Friedman, The World is Flat, 176.
18. Ibid., 455.
19. Goldsmith and Wu, Who Controls the Internet?, 183.

© 2006 Probe Ministries

"Is Reiki Just Another Means to Medicine?"

I have a daughter who is 8 and [whose health] is very compromised. We have been to doctors, etc. who have yet to come up with an answer. I have had several people recommend Reiki. I have hesitated because I am very leery of "energy" based healings. I am a believing, Bible reading Christian. There is a woman in our church who suggested Reiki and is trained in it. In "testing" her [words against Scripture] I catch a lot of New Age phrases that I am not comfortable with and [it has] become clear she is not actually reading the Word of God...(vs. just attending services).

Your answer supplying [a Christian Perspective on Reiki](#) was the best in terms of guiding me that this is wrong. I think that the reason Reiki is more questionable is because it is reaching out to the "spiritual realm" that does not glorify God. Yet, I am wondering, given that conventional medicine does not glorify God (more so it glorifies the doctor) is Reiki just another means to medicine? Or is it not considered viable because it is so spiritually based?

I just do not understand energy healing and many people (including Christians) suggest we explore energy healing. Given my faith...I know that God is sovereign and can use ALL things...but He also warns us. Do you mind if I ask you to further elaborate? Given modern medicine is simply a tool of God, it does also violate some scriptural things if you look at Old Testament teachings (i.e. vaccines contain animal DNA and we are not to mix this, etc.)

I just want to put this to rest once and for all and know if I am not neglecting an avenue of potential healing for my child. Thank you.

Thanks for your letter. I'm truly sorry to hear about the health difficulties your daughter is struggling with! However, I could not, in good conscience, recommend Reiki energy medicine as a possible solution. You mentioned an email response which I wrote on a Christian perspective on Reiki, but I'm wondering if you read the article I wrote on Reiki? If not, you can find it [here](#).

In the article I go into much more depth than I can do over email. I offer an overview of Reiki energy medicine, look into the question of whether or not there is any legitimate scientific support for such energy, ask about Reiki's alleged success stories, and discuss some reasons why I believe that Christians should be concerned about Reiki.

First, and foremost, I think that we should be concerned about the spiritual aspects of Reiki. As my article spells out in much more detail, I think that we should be concerned about where the power of Reiki really comes from (provided that there is any real power there to begin with). This leads to my second main concern: if Reiki really has no power whatever to effect genuine (as opposed to merely psychosomatic) healing of the body, then we could end up endangering people's lives by sending them to a Reiki practitioner, instead of a properly credentialed medical doctor. I also explain my reasoning here

in more detail in my article.

Of course, modern Western medicine is not perfect. But its reliance on quality control, reproducible results, the scientific method, extensive training, education, and licensing, etc., clearly distinguish it from much of energy medicine. In addition, since those who practice it are not typically calling upon spirit guides and other questionable entities, it is much less likely to entangle those making use of it with possible demonic involvement.

At any rate, as my article shows, it seems to me that there are sufficient reasons for Christians to be wary of Reiki and to avoid it. Others may disagree, but this is definitely my opinion on the matter.

I hope this is helpful and, again, please check out my [article](#) on the subject (if you have not done so already).

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2010 Probe Ministries

On Engaging Culture

In the late 1940s, conservative Christians were called to come out of the forts to which they had retreated under the onslaught of modernistic thinking and to re-engage their culture. The call was heard, and evangelical Christians have been increasingly involved in academia, the arts, the media, medical ethics, politics, and other strategic areas of our culture. Of course, there's also been significant involvement in pop culture with examples ranging from Christian trinkets

sold in Christian bookstores to some pretty good music.

A phrase that is often used for this cultural involvement is “engaging culture.” In fact, that phrase forms a third of Probe’s abbreviated mission statement: “renewing the mind, equipping the church, engaging the world.” What does it mean to “engage” culture? The phrase might give the impression that Christians stand outside their culture and need to re-enter it. This is a simplistic understanding. With the exception of a few such as the Amish, we are all embedded in American culture. We buy food from the same grocery stores as non-Christians and eat the same kinds of food. We watch the same ballgames, wear the same kinds of clothes, drive the same kinds of cars, speak the same language, visit the same museums, take advantage of the same medical care—we could go on and on. In fact, even the Amish don’t stand totally outside American culture. Participation is a matter of degree.

To note this participation is not to denigrate it; this is the way life is on this planet. People have divided into different groups and developed different cultures, and within those cultures there are both Christians and peoples of other faiths or no faiths at all.

Christians have always had to deal with the issue of living in a world that isn’t in tune with Christian beliefs and morality. When we become actively involved in our culture, our differences become more acute. Given these differences, how are we to “engage” our culture? What should that look like? It’s doubtful whether those who first sounded the evacuation order would approve of how deeply some Christians have embedded themselves in contemporary society. Polls by the Barna Group show how much evangelicals look like their non-Christian neighbors. What is a proper involvement in culture?

A new book on the subject has gained a lot of attention: *Culture Making* by Andy Crouch. Crouch presents two sets of concepts which together form a framework for how we might

interact with our culture. He names five strategies and two ways of employing these strategies.

First, the five strategies for interacting with culture are condemning, critiquing, copying, consuming, and cultivating. *Condemning* is finding fault with a thing or practice or person. *Critiquing* refers to analyzing culture. *Copying* is bringing cultural goods into our own subculture and forming a parallel culture. *Consuming* is simply enjoying the fruits of our culture. *Cultivating* refers to creating and nurturing. I'll come back to cultivating later.

Second, the two ways of *employing* the strategies Crouch calls *postures* and *gestures*. These are metaphors taken from our physical stances and motions. *Posture* is the way one stands when not paying attention to how one is standing. Some people have a very erect posture and some slouch. *Gestures* are ad hoc motions we make throughout the day. I need the book on my desk, so I pick it up. I greet someone by shaking hands. I get someone's attention by waving my arms over my head. I don't constantly use the gestures of arm waving or hand shaking or picking up; I only use them when needed.

Now let's put the strategies together with the stances. The first four of the strategies are the ones most commonly practiced. All of them have their places as gestures. Occasionally we need to *condemn*. Some things are bad, and we need to say so. *Critiquing* is something we need to do as well from time to time. Some law is being debated, for example, and those involved have to analyze the proposal from a variety of angles. *Copying* our culture is something we do sometimes that is okay. Because we live alongside non-Christians in our broader culture, we will be influenced to some extent by musical styles or styles of clothing. In the area of sports, some churches have softball teams and compete against teams from other churches. *Consuming* is something we all do routinely. I go to movies that don't have distinctly Christian messages. I eat at a local Italian restaurant without checking

the religious credentials of the owners or employees. I drive on our interstate system without worrying about the fact it wasn't created with distinctly Christian purposes in mind.

A serious problem for Christians is that we often allow these *gestures* to become *postures*. That is, what should only be an occasional behavior becomes a lifestyle or character trait. For example, some people adopt a posture of *condemnation*. They condemn constantly. You've seen the facial expression: eyebrows up, piercing eyes staring, head shaking. Such people seem incapable of finding anything good in culture.

Other people adopt a posture of *critiquing*. Everything is put under the microscope for analysis. Nothing is simply enjoyed. Occupying one's time with critiquing leaves no place for actually bringing about change.

The posture of *copying* is often seen in our Christian subculture. Whatever is new in clothing or hair styles or music, we're all over it. On our t-shirts we print Christian slogans (sometimes cheapening the gospel by a cheesy use of company logos, such as T-shirts with "Christ is King" in the style of the Burger King crown logo). Christian lyrics are written for the latest styles in music. We master the latest marketing techniques. When we are always copying, we are getting our cues from people who don't share our values. Another problem is that we are always following behind. This posture also reveals a separatist mindset; we can enjoy "their" music, but we have to bring it over the wall into "our" world.

