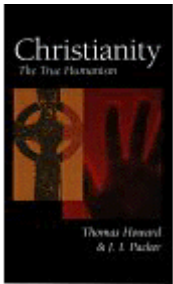


Christianity: The True Humanism

Christianity and Humanism

What does it take to be human?



Does that sound like an odd question? One is human by birth, right? J. I. Packer and Thomas Howard seek to explain and answer that question in their book *Christianity: The True Humanism*.[\[1\]](#) This delightful and insightful book, first published in the mid-'80s, is now back in print. Since it provides valuable insight for apologetics—and is one of my favorites—I'd like to share a few of its insights.

To bring out a Christian view of what makes for a truly fulfilling human experience, the authors contrast it with that of secular humanism. Secular humanism is the belief that mankind can truly find itself apart from any reference to God. It seeks to elevate the human race through a confidence in our ability to understand and order our world guided by our own reason and standing on the findings and possibilities of science.

One note before continuing. Some have objected to connecting the word *humanism* with *Christian*. Doesn't it suggest the exaltation of people? If you are familiar with either of the authors, you'll know that isn't their intent at all. As they say, "This book is an attempt to describe the sense in which the Christian religion both undergirds and nourishes all that seems to mark our true humanness."[\[2\]](#)

Because *Christianity: The True Humanism* explores the meaning of Christianity for the human experience, it adds to our apologetic for the faith. The authors write: “The best defense of any position is a creative exposition of it, and certainly that is the best means of persuading others that it is true.”[\[3\]](#)

What Do We Need to be Human?

So, what *do* we need to live a full life? It might be hard to get started answering that, but once the answers start they come in a rush. A sense of identity is one thing we need. How about adequate food, companionship, peace, beauty, goodness, and love? Freedom, a recognition by others of one’s dignity, some measure of cultural awareness, and a worthy object of veneration also fill certain needs. Recreation, a sense of one’s own significance, and meaning in life are a few more.

Animals don’t seem to be concerned about most of these things. As the authors say, “Once you get a dog fed he can manage. Give a puffin or a gazelle freedom to range around and it will cope without raising any awkward questions about esteem and meaning.”[\[4\]](#)

Far from being a religion of escape which calls people away from the realities of life, as critics are wont to say, Christianity calls us to plunge in to the issues that matter most and see how the answer is found in Jesus Christ. The good things in life are pursued with God’s blessing. The difficult things are taken in and worked through, leaving the results to God. Here there is no need for submerging oneself in a bottle of alcohol to relieve the stress, no approval for running from the faults of a failing spouse into the arms of another, no settling for a grimy existence from which there is no escape but death.

What is the testimony of saints around us and those who’ve

gone before us? “If what the saints tell us is true,” say the authors, “Christian vision illuminates the whole of our experience with incomparable splendor. Far from beckoning us away from raw human experience, this vision opens up to us its full richness, depth, and meaning.”[\[5\]](#) They tell us that to run into the arms of Christ is not to run away from one’s humanness, but to find out what it means to be fully human. Even our imaginations give testimony that there is more to life than drudgery; we might try to walk machine-like through life ignoring its difficulties, but our imaginations keep bringing us back. There is something bigger. “Our imaginations insist that if it all comes to nothing then existence itself is an exquisite cheat,”[\[6\]](#) for it keeps drawing us higher.

In this article we’ll consider four issues—freedom, dignity, culture, and the sacred—as we explore what it means to be fully human.

Freedom

What does freedom mean to you? When you find yourself wishing to be free, what is it you want? Are you a harried supervisor facing demands from your superiors and lack of cooperation from your subordinates? Freedom to you might mean no demands from above and no obligations below. Are you a student? Freedom might mean no more course requirements, no more nights spent hunched over a desk while others are out having a good time.

My Webster’s dictionary gives as its first definition of freedom: “not under the control of some other person or some arbitrary power; able to act or think without compulsion or arbitrary restriction.”[\[7\]](#) To be free is thus to be able to do something without unreasonable restriction. Of course what will constitute the experience of freedom will vary from person to person according to our interests and desires. But are there any commonalities rooted in human nature which will inform everyone’s understanding of freedom?

A Christian View of Freedom

When we think about freedom we typically focus on our external circumstances which hinder us from doing what we want. If only our circumstances were different we could *really* be free. But if freedom lies primarily in being able to do as we please, very few of us will ever know it. So, freedom can be very elusive; it comes in fits and snatches, and too often our sights are set on things outside our reach anyway.

Given the contrast between the dimensions of our dreams and the restrictions we face, is it possible for anyone to truly be free? It is when we understand our true nature and what we were meant to be and do.

Let's first distinguish between *subjective* freedom and *objective* freedom. *Subjective* freedom is that psychological sense of contentment and fulfillment which comes with doing the best we know and want to do. *Objective* freedom is that condition of being in a situation well-suited to our own makeup which provides for our doing the best thing. It lies, in other words, in being and doing what we were meant to be and do. Like the car engine that is free when the pistons can move up and down unhindered—and not flop wildly in all directions—we, too, are free when we operate according to our makeup and design.

Because we were created by God according to His plan, freedom results from aligning ourselves with God's design. This requires understanding human nature generally so we can know those things which are best for all people, and understanding ourselves individually so we can know what we are best suited to be and do. This understanding of human nature and of ourselves is then subjected to the law of love in service to others. Because we are made like God, we are made to do for others; to sacrifice for the good of other people. It is God's

love which has set us free, and which enables us to let go of our own self-interests in order to reach out to others. This is true freedom in the objective sense. “When nothing and no one can stop you from loving, then you are free in the profoundest sense.”[\[8\]](#) But this means being free from any desires of our own which would hinder us from doing those things for others we should be doing.

This focus on love of others contrasts sharply with what we’re told in modern society, that freedom means focusing on ourselves. “It is the stark opposite of all egocentrism, self-interest, avarice, pride, and self-assertion—the very things, so we thought, that are necessary if we are ever to wrest any freedom from this struggling, overcrowded, and oppressive world of ours.”[\[9\]](#)

The key figure to observe, of course, is Jesus. We might consider Him bound by his poverty and by the rigors of His ministry. But remember that He freely accepted the Father’s call to sacrifice Himself for us. His very food was to do the will of the Father. Jesus was free because He fit perfectly in the Father’s plan, and there was nothing that could keep Him from accomplishing the Father’s wishes which were also His *own* desire.

In summary, the freedom people long for—of being rid of expectations and restrictions so one can do what one wants—turns out to be illusory. We are free when we rid ourselves of the things which prevent us from living in obedience to the God who has loved us and given Himself for us, for this is what we were designed to do.

Dignity

The Imago Dei

One of the words seldom heard today to describe a person is *dignified*. What does that word bring to mind? Perhaps a

stately looking gentleman, dressed formally and with impeccable manners . . . but looking all the world like he'd be more comfortable if he'd just relax!

Packer and Howard believe that dignity is an important component of a full humanity. Dignity is "the quality of being worthy of esteem or honor; worthiness." It refers to a "proper pride and self-respect"[{10}](#) True dignity is not the stuffiness of some people who think they are not part of the riff-raff of society. When we react against such arrogance we need to realize that our reaction is not against dignity itself. For it is our innate sense of the dignity of all people, no matter what their place in society, that makes such airs objectionable.

Dignity is defined objectively by our nature, and is subjectively revealed in the way we act. What is that something about us that warrants our being treated with dignity and calls for us to act dignified (in the best sense)? That something is the *imago Dei*, the image of God, which is ours by virtue of creation. We have a relationship to the Creator shared by no other creature because we are like Him. This gives us a special standing in creation, on the one hand, but makes all people equal, on the other.

Secular humanism, by contrast, sees us as just another step on the evolutionary ladder. Our dignity is dependent upon our *development* (as the highest animal currently). Although at present we might demand greater honor than animals because we're on the top, there is nothing in us by nature that makes us worthy of special honor. "By making dignity dependent upon development," Packer and Howard say, "the humanist is opening the door to the idea that less favored, less well-developed human beings have less dignity than others and consequently less claim to be protected and kept from violation than others."[{11}](#) Hence, abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia. One has to wonder, too, if there is a connection between we've been taught about our lack of natural worth by evolutionists

and the lack of concern for behaving in a dignified manner in public life.

Furthermore, secular humanism treats people according to their usefulness, either actual or potential. "To be valued for oneself, as a person, is humanizing," say the authors, "for it ennobles; but to be valued only as a hand, or a means, or a tool, of a cog in a wheel, or a convenience to someone else is dehumanizing—and it depresses. . . . Secular humanism, though claiming vast wisdom and life-enhancing skills, actually diminishes the individual, who is left in old age without dignity (because his or her social usefulness is finished) and without hope (because there is nothing now to look forward to)."[{12}](#)

Worship—Drawn Up to Full Height

If recognizing our dignity means understanding our highest self or nature, in what kind of situation or activity is our dignity most visible? Packer and Howard say it is in worshipping God that our dignity is most fully realized.

Why is that? There are a couple of reasons. First, we are made to worship, and dignity is found in doing what we are made to do. "The final dignity of a thing is its glory—that is, the realizing of its built-in potential for good. . . . The true glory of all objects appears when they do what they were made to do."[{13}](#) Like a car engine made to operate a certain way, we were made to bring all of our life's experience into the service of glorifying God.

Second, the object of one's worship reflects back on the worshipper. Those who worship things lower than themselves end up demeaning themselves, being brought down to the level of their object of worship. But those who worship things higher are drawn up to reflect their object of worship. To worship God is to be drawn up to our full height, so to speak. We are ennobled by worshipping the most noble One.

Moral Life—Marking the Dignity of Others

Does all this mean non-Christians have no dignity or aren't worthy of being treated in a dignified manner? Of course not. The authors summarize their idea this way: "To the Christian, every human being has intrinsic and inalienable dignity by virtue of being made in God's image and realizes and exhibits the full potential of that dignity only in the worship and service of the Creator."[{14}](#) Because of our inherent value as human beings, we all deserve to be treated in a certain way. Christians are to treat people according to their innate worth. We love people as Christ loves us. We also seek to guide them to the place of their highest fulfillment which is in Christ.

Thus, Christianity "reveals us to ourselves as the most precious and privileged of all God's creatures."[{15}](#) And therein lies our dignity.

Culture

What does it mean to be cultured? In one sense it has to do with the finer things in life. People visit the great museums and cathedrals and concert halls of this and other countries, take evening classes at the local college, learn foreign languages, take up painting and pottery making as hobbies. Even those who have little interest in the fine arts have an appreciation for skilled craftsmanship.

Being cultured also can mean being well-mannered, knowing what is considered appropriate and inappropriate in social interaction.

What is at the root of what it means to be cultured? Personal preference is part of it, if we're thinking of the arts for example. But culture goes deeper than that to matters of *taste*. "Taste is a facet of wisdom," say Packer and Howard;

“it is the ability to distinguish what has value from what does not.” It has to do with *appropriateness*, with fitness and value.

But how do we measure appropriateness? Traditionally we have measured it by our view of the value of humankind. Does what comes off the artist’s easel in some manner elevate our humanness? Or at least does it not degrade humanity? Do we treat people in a way which shows respect for them, which is the essence of good manners? To be in good taste is to be characterized by being appropriate to the situation. With respect to culture, it is to be appropriate given our nature. On the other hand, to be in poor taste is to be “unworthy of our humanness.”[\[16\]](#) To appreciate the value in people and in their creative expression is to be cultured.

Should Christians be concerned about culture? While Christianity *per se* is indifferent to matters of culture (for the message is to all people of all cultures, and we should value the contributions of all cultures), Christians ourselves aren’t to be indifferent. In our daily lives we should be demonstrating habits and tastes informed by the Gospel, and these should mark whatever we put their hands to. We are to treat people with respect as having been made in God’s image. We also apply ourselves creatively in imitation of God, and our creativity should reflect God’s view of mankind and the world. Our creative activity in this world is what some refer to as the “cultural mandate.” “When man harnesses the powers and resources of the world around him to build a culture and so enrich community life, he is fulfilling this mandate,” say our authors.[\[17\]](#) In doing this we reflect the redemptive work God has been doing since Adam and Eve.

While, on the one hand, we should appreciate the cultural contributions of anyone which elevate mankind and more clearly reflect God’s attitude toward us and our world, on the other hand we are under no obligation to accept anything and everything in the name of “creativity.” We can’t applaud the

blasphemous or immoral. And this is where Christianity stands against secular humanism. For the latter, in its demotion of man to the level of animal and its elevation of human liberty above all transcendent standards, must allow wide freedom in creativity, whether it be crucifixes in urine or erotic performance art. But in doing so it ultimately degrades us rather than exalts us. A sweeping look at the 20th century with its horrific assaults on humanity offers a clue as to the strength of moral standards devoid of God's will.

A few important notes here. First, although the Bible doesn't teach standards of beauty, "it charges us to use our creativity to devise a pattern of life that will fitly express the substance of our godliness, for this is what subduing the earth, tending God's garden, and having dominion over the creatures means."[{18}](#) Second, "the Gospel is the great leveler."[{19}](#) There is no room for pride, for exalting one culture above others.

One final note. Even given all that has been said about the significance of culture and our contribution to it, it is important to note that the demonstration of God's goodness to those around us through love and works of service is more important than "cultural correctness." We cannot turn our nose up at those who prefer comic books to classics or rap to Bach. For to do so is to deny the foundations of all we have been talking about, the inherent value of the individual person.

The Sacred

Convention, Taboos, and the Divine

In his book *The New Absolutes*, William Watkins argues that people today aren't truly relativists; they've merely swapped a new set of absolutes for the old.[{20}](#) It's fairly common for conventions and taboos to change over time, rightly or

wrongly. One important question we need to ask, according to Packer and Howard, is this: "Which way of doing things does a greater service to what is truly human in us?"[{21}](#)

Taboos have to do with bedrock issues of fitness and decency. Packer and Howard tell us that our many social codes of behavior are "a secular expression of our awareness of the sacred, the inviolable, the authoritative, the 'numinous' as it is nowadays called—in short, the divine."[{22}](#)

Wait a minute. Isn't it a bit of an exaggeration to talk about taboos and conventions in terms of the divine? No, say our authors, for what we are seeking in all this is what is ultimate and fixed. Wherever there are conventions or attitudes which have such binding authority over us that to disregard them is taboo, "there you have what we called the footprints of the gods—an intuition, however anonymous and unidentified, of the divine."[{23}](#) As ideas and beliefs exert authority over our spirits, they become sacred.

We are a worshiping race. Because of our createdness we naturally find ourselves looking for the transcendent (although we typically look in the wrong places, and although secularists will deny they're looking for anything higher than what we ourselves can produce). We naturally find ourselves giving obeisance to one thing or another, often without conscious thought. "You can no more have a tribe, community, or civilization without gods," say our authors, "than you can have one without customs."[{24}](#) It is the rare secularist who is never pushed to the point of offering up a prayer in hopes that there is Someone listening. An awareness of the reality of the sacred seems to be built in to us.

In our post-Christian world there are a number of substitute religions. Even secular movements like Marxism become religions of a sort with icons and symbols and sacred books. In shrinking the sacred down to our own proportions we lose what we sought, however, for as the theology becomes debased,

so does the religion. And debased religion in turn debases its devotees. Note what Paul said about this in Romans chapter 1.

The Meaning of Sacredness

With respect to God, sacredness refers to His holiness and inviolability and to the value that inheres in all He has made. He is set apart from and above us. "He is not to be profaned, insulted, defied, or treated with irreverence in any way." [\[25\]](#) God both *cannot* and *ought not* be challenged.

Furthermore, that which He has made is due a measure of honor, and those things which are set apart for special service are deserving of special honor. We wouldn't think of tearing up the original copy of the Constitution of the United States or of splashing paint on the Mona Lisa. Likewise—but even more so—we shouldn't think of abusing that which has come from the Maker's hand or treating that which has been set apart for His use as cheap. Here's an example of the latter: How many of us think of our church buildings and their furnishings as sacred in any sense? We no longer have the Temple; but are buildings erected expressly for the purpose of God's service really just cinder blocks and wood?

Sin and the Sacred

If we aren't to treat the objects of this world as less than they deserve, much less should we mistreat those who have been made in His image. To sin against others is to violate their sacredness and our own, for in doing so "we profane and defile the sacred reality of God's image in us." [\[26\]](#)

For the secularist, as we've said before, without God all things have functional value only. As things or people outlive their usefulness they are to be discarded. The unborn who are

malformed are of no use; they can be discarded. So, for example, the aged, now costing society rather than contributing to it, are to be assisted in death. But not so for the Christian. In taking seriously the sacredness of God and of what He has made, we preserve ourselves and provide protection against those things and ideas that would lessen or destroy us.