Consuming as a posture results in us becoming indiscriminant in what we "eat." Others are always deciding for us what is good. There is such a concern with keeping up with the latest, with not being left behind, that we are often unaware of how what we consume affects us. A posture of consuming also leaves little room for creating something new.

These strategies are the same ones non-Christians employ. The difference is the values which determine *how* they are employed. All of *our* condemning, critiquing, copying, and consuming are to be governed by scriptural norms.

If we stop here, we will miss the major point of Andy Crouch's book. While these strategies have their places, there's one which we can leave out completely to our detriment and the detriment of our society. That is *cultivation*. Cultivating involves creating and nurturing. Crouch uses the metaphor of gardening to illustrate. The gardener looks at what is there—landscape, sunlight, etc.—and considers what could be grown. Weeds are removed, the soil is tilled, and the seeds are planted. Water is provided to enable growth. This is the stuff of culture making. We aren't just to react to what is there, but to bring new things into existence and to care for what is there that is good.

Crouch has some questions for Christians:

I wonder what we Christians are known for in the world outside our churches. Are we known as critics, consumers, copiers, condemners of culture? I'm afraid so. Why aren't we known as cultivators—people who tend and nourish what is best in human culture, who do the hard and painstaking work to preserve the best of what people before us have done? Why aren't we known as creators—people who dare to think and do something that has never been thought or done before, something that makes the world more welcoming and thrilling and beautiful?

I suspect that one problem some Christians might have with this has to do with eschatology. Those who hold to a premillennial, pretribulational view of end times see this world as being doomed for destruction, and some wonder why we should put any effort into cultural engagement beyond witnessing for Christ. A big problem with that is that no one

knows when the end is coming. In the meantime, cars and factories spew pollution into the air that is harmful to our health and to the well-being of other living things. Cancer still ends lives way too soon and is often attended by much suffering. The decay of inner cities is depressing to its inhabitants. Are Christians engaged in making cars that don't pollute? Fighting cancer? Cleaning up and reversing the decay of declining neighborhoods?

To some, this will sound suspiciously like the "social gospel" of the mid-twentieth century. It isn't. For one thing, it is grounded in Christian theology. We are created in the image of *the* Creator and have been made creative ourselves. For another, because we are made in the image of God we should care about the health and well-being of all people. Consider, too, that God Himself is interested in beauty (Ex. 28:2, 40).

Most of us will never invent something that will drastically alter people's lives. We won't do anything really big like find the cure for Alzheimer's or solve the nation's economic crisis. But we can do small things. We can tutor a child who has trouble reading, fix up our yards and houses so they aren't eye-sores to our neighbors, join a local civic chorale or orchestra. In short, it's just a matter of using our talents to make our world a better place, and in doing so to enrich the lives of other people and point to the glory of God.

In doing so, we may also find that non-Christians are more apt to listen to our reason for doing so.

Augustine on Popular Culture: Ancient Take on a Modern Problem

In his recent book, *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture*[\[1\]](#), theologian Kelton Cobb observes that in our day, “a great number of people are finding solace in popular culture, solace they find lacking in organized religion.”[\[2\]](#) This is just one important reason why Christians must give careful thought and analysis (discernment) to the issue of popular culture. As members of the body of Christ, who desire to see others brought into loving fellowship with Him, it behooves us to understand why it is that many people claim to find greater consolation in popular culture than they do in the church of Jesus Christ.

But there’s another reason why today’s Christians must give some attention to popular culture, namely, for better or worse, we are all swimming in it. As Cobb reminds us, “whole generations in the West have had their basic conceptions of the world formed by popular culture.”[\[3\]](#) Just think for a moment about how much we are daily influenced by various artifacts of popular culture—things like television, movies, music, magazines, comic books, video games, sports, and advertising (just to name a few). How should the believer relate to popular culture? Should he shun it, embrace it, seek to transform it? Or should he rather do all of the above, depending on what particular item of popular culture is in view? As one can see, these are difficult questions. Not surprisingly, therefore, thoughtful Christians have answered these questions rather differently. But instead of trying to review all their answers here,[\[4\]](#) I will briefly discuss just

one view which, I believe, still merits our careful consideration.

Augustine is considered by many to be the greatest theologian of the early church. Born on November 13, 354 A.D., to a pagan father and a Christian mother, he pursued his studies for a time in Carthage, the North African capital. According to Cobb, "Carthage was an epicenter of popular entertainment in the [Roman] empire, famous for its circus, amphitheater and gladiatorial shows—a fourth-century Las Vegas."[\[5\]](#) Cast into this environment as a passionate young pagan, Augustine indulged both his appetite for sex and his love for the theater. These early experiences led the later, Christian Augustine, to a unique appreciation for the almost irresistible draw that the artifacts of popular culture can have on us. In spite of this, however, he did not conclude (as the earlier church father Tertullian had largely done) that there is nothing of redeeming value in popular culture. Indeed even the pagan theater, which by his own admission had been partly responsible for stirring up his youthful lusts, is not entirely consigned to the garbage bin of useless "worldly" entertainment. Instead, Augustine took the intriguing position "that aspects of pagan culture ought to be preserved and put into the service of the church."[\[6\]](#)

In his monumental work, the *City of God*, Augustine postulated the existence of two cities—the city of man and the city of God. Although these two cities will eventually be separated at the last judgment, for the moment they are "mingled together" in the world, with the result that the inhabitants of both cities participate in many of the same social and cultural activities. So what differentiates the inhabitants of one city from those of another? According to Augustine it is the "quality of their love," along with the nature of their attachment to the things of this world. Cobb comments on Augustine's view as follows: "We are citizens of the earthly city to the extent that we love the earthly city as an end in

itself; we are citizens of the heavenly city to the extent that we make use of the earthly city—including its astonishing arts and cultural attainments—as a way of loving God.”{7}

In other words, Augustine is suggesting the following principle for evaluating various cultural activities from a Christian perspective: Does the activity (in some form or fashion) inspire a greater love of God or one’s neighbor? If so, then there is something of genuine value to be had from participating in that activity. On the other hand, if the activity leads one to think less of God or one’s neighbor, then it’s probably suspect from a Christian perspective. “Thus,” writes Cobb, “Augustine offers a strategy for the appropriation of pagan religious symbols and all varieties of popular art. They may be appropriated if they can be pressed into the service of charity, into the journey of the soul to God, as a *means* of devotion rather than as *objects* of devotion”{8}

Of course, Augustine was aware that there are other principles which can (and should) be used in evaluating whether or not to participate in some cultural activity. For example, he taught that “Wherever we may find truth, it is the Lord’s.”{9} And truth is intrinsically valuable and good. So if a particular cultural activity helps you toward a greater understanding and appreciation of God, or the things which God has made—and if it’s not contrary to some moral precept in the Bible—then this, too, is probably something valuable and appropriate for Christian participation.

As one considers Augustine’s principles, one can’t help but be impressed by their wisdom. Not only are these principles extremely practical, they are also thoroughly biblical. Indeed, they remind one of the way in which Paul interacted with the cultural artifacts of *his* day. You can scarcely study the life of this great missionary/theologian without being impressed by the way he took pains to genuinely understand something of the Gentile culture to which he had been called

to minister. Thus, in Acts 17 we not only see him conversing with some of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers (v. 18), but we also learn that he had taken time to familiarize himself with the religious beliefs of Athens (vv. 22-23). Moreover, when he describes the nature of God and man to the members of the Areopagus he cites, *with approval*, the statements of two pagan poets (vv. 28-29). Finally, as we study his letters we also see repeated references and allusions to the athletic games of his day (e.g. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Philippians. 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:5; etc.). Clearly Paul was attuned to the cultural concerns and activities of the people he sought to reach for Christ.

In light of all this, Paul's words to the Philippians are especially significant, particularly as we reflect on the ever-persistent question of how *we*, as believers, should relate to our *own* culture: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:8-9).

Notes

1. I am particularly indebted to the discussion of Augustine and popular culture found in Kelton Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 80-86.
2. Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide*, 6.
3. Ibid., 7.
4. The interested reader can find more information in texts like Cobb's (mentioned above) and H. Richard Niebuhr's classic, *Christ and Culture*.
5. Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide*, 80.
6. Ibid., 83.
7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 86.

9. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), II/18; cited in Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide*, 84.

© 2008 Probe Ministries

China, The Olympics and Christians

When the 2008 Olympics were awarded to China back in 2001, there was a naive hope that this decision would change China and also lead to an improvement in human rights. It turns out that instead of changing China, it may have changed us.

One example of this can be seen in our country. When the Olympic torch was carried through various cities in the world, it was protected not only by the local authorities but also by the Chinese secret police. So when the torch came to San Francisco, once again the Chinese secret police showed up. Now to be fair, the news reports actually said that they were volunteers from the Special Forces academy of the Peoples Armed Police. But a better description for them would be Chinas secret police.

This organization has been used to protect embassies in Beijing. But it has also been called upon put down protests in Tibet and suppress protests and other forms of expression in

China. They were described by the chairman of the 2012 London Olympic committee as thugs. Others described their tactics as aggressive.

It is amazing to me that we allowed these secret police in our country, but it illustrates my point. We thought that these trade overtures and the Olympics would change China. In the long run, they may have a positive impact. But so far it seems like we are the ones who have changed.

There was also the naive hope that bringing the Olympics to China would usher in an era of improved human rights in this communist country. It appears that in some ways the situation is worse. China has invested time and money in preparing for the Olympics. It appears they have also done all they can to rid the nation of anyone who could be seen as a dissident.

For decades, China has been rounding up Christians and other dissidents. They have been beaten and thrown in jail. Some have been killed. Lord David Alton estimates that each year 8,000 executions take place in China. Those who escape this persecution must live in a society where political and religious opinion is repressed, where journalists are jailed, and where the Internet and overseas broadcasts are censored.

The Chinese constitution promises its citizens that they have freedom of religious belief. But we know better. While there is an official state church, most of the growth (and the perceived potential threat to the government) takes place in the underground churches. As we get closer to the Olympics, the government seems bent on doing more to smash the growing home church movement.

As Christians we should be in prayer about what is taking place in China. But a growing debate has centered on what the U.S. government should do. Some have called for President Bush to boycott the opening ceremonies. They believe this would be a strong statement of our repudiation of the practices of the

Chinese government. Others have suggested that President Bush go and use the Olympics as a platform to speak out against the Chinese government.

I see merit in either action. What is unacceptable is the current policy of silence. The president, his administration, and even corporate sponsors have been silent about what has been going on for decades. Now even the secular world is calling for action because of China's policy toward Tibet. It is time for all of us (Christians included) to break our silence and speak out.

© 2008 Probe Ministries

Crusader Terrorists? – How Should Christians Respond

In this day of multiculturalism and political correctness, Christians should have been prepared to learn that a New Jersey school district recently chose Christian Crusaders as an imaginary terrorist group for its first live action hostage response drill. To portray the terrorists, the school district organizers made up a right-wing fundamentalist group that denies the separation of church and state. Then, they created a fake hostage situation instigated by the supposedly angry parent of a student expelled for praying.

The stated goal of the event was summarized nicely by the district superintendent. He claimed that “You perform as you practice. We need to practice under conditions as real as possible in order to evaluate our procedures and plans so that

they're as effective as possible." While many comments could be made about the phrase as real as possible, the most critical aspect of this issue is a deeper consideration.

Sadly, just as the impact of the aforementioned PC dogma on our schools is predictable, so is the vehement response of the local Christian community to this perceived offense. One Christian demanded that a public apology be given by school officials, along with their resignations. Other critics pointed out the obvious bigotry against Christians and the absurdity of the scenario itself. Christians have the legal right to pray in schools, and they are far more likely to bring their lawyers than their guns.

Still others mentioned that this is not the first time a school district had deliberately steered clear of the obvious terrorist groups, deciding instead to pick on Christians. For example, three years ago a Michigan school district substituted a group of crazed Christian homeschoolers called Wackos Against Schools and Education for their mock terrorism drill to avoid offending any Muslims.

Unfair scenarios such as these have a lot of Christians upset, and in a perfect world, they have a right to be. But is this the best response to events such as these? How should an ambassador for Christ handle them? May I suggest an alternative?

Instead of the immediate declaration of how persecuted and indignant we Christians are, perhaps we should ask ourselves why school officials see the followers of Jesus in this light in the first place. Are we doing anything that prompts this kind of stereotyping? Unfortunately, many school administrators only hear from outraged believers when there is a problem. Rarely are Christians viewed as beneficial to the school and surrounding community.

I know of a small evangelical church in New Zealand that was

marginalized as an almost cultish group until they decided to pick a school to bless each spring. Church members take one week each year to clean, paint, and repair at the church's expense whatever needs fixing at the selected school. Their Christ-like service has completely changed the surrounding community's attitude regarding the church, and school officials have even attended services as a result of their gratitude. A similar scenario played out recently in a small village in China. An underground church went from being persecuted to being appreciated when they decided to restore a bridge vital to that city.

It is relatively easy and natural to respond to negative stereotyping, even persecution, with a demand for political rights and privileges. It is far more difficult and supernatural to bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you.

© 2007 Probe Ministries

Media and Discernment

We live in the midst of a media storm, and Christians need to develop discernment in their consumption of various media (TV, movies, music, videos, computer, etc).

Media Exposure

We live in the midst of a media storm. Every day we are confronted by more media messages than a previous generation could even imagine.

For example, more homes have TV sets (98 percent) than have indoor plumbing. In the average home the television set is on

for more than six hours a day. Children spend more time watching television than in any other activity except sleep.{1} Nearly half of elementary school children and 60 percent of adolescents have television sets in their bedrooms.{2}

But that is just the beginning of the media exposure we encounter. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* estimates that the average teenager listens to 10,500 hours of music during their teen years.{3} Families are watching more movies than ever before since they can now watch them on cable and satellite and rent or buy movies in video and DVD format.

The amount of media exposure continues to increase every year. Recent studies of media usage reveal that people spend more than double the time with media than they think they do. This amounts to nearly twelve hours a day total. And because of media multitasking, summing all media use by medium results in a staggering fifteen hours per day.{4}

Student use of the Internet has been increasing to all-time levels. A study done at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst found the following:{5}

- Nearly 90 percent of the students access the Internet every day.
- Students spent over ten hours per week using IM (instant messaging).
- Those same students spent over twenty-eight hours per week on the Internet.
- Nearly three-fourths spent more time online than they intended.

In addition to concerns about the quantity of media input are even greater concerns about the quality of media input. For example, the average child will witness over 200,000 acts of violence on television, including 16,000 murders before he or

she is 18 years old. And consider that the average child views 30,000 commercials each year.

A study of adolescents (ages 12-17) showed that watching sex on TV influences teens to have sex. Youths were more likely to initiate intercourse as well as other sexual activities.[\[6\]](#)

Over 1000 studies (including reports from the Surgeon General's office and the National Institute of Mental Health) "point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children."[\[7\]](#)

To put it simply, we are awash in media exposure, and there is a critical need for Christians to exercise discernment. Never has a generation been so tempted to conform to this world (Rom. 12:1-2) because of the growing influence of the proliferating forms of media.