Freedom, dignity, culture, and the sacred—four aspects of the human experience. When we look at the Christian worldview and at secularism, it is clear which provides the greater promise for mankind. It is Christianity, and not secularism, which provides for human life in its fullness.

Notes

1. J. I. Packer and Thomas Howard, *Christianity: The True Humanism* (Berkhamsted, Herts, England: Word Publishing, 1985).
2. *Ibid.*, 38.
3. *Ibid.*, 13.
4. *Ibid.*, 37.
5. *Ibid.*, 39.
6. *Ibid.*, 44.
7. *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 4th ed. (1999), s.v. "free."
8. Packer and Howard, 60.
9. *Ibid.*, 68.
10. *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 4th ed. (1999), s.v. "dignity."
11. Packer and Howard, 138-39.
12. *Ibid.*, 160.
13. *Ibid.*, 152.
14. *Ibid.*, 155.
15. *Ibid.*, 160.
16. *Ibid.*, 167.
17. *Ibid.*, 177.

18. Ibid., 178.
19. Ibid., 172.
20. William D. Watkins, *The New Absolutes* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1996). An article I wrote on this book can be found at Probe's Web site at www.probe.org/the-new-absolutes/. This article was reprinted in Jerry Solomon, ed., *Arts, Entertainment, and Christian Values: Probing the Headlines That Impact Your Family* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000).
21. Packer and Howard., 187.
22. Ibid., 187-88.
23. Ibid., 189.
24. Ibid., 188.
25. Ibid., 195.
26. Ibid., 206.

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Rights and Wrongs

Probe's founder, Jimmy Williams, discusses the true source of ethics.



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

During a recent meeting of college educators at Harvard University, Cornell President Frank Rhodes rose to address the issue of reforms, suggesting that it was time for universities to pay "real and sustained attention to students' intellectual and moral well-being." Immediately there were gasps, even catcalls. One indignant student stood to demand of Rhodes, "Who is going to do the instructing? Whose morality are we going to follow?" The audience applauded thunderously,

believing that the young man had settled the issue by posing an unanswerable question. Rhodes sat down, unable or unwilling to respond.

This interchange between university president and college student hits at the most basic question in formulating any and every system of ethics, namely that of identifying the *basis* for determining the standards we humans designate as “right” or “wrong.”

What is ethics?

Ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning, “what ought to be,” or, “a place of refuge,” such as a cave, solid and absolute. The dictionary defines ethics as

- (1) the study of standards of conduct and moral judgment, or
- (2) the system or code of morals of a particular philosopher, religion, group, etc.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer defined ethics as “the name we give for our concern for good behavior.”

Human Ethical Universality

No human lives without the ethical dimension. Statements like, “That’s not fair,” or “You promised,” reveal the common ethical assumptions humans have come to expect of one another. This is not to say that each human always acts responsibly toward his fellows. In every culture we find individuals who choose to ignore the commonly held standards; they choose to rape, to steal, to kill. Breaking established standards is therefore a *relative* issue; that is, some do, and some don’t. But an *absolute* is also involved: no one likes to be raped, robbed, or murdered.

OPTIONS FOR VALUES

One can say that every ethical value involves some standard of behavior, and every standard is defined in a *prescriptive* manner. Ethical standards are expressed in terms of “ought” and “should,” or “ought not” and “should not.” They transcend the language of *description*, speaking not only of “what is,” but rather “what should be.” Where do we find such standards? What kinds of foundational possibilities are available to us upon which to build an ethical system? The options are as follows:

The Natural Ethic (Nature)

“All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;
And, spite of pride, in erring reason’s spite,
One truth is clear, *whatever is, is right.*”

Alexander Pope

Definition: “Oughts” are derived from what “is.”

Mortimer Adler called this an attempt “to get conclusions in the imperative mood from premises entirely in the indicative mood.” This view presupposes the origination of value is found in the facts, the observation of nature.

“What is ethically right is related *in some way* to what is materially true” (G. G. Simpson). Example: A man runs a red light. He cannot draw a conclusion of whether or not to run the red light without having an earlier presupposition or standard in place concerning that ethical choice: “One shouldn’t run red lights.”

Implications:

To have true moral values, people must get them from somewhere other than the actual world of description.

This view destroys the very concepts of good and evil, because “what is” contains both. To speak of good and evil becomes nonsensical. Charles Manson said, “If God is one, what is bad?” Baudelaire lamented, “If God exists he is the Devil.”

This view does not answer the question of predatorial/survival life in nature. All that we call “human” would be destroyed if people practiced this natural ethic consistently and universally.

Not many hold this view seriously. T. H. Huxley admitted that though evolution is “true,” it leads to bad ethics. Even evolutionists choose not to live in such a world. Instead, they philosophically smuggle Christian ethics arbitrarily into their system and hold it *romantically* upon their naturalistic base.

If we are to have ethics, we must find them outside the natural realm.

The Consensus Ethic (Majority Rule)

Definition: Whatever a cultural group approves of is deemed right; whatever the group disapproves of is wrong. In America, we find the most popular expression of cultural relativism demonstrated in the opinion poll (e.g., the Clinton Scandal).

Implications:

The grand result of the Kinsey Report on American sexual ethics in the 1950’s was that people bought the idea that if a *majority* of citizens accepted something as right or wrong, it was.

Cultural relativism claims to be based on a scientific view of morals. Admittedly, statistical analysis of human behavior is

the true and proper task of sociologists. But within the discipline, unfortunately, there is, by design, or by inference, a strong tendency to make value judgments about the results of research. Sociology exists *only* to tell us *what* people are doing, not what they *should* be doing. True values must be found somewhere else.

Ethics by majority may actually have little to do with morality. A society can become corrupt. In New Guinea, for example, the tribe of Papuans have a 100 per cent majority in their view on the virtue of cannibalism. Does their unanimous consent on this issue make it moral? By such reasoning, if 51% of the German people assented to the extermination of Jewry by Hitler and his henchmen, then their actions were "right," and other cultures should have withheld any criticism of German sovereignty in their own internal affairs.

Cultural relativism is really "status-quoism," providing no strong motive for social change. It is also capricious over time. For example, in 1859, slavery in the United States was socially acceptable and abortion was illegal. Today, the reverse is true.

Those who prefer this ethical foundation must face one very dangerous fact: **If there is no standard by which society can be judged and held accountable, then society becomes the judge.** When that happens, no one is safe—minorities, the unborn, the elderly, the handicapped, and perhaps even the blond-headed or the left-handed!

The Arbitrary Ethic (Power)

A teenager complains to her mother, "Why can't I go out tonight?" Mom replies, "Because I say so!" No reason is given, other than that of the mother imposing her will on her daughter. This is the arbitrary, *de facto* use of power: "Might makes right."

Definition: An individual or elitist group sets itself up as arbiter of values and uses the necessary force to maintain these values. Democratic consensus rules from below; arbitrary absolutists rule from above.

Critique:

The arbiter can be a dictator, a parliament, a supreme court, a political party, or any elite configuration which has the wherewithal to impose its will upon the populace.

What is enforced is based solely upon what the arbiter decides will be enforced. Emperor worship of the Roman Caesars brought persecution to Jews and Christians who refused to practice it. Plato's Republic would be governed by its philosopher kings. The Catholic Inquisitors summarily tortured and executed unrepentant heretics. B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two* utopia would be carefully managed by beneficent planners through total environmental control and behavior modification. Soviet Russia was ruthlessly governed by an all-powerful Central Committee and its KGB enforcers.

It is important to remember that such arbiters can make something *legal* but not *moral*. The 1972 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion is the most pertinent contemporary example. The judges, choosing to ignore medical, legal, and religious precedents on the true humanity of the unborn, made an arbitrary, pragmatic decision. This ruling was legal, but not necessarily moral.

The great flaw in this approach is that it presupposes great trust in those who govern. History has not confirmed the wisdom of placing such confidence in those who wield absolute power. The balancing of power in the U.S. Constitution between the various branches of government reflects the wariness of its Framers to give undue authority to any sole federal entity.

"Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely." It leads

to despotism, tyranny, and bondage.

The True Absolute (Transcendence)

“There are two ways in which the human machine goes wrong. One is when human individuals drift apart from one another, or else collide with one another and do one another damage, by cheating or bullying. The other is when things go wrong inside the individual when the different parts of him (his different faculties and desires and so on) either drift apart or interfere with one another. You can get the idea . . . if you think of us as a fleet of ships sailing in formation. The voyage will be a success only, in the first place, if the ships do not collide and get in one another’s way; and secondly, if each ship is seaworthy and has her engines in good order. As a matter of fact, you cannot have either of these two things without the other. If the ships keep on having collisions they will not remain seaworthy very long. On the other hand, if their steering gears are out of order they will not be able to avoid collisions. “But there is one thing we have not yet taken into account. We have not asked where the fleet is trying to get to. . . . And however well the fleet sailed, its voyage would be a failure if it were meant to reach New York and actually arrived at Calcutta.

“Morality, then, seems to be concerned with three things. Firstly, with fair play and harmony between individuals. Secondly, with what might be called tidying up or harmonizing the thing inside each individual. Thirdly, with the general purpose of human life as a whole: what man was made for? What course the whole fleet ought to be on? . . .”
(C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

Definition: C. S. Lewis has here identified the “three parts of morality,” the first two of which humans are well acquainted with: internal moral deficiencies and conflict with others through ethical choices. It is the *third* part for which

all humans desperately need and long, namely, some *objective* standard to which all humans must adhere. Such a standard necessarily *transcends* the world of description. It presupposes that God exists and has spoken, or *revealed* such standards. The true absolute contends that the Creator of man AND nature has given such values that are commensurate with the way He made us and appropriate to people's problems and aspirations.

Example: The Ten Commandments provide the boundaries for the definition of humanness; any act contrary to this true absolute is a violation of our humanity. Further, these standards are not merely *external* principles, but rather the very essence of the nature and character of God.

Implications:

Some things are **right**; some are **wrong**, and objectively so. This ethical system is based on *normative* principles rather than subjective, *utilitarian* ones.

It also provides a basis for conviction: what was right yesterday will be right today. The individual is protected against the *whole* of society—wicked kings, pragmatic judges, corrupt politicians, and decadent populace.

There is also a true and legitimate motive for fighting evil, an objective basis for social change.

ETHICAL SYSTEMS BUILT ON THE ABOVE

Natural Ethic

1. Behaviorism

All of our actions are the result of either our genetic make-up (see Probe articles [“Human Nature”](#) and [“Sociobiology: Evolution, Genes and Morality”](#)) or our environment.

Premises:

This system presupposes that nothing exists beyond the material realm.

What is called **mind** is reduced to physical and chemical reactions.

We cannot act upon the world; rather, the world acts upon us.

Critique:

There can be no human responsibility for actions.

And yet, behaviorists themselves appeal to a standard of justice when wronged.

Contrary to the contention of the behaviorists, there *are* both philosophical reasons and scientific evidence to support the belief that we do possess an immaterial substance.

2. Darwinism

3. Marxism

Humanistic Systems

1. Cultural Relativism, consensus (See above)

2. Arbitrary Absolute (See Above)

3. Situation Ethics

This system seeks to use the rules whenever they are useful, but it discards them if they happen to conflict with *love*. Joseph Fletcher is the chief proponent.

Premises:

The sole arbiter of morality in any situation is love; it is the *only* absolute, according to Fletcher.

Love should be defined in utilitarian terms. William James said, "What works is right." Actions should be judged by whether or not they contribute to the greatest good for the greatest number (lifeboat ethics).

The end justifies the means.

Critique:

Everyone may have a different opinion of what is loving or unloving in a given situation. If "love" is an absolute, humanity has a very difficult time in applying it to real life. Thus, morality is reduced to a matter of personal preference: "It all depends upon your point of view."

If morality is based on the consequences, we have to be able to predict with accuracy these consequences if we want to know whether or not we are acting morally. In short, one would have to BE God in order to always do the loving thing ahead of time.

4. Emotive Ethics

In this view nothing is literally right or wrong; these terms are simply expressions of personal emotion and as such are neither true nor false.

Premises:

When we speak of good or evil, these remain simply expressions of our own subjective feelings about what we have encountered or experienced.

We can **describe**, but we cannot **prescribe**.

Thus, all actions are morally neutral.

Critique:

The most an emotivist can say is, "I don't *like* other ethical theories. I *like* my own opinion on this issue."

Emotivists cannot verify their assumption that the only meaningful utterances are statements of factual or personal observation and preference. Some other meaningful system for true moral acts may exist beyond their experience and myopic world view.

5. Hedonism

Hedonists, like emotivists, are individually directed along the lines of their personal choices and desires. The hedonist (or Epicurean), however has a goal in mind: the pursuit of pleasure. Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) believed that there were two primary choices in life—to experience either pain or pleasure. His philosophy is based on avoiding the former at all costs and relentlessly pursuing the latter with no consideration given to the consequences upon others. This, “If it feels good, do it,” mentality fits well today in a society which stresses that the individual (me) is most important.

6. Pantheism

The ethical system which flows out of pantheism and new age thinking is similar to both emotivism and hedonism, and is really more *humanistic* than *theistic*. While Christian theism is God-centered, and naturalism is man-centered, pantheism is world-centered. But the focus is still upon man, and the world becomes god. In pantheism, man and nature become one, and together become the only “god” which exists. Man thus becomes his own god; he *is* god, or at least a part of god. Ethics becomes, then, those choices which keep one in harmony with the “cosmic oneness,” and salvation comes from looking *within* to maintain that harmony. This process, like all Eastern Mysticism, tends to blur reality and the ethical distinctions of “right” and “wrong.”

Inadequate Absolutes: The Moral Dilemma

In summary, there are two reasons why man, acting

autonomously, cannot establish a valid and satisfying moral theory on either naturalistic or humanistic moral theory.

The scientific method is limited.

Science can collect facts, but these pieces of information cannot tell us what we *ought* to do. It ignores the very real possibility that something real exists beyond the natural world, and it is thus doomed to look *within* its own self-defined "closed system" for an adequate ethical base. Unfortunately, none honestly exists, philosophically, except the natural law of nature, "red in tooth and claw."

Relativism is always self-contradictory.

Although relativism disclaims the existence of absolutes, it must assume the existence of an absolute by which other theories can be judged. The problem today is that society has abandoned belief in a transcendent, absolute truth, a morally binding source of authority that is above our rights as individuals. To modern man, then, there is no absolute other than perhaps the belief that "there are no absolutes," which is itself a contradiction.

It assumes there are no intrinsic values, yet it must assume that intrinsic values exist whenever it gives guidance in making moral decisions.

If ends and means are relative, regardless of the ethical system preferred, one's own point of reference must also be in flux.

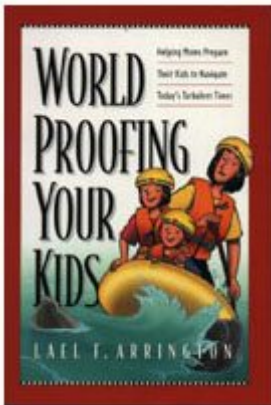
FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICAL ABSOLUTES

1. It is based on an authority higher than man (Creator God) and *revelation*, rather than human experience, both individually or collectively.

2. The absolute standard for morality is God Himself, and every moral action must be judged in the light of His nature.
3. Man is not simply an animal, but a unique, moral being created in the image of God.
4. God's moral revelation has intrinsic value; it is *normative* rather than *utilitarian*. If the above is true, a homeless person possesses the same God-given worth as the president of the United States.
5. Scripture is accepted as morally authoritative, the Word of God, being derived from God.
6. In the Scriptures, law and love are harmonized, and obedience to God's laws is not legalism.
7. God's moral revelation was given for the benefit of humankind.
8. These moral principles are timeless, having historical continuity, and humans—individually or collectively—experience the common grace of God whenever and wherever they are adhered to.
9. True Christian morality deals with intentions, as well as actions, seeks the glory of God instead of pleasure and self-gratification, and encourages service to others, rather than serving self.

God alone knows all the goals, determines all morality, and allows us to "play the game." But he does not allow us to make the rules. Modern and postmodern man, seemingly loosed from such transcendent restrictions, has chosen to make up his own. The folly of such a reference point for life is everywhere apparent.

Worldproofing Our Kids



Lael Arrington has written a truly wonderful and exceptionally helpful book, *Worldproofing Your Kids*, [\[1\]](#) subtitled “Helping Moms Prepare Their Kids to Navigate Today’s Turbulent Times.” While she ostensibly wrote it for moms, any Christian parent who cares about helping his or her child develop a Christian worldview will enjoy it . . . and probably learn a thing or two (or three) in the process.

Lael has raised five questions that Christian parents would be wise to keep in mind, so we can relate them to what happens in our kids’ world and in the world at large. In teachable moments, we can help our kids to think through and then *own* their answers to these questions:

- 1. Who makes the rules?*
- 2. How do we know what is true?*
- 3. Where did we come from?*
- 4. What are we supposed to be doing here?*
- 5. Where are we going?*

The first question truly is foundational, not just to the

other questions but to a basic Christian worldview: Who makes the rules?

Who Makes the Rules?

As a nation, we used to believe that God makes the rules, and through special revelation He told us what they are. But there has been a shift in the culture, and now there are a great many people who “do not believe that moral truth is universal and final. They do not believe in special revelation from God that lays down what is morally right and wrong for all people for all time. They believe that . . . ultimately, *man makes the rules.*”[\[2\]](#)

We need to talk with our children about the consequences of each answer. When man makes the rules, when “everyone does what is right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25), there are dreadful consequences. Sometimes the strong and powerful lord it over the weak and defenseless. Sometimes, when man makes the rules, everything breaks down into chaos. In *Worldproofing Your Kids*, Lael Arrington provides some wonderful activities to help develop the elements of a Christian worldview. For example, she suggests we watch a video of *Alice in Wonderland* with our kids, and she provides some excellent discussion questions to bring out the consequences of what happens when anybody and everybody can make the rules.

The bottom line to communicate to our kids is that much of the pain and suffering in this life is the result of making our own rules and violating God’s.

But when we agree that God has the right to make the rules, and we follow them, life works the way it was designed. That’s because there are good reasons for the rules. We need to give our kids the “whys” behind God’s commands. In his book *Right from Wrong*,[\[3\]](#) Josh McDowell explains that God’s loving heart makes rules designed to do two things: *protect* and *provide* for us. Our kids need to talk with us about *why* God doesn’t want

us to have sex before marriage—because purity protects our hearts and bodies, and purity provides a better sexual relationship within marriage. We need to talk to our kids about *why* God tells us not to cheat and lie: because He is truth, and He knows that honesty and truth telling protects us from the pain of lies and provides for a peace filled life.

The goal is not just to teach our kids that God makes the rules, but to choose to submit to those rules because it's the right thing to do . . . and because it will make life work better.

How Do We Know What Is True?

Truth has taken a beating.

The Christian view of truth is a belief in truth that is true for all people at all times: absolute truth. The western world used to believe that all truth was God's truth. After the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, which produced the byword "Man is the measure of all things," truth became secular. People believed that there is a body of real truth "out there" that can be discovered through our reason. God was no longer a part of it.

Now we've moved to the postmodern view of truth. There is no such thing as "true truth," nothing that is true for all people at all times. Truth is now what I make it. Truth is whatever works for me. I create truth based on my feelings and experience.

So when we say things like "The only way to heaven is by trusting Jesus Christ," we get responses like, "You narrow minded bigot!" and "That may be true for you, but it's not true for me." And the classic postmodern response to just about anything: "Whatever!"

How do we help our kids know what is true?

First, we start with the foundational truth of our lives: God's Word. Remember, it's not just a body of truth, it is *alive* and *active* (Heb. 4:12). We teach them the Bible's strongest truth claims: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1); people are infinitely valuable (Isa. 43:4); we have a sin problem and we need a savior (Rom. 3:22-24); Jesus claims to be God (Mark 14:62, among others {4}). Our kids need to know the truth before they can spot a lie.

Second, we teach them not to be afraid of criticism from those who do not believe in truth. Those who trumpet a postmodern worldview don't *live* by it, because it doesn't match the real world we live in. People who sneer at Christians for insisting that there is such a thing as absolute truth still stop at red lights, and they expect everybody else to do the same. They may say they decide what is true for them, but they don't try to pay for their groceries with a one-dollar bill and insist that, for them, it's worth a hundred dollars.

Third, we can strengthen our kids' confidence in the truth by teaching them logic. Begin with the simplest rule of logic: A does not equal non-A. Two opposite ideas cannot both be true. One can be true, they can both be false, but they can't both be true. Teach them to recognize red herrings, ad hominem arguments, and begging the question. Get Philip Johnson's terrific book, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*, {5} which has a great chapter called "[Tuning Up Your Baloney Detector.](#)" He covers several false arguments.

Make it a game: "Spot the lie." Help them identify songs, movies, TV shows, advertisements, and articles that contain errors in logic or which go against biblical truth. Encourage them to recognize when people make up private meaning for words. Postmodern people who believe they can create their own truth say things like "Well, that depends on what the meaning of the word *is is*."

Truth matters to God, because He is truth. We need to teach our kids that it should matter to us as well.

Where Did We Come From?

I especially appreciated the way Arrington explained the importance of addressing the worldview question, "Where did we come from?" and the closely related question, "Who are we?" She points out that the way we answer these questions will also determine how we deal with the issues of animal rights, abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.

The "Where did we come from?" question isn't about sex and the stork; it's about creation and evolution. There are really only two basic answers. Either God made us, or we are an accident of the universe, the unplanned product of matter plus chance plus time.

If God made us, then we are infinitely valuable and intrinsically significant because God personally called each of us into existence. And not only are we valuable and loved, but every other human on the planet is equally valuable and loved. If evolution is true—defining evolution as the mindless, impersonal chance process that produces the stuff of the universe—then there is no point to our existence. We have no value because there is no value giver. Honest evolutionists recognize this: Cornell professor William Provine has said, "If evolution is true then there is no such thing as life after death, there is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning for life; there is no free will."[6](#)

We come hard wired from the factory with a longing for transcendence, desperately wanting to be a part of a larger story where we are beloved and pursued. We long to know that there is meaning to the world and to our lives. We come equipped with an innate sense of fairness and justice, concepts that have no meaning in a world without a God who is

absolutely just and moral.

As parents, we need to tap into these basic longings to teach our children that only the creation story adequately explains our legitimate thirst for relationship and for significance, for fairness and for transcendence. Then we can explain how the creation story (and I define story as “the way things happened,” not “wishful thinking”) also helps us understand other issues. We can teach our kids that it is not murder to use the flesh of animals for food and the skin of animals for clothing because animals are not like humans; only human beings are made in the image of God. We need to be good stewards of the animals that God made, but not elevate them to the same level as mankind—or devalue man to the level of animals.

With an understanding that the creation story makes human life sacred and holy, we can teach our kids why it is wrong to kill babies before they are born (abortion), and after they are born (infanticide). We can teach them why it is equally wrong to kill the sick and the infirm when it is inconvenient for us (euthanasia).

Lael writes, “The common thread between evolution, abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia is the devaluing of human life and the way our culture has responded with options for disposal.”[\[7\]](#)

What Are We Supposed to be Doing Here?

This section of Lael Arrington’s book is called “Work, Leisure, and the Richer Life: I’m tired of paddling! Are we there yet? I’m bored!”

If we were to get an honest answer to the questions, “What are you supposed to be doing here? What’s your purpose in life?,” many high school and college students would probably say, “To have as good a time as possible.” Our culture has raised the

expectation that everything is supposed to be fun and entertaining. When my mother managed the layaway department of a Wal-Mart a few years ago, she said it was frustrating to deal with the young employees. They came in feeling entitled to a paycheck but didn't want to work for it. Work wasn't "fun."

One of the greatest gifts we as parents can give our children is to cast a vision for their part in the larger story of life, one that involves a planning and purpose for their life, a calling from God to play their specially designed part. Our innate longing for transcendence means that we need to teach our children that they are a specially chosen part of the cosmic story of creation, fall, and redemption.

First, we need to teach by word and example that work has dignity and value. Work isn't part of the curse; it is part of God's perfect design for us. God gave Adam and Eve the responsibility of stewarding the garden before the Fall (Gen. 2). Part of our purpose in life is to be a difference maker, and work is part of how we do that. Whether one's work is to be a student, a fast food counter person, a house cleaner, a computer programmer, a mechanic, an administrator, or the really super important roles of mother or father, we are called to make a difference in the world and in God's kingdom.

Second, we can be a cheerleader for our children's God given gifts and talents. We need to be students of our children so that we can understand and appreciate the unique package that God put together. It helps to explore the various personality styles to help our kids grow in understanding of themselves and others. John Trent has written a book for children using animal motifs called *The Treasure Tree*.[{8}](#) Tim LaHaye[{9}](#) and Ken Voges[{10}](#) have explored the temperaments in slightly different ways, but they're both very helpful.

As we discern how our children are gifted with natural talents and abilities, we need to acknowledge those gifts and

encourage our kids to develop them. If our children have trusted Christ as Savior, they have received a whole new set of spiritual gifts for us to be on the alert for. Of course, we need to have a working knowledge of the gifts and learn how to spot them. God gives personality gifts, talent and ability gifts, and spiritual gifts to equip our children for whatever He has planned for their lives. What a privilege we have as parents to help them discover that they are called to a special place of service with a special set of equipment to do whatever it is God has called them to!

Where Are We Going?

The last part of the book *Worldproofing Your Kids* deals with citizenship—especially our heavenly citizenship. Another way to inspire confidence that the Christian worldview is true is to celebrate the fact that the best part of life is still ahead.

If we want our kids to recognize the larger, cosmic story of creation, fall, and redemption, then we need to point them continually to their future (Lord willing) in heaven, where we will finally experience real life, real riches, and real intimacy with God. We need to remind them that their choices on earth, for good and for bad, are determining their future in heaven. This is an important part of our roles as parents, of course—to teach them the wisdom that comes from considering both the long term and short term consequences of their choices.

Lael Arrington urges us to take our children to biblical passages and good books that give them a glimpse of where we are going. Help them catch the vision of what C. S. Lewis was describing:

“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an

ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.”[\[11\]](#)

And speaking of C. S. Lewis, please do yourself and your children the favor of reading *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which is a series of books for children of all ages which will capture their hearts for the world to come and make them fall in love with the Lord Jesus.

Lael writes, “Perhaps we are now qualifying for what degree of power and authority we will be granted when we reign with Christ. The New Testament assures us that those who endure, those who serve now, will reign later (2 Tim. 2:12, Rev. 5:10, 22:5). We can challenge our [children], ‘Are we making daily decisions to serve, to develop our gifts and talents so we will be best prepared to reign with Christ?’”[\[12\]](#)

I love the story of the godly old woman who knew she was about to die. When discussing her funeral plans with her pastor she told him she wanted to be buried with her Bible in one hand and a fork in the other.

She explained, “At those really nice get-togethers, when the meal was almost finished, a server or maybe the hostess would come by to collect the dirty dishes. I can hear the words now. Sometimes, at the best ones, somebody would lean over my shoulder and whisper, ‘You can keep your fork.’ And do you know what that meant? Dessert was coming!

“It didn’t mean a cup of Jell-O or pudding or even a dish of ice cream. You don’t need a fork for that. It meant the good stuff, like chocolate cake or cherry pie! When they told me I could keep my fork, I knew the best was yet to come!

“That’s exactly what I want people to talk about at my funeral. Oh, they can talk about all the good times we had together. That would be nice.

“But when they walk by my casket and look at my pretty blue dress, I want them to turn to one another and say, ‘Why the fork?’

“That’s what I want you to say. I want you to tell them that I kept my fork because the best is yet to come.”[\[13\]](#)

The author gratefully acknowledges the generous assistance of Lael Arrington in the preparation of this article.

Notes

1. Lael Arrington, *Worldproofing Your Kids* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997).
2. Ibid, 42.
3. Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Right From Wrong* (Nashville, TN: Word Books, 1994).
4. See also the Probe article [“Jesus’ Claims to be God”](#) on the Probe Web site (www.probe.org).
5. Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).
6. William Provine and Philip Johnson, “Darwinism: Science or Naturalistic Philosophy?” (videotape of debate held at Stanford University, April 30, 1994). Available from Access Research Network (www.arn.org).
7. Arrington, 179.
8. John Trent, *The Treasure Tree*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998).
9. Tim LaHaye, *The Spirit-Controlled Temperament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993).
10. Ken Voges and Ron Braund (contributor), *Understanding How Others Misunderstand You* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).
11. C. S. Lewis, *A Weight of Glory* (New York, Macmillan Co., 1949), 1-2.
12. Lael Arrington, personal correspondence with the author, February 26, 2000.
13. Jack Canfield, ed., *A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul* (Edison, NJ: Health Communications, Inc., 1996).

A Conversation with an Atheist

Rick Wade distills an in-depth e-mail dialog with an atheist in which he addresses her doubts and arguments concerning the existence of God.



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

About Our Dialogue

The Conversation Begins

In the fall of 1999 I became involved in an e-mail conversation with an atheist who wrote in response to a program I'd written titled [The Relevance of Christianity](#). In this program [Ed. note: The transcripts for our radio programs become the online articles such as the one you are reading.] I contrast Christianity and naturalism on the matters of meaning, morality, and hope.[{1}](#) She wrote to say that she was able to find these things in her own philosophy of life without God. If such things can be had without God, why bother bringing Him in, especially given all the trouble religion causes?

Stephanie has an undergraduate degree in philosophy, and is pursuing her doctorate in physics.[{2}](#) Our conversation has been quite cordial, and in our over two-month long conversation I've grown to respect her. She isn't just out to pick a fight. I try to keep in mind that, if her ideas seem grating on me, mine are just as grating on her.

Stephanie seems genuinely baffled by theistic belief. If God is there, He is outside the bounds of what we can know. While someone like Kierkegaard saw good reason to take a “leap of faith” into that which can’t be proved, she sees no reason to do that. “I think that if I had faith it would be like his,” she says, “but the leap seems, at this point, both futile and risky.”

Stephanie has three general objections to belief in God. First, she believes that the evidence is insufficient. The evidence of nature is all she has, and God is said to have attributes beyond the natural. There’s no way to know about such things. Second, she believes that theistic belief adds nothing of importance to our lives or to what we can know through science. I asked her, “What is it about Christianity that turns you off to it?” And she replied, “I imagine believing, and I am no more fulfilled and no less worried than I am when I am not believing. God just does not seem to be a useful, beneficial, or tenable idea.” Third, she believes that religion is morally bad for people. It grounds morality in fear, she believes, and it produces a dogmatism in adherents that prompts such behavior as killing abortion providers.

Stephanie began our correspondence not to be given proofs for the existence of God, but for me “to explain more personally His relevance.” What is called for, then, is defense and explication rather than persuasion.

Basic Elements of Stephanie’s Atheism

There are three main elements underlying Stephanie’s atheism. The first is *reason*, which she believes is sufficient for understanding our world, for morality, and for understanding and cultivating human qualities such as “aesthetic appreciation, compassion, and love.” It is, of course, the final authority on religion as well. Reason does not admit faith. Insofar as one has admitted faith into the equation, one has moved toward irrationalism. As George Smith wrote, “I

will not accept the existence of God, or any doctrine, on faith because I reject faith as a valid cognitive procedure. . . . If theistic doctrines must be accepted on faith, theism is necessarily excluded.”{3}

The second element, *nature*, is reason’s best source for information. Stephanie says, “I have no access to anything outside of the natural universe and my own mind.”

The package is complete with Stephanie’s commitment to *science*, which is the tool reason uses to understand nature. It alone is capable of giving us “objective, investigable knowledge,” she says. In fact, I think it is fair to label Stephanie’s approach to knowledge “scientistic.” There seems to be no area of life which need not be submitted to science to be considered rational, and for which scientific investigation isn’t sufficient.

The reason/nature/science triumvirate provides the structure for acquiring knowledge. To go beyond it is to move into irrationalism, Stephanie believes. There’s certainly no reason to add God. She says, “As I understand it, the idea of God as a creator or guarantor adds nothing but unjustified mysticism to my knowledge.”{4}

Theists have no problem with using reason to understand our world, or with the study of nature, or with using the tools of science. The problem comes when Stephanie concludes that nothing can be known beyond nature analyzed scientifically. She believes that nature is all that is there or at least all that is knowable. Stephanie says she doesn’t consciously start with naturalism; she has no desire to “champion naturalism as a dogma,” she says. However, since science “only permits investigation of natural, repeatable phenomena,” and she is satisfied with that, her view is restricted to the scope of nature. She even goes so far as to say, “I equate rationality and naturalism.”