Biblical Discernment

Although the Bible does not provide specific instructions about media (you can't find a verse dealing with television, computers, or DVDs), it nevertheless provides broad principles concerning discernment.

For example, the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:22 instructs us to "Flee from youthful lusts." We should stay away from anything (including media) that inflames our lust. Paul also goes on to say that in addition to fleeing from these things, we should also "pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace." We should replace negative influences in our life with those things which are positive.

Paul says in Colossians 3:8, "But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips." Now, does that mean you could never read something that has anger or rage or slander in it? No. After all, the Bible has stories of people who manifest

those traits in their lives.

What Paul is saying is that we need to rid ourselves of such things. If the input into our lives (such as through media) manifests these traits, then a wise and discerning Christian would re-evaluate what is an influence in his or her life.

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." We should focus on what is positive and helpful to our Christian walk.

We are also admonished in Romans 13:13 to "behave decently as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy."

As Christians, we should develop discernment in our lives. We can do this in three ways: stop, listen, and look. Stop what you are doing long enough to evaluate the media exposure in your life. Most of us just allow media to wash over us everyday without considering the impact it is having on us.

Second, we should listen. That is, we should give attention to what is being said. Is it true or false? And what is the message various media are bringing into our lives?

Finally, we should look. We need to look at the consequences of media in our lives. We should rid ourselves of influences which are negative and think on those things which are positive.

Worldview of the News Media

Of all the forms of media, the news media have become a primary shaper of our perspective on the world. Also, the rules of journalism have changed in the last few decades. It used to be assumed that reporters or broadcasters would

attempt to look at events through the eyes of the average reader or viewer. It was also assumed that they would not use their positions in the media to influence the thinking of the nation but merely to report objectively the facts of an event. Things have changed dramatically in the news business.

The fact that people in the media are out of step with the American people should be a self-evident statement. But for anyone who does not believe it, there is abundant empirical evidence to support it.

Probably the best-known research on media bias was first published in the early 1980s by professors Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman. Their research, published in the journal *Public Opinion*[\[8\]](#) and later collected in the book *The Media Elite*,[\[9\]](#) demonstrated that reporters and broadcasters in the prestige media differ in significant ways from their audiences.

They surveyed 240 editors and reporters of the media elite—*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, ABC, NBC, and CBS. Their research confirmed what many suspected for a long time: the media elite are liberal, secular, and humanistic.

People have always complained about the liberal bias in the media. But what was so surprising is how liberal members of the media actually were. When asked to describe their own political persuasion, 54 percent of the media elite described themselves as left of center. Only 19 percent described themselves as conservative. When asked who they voted for in presidential elections, more than 80 percent of them always voted for the Democratic candidate.

Media personnel are also very secular in their outlook. The survey found that 86 percent of the media elite seldom or never attend religious services. In fact, 50 percent of them have no religious affiliation at all.

This bias is especially evident when the secular press tries

to cover religious events or religious issues. Most of them do not attend church, nor do they even know people who do. Instead, they live in a secularized world and therefore tend to underestimate the significance of religious values in American lives and to paint anyone with Christian convictions as a “fundamentalist.”

Finally, they also found that the news media was humanistic in their outlook on social issues. Over 90 percent of the media elite support a woman’s so-called “right to abortion” while only 24 percent agreed or strongly agreed that “homosexuality is wrong.”

For a time, members of the media elite argued against these studies. They suggested that the statistical sample was too small. But when Robert Lichter began to enumerate the 240 members of the news media interviewed, that tactic was quickly set aside. Others tried to argue that, though the media might be liberal, secular, and humanistic, it did not affect the way the press covered the news. Later studies by a variety of media watchdogs began to erode the acceptance of that view.

A second significant study on media bias was a 1996 survey conducted by the Freedom Forum and the Roper Center.^{10} Their survey of 139 Washington bureau chiefs and congressional correspondents showed a decided preference for liberal candidates and causes.

The journalists were asked for whom they voted in the 1992 election. The results were these: 89 percent said Bill Clinton, 7 percent George Bush, 2 percent Ross Perot. But in the election, 43 percent of Americans voted for Clinton and 37 percent voted for Bush.

Another question they were asked was, “What is your current political affiliation?” Fifty percent said they were Democrats, 4 percent Republicans. In answer to the question, “How do you characterize your political orientation?” 61

percent said they were liberal or moderately liberal, and 9 percent were conservative or moderately conservative.

The reporters were also asked about their attitudes toward their jobs. They said they see their coverage of news events as a mission. No less than 92 percent agreed with the statement, "Our role is to educate the public." And 62 percent agreed with the statement, "Our role is sometimes to suggest potential solutions to social problems."

A more recent survey by the Pew Research Center further confirms the liberal bias in the media. They interviewed 547 media professionals (print, TV, and radio) and asked them to identify their political perspective. They found that 34 percent were liberal and only 7 percent were conservative. This compares to 20 percent of Americans who identify themselves as liberal and 33 percent who define themselves as conservative.[\[11\]](#)

It is also worth questioning whether a majority of media professionals who labeled themselves as moderate in the survey really deserve that label. John Leo, writing for *U.S. News and World Report*, says that it has been his experience "that liberal journalists tend to think of themselves as representing the mainstream, so in these self-identification polls, moderate usually translates to liberal. On the few social questions asked in the survey, most of the moderates sounded fairly liberal."[\[12\]](#)

Once again we see the need for Christians to exercise discernment in their consumption of media.

Dealing with the Media

Christians must address the influence of the media in society. It can be a dangerous influence that can conform us to the world (Rom. 12:2). Therefore we should do all we can to protect against its influence and to use the media for good.

Christians should strive to apply the following two passages to their lives as they seek discernment concerning the media: Philippians 4:8, which we quoted above, and Colossians 3:2–5:

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Here are some suggestions for action.

First, control the quantity and quality of media input. Parents should set down guidelines and help select television programs at the start of the week and watch only those. Parents should also set down guidelines for movies, music, and other forms of media. Families should also evaluate the location of their television set so that it is not so easy to just sit and watch TV for long hours.

Second, watch TV with children. One way to encourage discussion with children is to watch television with them. The plots and actions of the programs provides a natural context for discussion. The discussion could focus on how cartoon characters or TV characters could solve their problems without resorting to violence. What are the consequences of violence? TV often ignores the consequences. What are the consequences of promiscuous sex in real life?

Third, set a good example. Parents should not be guilty to saying one thing and doing another. Neither adults nor children should spend long periods of time in front of a video display (television, video game, computer). Parents can teach their children by example that there are better ways to spend time.

Fourth, work to establish broadcaster guidelines. No TV or movie producer wants to unilaterally disarm all the actors on

their screens for fear that viewers will watch other programs and movies. Yet many of these TV and movie producers would like to tone down the violence, even though they do not want to be the first to do so. National standards would be able to achieve what individuals would not do by themselves in a competitive market.

Fifth, make your opinions known. Writing letters to programs, networks, and advertisers can make a difference over time. A single letter may not make a difference, but large numbers of letters can even change editorial policy. Consider joining with other like-minded people in seeking to make a difference in the media.

While the media has a tremendous potential for good, it can also have some very negative effects. Christians need wisdom and discernment to utilize the positive aspects of media and to guard against its negative effects.