It seems, then, that the deck is stacked from the beginning. Stephanie's emphasis on science doesn't necessarily prevent her from finding God, but her naturalism does.

Insufficient Evidences

The Evidentialist Objection

Let's look at Stephanie's three basic objections to theistic belief, beginning with the charge that there is insufficient evidence to believe. Rather than offer a defense for theistic belief, let's look at the objection itself.

Stephanie's argument is called the "evidentialist objection." She quotes W. K. Clifford, a 19th century scholar who wrote, "It is wrong always, everywhere, and for everyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."[{5}](#) Stephanie's objection is that there isn't enough evidence to believe in God. The first question, of course, is what constitutes good evidence. Another question is whether we should accept Clifford's maxim in the first place.

Some atheists believe they don't bear the same burden of adducing evidences for their beliefs as theists do. They say atheism is the "default" position. To believe in God is to *add* a belief; to *not* add that belief is to remain in atheism or perhaps agnosticism.[{6}](#) But atheism isn't a "zero belief" system. Western atheism is typically naturalistic. Atheists hold definite views about the nature of the universe; there's no reason to think that atheism is where we all automatically begin in our thinking, such that to move to theism is to add a belief while to *not* believe in God is to remain in atheism. It's hard not to agree with Alvin Plantinga that the presumption of atheism "looks like a piece of merely arbitrary intellectual imperialism."[{7}](#) If theists have to give evidences, so do atheists.

Stephanie, however, doesn't defend her atheism or naturalism

this way. She believes that reason using the tools of science is the only reliable means of attaining knowledge. The result of her observations, she says, is naturalism. There simply aren't sufficient evidences for believing in God, at least the kinds of evidences that are trustworthy. Which kind are trustworthy? Stephanie wants evidences in nature, because in nature one finds "objective, investigable knowledge." However, she doesn't believe evidences for God can be found there. God must be outside of nature if He exists. She said, "You may rightly ask what kind of naturalistic evidence I would ever accept for God, and I would have to answer, none.' Because once a naturalistic investigation turns to God with its hands up, it ceases to be naturalistic, and so it ceases to refer to anything that I can hope to investigate. I lack a sense for God and I have no access to anything outside of the natural universe and my own mind." She said in a later letter that the cause of the universe may have had an agent. But when we begin adding other attributes to this agent, attributes which can't be studied scientifically, we get into trouble. "As soon as you talk about God as having infinite attributes, those attributes actually begin to lose meaning," she says. "My view," she says, "is that it's just as well to call the unknown cause what it is—an unknown cause—until the means to investigate it are developed." And by this she means natural means. *A Naturalistic Twist*

The first problem here is obvious: Stephanie has biased the argument in her favor by her restrictions on knowledge to the realm of nature. She reduces our resources for knowledge to the scientifically verifiable. Such reductionism is arbitrary. By reducing all knowledge to that which can be discovered scientifically, Stephanie has cut out significant portions of our knowledge. Philosopher Huston Smith said this: "It is as if the scientist were inside a large plastic balloon; he can shine his torch anywhere on the balloon's interior but cannot climb outside the balloon to view it as a whole, see where it is situated, or determine why it was fabricated." [\[8\]](#) Science

can't tell us what the final cause (or purpose or goal) of a thing is; in fact it can't tell whether there *are* ultimate purposes. It cannot determine ultimate or existential meaning. While it can describe the artist's paintbrush and pigments and canvas, it can't measure beauty. *Clifford's Folly*

Beyond this difficulty is the fact that Clifford's maxim *itself* has problems.

First, the evidentialist approach is unreasonably restrictive. If we have to be able construct an argument for everything we believe³/₄and upon which we act—we will believe little and act little.

Second, this approach might have validity in science, but it leaves out other significant kinds of beliefs. Kelly Clark lists perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, belief in other minds, and truths of logic as other kinds of "properly basic" beliefs that we hold without inferring them from other beliefs.[\[9\]](#) Beliefs involved in personal relationships are another example. Relationships often require a willingness to believe in a friend apart from sufficient evidences. In fact, the willingness to do so can have a positive effect on developing a good relationship. Beliefs *about* persons are still another example. I accept without proof that my wife is a person, that she isn't an automaton, that she has intrinsic value, etc. These kinds of beliefs don't require amassing evidences to formulate an inductive or deductive proof. Clifford's maxim works well in scientific study, but not for beliefs about persons.

More to the point, religious beliefs don't fit so neatly within evidentialist restrictions. They are more like relational beliefs since, in confronting a Supreme Being, one is not confronting a hypothesis but a Person.

Fourth, Stephanie's use of Clifford's evidentialism is biased in her favor because, as we discussed above, her satisfaction

with the deliverances of scientific investigation means she will only accept evidences in the natural order. *Do We Have Good Reasons for Believing?*

Some Christian scholars are saying that we don't *have* to have evidences for belief, meaning that we don't have to be able to put together an argument whereby God's existence is inferred from other beliefs. Our direct experience of God is sufficient for rational belief (using "experience" in a broader sense than emotional experience).^{10} Belief in God is therefore properly basic.

This is *not* to say there are no *grounds* for believing, however. Drawing from John Calvin, Alvin Plantinga says that we have an ingrained tendency to recognize God under appropriate circumstances. Of course, there *are* a number of reasons or grounds for believing. These include direct experience of God, the testimony of a people who claim to have known God, written revelation which makes sense (if one is open to the supernatural), philosophical and scientific corroboration, the historical reality of a man named Jesus who fulfilled prophecies and did miracles, etc. Am I reversing myself here? Do we need reasons or not? The point is this: while there are valid reasons for believing in God, what we do *not* need to do is submit our belief in God ultimately to Clifford's maxim, especially a version of it already committed to naturalism. We can recognize God in our experience, and this belief can be confirmed by various reasons or evidences. Rather than view our belief as guilty until proven innocent, as the evidentialist objection would have it, we can view it as innocent until proven guilty. Let the atheists prove we're wrong.

Theism Adds Nothing

The second general objection to belief in God Stephanie offers is that it adds nothing of value to life and to what we can know by reason alone. Is this true? *Meaning*

Consider the subject of *meaning*. Stephanie said she finds meaning in the everyday affairs of life without worrying about God. Let me quote an extended passage from Stephanie's first letter on the subject of meaning. Her reference in the first line is to a quotation from a book by Albert Camus.

Your quote from *The Stranger* ("I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe") expresses well a feeling that I have had often. The universe is not concerned with me, so I do not need to bow and cater to anything in it; I can merely be grateful (yes, actually grateful to nothing in particular) that I can walk along a path with trees and breathe in the crisp late autumn, that I can watch cotton motes fly into my face, facing the sun, that I can struggle and wrangle my way into knowing that Heisenberg's uncertainty principle is that which keeps atoms from collapsing (in nanoseconds!!). I find meaning in my relationship with my parents, brothers, and in my marriage; my husband is the most kind, capable, ethical, and wise person I've ever met. These things are sufficiently meaningful for me; I do not think that true meaning is necessarily eternal and I do not demand recognition from the universe or the human notion of its maker. I am convinced that belief in a personal god could do nothing but dilute these things by subordinating them to something as slippery as God.

Thus, Stephanie believes that God isn't necessary for her to find meaning in life.

I replied that her naturalism provides no meaning beyond what we impose on the universe. We can *pretend* there is purpose behind it all, but a universe that doesn't care about us doesn't care about our superimposed meanings either. What does she do when the meaning she has given the universe doesn't find support in the universe itself? I wrote:

You might see this earth as a beautiful 'mother' of sorts

which nourishes and sustains its inhabitants. Do people who suffer through hurricanes or earthquakes or tornadoes see it as such? Do people who live in almost lifeless deserts who have to spend their days walking many miles to get water and who struggle to eke out a meager existence from the land find beauty and meaning in it? Often people who live close to the land do indeed find a special meaning in nature itself, but by and large they also believe there is a higher power behind it who not only gives meaning to the universe but who gives meaning to the struggle to survive and to the effort to preserve nature.

When I said that all her efforts at accomplishing some good could come to naught, and thus be ultimately meaningless, her response was, "That's OK. . . . I'm not looking for universal or eternal meaning."

It's hard to know what to say to that. We might follow Francis Schaeffer's advice and "take the roof off;"[{11}](#) in other words, expose the implications of her beliefs. Stephanie says she isn't a nihilist (one who believes that everything is thoroughly meaningless and without value); perhaps she could be called an "optimistic humanist" to use J. P. Moreland's term.[{12}](#) She believes there are no ultimate values; rather, we give life whatever meaning we choose. However, this position has no rational edge on nihilism. It simply reflects a decision to *act* as if there is meaning. Such groundless optimism is no more rationally justifiable than nihilism. It is just intellectual make-believe designed to help us be content with our lot³/₄ adult versions of children's fairy tales.

Since the loss of absolute or transcendent meaning undercuts all absolute value, each person must choose his or her own values, moral and otherwise. As I told Stephanie, others might not agree with her values. The Nazis thought there was valid meaning in purifying the race. What did the Jews think?

What can be seen as meaningful for the *moment* is just

that—meaningful for the moment. Death comes and everything that has gone before it comes to nothing, at least for the individual. Sure, one can find meaning in, say, working to discover a cure for a terrible disease knowing that it will benefit countless people for ages to come. But those people who benefit from it will die one day, too. And in the end, if atheists are correct, the whole race will die out and all that it has accomplished will come to naught.^{13} Thus, while there may be *temporal* significance to what we do, there is no *ultimate* significance. Can the atheist really live with this?

By contrast, the eternal nature of God gives meaning beyond the temporal. What we do has eternal significance because it is done in the context of the creation of the eternal God who acts with purpose and does nothing capriciously. More specifically, belief in God locates our actions in the context of the building of His kingdom. There is a specific end toward which we are working that gives meaning to the specific things we do.

Strictly speaking, then, we might agree with Stephanie that it's true God doesn't *add* anything. Rather, He is the very *ground* of meaning. *Morality*

What about *morality*? Although Stephanie says that naturalistic morality is superior, when pressed to offer a standard she was only able to offer a basic impulse to kindness. In addition, she said, "I think that it is sufficient to have an internal sense of the golden rule, and I think that's a natural development." She used the metaphor of a child growing up to illustrate our growth in morality. Reason is all that is needed for good moral behavior. If biblical moral principles agree with reason they are unnecessary. If they don't, "they are absurd."

In response I noted that we can measure the growth of a child by looking at an adult; the adult we might call the *telos* or goal of the child. We know what the child is supposed to

become. What is the goal or end, in her view, of morality? What is the standard of goodness to which we should attain? Stephanie accepts the golden rule but can give me no reason why *I* should. Reason by itself doesn't direct me to. The golden rule assumes a basic equality between us all. Where does *this* idea come from? Even if it is employed only to safeguard the survival of the race, by what standard shall we say *that's* a good thing? Maybe we need to get out of the way for something else.

God, however, provides a standard grounded in His character and will to which we all are subject. He doesn't change on fundamental issues (although God has pressed certain moral demands on His people more at one time than another in keeping with the progress of revelation^{14}), and His law is suited to our nature and our needs. The universe doesn't necessarily stand behind Stephanie's chosen morality, but God—and the universe³₄stand behind His.

One final note. Showing the weaknesses of naturalism with respect to morality is *not* to say that all atheists are evil people. In her first letter, Stephanie wrote, "I take offense at your statement that the relativism of a godless morality permits things like the destruction of the weak and the development of a master race.' . . . I find this charge of atheist amorality from Christians to be horribly persistent and unfair." I noted that I never said in the *Relevance* radio program that all atheists are immoral or amoral. What I said was that "atheism itself makes no provision for fixed moral standards." I asked Stephanie to show me what kind of moral standard naturalism offers. In fact, it offers none. As I noted earlier, Stephanie doesn't want to "champion naturalism." She knows it has nothing to offer. In fact, in one of her latest posts, she admitted that her philosophy only leaves her with "a frail pragmatism" and even "a certain moral relativism" because she doesn't have "the absolute word of God to fall back upon." She only has her own moral standards that

have no hold on anyone else. Until she can show me what universal standard naturalism offers, I'll stand behind what I said about what naturalism allows. *Hope*

Let's turn our attention now to *hope*. Stephanie says that when she dies she will cease to exist. She thus has to be satisfied with the here and now. If there *is* nothing else, one must make do. Stephanie said, "I am satisfied with the time that I have here and now to think and feel and explore. You say, 'an impersonal universe offers no rewards,' but I am simply unable to comprehend the appeal of the vagaries of the Christian Heaven, especially with the heavy toll that they seem to of necessity take on intellectual honesty. If your notion of true hope requires a belief that one is promised eternal glory and fulfillment, then I cannot claim it. I am unable to comprehend what that could mean." Maybe the reason she is unable to comprehend it is her scientific approach. Heaven isn't something one can analyze scientifically. P>In response I noted that she stands apart from the majority of people worldwide. There is something in us that yearns for immortality, I said. Of course, the various religions of the world have different ways of defining what the eternal state is and how to attain it. Christians believe we were created to desire it; it is a part of our make-up because we were created by an immortal God to live forever. If naturalism is true, I asked, how do you explain the desire for immortality?

If we had no good reason to believe in "the vagaries of the Christian Heaven," I suppose it would be foolish to allow it to govern one's life. However, we *do* have good reasons: the promise of God who doesn't lie, and the resurrection of Jesus. We also have the witness of "eternity set in our hearts." (Eccles. 3:11) Because of this hope—which isn't a "cross your fingers" kind of hope, but is justified confidence in the future—our labors here for Christ's kingdom will not die with us, but will have eternal significance. They are what is called "fruit that remains" (John 15:16), or the work which is

“revealed with fire.” (1 Cor. 3:13-14) *Science*

We’re still thinking about what belief in God adds to our lives and our knowledge. One area in which even some theists don’t want to bring God is science itself. Does theistic belief add anything to science, or is its admission a source of trouble?

Much ink has been spilled over this question. Aside from naturalistic evolutionists, some theistic scientists believe that to go beyond what is called “methodological naturalism” is risky.[{15}](#) That’s the belief that, for the purposes of scientific investigation, the scientist should not fall back on God as an explanation, but should stay within the bounds of that which science can investigate. However, not everyone is of this opinion. As scholars active in the intelligent design movement are showing today, it isn’t necessarily so that the supernatural has no place in science.

William Dembski, a leader in the intelligent design movement, says that, far from harming scientific inquiry, design *adds* to scientific discovery. For one thing, it fosters inquiry where a naturalistic view might see no need. Dembski names the issues of “junk DNA” and vestigial organs as examples. Is this DNA really “junk”? Did these vestigial organs have a purpose or do they have a purpose still? Openness to design also raises a new set of research questions. He says, “We will want to know how it was produced, to what extent the design is optimal, and what is its purpose.” Finally, Dembski says, “An object that is designed functions within certain constraints.” So, for example, “If humans are in fact designed, then we can expect psychosocial constraints to be hardwired into us. Transgress those constraints, and we as well as our society will suffer.”[{16}](#)

In sum it simply isn’t true that belief in God adds nothing of value to our lives and our knowledge. After all, whereas Stephanie is restricted to explanations arising from the

natural order, we have the supernatural order in addition.

Moral Problems with Theism

It Doesn't Live up to Its Promises

A third general objection Stephanie has to theistic belief has to do with moral issues. Atheists say there are moral factors that count against believing in God. To show a contradiction between what the Bible teaches about God's character and what He actually does is to show either that He really doesn't exist or that He isn't worthy of our trust.

One argument says that the Bible doesn't live up to its promises. Stephanie pointed to the matter of unanswered prayer. She referred to a man who claimed to have been an evangelical who lost his faith primarily because of "the inefficacy of prayer." She has concluded that "hoping at God gives you the same results' that hoping at the indifferent universe does—none that are consistent enough to be useful!"

In response, I noted first that people often put God to the test as if He is the one who has to prove Himself. Do we have the right to expect Him to answer our prayers 1) just because we pray them, or 2) when we haven't done what He has called us to do? People can't live the way *they* want to and then expect God to jump when they pray. Second, God has promised *His* people that He will hear them and answer, but He doesn't always answer prayers the way we expect or when we expect. Answers might be a long time coming, or they might come in totally unexpected ways. Or it might be that over time our understanding of the situation or of God's desires changes so that we realize that we need to pray differently. *Evil*

The problem of evil is a significant moral issue in the atheist's arsenal. We talk about a God of goodness, but what we see around us is suffering, and a lot of it apparently unjustifiable. Stephanie said, "Disbelief in a personal,

loving God as an explanation of the way the world works is reasonable—especially when one considers natural disasters that can't be blamed on free will and sin.”[\[17\]](#)

One response to the problem of evil is that God sees our freedom to choose as a higher value than protecting people from harm; this is the freewill defense. Stephanie said, however, that natural disasters can't be blamed on free will and sin. What about this? Is it true that natural disasters can't be blamed on sin? I replied that they *did* come into existence because of sin (Genesis 3). We're told in Romans 8 that creation will one day “be set free from its slavery to corruption,” that it “groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.” The Fall caused the problem, and, in the consummation of the ages, the problem will be fixed.