Notes

1. Huston and Wright, University of Kansas, "Television and Socialization of Young Children."
2. E.H. Woodard and N. Gridina, *Media in the Home: The Fifth Annual Survey of Parents and Children 2000* (Philadelphia, PA: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, 2000).
3. Elizabeth F. Brown and William R. Hendee, "Adolescents and Their Music: Insights Into the Health of Adolescents," *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 262 (September 22-29, 1989): 1659.
4. Robert A. Papper, et. al., "Middletown Media Studies," *International Digital Media & Arts Association Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 2004, 5.
5. Gary D. Malaney, "Student Internet Use at UMass Amherst,"

Student Affairs Online, Vol. 5, No. 1, Jan. 2004.

6. Rebecca Collins, et. al., "Watching Sex on Television Predicts Adolescent Initiation of Sexual Behavior," *Pediatrics*, Vol. 114 (3), September 2004.

7. Joint Statement on the Impact of Entertainment Violence on Children, American Academy of Pediatrics , 26 July 2000.

8. S. Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman, "Media and Business Elites," *Public Opinion*, (October-November 1981): 42-46.

9. S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter, *The Media Elite* (New York: Adler and Adler, 1986).

10. S. Robert Lichter, "Consistently Liberal: But Does It Matter?" *Media Critic* (Summer 1996): 26-39.

11. "Survey: Liberals dominate news outlets: Far higher number in press than in general population," *WorldNetDaily*, 24 May 2004.

12. John Leo, "Liberal media? I'm shocked!" *U.S. News and World Report*, 7 June 2004, 12.

© 2005 Probe Ministries

Slavery in America – How Did the Founders and Early Christians Regard It?

Kerby Anderson presents a thoughtful review of the attitude towards slavery held by many of our founders and early Christian leaders. Although a tragic chapter in our history,

he encourages us to understand that many opposed slavery from the beginning believing that all men are in fact created equal.

Introduction

Slavery has been found throughout the history of the world. Most of the major empires in the world enslaved millions. They made slaves not only of their citizens but of people in the countries they conquered.

Slavery is also a sad and tragic chapter in American history that we must confront honestly. Unfortunately, that is often not how it is done. History classes frequently teach that the founders and framers were evil men and hypocrites. Therefore, we no longer need to study them, nor do we need to study the principles they established in founding this country and framing the Constitution.

In fact, I have met many students in high school and college who have no interest in learning about the founders of this country and the framers of the Constitution merely because some were slaveholders. But I have also found that they do not know the whole story of the struggle over slavery in this country.

In reaction to this secular revisionist teaching in the public schools and universities, a Christian perspective has been offered that does not square with history. Some Christians, wanting to emphasize the biblical principles of the founding of this country, seem to have turned a blind eye to the evil of slavery. Slavery was wrong and represented an incomplete founding of liberty in this country.

In this article we will look at slavery in America and attempt to tell the story fairly and honestly. At the same time, we will bring forth facts and stories that have been lost from the current revisionist teaching on slavery.

First, let's put slavery in America in historical perspective. Historians estimate that approximately 11 million Africans were transported to the New World. Of these 4 million went to Brazil, 2.5 million to Spanish colonies, 2 million to the British West Indies, and 500,000 to the United States.

Although it is sometimes taught that the founders did not believe that blacks were human or deserved the same rights as whites, this is not true. Actually, the founders believed that blacks had the same inalienable rights as other persons in America. James Otis of Massachusetts said in 1764 that "The colonists are by the law of nature freeborn, as indeed all men are, white or black."[{1}](#)

Alexander Hamilton also talked about the equality of blacks with whites. He said, "their natural faculties are probably as good as ours. . . . The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the blacks, makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor experience."[{2}](#)

As we will see, many worked tirelessly for the abolition of slavery and wanted a society that truly practiced the belief that "all men are created equal."

The Founders' View of Slavery

Let's see what the founders and framers really thought about slavery and what they did to bring about its end. Here are a few of their comments.

Slavery was often condemned from the pulpits of America as revolutionary preachers frequently spoke out against it. One patriot preacher said, "The Deity hath bestowed upon them and us the same natural rights as men."[{3}](#)

Benjamin Franklin said that slavery "is an atrocious debasement of human nature."[{4}](#) He and Benjamin Rush went on to found the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition

of Slavery.

Benjamin Rush's desire to abolish slavery was based on biblical principles. He stated: "Domestic slavery is repugnant to the principles of Christianity." He went on to say, "It is rebellion against the authority of a common Father. It is a practical denial of the extent and efficacy of the death of a common Savior. It is an usurpation of the prerogative of the great Sovereign of the universe who has solemnly claimed an exclusive property in the souls of men."[\[5\]](#)

John Adams said, "Every measure of prudence, therefore, ought to be assumed for the eventual total extirpation of slavery from the United States I have, through my whole life, held the practice of slavery in . . . abhorrence."[\[6\]](#)

James Madison in his speech before the Constitutional Convention said, "We have seen the mere distinction of colour made in the most enlightened period of time, a ground of the most oppressive dominion ever exercised by man over man."[\[7\]](#)

During the American Revolution, many slaves won their freedom. Alexander Hamilton served on George Washington's staff and supported the plan to enlist slaves in the army. He wrote to John Jay that "An essential part of the plan is to give them their freedom with their muskets . . . for the dictates of humanity and true policy equally interest me in favor of this unfortunate class of men."[\[8\]](#) Blacks from every part of the country (except South Carolina and Georgia) won their freedom through military service.[\[9\]](#)

After the Revolution, many Americans who were enjoying new freedom from England were struck by the contradiction that many blacks were still enslaved. John Jay said "That men should pray and fight for their own freedom and yet keep others in slavery is certainly acting a very inconsistent as well as unjust and perhaps impious part."[\[10\]](#)

In *Federalist* #54, James Madison stated that Southern laws

(not nature) have “degraded [the slaves] from the human rank” depriving them of “rights” including the right to vote, that they would otherwise possess equally with other human beings. Madison argued that it was a “barbarous policy” to view blacks “in the unnatural light of property” rather than persons entitled to the same rights as other men.

Slavery and the Founders

When America was founded, there were about half a million slaves. Approximately one third of the founders had slaves (George Washington and Thomas Jefferson being the most notable). Most of the slaves lived in the five southern colonies.

Benjamin Rush and Benjamin Franklin (both signers of the Declaration of Independence) founded the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery in 1774. Rush went on to head a national abolition movement.

John Jay was the president of a similar society in New York. He said: “To contend for our own liberty, and to deny that blessing to others, involves an inconsistency not to be excused.” John Adams opposed slavery because it was a “foul contagion in the human character” and “an evil of colossal magnitude.” His son, John Quincy Adams, so crusaded against slavery that he was known as “the hell-hound of abolition.”

It’s important to note that when these anti-slavery societies were founded, they were clearly an act of civil disobedience. In 1774, for example, Pennsylvania passed a law to end slavery. But King George vetoed that law and other laws passed by the colonies. The King was pro-slavery, and Great Britain (at that time) practiced slavery. As long as the colonies were part of the British Empire, they would also be required to permit slavery.

When Thomas Jefferson finished his first draft of the

Declaration of Independence, it included a paragraph condemning the King for introducing slavery into the colonies and continuing the slave trade. It said: "He [King George] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither." Unfortunately, this paragraph was dropped from the final draft because it was offensive to the delegates from Georgia and South Carolina.

After America separated from Great Britain, several states passed laws abolishing slavery. For example, Vermont's 1777 constitution abolished slavery outright. Pennsylvania passed a law in 1779 for gradual emancipation. Slavery was abolished in Massachusetts and New Hampshire through a series of court decisions in the 1780s that ruled that "all men are born free and equal." Other states passed gradual abolition laws during this period as well. By the time of the U.S. Constitution, every state (except Georgia) had at least prohibited slavery or suspended the importation of slaves.