Second, I noted that on a naturalistic basis, it's hard to even know what evil *is*. But the reality of God explains it. As theologian Henri Blocher said,

The sense of evil requires the God of the Bible. In a novel by Joseph Heller, “While rejecting belief in God, the characters in the story find themselves compelled to postulate his existence in order to have an adequate object for their moral indignation.” . . . When you raise this standard objection against God, to whom do you say it, other than *this* God? Without this God who is sovereign and good, what is the rationale of our complaints? Can we even tell what is evil? Perhaps the late John Lennon understood: “God is a concept by which we measure our pain,” he sang. Might we be coming to the point where the sense of evil is a proof of the existence of God?[\[18\]](#)

So, while it's true that no one (in my opinion) has really nailed down an answer to the problem of evil, if there is no God, there really is no problem of evil. Does the atheist ever find herself shaking her fist at the sky after some

catastrophe and demanding an explanation? If there is no God, no one is listening.

Biblical Morality

Moral Character of God

Another direction atheistic objections run with respect to moral issues is in regard to the character of God. Is He good like the Bible says?

The “Old Testament God” is a favorite target of atheists for His supposed mean spirited and angry behavior, including stoning people for picking up sticks on Sunday, and having prophets call down bears on children.[{19}](#) The story of Abraham and Isaac is Stephanie’s favorite biblical enigma. She asked if I would take a knife to my son’s throat if God told me to. Clearly such a God isn’t worthy of being called good.

Let’s look more closely at the story of Abraham. Remember first of all that God did not let Abraham kill Isaac. The text says clearly that this was a test; God knew that He was going to stop Abraham.

But why such a difficult test? Consider Abraham’s cultural background. As one scholar noted, “It must be ever remembered that God accommodates His instructions to the moral and spiritual standards of the people at any given time.”[{20}](#) In Abraham’s day, people offered their children as sacrifices to their gods. While the idea of losing his promised son must have shaken him deeply, the idea of sacrificing him wouldn’t have been as unthinkable to him as to us. Think of an equivalent today, something God might call us to do that would stretch us almost to the breaking point. Whatever we think of might not have been an adequate test for Abraham. God needed to go to the extreme with Abraham and command him to do something very difficult that wasn’t beyond his imagination given his cultural setting.

Next, notice that Abraham said to the men with him “we will worship and return to you.” (Gen. 22:5) The book of Hebrews explains that “He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received [Isaac] back as a type” (11:17-19). Abraham believed what God had told him about building a great nation through Isaac. So, if Isaac died by God’s command, God would raise him from the dead.

Stephanie also objected to stories that told how God commanded the complete destruction of a town by the Israelites. The only way to understand this is to put it in the context of the nature of God and His opinion of sin, and the character of the people in question. God is absolutely holy, and He is a God of justice as well as mercy. To be true to His nature, He must deal with sin. Read too about the people He had the Israelites destroy. They were evil people. God drove them out because of their wickedness (Deut. 9:5). Walter Kaiser explains why the Canaanites were dealt with so severely.

They were cut off to prevent Israel and the rest of the world from being corrupted (Deut. 20:16-18). When a people starts to burn their children in honor of their gods (Lev. 18:21), practice sodomy, bestiality, and all sorts of loathsome vices (Lev. 18:23,24; 20:3), the land itself begins to “vomit” them out as the body heaves under the load of internal poisons (Lev. 18:25, 27-30). . . . [William Benton] Greene likens this action on God’s part, not to doing evil that good may come, but doing good in spite of certain evil consequences, just as a surgeon does not refrain from amputating a gangrenous limb even though in so doing he cannot help cutting off much healthy flesh.[{21}](#)

Kaiser goes on to note that when nations repent, God withholds judgment (Jer. 18:7,8). “Thus, Canaan had, as it were, a final forty-year countdown as they heard of the events in Egypt, at the crossing of the Red Sea, and what happened to the kings who opposed Israel along the way.” They knew about the Israelites (Josh. 2:10-14). “Thus God waited for the ‘cup of

iniquity' to fill up—and fill up it did without any signs of change in spite of the marvelous signs given so that the nations, along with Pharaoh and the Egyptians, 'might know that He was the Lord.'" {22}

One more point. Stephanie seemed to think that God still does things today as He did in Old Testament times. When I told her that God does not require all the same things of us today that He required of the Israelites, she said that “the advantage of the absoluteness of the biblical morality you wish to trumpet is negated by your softening of OT law and by your making local and relative the very commandments of God.” In other words, we say there are absolutes, but we give ourselves a way out. I simply noted that where it was commanded by God, for example, to put a rebellious son to death, we do not soften that command at all. But when in God’s own economy He brings about change, we go with the new way. God doesn’t change, but His requirements for His people have changed at times. This doesn’t leave everything open, however. The question is, What has God called us to do today?

Its Harmful Effects on Us

For Stephanie, biblical instruction on morality not only reveals a God she can’t trust, it also is harmful for us, too. So, for example, she says, “The desire not to harm can be overcome by the desire to do right by [one’s] idea of God (look at Abraham, my favorite enigma). That’s where the real harm to society can creep in.” She believes that the certainty of religious dogmatism regarding its own rightness encourages “excesses,” such as “holy wars and terrorism for possession of the holy land, and the killing of doctors and homosexuals for their own good.” She said that Christianity permits the kind of horrors we accuse atheists of perpetrating but with the endorsement of God. “Hitler was a very devout Catholic, as I understand it,” she said.

There is serious confusion here. Loaded words like “terrorism”

bias the issue unfairly, and Stephanie takes some “excesses” to be rooted in Scripture when in fact they have nothing to do with biblical morality. It is unfair of her and other atheists to ignore the commands of Scripture that clearly reflect God’s goodness while ignoring sound interpretive methods for understanding the harder parts. It’s also wrong to let religious fanaticism in general count against God. Just as some atheists aren’t going to live up to Stephanie’s high standards, some Christians don’t live up to God’s. Gene Edward Veith says that, while Hitler had a “perverse admiration for Catholicism,” he “hated Christianity.”^{23} What is clear is that there is no biblical basis for Hitler’s atrocities. To return to the point I tried to make earlier, if he looked, Hitler *could* have found moral injunctions in Christianity to oppose his actions. Naturalists, on the other hand, have no such standard by which to measure anyone’s actions. Conclusion

We have attempted to respond to Stephanie’s three main objections to believing in God: there’s not enough evidence; it adds nothing to what we can know from science; and theism is bad for people. These are stock objections atheists present. I think they have good answers. The next step is to try to take the atheist to the place where she or he can “see” God. Removing the reasons for rejecting God is one step in the process. The next step is to show her God. I can think of no better way to do that than to take her to Jesus, who “is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb. 1:3). I recommended that Stephanie read one or more of the Gospels, and she said she would read John. This is the point of apologetics, to take people to the Lord in the presence of whom they must make a choice. Now we’ll wait to see what happens.

Notes

1. Rick Wade, [*The Relevance of Christianity*](#) (Probe Ministries, 1998).

2. Stephanie is aware of this program, and has given me permission to use her name.
3. George Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1989), 98.
4. One is reminded of the time when the eighteenth century mathematician and physicist the Marquis de Laplace was asked where God fit in his theory of celestial mechanics. He replied, "I have no need of that hypothesis."
5. W. K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," in *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Baruch A. Brody (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 246.
6. Antony Flew, "The Presumption of Atheism," in *Faith and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 337-38. See also George Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1989), 7-8.
7. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 28.
8. Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, rev. ed. (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1989), 85.
9. Kelly James Clark, *Return to Reason* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 126-28. I am indebted to this book for this portion of my discussion.
10. A good introduction to the evidentialist objection and this kind of response to it (what is being called Reformed epistemology) is found in Clark, *Return to Reason*. See also J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City; A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 116-17. The seminal work is Plantinga and Wolterstorff, *Faith and Rationality*.
11. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who is There* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 128-130.

12. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*, 120ff.
13. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, rev. ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 59.
14. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 60-64.
15. Papers from the "Naturalism, Theism and the Scientific Enterprise" conference in Austin, Texas in 1997, which included several presentations on this subject can be accessed on the Web at www.dla.utexas.edu/depts/philosophy/faculty/koons/ntse/ntse.html.
16. William A. Dembski, "Science and Design," *First Things* 86 (October 1998): 26-27.
17. There is an article on Probe's web site about the problem of evil, so I'll only make a few comments here. See Rick Rood, [The Problem of Evil: How Can A Good God Allow Evil?](#) (Probe Ministries, 1996).
18. Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 102-03.
19. For a in-depth discussion of the moral difficulties in the Old Testament, the reader might want to refer to Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, in which he devotes three chapters to such difficulties.
20. W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 197.
21. Kaiser, 267-68.
22. Kaiser, 268.
23. Gene Edward Veith, *Modern Fascism: Liquidating the Judeo-Christian Worldview* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House,

1993), 50.

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St. Augustine

Former Probe intern Tim Garrett explains that St. Augustine's The City of God and his Confessions reveal not only a brilliant mind, but demonstrate his abiding concern to announce God's righteousness in His dealings with man.

Who Was St. Augustine?

One of the most remarkable things about a close reading of Church history is that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. In the New Testament we find that a man who called himself "the chief of sinners" due to his murderous hatred toward Christians was saved when Christ Himself appeared to him on the road to Damascus. What is clear from the account in the ninth chapter of the Book of Acts is that it was not Saul who was seeking Christ: instead, it was Christ who was seeking Paul.

In modern times we see a similar situation in the life of C. S. Lewis. In *Surprised by Joy*, he recounts the night that he knelt to admit that God was God by calling himself "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England." Like the Apostle Paul, we can see that Lewis was perfectly prepared to be an apologist for the faith, but that preparation occurred *before he ever became a Christian!* It is only after the fact that we see how God was actively seeking the sinner.

In this article we will examine another reluctant convert, a man whose life and ministry has been crucial to church

history. His name was Aurelius Augustine: we know him as St. Augustine of Hippo. But until his conversion, Augustine was anything but a saint! Born in the year 354 in North Africa, Augustine was raised by a Christian mother and a pagan father. The father's main desire was that his son get a good education, while his mother constantly worried about her son's eternal destiny. Augustine indeed received a first class education, but his mother was tormented by his indulgent lifestyle. Augustine became involved with a concubine at the age of seventeen, a relationship which lasted thirteen years and produced one son. Recognizing that sexual lust was competing with Christ for his affections, Augustine uttered the famous prayer "Make me chaste Lord . . . but not yet."

While sexual passion ruled his heart, Augustine sought wisdom with his mind. After suffering enormous internal conflicts, Augustine submitted himself to Christ at the age of thirty-two, and soon thereafter became Bishop of Hippo. Augustine became a tireless defender of the faith, diligent in his role as a shepherd to the flock as well as one of the greatest intellects the Church has ever known.

In this look at the life of Augustine we will focus on two of his greatest books—the *Confessions*, and *The City of God*. As we will see, Augustine's life and work is a testimony to the boundless mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Augustine's Youth

In a gripping television interview recently broadcast on *60 Minutes*, the man convicted of the Oklahoma City bombings spoke of his grievances against the federal government. During the interview, Timothy McVeigh revealed that his lawyers have filed an appeal that maintains that pre-trial publicity prevented him from getting a fair trial. Like many of us, McVeigh seems intent on avoiding the penalty of his actions; but rather than doing so by insisting upon his innocence, he is attempting to have the verdict thrown out due to a

technicality.

It was truly disturbing to see an articulate young man such as McVeigh coldly dismiss the mass murder of innocents on the basis of a legal technicality. In many respects, his demeanor reflects the contemporary shift in attitude toward sin and guilt that has had devastating consequences for society. As a nation, America has seen a shift from a worldview primarily informed by biblical Christianity to one in which the individual is no longer responsible for his actions. Now it is either society or how one is raised that is given emphasis.

Against this cultural backdrop it is truly therapeutic to read Augustine's *Confessions*. Throughout this wonderful book, which is written in the form of a prayer, Augustine freely admits his willful disobedience to God. Augustine's intent is to reveal the perversity of the human heart, but specifically that of his own. But Augustine was not intent on just confessing his sinfulness: this book is also the confession of his faith in Christ as well. Augustine, as he is moved from a state of carnality to one of redemption, marvels at the goodness of God.

One of the most telling incidents in the *Confessions* is Augustine's recollection of a decisive event in his youth. He and an assortment of friends knew of a pear tree not far from his house. Even though the pears on the tree didn't appeal to Augustine, he and his friends were intent on stealing the pears simply for the thrill of it. They had no need of the pears, and in fact ending up throwing them to some pigs. Augustine's account of this thievery reveals a penetrating insight into our dilemma as human beings. Whereas today many want to blame their parents or their environment for their problems, Augustine admits that his sole motive was a love of wickedness: he *enjoyed* his disobedience.

This reflects one of Augustine's major contributions to Christian theology: his emphasis on the perversity of the

human will. We would all do well to read Augustine's *Confessions* if only to remind us that evil isn't simply a sickness but a condition of the heart that only Jesus Christ can heal.

Augustine's Search for Wisdom

In his fascinating book entitled *Degenerate Moderns*, author Michael Jones convincingly documents how many of the intellectual gurus of the modern era have conformed truth to their own desires. Jones research reveals how Margaret Mead, Alfred Kinsey, and other prominent trend-setters intentionally lied in their research in order to justify their own sexual immorality. Sadly, contemporary culture has swallowed their findings, leading many to conclude that sexual immorality is both normal and legitimate.

However, when we turn to Augustine's *Confessions*, we see someone who has subordinated his own desires to the truth. The *Confessions* is an account of how Augustine attempted to satisfy the longings of his heart with professional ambition, entertainment, and sex, yet remained unfulfilled. One of Augustine's most famous prayers is therefore the theme of the whole book: "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee, O God." Only by submitting his own desires to the Lordship of Christ did Augustine find the peace that he was seeking.

But that submission did not come easy. Throughout most of his adult life, Augustine had been seeking to discover wisdom. But two questions were especially disturbing for him: What is the source of evil, and How can a Being without physical properties exist? Obviously, this second question was a barrier to his belief in the God of the Bible. In his search for answers, Augustine became involved with a group known as the Manichees, who combined Christian teaching with the philosophy of Plato. Plato's philosophy helped convince Augustine that existence did not require physical properties,

but he found their answer to the question of evil problematic, and after eight years as a seeker left the Manichees.

Still, the most difficult barrier for Augustine was not intellectual, but a matter of the heart. He eventually came to the point where he knew he should submit himself to Christ, but was reluctant to do so if it meant giving up his relationship with his concubine. One day, while strolling through a walled garden, Augustine heard from the other side of the wall what sounded like a child's voice, saying "pick up and read, pick up and read." At first he thought it was a children's game. Then, acknowledging what he took to be a command of the Lord, he picked up a nearby Bible, and upon opening it immediately came to Romans 13:13-14, words tailor made for Augustine: "Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticisms and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts." Augustine's search for wisdom was complete, as he acknowledged that wisdom is ultimately a *person*: Jesus Christ. The wisdom of God had satisfied his deepest longings.

Augustine's Philosophy of History: *The City of God*

The United States is currently going through what some call a "culture war." On the one hand there are those who believe in eternal truth and the importance of maintaining traditional morality. At the other end of the spectrum are those who believe that the individual is autonomous and should be free to live as he pleases without anyone telling him what is right or wrong. Until thirty years ago the first group held sway. Today, that same group is considered divisive and extreme by the "politically correct" mainstream culture.

But culture wars are not unique to modern America. In the year 410, mighty Rome was sacked by an invading army of Goths. Soon thereafter, the search was on for a scapegoat. In the year 381

Christianity superseded the ancient religion of the Romans as *the* state religion. This enraged those who favored the old state religion, who claimed that Rome had gained world supremacy due to the favor of the ancient gods. When Rome officially accepted the Christian God and forsook the gods, the gods were said to have withdrawn their favor and allowed the invading armies to breach the walls of Rome in order to demonstrate their anger at being replaced by the Christian God. Educated Romans found such an argument silly, but an even more serious charge was that Christians were disloyal to the state, since their allegiance was ultimately to God. Therefore, Christianity was blamed for a loss of patriotism since Christians believed themselves to ultimately be citizens of another kingdom—the Kingdom of God.