Most of the founders (including many who at the time owned slaves) wanted to abolish the slave trade, but could not do so at the founding of this country. So, what about the compromises concerning slavery in the Constitution? We will look at that topic next.

Slavery and the Framers

We have noted that some of the founders were slaveholders. Yet even so, many of them wanted to abolish slavery. One example was George Washington.

In 1786, Washington wrote to Robert Morris that "there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a

plan adopted for the abolition of [slavery].”[{11}](#) Later in his life he freed several of his household slaves and decreed in his will that his slaves would become free upon the death of his wife. Washington’s estate even paid for their care until 1833.

What about the compromises in the U.S. Constitution? When the delegates came to Philadelphia, there were strong regional differences between northern and southern states concerning slavery.[{12}](#)

The first compromise concerned enumeration. Apportionment of representatives would be determined by the number of free persons and three-fifths of all other persons. Many see this as saying that blacks were not considered whole persons. Actually, it was just the opposite. The anti-slavery delegates wanted to count slaves as less in order to penalize slaveholders and reduce their influence in Congress. Free blacks were considered free persons and counted accordingly.

The second compromise dealt with the slave trade. Congress was prohibited until 1808 from blocking the migration and importation of slaves. It did not prevent states from restricting or outlawing the slave trade. As I pointed out previously, many had already done so. It did establish a temporary exemption to the federal government until President Jefferson signed a national prohibition into law effective January 1, 1808.

A final compromise involved fugitive slaves that guaranteed return of slaves held to service or labor “under the laws thereof.” The wording did not imply that the Constitution recognized slavery as legitimate but only acknowledged that states had laws governing slavery.

It is notable that the words “slave” and “slavery” cannot be found in the U.S. Constitution. James Madison recorded in his notes on the constitutional convention that the delegates

“thought it wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea that there could be property in men.”

Slavery was wrong, and it is incorrect to say that the U.S. Constitution supported it. Frederick Douglass believed that our form of government “was never, in its essence, anything but an anti-slavery government.” He argued, “Abolish slavery tomorrow, and not a sentence or a syllable of the Constitution need be altered.”

Nevertheless, the seeds of a future conflict were sown in these compromises. The nation was founded on the ideal that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” John Quincy Adams later admitted that: “The inconsistency of the institution of slavery with the principles of the Declaration of Independence was seen and lamented.” The conflict eventually broke out into a great civil war.

The Bible and Slavery

How does the Bible relate to slavery in America? While it is true that so many of the leaders in the abolition movement were Christians, there were others who attempted to use their particular interpretation of the Bible to justify slavery. That should not be surprising since today we see people trying to manipulate the Bible to justify their beliefs about issues like abortion and homosexuality.

The Bible teaches that slavery, as well as other forms of domination of one person over another, is wrong. For example, Joseph was sold into slavery (Genesis 37), and the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites (Exodus 1). Neither these nor other descriptions of slavery in the Bible are presented in a favorable light.

The Old Testament law code made it a capital crime to kidnap a person and sell him into slavery (Ex. 21:16). It also

commanded Israel to welcome a slave who escaped from his master and not be returned (Deut. 23:15-16).

Nevertheless, some pointed to other passages in the Old Testament to try to justify slavery. For example, those who needed financial assistance or needed protection could become indentured servants (Ex. 21:2-6; Deut. 15:12-18). But this was a voluntary act very different from the way slavery was practiced in America. Also, a thief that could not or would not make restitution could be sold as a slave (Ex. 22:1-3), but the servitude would cease when restitution had been made.

In the New Testament, we see that Paul wrote how slaves (and masters) were to act toward one another (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25, 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1-2). Since nearly half of the population of Rome were slaves, it is understandable that he would address their attitudes and actions. Paul was hardly endorsing the Roman system of slavery.

Paul's letter to Philemon encouraged him to welcome back his slave Onesimus (who had now become a Christian). Christian tradition says that the slave owner did welcome him back as a Christian brother and gave him his freedom. Onesimus later became the bishop of Berea.

It is also true that many of the leaders of the abolition movement were Christians who worked to abolish slavery from America. Lyman Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Lloyd Garrison, and Charles Finney are just a few of the 19th century leaders of the abolition movement. Finney, for example, not only preached salvation but called for the elimination of slavery. He said, "I had made up my mind on the question of slavery, and was exceedingly anxious to arouse public attention to the subject. In my prayers and preaching, I so often alluded to slavery, and denounced it." [\[13\]](#)

Slavery is a sad and tragic chapter in American history, and we must confront it honestly. But the way the subject of

slavery is taught in America's classrooms today often leaves out many important facts. I encourage you to study more about this nation's history. Our founders have much to teach us about history, government, and morality.

Notes

1. *Rights of the Colonies* in Bernard Bailyn, ed. *Pamphlets of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 439.
2. Alexander Hamilton writing to John Jay, March 14, 1779 in Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner, eds. *The Founders' Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), I:527.
3. Samuel Stillman, *The Duty of Magistrates* (1779) in Frank Moore, ed., *Patriot Preachers of the American Revolution* (New York: Charles T. Evans, 1892), 285.
4. "An Address to the Public from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition Slavery" in J.A. Leo Lemay, ed., *Benjamin Franklin, Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1987), 1154.
5. Benjamin Rush, *Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies Established in Different Parts of the United States Assembled at Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Zachariah Poulson, 1794), 24.
6. John Adams to Robert J. Evans, June 8, 1819, in Adrienne Koch and William Peden, eds., *Selected Writings of John and John Quincy Adams* (New York: Knopf, 1946), 209.
7. Speech at Constitutional Convention, June 6, 1787 in Max Farrand, ed., *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (New Haven: Yale University, 1937), 1:135.
8. Hamilton, in Kurland and Lerner, eds., *The Founders' Constitution*, I:527.
9. Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro and the American Revolution*

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961).

10. John Jay writing to Richard Price, September 27, 1785 in *The Founders' Constitution*, 538.
11. Letter of April 12, 1786, in W. B. Allen, ed., *George Washington: A Collection* (Indianapolis: Library Classics, 1989), 319.
12. Matthew Spalding, *The Founders' Almanac* (Washington, DC: Heritage, 2002), 285-6.
13. Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1876), 324.

© 2003 Probe Ministries

Christians to Muslims and Jews: “Crusades Were Wrong”

Written by Rusty Wright

Why would modern Christians retrace the steps of the eleventh-century Crusaders? To apologize for the atrocities of their ancestors.

Their “Reconciliation Walk,” which ends this summer in Jerusalem on the 900th anniversary of the Crusaders’ storming of the city, has garnered intriguing response across Europe and the Middle East. Representatives of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Judaism, Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy will attend the July 15 Jerusalem event.

The Crusades’ outrages have long seemed one of history’s ugly abscesses. The thought of killing to reclaim a “holy land” in

“the name of Christ” seems a sick farce.

The Crusaders’ committed horrible atrocities, raping, murdering and plundering Jews, Muslims and other Christians en route to Palestine. When they reached Jerusalem in 1099, blood flowed freely. Jews fled to a synagogue and Muslims to a mosque. Crusaders burned the synagogue, killing about 6,000 Jews, and stormed the mosque, butchering an estimated 30,000 Muslims. They left a legacy of fear and contempt in the Muslim world.

That’s why when Reconciliation Walk leader Lynn Green entered a Muslim gathering at a Turkish mosque in Cologne, Germany on Easter 1996, he didn’t know what to expect. He was in the city where the medieval Crusades began in 1096 with other Christians determined to retrace the steps of the eleventh-century Crusaders and apologize to Muslims and Jews for the horrors committed against their forebears in the name of Christ.

The Imam’s (leading teacher’s) public response was startling. “When I heard the nature of your message,” he told the crowd, “I was astonished and filled with hope. I thought to myself, ‘Whoever had this idea must have had an epiphany.’” In further conversation, the Imam told Green that many Muslims were starting to examine their sins against Christians and Jews but haven’t known what to do, and that the Christians’ apology was a good example for Muslims to follow.

125 Christians formally presented the “Reconciliation Walk” statement of apology in Turkish, German and English to about 200 Muslim disciples at the Cologne mosque. Loud, sustained applause followed. The Imam, the most senior imam in Europe, sent copies of the statement to 600 mosques throughout Europe. The Walk was off to a promising start.

The 2000-mile, three-year walk across Europe, through the Balkans and Turkey and south to Jerusalem has sought to build

bridges of understanding and to turn back over 900 years of animosity among the world's three major religions. Response has been surprisingly warm. Audiences at synagogues and mosques have lauded the gesture, often in tears, and encouraged its proclamation. Nationwide press coverage and government protective escorts in Turkey brought crowds into the village streets to receive the walkers enthusiastically.

The Reconciliation Walk Message says the Crusaders "betrayed the name of Christ by conducting themselves in a manner contrary to His wishes and character. ...(By lifting up the Cross) they corrupted its true meaning of reconciliation, forgiveness and selfless love." The messengers "deeply regret the atrocities committed in the name of Christ by our predecessors. We are simple followers of Jesus Christ who have found forgiveness from sin and life in Him," they explain. "We renounce greed, hatred and fear, and condemn all violence done in the name of Jesus Christ."

The walkers cite Jesus' biblical affirmation that He came to "proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed."

Observers have found the Walk absorbing. International School of Theology church history professor Dr. J. Raymond Albrektson called it "a commendable and necessary venture, and better late than never."

Duke University Professor of Religion Eric Meyers, who is Jewish, commented, "Reconciliation between Christianity and the Jewish people or Christianity and the Islamic world is certainly a laudable and noble aim." Meyers hoped that what he called "God's universalistic vision" would not be overlooked.

George Washington University Professor of Islamic Studies Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a Muslim, remarked, "Every effort by both sides to bring Christians and Muslims closer together and to unify them before the formidable forces of irreligion and

secularism which wield inordinate power today must be supported by people of faith in both worlds.”

Apologizing for 900-year-old sins won't restore the lives lost. But in a modern world where religious differences can prompt turf wars and ethnic cleansing, maybe it can provide an inspiring example to emulate.

© 1999 Rusty Wright. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Why Care about Theology?

What is your response when you hear the word *theology*? Some people tend to cringe and think that such a word is of use only to the seminary student or, at the most, their pastor. Have you given much thought to how this word may apply to your life? If so, please continue your pursuit by thinking along with us. If not, we hope to encourage you to begin to take theology a little more seriously than you may have before.

Just what is theology? Literally, it is derived from a combination of two Greek terms meaning “a word about God.” Eventually it was employed to refer not only to a study of the nature and attributes of God, but to the whole range of Christian doctrine. Augustus H. Strong, a theologian of the early twentieth century, offered a definition that is even broader. He wrote, “Theology is the science of God and of the relations between God and the universe.”(1) So theology is concerned with a very wide range of subjects, such as the Bible, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, man, salvation, angels, the church, and the end times. Or, we can even say our theology pertains to all of life.

Sound theology is very important in the life of a Christian.

History shows us this has always been true. From heresies in the very early church, through the upheaval of the Reformation, to the “Jesus Seminar” of more recent times, Christians have been challenged to give serious attention to matters of theology. And there are important reasons for each of us to devote increased attention to it at this time in history. Historic orthodox theology is currently being questioned, if not attacked, from both outside and inside our churches and institutions. Several examples will demonstrate this.

Contemporary Illustrations

A few years ago an infamous movie entitled *The Last Temptation of Christ* drew national and international attention because of its blasphemous caricature of Christ. The non-orthodox reports of the Jesus Seminar, a gathering of various scholars, have received the attention of both theological journals and popular magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. The conjectures of New Age advocates such as Shirley MacLaine include heretical views of God, Christ, and other facets of theology. Process theologians, who teach at many seminaries, teach a doctrine of God that includes the idea that “the world can be thought of as the body of God,” and the notion of a changing God who is as dependent on the world as the world is on Him.(2) Recent books from within evangelical circles include titles such as *The Openness of God*, which “asserts that such classical doctrines as God’s immutability, impassibility and foreknowledge demand reconsideration.”(3) More orthodox evangelical writers have written such books as *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* Obviously, the title indicates that the author is concerned about what he believes is a collapse of theology.(4) *The Body*, a book by Charles Colson, decries what Colson sees as a drift to a consumer-oriented church that, among other things, isn’t concerned about matters of theological truth(5).

Such illustrations serve to alert us to the need for more theological reflection, not less. These are challenging times for theology!

Who Are the Theologians?

Do you know anyone who can be called a theologian? You probably immediately begin to think of a seminary professor or an erudite pastor you may know. But is it possible *you* can be called a theologian? If someone were to ask you what you believe about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and many other doctrines, chances are you would answer their questions. Thus you are stating your theology; you are, at some level, a theologian. There are certainly “professional” theologians who spend their lives thinking about and teaching theology, but theology is not just for schools and seminaries; it is for life. It is for you and every other member of Christ’s body, the church.

In the fairly recent past in this country theology was spoken of in both the academy and the church. David Wells, a contemporary professional theologian who is concerned about recapturing such unity, has written that at one time theology encompassed three essential elements: “(1) a confessional element, (2) reflection on this confession, and (3) the cultivation of a set of virtues that are grounded in the first two elements.”(6) “Confession, in this understanding, is what the Church believes. It is what crystallizes into doctrine.” Thus we are to confess our theology based on the inspired Word of God, the Bible. Then we are to wrestle intellectually with what it means to hold such theology in the present world. Finally, we are to wisely apply the truth found in the first two steps.(8) It appears that too often such steps are lacking among all but a few contemporary Christians.

For more than two years my wife and I visited worship services at many churches in the Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas metroplex, which some refer to as a major part of the “Bible belt.” The

churches represent a wide spectrum of denominational affiliations, and some are non-denominational. Our visits left us with many impressions, some of which are very positive. But one of several concerns is that too many of these churches emphasized appeasement rather than proclamation. That is, there was concern for relating to the “seeker” at the expense of teaching the believer; or there was an emphasis on “how to” sermons that contained little doctrinal substance; or there was stress on what is called contemporary Christian music coupled with lyrics that were often void of meaning; or there were statements of trite cliches that can do little, if anything, to lead the church to maturity. In other words, much was done to appease the “wants” of the people and little was done that would give the impression that theology is important in these churches.

On the other hand, those few churches that were the exceptions to such emphases boldly stated theological truth and genuinely worshipped God in the process. Their praise had meaning; their prayers were directed to the holy and sovereign God; their sermons contained truth that encouraged the church toward maturity; and even though individual “wants” were not stressed, true needs were met because theology for all of life had been proclaimed.

Which of these accounts is descriptive of your church? Does your church summon you to theological maturity? Or are you caught in a web of appeasement? The writer of Hebrews implored his readers to “press on to maturity” (Heb. 6:1). May God help us do the same!