Augustine responded to these accusations by writing his philosophy of history in a book entitled *The City of God*. Augustine spent thirteen years researching and writing this work, which takes its title from Psalm 87:3: "Glorious things are spoken of you, O City of God." Augustine's main thesis is that there are two cities that place demands on our allegiance. The City of Man is populated by those who love themselves and hold God in contempt, while the City of God is populated by those who love God and hold themselves in contempt. Augustine hoped to show that the citizens of the City of God were more beneficial to the interests of Rome than those who inhabit the City of Man.

For anyone interested in the current debate between secularists and the "Religious Right," Augustine's argument is a masterful combination of historical research and literary eloquence. Christians in particular would be well served by studying this important document, since believers are often accused of being divisive and extreme, characteristics considered by some as un-American.

In Augustine's time, it was asserted that the values of Christianity were not consistent with good Roman citizenship.

But Augustine's historical investigation revealed that it is sin that is at the root of all our problems: starting with Cain's murder of Abel, the sin of Adam has borne terrible consequences.

Much of Augustine's task was to demonstrate the consequences of a society that loses its moral compass. Augustine took it upon himself to demonstrate the falsity of the assertion that the Christian worldview is incompatible with civic life. Those who maintained that the acceptance of Christian virtues had had a direct bearing on Rome's fall did so primarily from a very limited perspective. The clear implication was that Christianity, a religion that asks its adherents to love their neighbor and pray for their enemies, had fostered a society incapable of defending itself against its more vicious neighbors.

Augustine's response was to demonstrate that Rome had suffered through numerous catastrophes *long* before Christianity ever became the religion of the Romans. Actually, it was due to the respect of the Goths for Christianity that their attack wasn't worse than it was: they relented after only three days. Against those who claimed that Christians could not be loyal citizens due to their higher allegiance to God, Augustine reminded them that the Old and New Testament Scriptures actually *command* obedience to the civil authorities. And any assertion that Christianity had weakened the defense of the empire failed to acknowledge the real cause of Rome's collapse, namely that Rome's moral degeneracy had created a society where justice was no longer valued. Augustine quotes the Roman historians as themselves recognizing the brutality at the very root of the nation, beginning with Romulus' murder of his brother Remus.

Augustine's analysis came to conclude that the virtues of Christianity are most consistent with good citizenship, and then went on to show the biblical distinction between the founding of Rome and that of the City of God. Just as Rome's

origins date back to the dispute between Romulus and Remus, the City of God had its origin in the conflict between Cain and Abel. The City of Man and the City of God have intermingled ever since, and only at the final judgment of Christ will “the tares be separated from the wheat.” For Augustine, the ultimate meaning of history will be borne out only when each one of us acknowledges who it was that we loved most: ourselves, or God.

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Technological Challenges of the 21st Century

We live in historic times. And we will face new challenges as we enter the 21st century, especially in the area of technology. The fields of biotechnology and information technology have the capacity to change the social landscape and even alter the way we make ethical decisions. These are not challenges for the faint-hearted. We must bring a tough-minded Christianity into the 21st century.

We are reminded in 1 Chronicles 12:32 (NIV) that the men of Issachar “understood the times and knew what Israel should do.” Likewise, we must understand our times and know what we should do. New ethical challenges await us as we consider the moral issues of our day and begin to analyze them from a biblical perspective.

We should also enter into the task with humility. Over a hundred years ago, Charles Duell, Director of the U.S. Patent Office, was ready to close his office down because he believed that “Everything that can be invented has been invented.”[\[1\]](#)

We should not make the mistake of thinking that we can accurately see into the future. However, we can analyze trends and look at new inventions and begin to see the implications of these remarkable changes. Our challenge will always be to apply the timeless truths of Scripture to the quickly changing world around us.

How should Christians analyze the technological changes taking place? First we must begin by developing a theology of technology.

Theology of Technology

Technology is really nothing more than the systematic modification of the environment for human ends. This might be a process or activity that extends or enhances a human function. A telescope extends man's visual perception. A tractor extends one's physical ability. A computer extends a person's ability to calculate.

The biblical mandate for developing and using technology is stated in Genesis 1:28. God gave mankind dominion over the land, and we are obliged to use and manage these resources wisely in serving the Lord. God's ideal was not to have a world composed exclusively of primitive areas. Before the Fall (Gen. 2:15) Adam was to cultivate and keep the Garden of Eden. After the Fall the same command pertains to the application of technology to this fallen world, a world that "groans" in travail (Rom. 8:22). Technology can benefit mankind in exercising proper dominion, and thus remove some of the effects of the Fall (such as curing disease, breeding livestock, or growing better crops).

Technology is neither good or evil. The worldview behind the particular technology determines its value. In the Old Testament, technology was used both for good (e.g., the building of the ark, Gen. 6) and for evil (e.g., the building of the Tower of Babel, Gen. 11). Therefore, the focus should

not be so much on the technology itself as on the philosophical motivation behind its use. Here are three important principles that should be considered.

First, technology should be seen as a tool, not as an end in itself. There is nothing sacred about technology. Unfortunately, Western culture tends to rely on it more than is appropriate. If a computer, for example, proves a particular point, people have a greater tendency to believe it than if the answer was a well-reasoned conclusion given by a person. If a machine can do the job, employers are prone to mechanize, even if human labor does a better or more creative job. Often our society unconsciously places machines over man. Humans become servants to machines rather than the other way around.

There is a tendency to look to science and engineering to solve problems that really may be due to human sinfulness (wars, prejudice, greed), the fallenness of the world (death, disease), or God's curse on Adam (finite resources). In Western culture especially, we tend to believe that technology will save us from our problems and thus we use technology as a substitute for God. Christians must not fall into this trap, but instead must exhibit their ultimate dependence on God. Christians must also differentiate between problems that demand a technological solution and ones that can be remedied by a social or spiritual one.

Second, technology should be applied in different ways, according to specific instructions. For example, there are distinctions between man and animal that, because we are created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), call for different applications of medical science. Using artificial insemination to improve the genetic fitness of livestock does not justify using it on human beings. Christians should resist the idea that just because we *can* do something, we *should* do it. Technological ability does not grant moral permission.

Third, ethics, rather than technology, must determine the direction of our society. Jacques Ellul has expressed the concern that technology moves society instead of vice versa.^{2} Our society today seems all too motivated by a technological imperative in our culture. The technological ability to do something is not the same as a moral imperative to do it. Technology should not determine ethics.

Though scientists may possess the technological ability to be gods, they nevertheless lack the capacity to act like gods. Too often, man has tried to use technology to become God. He uses it to work out his own physical salvation, to enhance his own development, or even to attempt to create life. Christians who take seriously human fallenness will humbly admit that we often do not know enough about God's creation to use technology wisely. The reality of human sinfulness means that society should be careful to prevent the use of technology for greed and exploitation.

Technology's fruits can be both sweet and bitter. C. S. Lewis writes in the *Abolition of Man*, "From this point of view, what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be power exercised by some men over men with Nature as its instrument. . . . There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows the triumphal car."^{3}

Christians must bring strong biblical critique to each technological advance and analyze its impact. The goal should be to liberate the positive effects of technology while restraining negative effects by setting up appropriate constraints against abuse.

The Challenge of Biotechnology

The age of biotechnology has arrived. For the first time in

human history it is possible to completely redesign existing organisms, including man, and to direct the genetic and reproductive constitution of every living thing. Scientists are no longer limited to breeding and cross-pollination. Powerful genetic tools allow us to change genetic structure at the microscopic level and bypass the normal processes of reproduction.

For the first time in human history it is also possible to make multiple copies of any existing organism or of certain sections of its genetic structure. This ability to clone existing organisms or their genes gives scientists a powerful tool to reproduce helpful and useful genetic material within a population.

Scientists are also developing techniques to treat and cure genetic diseases through genetic surgery and genetic therapy. They can already identify genetic sequences that are defective, and soon scientists will be able to replace these defects with properly functioning genes.

Gene splicing (known as recombinant DNA technology) is fundamentally different from other forms of genetic breeding used in the past. Breeding programs work on existing arrays of genetic variability in a species, isolating specific genetic traits through selective breeding. Scientists using gene splicing can essentially “stack” the deck or even produce an entirely new deck of genetic “cards.”

But this powerful ability to change the genetic deck of cards also raises substantial scientific concerns that some “sleight-of-hand” would produce dangerous consequences. Ethan Singer said, “Those who are powerful in society will do the shuffling; their genes will be shuffled in one direction, while the genes of the rest of us will get shuffled in another.”^{4} Also there is the concern that a reshuffled deck of genes might create an Andromeda strain similar to the one envisioned by Michael Crichton in his book by the same

title.^{5} A microorganism might inadvertently be given the genetic structure for some pathogen for which there is no antidote or vaccine.

The potential benefits of gene splicing are significant. First, the technology can be used to produce medically important substances. The list of these substances is quite large and would include insulin, interferon, and human growth hormone. The technology also has great application in the field of immunology. In order to protect organisms from viral disease, doctors must inject a killed or attenuated virus. Scientists can use the technology to disable a toxin gene, thus producing a viral substance that triggers production of antibodies without the possibility of producing the disease.

A second benefit is in the field of agriculture. This technology can improve the genetic fitness of various plant species. Basic research using this technology could increase the efficiency of photosynthesis, increase plant resistance (to salinity, to drought, to viruses), and reduce a plant's demand for nitrogen fertilizer.

Third, gene splicing can aid industrial and environmental processes. Industries that manufacture drugs, plastics, industrial chemicals, vitamins, and cheese will benefit from this technology. Also scientists have begun to develop organisms that can clean up oil spills or toxic wastes.

This last benefit, however, also raises one of the greatest scientific concerns over the use of biotechnology. The escape (or even intentional release) of a genetically engineered organism might wreak havoc on the environment. Scientists have created microorganisms that dissolve oil spills or reduce frost on plants. Critics of gene splicing fear that radically altered organisms could occupy new ecological niches, destroy existing ecosystems, or drive certain species to extinction.

A significant question is whether life should be patented at

all. Most religious leaders say no. A 1995 gathering of religious leaders representing virtually every major religious tradition spoke out against the patenting of genetically engineered substances. They argued that life is the creation of God, not humans, and should not be patented as human inventions.[\[6\]](#)

The broader theological question is *whether* genetic engineering should be used and, if permitted, *how* it should be used. The natural reaction for many in society is to reject new forms of technology because they are dangerous. Christians, however, should take into account God's command to humankind in the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28). Christians should avoid the reflex reaction that scientists should not tinker with life; instead Christians should consider how this technology should be used responsibly.

One key issue is the worldview behind most scientific research. Modern science rests on an evolutionary assumption. Many scientists assume that life on this planet is the result of millions of years of a chance evolutionary process. Therefore they conclude that intelligent scientists can do a better job of directing the evolutionary process than nature can do by chance. Even evolutionary scientists warn of this potential danger. Ethan Singer believes that scientists will "verify a few predictions, and then gradually forget that knowing something isn't the same as knowing everything. . . . At each stage we will get a little cockier, a little surer we know all the possibilities."[\[7\]](#)

In essence biotechnology gives scientists the tools they have always wanted to drive the evolutionary spiral higher and higher. Julian Huxley looked forward to the day in which scientists could fill the "position of business manager for the cosmic process of evolution."[\[8\]](#) Certainly this technology enables scientists to create new forms of life and alter existing forms in ways that have been impossible until now.

How should Christians respond? They should humbly acknowledge that God is the sovereign Creator and that man has finite knowledge. Genetic engineering gives scientists the technological ability to be gods, but they lack the wisdom, knowledge, and moral capacity to act like God.

Even evolutionary scientists who deny the existence of God and believe that all life is the result of an impersonal evolutionary process express concern about the potential dangers of this technology. Erwin Chargaff asked, "Have we the right to counteract, irreversibly, the evolutionary wisdom of millions of years, in order to satisfy the ambition and curiosity of a few scientists?"^{9} His answer is no. The Christian's answer should also be the same when we realize that God is the Creator of life. We do not have the right to "rewrite the fifth day of creation."^{10}

What is the place for genetic engineering within a biblical framework? The answer to that question can be found by distinguishing between two types of research. The first could be called genetic repair. This research attempts to remove genetic defects and develop techniques that will provide treatments for existing diseases. Applications would include various forms of genetic therapy and genetic surgery as well as modifications of existing microorganisms to produce beneficial results.

The Human Genome Project has been able to pinpoint the location and sequence of the approximately 100,000 human genes.^{11} Further advances in biotechnology will allow scientists to repair these defective sequences and eventually remove these genetic diseases from our population.

Genetic disease is not part of God's plan for the world. It is the result of the Fall (Gen. 3). Christians can apply technology to fight these evils without being accused of fighting against God's will.^{12} Genetic engineering can and should be used to treat and cure genetic diseases.

A second type of research is the creation of new forms of life. While minor modifications of existing organisms may be permissible, Christians should be concerned about the large-scale production of novel life forms. That potential impact on the environment and on mankind could be considerable. Science is replete with examples of what can happen when an existing organism is introduced into a new environment (e.g., the rabbit into Australia, the rat to Hawaii, or the gypsy moth in the United States). One can only imagine the potential devastation that could occur when a newly created organism is introduced into a new environment.

God created plants and animals as "kinds" (Gen. 1:24). While there is minor variability within these created kinds, there are built-in barriers between these created kinds. Redesigning creatures of any kind cannot be predicted the same way new elements on the periodic chart can be predicted for properties even before they are discovered. Recombinant DNA technology offers great promise in treating genetic disease, but Christians should also be vigilant. While this technology should be used to repair genetic defects, it should not be used to confer the role of creator on scientists.

A related issue in the field of biotechnology is human cloning. It appears that the cloning of a human being will no doubt take place some time in the future since many other mammals have been cloned. Proponents of human cloning argue that it would be a worthwhile scientific endeavor for at least three reasons. First, cloning could be used to produce spare parts. The clone would be genetically identical to the original person, so that a donated organ would not be rejected by the immune system. Second, they argue that cloning might be a way to replace a lost child. A dying infant or child could be cloned so that a couple would replace the child with a genetically identical child. Third, cloning could produce biological immortality. One woman approached scientists in order to clone her deceased father and offered to carry the

cloned baby to term herself. [\[13\]](#)

While cloning of various organisms may be permissible, cloning a human being raises significant questions beginning with the issue of the sanctity of life. Human beings are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28) and therefore differ from animals. Human cloning would certainly threaten the sanctity of human life at a number of levels. First, cloning is an inefficient process of procreation as shown in cloning of a sheep. Second, cloning would no doubt produce genetic accidents. Previous experiments with frogs produced numerous embryos that did not survive, and many of those that did survive developed into grotesque monsters. Third, researchers often clone human embryos for various experiments. Although the National Bioethics Advisory Commission did ban cloning of human beings, it permitted the cloning of human embryos for research. Since these embryos are ultimately destroyed, this research raises the same pro-life concerns discussed in the chapter on abortion.

Cloning represents a tampering with the reproductive process at the most basic level. Cloning a human being certainly strays substantially from God's intended procedure of a man and woman producing children within the bounds of matrimony (Gen. 2:24). All sorts of bizarre scenarios can be envisioned. Some homosexual advocates argue that cloning would be an ideal way for homosexual men to reproduce themselves.

Although this would be an alternative form of reproduction, it is reasonable to believe that human clones would still be fully human. For example, some people wonder if a clone would have a soul since this would be such a diversion from God's intended process of procreation. A traducian view of the origin of the soul, where a person receives both body and soul from his parents rather than an act of special creation by God, would imply that a cloned human being would have a soul. In a sense a clone would be no different from an identical twin.

Human cloning, like other forms of genetic engineering, could be used to usher in a “brave new world.” James Bonner says “there is nothing to prevent us from taking a thousand [cells]. We could grow any desired number of genetically identical people from individuals who have desirable characteristics.”^{14} Such a vision conjures up images of Alphas, Betas, Gammas, and Deltas from Aldous Huxley’s book *Brave New World* and provides a dismal contrast to God’s creation of each individual as unique.

Each person contributes to both the unity and diversity of humanity. This is perhaps best expressed by the Jewish Midrash: “For a man stamps many coins in one mold and they are all alike; but the King who is king over all kings, the Holy One blessed be he, stamped every man in the mold of the first man, yet not one of them resembles his fellow.”^{15} Christians should reject future research plans to clone a human being and should reject using cloning as an alternative means of reproduction.

The Challenge of Information Technology

The information revolution is the latest technological advance Christians must consider. The shift to computers and an information-based society has been swift as well as spectacular. The first electronic digital computer, ENIAC, weighed thirty tons, had 18,000 vacuum tubes, and occupied a space as large as a boxcar.^{16} Less than forty years later, many hand-held calculators had comparable computing power for a few dollars. Today most people have a computer on their desk with more computing power than engineers could imagine just a few years ago.

The impact of computers on our society was probably best seen when in 1982 *Time* magazine picked the computer as its “Man of the Year”—actually listing it as “Machine of the Year.”^{17} It is hard to imagine a picture of the Spirit of St. Louis or an Apollo lander on the magazine cover under a banner “Machine of

the Year.” This perhaps shows how influential the computer has become in our society.

The computer has become helpful in managing knowledge at a time when the amount of information is expanding exponentially. The information stored in the world’s libraries and computers doubles every eight years.[{18}](#) In a sense the computer age and the information age seem to go hand in hand.

The rapid development and deployment of computing power however has also raised some significant social and moral questions. People in this society need to think clearly about these issues, but often ignore them or become confused.

One key issue is computer crime. In a sense computer fraud is merely a new field with old problems. Computer crimes are often nothing more than fraud, larceny, and embezzlement carried out by more sophisticated means. The crimes usually involve changing address, records, or files. In short, they are old-fashioned crimes using high technology.

Another concern arises from the centralization of information. Governmental agencies, banks, and businesses use computers to collect information on its citizens and customers. For example, it is estimated that the federal government has on average about fifteen files on each American.[{19}](#) Nothing is inherently wrong with collecting information if the information can be kept confidential and is not used for immoral actions. Unfortunately this is often difficult to guarantee.

In an information-based society, the centralization of information can be as dangerous as the centralization of power. Given sinful man in a fallen world, we should be concerned about the collection and manipulation of vast amounts of personal information.

In the past, centralized information processing was used for persecution. When Adolf Hitler’s Gestapo began rounding up

millions of Jews, information about their religious affiliation was stored in shoe boxes. U.S. Census Bureau punch cards were used to round up Japanese Americans living on the West Coast at the beginning of World War II.[{20}](#) Modern technology makes this task much easier. Governmental agencies routinely collect information about citizens' ethnic origin, race, religion, gross income, and even political preference.

Moreover, the problem is not limited to governmental agencies. Many banking systems, for example, utilize electronic funds-transfer systems. Plans to link these systems together into a national system could also provide a means of tracking the actions of citizens. A centralized banking network could fulfill nearly every information need a malevolent dictator might have. This is not to say that such a thing will happen. It does mean, however, that societies that want to monitor their citizens will be able to do so more efficiently with computer technology.

A related problem arises from the confidentiality of computer records. Computer records can be abused like any other system. Reputations built up over a lifetime can be ruined by computer errors and often there is little recourse for the victim. Congress passed the 1974 Privacy Act which allows citizens to find out what records federal bureaucracies have on them and to correct any errors.[{21}](#) But more legislation is needed than this particular act.

The proliferation of computers has presented another set of social and moral concerns. In the recent past most of that information was centralized and required the expertise of the "high priests of FORTRAN" to utilize it. Now most people have access to information because of increasing numbers of personal computers and increased access to information through the Internet. This access to information will have many interesting sociological ramifications, and it is also creating a set of troubling ethical questions. The proliferation of computers that can tie into other computers

provides more opportunities for computerized crime.

The news media frequently carry reports about computer "hackers" who have been able to gain access to confidential computer systems and obtain or interfere with the data banks. Although these were supposed to be secure systems, enterprising computer hackers broke in anyway. In many cases this merely involved curious teenagers. Nevertheless computer hacking has become a developing area of crime. Criminals might use computer access to forge documents, change records, and draft checks. They can even use computers for blackmail by holding files for ransom and threatening to destroy them if their demands are not met. Unless better methods of security are found, professional criminals will begin to crack computer security codes and gain quick access into sensitive files.

As with most technological breakthroughs, engineers have outrun lawmakers. Computer deployment has created a number of legal questions. First, there is the problem of establishing penalties of computer crime. Typically, intellectual property has a different status in our criminal justice system. Legal scholars should evaluate the notion that ideas and information need not be protected in the same way as property. Legislators need to enact computer information protection laws that will deter criminals, or even curious computer hackers, from breaking into confidential records.

A second legal problem arises from the question of jurisdiction. Telecommunications allows information to be shared across state and even national borders. Few federal statutes govern this area and less than half the states have laws dealing with information abuse.

Enforcement will also be a problem for several reasons. One reason is the previously stated problem of jurisdiction. Another is that police departments rarely train their personnel in computer abuse and fraud. A third reason is lack of personnel. Computers are nearly as ubiquitous as telephones

or photocopiers.

Computer fraud also raises questions about the role of insurance companies. How do companies insure an electronic asset? What value does computer information have? These questions also need to be addressed in the future.

Technology and Human Nature

These new technologies will also challenge our views of human nature. Already medical technology is challenging our views of what it means to be human. A key question in the abortion debate is, When does human life begin? Is an embryo human? What about a developing fetus? Although the Bible provides answers to these questions, society often takes its cue from pronouncements that do not square with biblical truth.

Biotechnology raises yet another set of questions. Is a frozen embryo human and deserving of a right to life? Is a clone human? Would a clone have a soul? These and many more questions will have to be answered. Although the Bible doesn't directly address such issues as genetically engineered humans or clones, key biblical passages (Ps. 139, Ps. 51:5) certainly seem to teach that an embryo is a human created in the image of God.

Information technology also raises questions about human nature in an unexpected way. Researchers believe that as computer technology advances, we will begin to analyze the human mind in physical terms. In *The Society of Mind*, Marvin Minsky, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that "the mind, the soul, the self, are not a singly ghostly entity but a society of agents, deeply integrated, yet each one rather mindless on its own." [\[22\]](#) He dreams of being able ultimately to reduce mind (and therefore human nature) to natural mechanism. Obviously this is not an empirical statement, but a metaphysical one that attempts to reduce everything (including mind) to matter.

Will we some day elevate computers to the level of humanity? One article asked the question, Would an Intelligent Computer Have a “Right to Life?”[\[23\]](#) Granting computer rights might be something society might consider since many are already willing to grant certain rights to animals.

In a sense the question is whether an intelligent computer would have a soul and therefore access to fundamental human rights. As bizarre as the question may sound, it was no doubt inevitable. When 17th century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz first described a thinking machine, he was careful to point out that this machine would not have a soul—fearful perhaps of reaction from the church. Already scientists predict that computer intelligence will create “an intelligence beyond man’s” and provide wonderful new capabilities.[\[25\]](#) One of the great challenges in the future will be how to manage new computing power that will outstrip human intelligence.

Once again this is a challenge for Christians in the 21 st century. Human beings are more than just proteins and nucleic acids. Human being are more than bits and bytes. We are created in the image of God and therefore have a spiritual dimension. Perhaps this must be our central message to a world enamored with technology: human beings are created in the image of God and must be treated with dignity and respect.

Notes

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Not a Threat: The

Contributions of Christianity to Western Society

Rick Wade provides a solid argument for the beneficial contributions of Christianity to Western culture in the areas of science, human freedom, morality, and healthcare.

What If You'd Never Been Born?

Do you remember this scene in the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*?

GEORGE (cont'd): Look, who are you?

CLARENCE (patiently): I told you, George. I'm your guardian angel. [George, still looking at him, goes up to him and pokes his arm. It's flesh.]

GEORGE: Yeah, yeah, I know. You told me that. What else are you? What . . . are you a hypnotist?

CLARENCE: No, of course not.

GEORGE: Well then, why am I seeing all these strange things?

CLARENCE: Don't you understand, George? It's because you were not born.

GEORGE: Then if I wasn't born, who am I?

CLARENCE: You're nobody. You have no identity. [George rapidly searches his pockets for identification, but without success.]

GEORGE: What do you mean, no identity? My name's George Bailey.

CLARENCE: There is no George Bailey. You have no papers, no cards, no driver's license, no 4-F card, no insurance policy . . . (he says these things as George searches for them) [George

looks in his watch pocket.]

CLARENCE (cont'd): They're not there, either.

GEORGE: What?

CLARENCE: Zuzu's petals. [George feverishly continues to turn his pockets inside out.]

CLARENCE (cont'd): You've been given a great gift, George. A chance to see what the world would be like without you.[{1}](#)

Do you remember George Bailey's encounter with Clarence the angel? George didn't think life was worth living, and it was Clarence's job to show him he was wrong. To do so, he showed George what Bedford Falls would have been like if George had never been born.

In desperation, George races through town looking for something familiar. After observing him for a little while, Clarence utters this bit of wisdom: "Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives, and when he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"[{2}](#) Inspired by the plot of *It's a Wonderful Life*, in 1994 D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe wrote a book titled *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*[{3}](#) The authors determined to show what the world would be like if, like George Bailey, Jesus had never been born.

Christianity has come under attack from many different directions. It is often derided as the great boogeyman of human civilization. It is presented as an oppressive force with no regard for the higher aspirations of humankind. To throw off its shackles is the way of wisdom.

Kennedy quotes Friederich Nietzsche, a nineteenth century philosopher whose ideas continue to have a profound effect on our society. Said Nietzsche: "I condemn Christianity; I bring against the Christian Church the most terrible of all the

accusations that an accuser has ever had in his mouth. It is, to me, the greatest of all imaginable corruptions; it seeks to work the ultimate corruption, the worst possible corruption. The Christian Church has left nothing untouched by its depravity; it has turned every value into worthlessness, and every truth into a lie, and every integrity into baseness of soul.”[\[4\]](#)

This article will—we hope^¾show just how beneficial Christianity has been, even for its critics. Drawing from Kennedy and Newcombe’s book in addition to other literature, we will examine the impact of Christian beliefs on society. The four areas we’ll consider are science, human freedom, morality, and healthcare. A theme which will run throughout this discussion is the high value Christianity places on human beings. Far from being a source of oppression, the message of Christ serves to heal, set free, and provide protective boundaries.

Contributions to Science

Perhaps the area in which Christianity has been the most vociferously attacked in this century has been the area of science. Religion and science are thought by many to be like oil and water; the two simply don’t mix. Religion is thought to offer superstition while science offers facts.

It would seem, however, that those who make such a charge haven’t given much attention to the history of science. In their book, *The Soul of Science*,[\[5\]](#) authors Nancy Pearcey and Charles Thaxton make a case for the essential role Christianity played in the development of science. The authors point out four general ways Christianity has positively influenced its development.[\[6\]](#)

First, Christianity provided important presuppositions of science. The Bible teaches that nature is real, not an illusion. It teaches that it has value and that it is good to

work with nature. Historically this was an advance over pagan superstitions because the latter saw nature as something to be worshipped or as something filled with spirits which weren't to be angered. As one theologian wrote, "Nature was thus abruptly desacralized, stripped of many of its arbitrary, unpredictable, and doubtless terrifying aspects."[{7}](#)

Also, because it was created by God in an orderly fashion, nature is lawful and can be understood. That is, it follows discernible patterns which can be trusted not to change. "As the creation of a trustworthy God, nature exhibited regularity, dependability, and orderliness. It was intelligible and could be studied. It displayed a knowable order."[{8}](#)

Second, Christianity sanctioned science. Science "was justified as a means of alleviating toil and suffering."[{9}](#) With animistic and pantheistic cultures, God and nature were so closely related that man, being a part of nature, was incapable of transcending it, that is, of gaining any real control over it. A Christian worldview, however, gave man the freedom to subject nature to his needs-with limitations, of course-because man relates primarily to God who is over nature. Technology-or science applied-was developed to meet human needs as an expression of our God-given duty to one another. As one historian put it, "the Christian concept of moral obligation played an important role in attracting people to the study of nature."[{10}](#)

Third, Christianity provided motives for pursuing scientific knowledge. As scientists learned more about the wonders of the universe, they saw God's glory being displayed.

Fourth, Christianity "played a role in regulating scientific methodology."[{11}](#) Previously, the world was thought to work in perfectly rational ways which could be known primarily through logical deduction. But this approach to science didn't work. Planets don't have to orbit in circular patterns as some

people concluded using deductive logic; of course, it was discovered by investigation that they didn't. A newer way of understanding God's creation put the emphasis on God's will. Since God's will couldn't be simply deduced through logical reasoning, experimentation and investigation were necessary. This provided a particular theological grounding for empirical science.

The fact is that it was distinctly Christian beliefs which provided the intellectual and moral foundations for the study of nature and for its application through technology. Thus, although Christianity and some scientists or scientific theories might be in opposition, Christianity and science are not.

Contributions to Human Freedom

One of the favorite criticisms of Christianity is that it inhibits freedom. When Christians oppose funding pornography masquerading as art, for example, we're said to be unfairly restricting freedom of expression. When Christians oppose the radical, gender feminism which exalts personal fulfillment over all other social obligations, and which calls for the tearing down of God-given moral structures in favor of "choice" as a moral guide, we're accused of oppression.

The problem is that people now see freedom not as self-determination, but as self-determination unhindered by any outside standard of morality. Some go so far in their zeal for self-expression that they expect others to assist them in the process, such as pornographic artists who expect government funding.

There are at least two general factors which limit or define freedom. One we might call the "rules of the game." The other is our nature.

The concert violinist is able to play a concerto because she

knows the “rules of the game.” In other words, she knows what the musical notation means. She knows how to produce the right sounds from the violin and when to produce them. She might want the “freedom” to make whatever sounds she wishes in whatever key and whatever beat, but who would want to listen? Similarly, as part of God’s universe, we need to operate according to the rules of the game. He knows how life on earth is best lived, so we need to live according to His will and design.

Our nature also structures our freedom. A fish can try to express its freedom by living on dry land, but it won’t be free long; it won’t be alive long! We, too, are truly free only in so far as we live according to our nature-not our fallen nature, but our nature as created by God. This is really another way of looking at the “rules of the game” idea. But it’s necessary to give it special focus because some of the “freedoms” we desire go against our nature, such as the freedom some want to engage in homosexual activity.

Some people see Christianity as a force which tries to inhibit proper expression of who we are. But it is the idea of helping people attain the freedom to be and do as God intended that has fueled much Christian activity over the years. For example, Christians were actively engaged in the battle against slavery because of their high view of man as made in God’s image.[{12}](#)

Another example is feminism. Radical feminists complain that Christianity has been an oppressive force over women. But it seems to have escaped their notice that Christianity made significant steps in elevating women above the place they held before Christ came.[{13}](#)

While it is true that women have often been truly oppressed throughout history, even by Christian men, it is false that Christianity itself is oppressive toward them. In fact, in an article titled “Women of Renewal: A Statement” published in

First Things, {14} such noted female scholars as Elizabeth Achtemeier, Roberta Hestenes, Frederica Mathewes-Green, and May Stewart Van Leeuwen stated unequivocally their acceptance of historic Christianity. And it's a sure thing that any of the signatories of this statement would be quite vocal in her opposition to real oppression!

The problem isn't that Christianity is opposed to freedom, but that it acknowledges the laws of our Creator who knows better than we do what is good for us. The doctrines of creation and redemption define for us our nature and our responsibilities to God. His "rules of the game" will always be oppressive to those who seek absolute self-determination. But as we'll see, it is by submitting to God that we make life worth living.

Contributions to Morality

Let's turn our attention to the issue of morality. Christians are often accused of trying to ram their morality down people's throats. In some instances this might accurately describe what some Christians have done. But for the most part, I believe, the criticism follows our simple declaration of what we believe is right and wrong and our participation in the political and social arenas to see such standards codified and enforced.

The question that needs to be answered is whether the high standards of morality taught in Scripture have served society well. Has Christianity served to make individuals and societies better and to provide a better way of life?

In a [previous article](#) I wrote briefly about the brutality that characterized Greco-Roman society in Jesus' day. {15} We often hear about the wondrous advances of that society; but do you know about the cruelty? The Roman games, in which "beasts fought men, men fought men; and the vast audience waited hopefully for the sight of death," {16} reveal the lust for blood. The practice of child exposure shows the low regard for

human life the Romans had. Unwanted babies were left to die on trash heaps. Some of these were taken to be slaves or prostitutes.[{17}](#) It was distinctly Christian beliefs that brought these practices to an end.