Theology in the World

A 1994 *U.S. News & World Report* poll of religious beliefs in the U.S. indicates that “about 95 percent of Americans say they believe in God or a universal spirit, and about 60 percent say they attend religious services regularly.”(9) In addition, “more than 80 percent, including 71 percent of

college graduates, believe the Bible is the inspired word of God.”(10) And “68 percent of Americans are members of a church or synagogue.”(11) But do such statistics mean that sound theology plays a significant part in our lives? For example, could it be “that the surprising growth of church membership rolls in recent decades may signify the ascendancy of shallower, less demanding forms of religion with wider appeal?”(12) We believe the answer to this question is, “Yes!” It appears that too many Christians are unwilling to face the demands of theological thinking, and shallowness is the result. Good theology requires contemplation, study, and even debate. It is demanding, and it is certainly not shallow.

Since we are living in a culture that believes “anything goes,” distinctive statements concerning our theology are increasingly necessary. Most people are willing to accept you as a Christian if your beliefs (i.e., your theology) are not narrow. If you are willing, for example, to state that Christianity is one of many legitimate paths to salvation, you will be accepted. But if you state that the gospel is the only path to salvation, you may be labeled as a narrow-minded bigot. Although a large majority of the people in this country claim to be religious, a large portion of that majority is still thinking within a relativistic worldview that attempts to reject absolutes. The exclusive claims of Christianity don’t fit within such a worldview.

This was brought out clearly for me during an open forum in the lobby of a dormitory on a large state university campus. For more than two hours one of my colleagues and I attempted to answer questions concerning Christianity from approximately a hundred college students. Their questions led us in many directions. We discussed social, political, apologetic, and many other issues. But the subject that disturbed them most was salvation through Jesus Christ. When I declared that Jesus was the only way to God, many of the students expressed their strong disagreement and even anger. One student was indignant

because he realized that my statement concerning Christ logically meant that his belief in an American Indian deity was wrong. Even some Christian students were uncomfortable with my assertion. They had an uneasiness about it because it seemed to be too intolerant. Thus I had to quickly remind them that Christ himself said He is the only way to God. I was not making a claim about Christ; I was simply telling them what He said about himself.

Those Christian students are indicative of the need for more demanding thought concerning theology. To claim to be a Christian and at the same time be immersed in the shallow pond of theological tolerance is antithetical. Perhaps the non-Christian students have an excuse; they don't know better. But the Christian students should know better; they need training in theology. And the same is true for all of us.

An Example of the Need

People continue to seek Jesus. But which Jesus? Is it the Jesus who was born of a virgin, who performed awesome miracles, who claimed to be God, who died on a cross for our sins, who rose from the dead, who ascended into heaven, who said He would return? Or is it the Jesus who died as a disillusioned revolutionary peasant? Or is it the Jesus who was a great religious teacher on a par with Buddha?

All these questions are very old, but at the same time they are very contemporary. And they indicate that theology, in this case the theology of Christ, continues to be important. As Christians, we are still challenged to think theologically. Long-held, foundational, orthodox theology is being contested, not just within academia, but in more public venues. Let's consider a prominent example.

In 1991 a book was published by the title of *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*.⁽¹³⁾ John Dominic Crossan, the author, then published a second book in

1994 entitled, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*.⁽¹⁴⁾ Then the third book in his trilogy about Jesus, *The Essential Jesus: Original Sayings and Earliest Images*,⁽¹⁵⁾ was also published in 1994. Such titles are filled with indications that Crossan is anything but a believer in an orthodox doctrine of Christ. Jesus may have been a Mediterranean Jewish peasant, but was He something much more? The second title indicates that the author believes there is need for a new biography of Jesus, so he has provided it. And the third title boldly asserts that the “original sayings” of Jesus have been isolated from all other sayings so that we can discover the “essential” Jesus.

I have brought Crossan and his books to our attention because he is a prominent member of what is called the Jesus Seminar. This much-publicized seminar is composed of scholars who “used to meet regularly to discuss and vote on the originality of Jesus’ sayings (1985⁹²) and are now evaluating his actions and deeds in a similar manner.”⁽¹⁶⁾

Crossan’s view of Jesus is exposed in a meandering passage that follows his perspective of the surrounding Roman Empire in which Jesus lived. He writes:

Jesus lived, against the systemic injustice and structural evil of that situation, an alternative open to all who would accept it: a life of open healing and shared eating, of radical itinerancy, programmatic homelessness, and fundamental egalitarianism, of human contact with discrimination, and of divine contact without hierarchy. He also died for that alternative. That is my understanding of what Jesus’ words and deeds were all about.⁽¹⁷⁾

Please note that Crossan has painted a picture of Jesus as a revolutionary whose primary concern was with things of this life. In fact his last phrase, “divine contact without hierarchy” (a confusing idea), is as close as he comes to stating that Jesus was anything more than a political radical.

There is no mention of Jesus as the sacrificial Savior who takes away sin and gives eternal life.

In light of the fact that such perspectives are in vogue, and in light of the fact that they are taught to future pastors and professors, can we afford to leave theology in the back rooms of our minds?

Practical Theology

A recent book asserts that God “learns something from what transpires” in this world. The same text also asserts that “God comes to know events as they take place,” and that we should see God “as receptive to new experiences and as flexible in the way he works toward his objectives in the world.”(18)

What is your reaction to such statements? If you have a reaction at all, you are to be commended. You are thinking theologically. As was true with me, your doctrine of God may have been challenged, and you may want to ask the author various questions. Those questions would probably have a lot to do with how you perceive God in your daily life. For example, you may want to ask if God is somehow dependent on you. If so, in what way?

Such thoughts demonstrate that theology is practical. If we stop a few minutes and concentrate, it is not difficult to see that our theology affects us, whether we are conscious of it or not. Let’s consider a few questions that can lead us to see how this is true.

1. If God used His awesome imagination to create the universe out of nothing, what is implied when the Bible states that humans are made in His image?

We can also use our God-given imaginations to create, not out of nothing, but out of what God supplied.

2. Is the Holy Spirit a person or a thing?

The Holy Spirit is a person within the godhead, the triunity. As a person, He interacts with us daily, and we can be filled with "Him," not "it."

3. If I accept Christ's sacrificial death for me, can my salvation be taken away?

No! "You have been saved" (Eph. 2:8) for eternity. You are secure as a member of God's family.

4. Was Jesus literally resurrected from the dead?

Yes! He has conquered death for us. "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54).

5. What is man's nature?

Man is made in God's image. But his image has been marred; thus our very nature inclines us to sin. Yet, though our genes, society, and other factors may influence us to sin, God holds us personally responsible to accept or reject His gracious offer of sin's remedy in Christ.

6. Do angels really exist?

Yes! Evil angels are in league with Satan and are actively opposed to God's purposes. Good angels are doing the bidding of God in the spiritual realm. Both evil and good

angels can serve to remind us that there is both a physical and a spiritual dimension.

7. Is the church a building?

No! The church is the redeemed people of God, of all the ages, living and dead; the church is also called the “body of Christ.” As such it is a living, dynamic carrier of the grace and power of God.

8. Is Jesus returning in power and authority for His church?

Yes! The truth of this brings security and hope in the midst of a troubled world.

In a cursory way these questions have touched the major categories of theology. It is our hope that you will study such categories seriously. What you believe about them is important to you and those who follow after you. Theology matters!

Notes

1. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson Press, 1907), 1.

2. Ronald H. Nash, *The Concept of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1983), 23-25.

3. Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), cover notes.

4. David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993).

5. Charles Colson, with Ellen Santilli Vaughn, *The Body*

(Dallas: Word, 1992).

6. Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 98.

7. Ibid., 99-100.

8. Ibid.

9. Jeffery L. Sheler, "Spiritual America," *U.S. News & World Report* (4 April 1994), 50.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

14. John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).

15. John Dominic Crossan, *The Essential Jesus: Original Sayings and Earliest Images* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).

16. Ibid., 22.

17. Ibid., 12.

18. Richard Rice, in *The Openness of God*, 16.

©1995 Probe Ministries.