In the era following “the disruption of Charlemagne’s great empire”, it was the Latin Christian Church which “patiently and persistently labored to combat the forces of disintegration and decay,” and “succeeded little by little in restraining violence and in restoring order, justice, and decency.”[{18}](#)

The Vikings provide an example of how the gospel can positively affect a people group. Vikings were fierce plunderers who terrorized the coastlands of Europe. James Kennedy says that our word *berserk* comes from their fighting men who were called “berserkers.”[{19}](#) Gradually the teachings of Christ contributed to major changes in these people. In 1020 A.D., Christianity became law under King Olav. Practices “such as blood sacrifice, black magic, the ‘setting out’ of infants, slavery and polygamy” became illegal.[{20}](#)

In modern times, it was Christians who led the fight in England against slavery.[{21}](#) Also, it was the teaching of the Wesleys that was largely responsible for the social changes which prevented the social unrest which might have been expected in the Industrial Revolution.[{22}](#)

In an editorial published in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1986 titled “Religious Right Deserves Respect,”[{23}](#) Reo Christenson argues that conservative Christians have been vindicated with respect to their concerns about such things as drinking, the sexual revolution, and discipline in schools. He says that “if anybody’s values have been vindicated over the last 20 years, it is theirs.” He concludes with this comment: “The Religious Right is not always wrong.”

To go against God’s moral standards is destructive to

individuals and societies. In a column which ran in the *Dallas Morning News* following the shootings at Columbine High School, [{24}](#) a junior at Texas A&M University asks hard questions of her parents' generation including these: "Why have you neglected to teach us values and morals? Why haven't you lived moral lives that we could model our own after?" [{25}](#)

Why indeed! In time, our society will see the folly of its ways by the destruction it is bringing on itself. Let's pray that it happens sooner rather than later.

Contributions to Healthcare

Healthcare is another area where Christianity has made a positive impact on society. Christians have not only been involved in healthcare; they've often been at the forefront in serving the physical health of people.

Although some early Christians believed that disease came from God, so that trying to cure the sick would be going against God's will, the opposite impulse was also seen in those who saw the practice of medicine as an exercise of Christian charity. [{26}](#)

God had already shown His concern for the health of His people through the laws given through Moses. In his book, *The Story of Medicine*, Roberto Margotta says that the Hebrews made an important contribution to medicine by their knowledge of personal hygiene given in the book of Leviticus. In fact, he says, "the steps taken in mediaeval Europe to counteract the spread of 'leprosy' were straight out of the Bible." [{27}](#)

Of course, it was Jesus' concern for suffering that provided the primary motivation for Christians to engage in healthcare. In the Middle Ages, for examples, monks provided physical relief to the people around them. Some monasteries became infirmaries. "The best-known of these," says Margotta, "belonged to the Swiss monastery of St Gall which had been

founded in 720 by an Irish monk; . . . medicines were made up by the monks themselves from plants grown in the herb garden. Help was always readily available for the sick who came to the doors of the monastery. In time, the monks who devoted themselves to medicine emerged from their retreats and started visiting the sick in their own homes." Monks were often better doctors than their lay counterparts and were in great demand.{28}

Christians played a significant role in the establishment of hospitals. In 325 A.D., the Council of Nicea "decreed that hospitals were to be duly established wherever the Church was established," says James Kennedy.{29} He notes that the hospital built by St. Basil of Caesarea in 370 even treated lepers who previously had been isolated.{30}

In the United States, the early hospitals were "framed and motivated by the responsibilities of Christian stewardship." {31} They were originally established to help the poor sick, but weren't intended to provide long-term care lest they become like the germ- infested almshouses.

A key factor in making long-term medical care possible was the "professionalization of nursing" because of higher standards of sanitation.{32} Before the 16th century, religious motivations were key in providing nursing for the sick. Anne Summers says that the willingness to fracture family ties to serve others, a disciplined lifestyle, and "a sense of heavenly justification," all of which came from Christian beliefs, undergirded ministry to the sick.{33} Even if the early nursing orders didn't achieve their own sanitation goals, "they were, nevertheless, often reaching higher sanitary standards than those previously known to the sick poor." {34}

There is much more that could be told about the contributions of Christianity to society, including the stories of Florence Nightingale, whose nursing school in London began modern

nursing, and who saw herself as being in the service of God; or of the establishment of the Red Cross through the zeal of an evangelical Christian; or of the modern missions movement which continues to see Christian medical professionals devote their lives to the needs of the suffering in some of the darkest parts of the world.^{35} It is obvious that in the area of medicine, as in a number of others, Christians have made a major contribution. Thus, those who deride Christianity as being detrimental are either tremendously biased in their thinking or are ignorant of history.

Notes

1. Downloaded from the Internet at http://www.clarence.com/iawl/script/script_19.html on May 11, 1999.
2. Downloaded from the Internet at http://www.clarence.com/iawl/script/script_20.html on May 11, 1999.
3. D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994).
4. Ibid., 5.
5. Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994).
6. Pearcey and Thaxton, 36-37. Taken from John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 19-33.
7. Pearcey and Thaxton, 25.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 36.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 36-37.
12. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v. "Christianity."
13. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 376.
14. "Women of Renewal: A Statement," *First Things* No. 80

(February 1998): 36-40.

15. Rick Wade, ["The World of the Apostle Paul."](#)

16. Will Durant, *The History of Civilization: Part III, Caesar and Christ: A History of Roman Civilization and of Christianity from their beginnings to A.D. 325* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1944), 133-34.

17. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 72.

18. Joseph Reither, *World History at a Glance* (New York: The New Home Library, 1942), 144; quoted in Kennedy, 165.

19. Kennedy and Newcombe, 164.

20. Sverre Steen, *Langsomt ble Landet vaart Eget* (Oslo, Norway: J.W. Cappelens Forlag, 1967), 52-53, quoted in Kennedy, 164-65. See also *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Scandinavia, History of."

21. Earl Cairns, *The Christian in Society: Biblical and Historical*

Precepts for Involvement Today (Chicago; Moody Press, 1973), 78-91.

22. Ibid., 67.

23. Reo M. Christenson, "Religious Right Deserves Respect," *Chicago Tribune*, September 1986.

24. Littleton, Colorado. Two young men killed 12 students and a teacher, and then killed themselves.

25. Marcy Musgrave, "Generation has some questions," *Dallas Morning News*, 2 May 1999.

26. Irvine Loudon, ed., *Western Medicine: An Illustrated History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 55.

27. Roberto Margotta, *The Story of Medicine*, ed. Paul Lewis (New York: Golden Press, 1968), 36. Referenced in Kennedy, 142.

28. Margotta, 117-18.

29. Kennedy, 145.

30. Ibid., 146. From Margotta, 102.

31. Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Care of Strangers: The Rise of America's Hospital System* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 8. From Kennedy, 147.

32. Kennedy, 148. Quote is from Rosenberg, 8.

33. Anne Summers, "Nurses and Ancillaries in the Christian Era," chap. 12 in *Western Medicine: An Illustrated History*, 134.

34. Ibid.

35. See Kennedy, 149-154.

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Why A Moral Life Won't Get Us to Heaven

Will a good, moral life get me to heaven? The answer is no, and Probe's Jimmy Williams spells out why, including how we CAN get to heaven.

Man: The Worshiping Animal

This essay is concerned with the often-asked question, "Won't a good, moral life get me to heaven?"

We begin first with the nature of man himself. One of the most remarkable things about humans is that from the dawn of history, and no matter where we find them on this planet, they are *worshipping* animals. In fact, humans are the *only* animals in the world who worship. *Homo Sapiens* is incurably religious. Why is man so inclined? What are the reasons, and how do they bear on our question about having good morals and getting to heaven?

Let's look briefly at some foundational elements that appear to be universals when it comes to human behavior. The first, as we stated above, is simply that humans *do* worship. Ethnic

groups of all kinds and in all places, whether remote or close to other peoples, have their own history, folklore, deities, rituals, particular moral system and life-customs. All of these enable each culture to cope with the great issues of life and its passages—from childhood to maturity to old age, and to the ultimate passage through that dark gate, Death. Christians tie this human inclination to worship directly to the fact that God says man, and only man, is created in His divine image (*imago dei*).

Secondly, what is also curious is *how* and *what* humans worship. The most prominent feature of human worship from earliest beginnings has been a *sacrifice* of some sort, whether the sheep, goats or bulls of the early Mediterranean world, or the human beings hurled into the mouths of volcanos by the Polynesians, or the child sacrifices of the Canaanites, or the ritual slaughter practiced by the Aztecs, the Incas, and virtually all of the New World Indians. In all cases, it appears some kind of blood must flow. We can also add to this (in many cultures) the prominence of *self-sacrifice* through flagellation, severe asceticism, or acts of personal penance.

The centrality of sacrifice in all human religious thinking points to an unmistakable reality: that humans instinctively know, or at least suspect, that there exists One to whom they are accountable for their behavior. They also assume, or know, that they have fallen short of what that higher being (or beings) requires of them. There is a universal sense that “God is not pleased with me.” So a third feature of worship is universal *guilt*. People worship because they feel guilty. They feel this guilt because they perceive they have fallen short of the standard that God, others, and they themselves require.

The Great Global Heresy: Religion

“Good little boys go to heaven and bad little boys go to hell!” Probably most of us, at one time or another, have undergone the ordeal of having a parent or a teacher point a

finger at us (or a neighboring miscreant) and warn of the ultimate outcome of unacceptable behavior.

This “Santa Claus” mentality suggests that God is “makin’ a list and checkin’ it twice, gonna find out who’s naughty or nice.”

Everywhere we turn, we hear people speak of this religion: it is the most popular approach to God on the planet. We all know about the good little angel sitting on one shoulder and the bad little angel on the other. And we are very familiar with jokes about what happens to the person who dies and is immediately face to face with Saint Peter at the Golden Gates of Heaven. Peter stands there ready to evaluate and pass judgement on whether we’ve been good enough to be admitted and accepted inside. Saint Peter expects us to give moral account of ourselves before we can go inside.

The general, world-wide assumption is that, when we die, our good deeds and our bad deeds will be placed on the divine scales and weighed to determine if we go “up” or “down.” However, from Christianity’s viewpoint, this is a great, global heresy.

This is “religion,” but it is definitely not Christianity. In fact, Christianity is radically opposed to such an idea, teaching us that we are not to *do* something, but rather that something has already been *done* on our behalf. This global heresy, which we call “religion,” actually comes from Hinduism. It is the idea that God resides at the top of a great mountain, and it makes little difference which path a seeker chooses in his ascent up that mountain, since all paths lead to the God on top. And it is up to you to climb if you want to reach the summit—and God.

At the western end of the Forum in ancient Rome, there stood the *Millenarium Aureum*, the Golden Milestone, a gilded bronze column set up by Augustus Caesar to mark the junction and the

origin of the major Roman roads spreading out like the spokes of a great wheel in every direction to distant destinations throughout the Empire. On this column were inscribed the major towns and their distances from Rome. From this came the popular saying, "All roads lead to Rome."

This is what religionists believe about God. They say things like, "Well, it really doesn't matter what you believe. What's important is that you try to do your best and be sincere about it. After all, we're all trying to get to the same place; we all worship the same God."

But in the Genesis account of Adam and Eve, we encounter something very different: in fact, we discover that there are *two* possible approaches to God, but only *one* is acceptable. After Adam and Eve had disobeyed God, they immediately hid in the bushes, took out needle and thread, and began sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves.

God came and found them in the bushes—flunking the first home economics course ever offered! God looked at the clusters of fig leaves they had hastily sewn together, and He was not pleased. In fact, He scolded their efforts and their conduct. Adam and Eve not only had to admit their guilt and disobedience, they also had to acknowledge their inability to make things right *through their own efforts*. They could not cover, or atone, for what they had done. The account goes on to say that God had to take the initiative to adequately clothe them. He killed some animals and made garments from their skins for a covering.

All philosophy, philanthropy, asceticism, religion, ethics, and all other systems which seek to gain the approval of God through human self-effort are the "fig-leaf" approach. This method is at the heart of what we call "religion," man's best effort to reach up and find God. But the problem every worshipper encounters when climbing the mountain is an impenetrable barrier which denies all further advance: it is

the barrier of God's holiness and perfection. Each individual's personal sin and imperfection prevents him or her from coming any closer.

In his autobiography *Mahatma Gandhi*, a devout Hindu, speaks eloquently of his own struggle with this when he says: "Oh wretched man that I am. It is a constant source of torture to me that I am so far from the one I know to be my very life and being, and I know that it is my own sin and wretchedness that hides Him from me."

The Problem of Sin

When the word "sin" comes up in a conversation, most people look as though someone just slipped them a mildewed fig! We *do* a lot of it; we just don't like to *talk* about it! Many people do not know what sin or a sinner really is. What is sin? Sin is a violation of the law, the standard God requires of every human. A sinner is therefore someone who has broken that standard.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that there is no good at all in people. There is a great deal of good. Humans are not as bad as they *could* be. The point is simply this: if our premise is that to get to heaven one has to be good, then how good is good enough?

The Scriptures are quite clear about this. God is not demanding "goodness." We saw above that Adam and Eve's best efforts to cover themselves (fig leaves) were not enough. The good which is in man, all his moral achievement, is not acceptable to God—because God is not demanding goodness, He demands *perfection!*

Many will say they try to live by the Ten Commandments or by some other rule of life, such as the Golden Rule. And yet, if we are honest, each of us discovers we have violated our own standards at some point. This is what Paul meant when he said,

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

The Grand Canyon is 6 to 18 miles across, 276 miles long, and one mile deep. The world’s record in the long jump, set by Mike Powell at the 1991 World Championships in Tokyo is 29’ 4 1/2”. Yet the chances of a person jumping from one side of the Grand Canyon to the other are greater than that of someone attempting to establish fellowship with God through his own efforts.

The standard man must meet is God’s perfection. Who can match that? It is a goal so far away that *no one* could ever reach it. To make matters worse, James tells us that “whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all” (James 2:10). This means if someone breaks just one of the commandments, he is as guilty as if he had broken all ten!

The purpose of giving the Ten Commandments in the first place was not because God knew human beings would keep them perfectly. The Bible tells us that these revealed standards were intended to be to us what an X-ray machine is to a broken arm. The machine reveals the *condition* of the arm, but it will not set and knit the bones, nor will it put the arm in a cast. By the same token, the Ten Commandments can only reveal to us the condition of our lives; they cannot heal us or cover our sin.

The Pharisees looked at the Law and then at their own lives and said, “I’m pretty good, really good.” Jesus had wanted them to come to the opposite conclusion. He even called them hypocrites! He said they were wrong to claim they were righteous enough and that all was well between them and their Maker. That is why he said, “Those who are well do not need a physician” (Matthew 9:12). When you are well, you don’t seek a doctor. The time to consult a physician is when you realize you are sick. Jesus was urging the Pharisees to be honest

about themselves when He said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (v.13).

When my wife Carol and I travel, and I discover I'm lost, I really hate for her to make her classic statement, "You're lost. Why don't you ask for directions?" In my case, the issue is always my male pride! With the Pharisees, it was *religious* pride, as it is for all who would seek heaven on the basis of their own merits.

A wise old Baptist preacher once said, "It isn't difficult to get people saved; it is difficult to get them lost!" This is man's dilemma: like the Pharisees, people cling to the old fig leaves of self-effort instead of submitting to the covering God Himself has provided for all (Christ's sacrificial death, the Cross). Each of us must choose one or the other (John 3:18, 36).

The Problem of Righteousness

While morality and human goodness are to be commended, God makes it clear from the very outset that no one, through his own efforts, possesses the ability to make himself presentable before God. It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon who said, "Man is basically a silkworm. A spinner and a weaver ... trying to clothe himself ... but the silkworm's activity spins it a shroud. So it is with man." Adam and Eve are classic examples.

Our problem is not only that we have fallen short of God's standard (Romans 3:23), by sinning; we also *lack* something. We not only need the removal of personal sin through blood sacrifice to satisfy divine *justice*; we need something *further* to make us fit for heaven and the divine presence of God. In other words, Christ's death in our place will keep us out of hell—but we still have the problem of getting into heaven. Isaiah spoke of this when he said, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and **all our righteous deeds** are as **filthy rags**." (Isaiah 64:6). Not our *sins*, but our good *deeds*!

We need not only atonement for our sins, we also need righteousness to enter heaven! But it has to be a certain *kind* of righteousness.

The most righteous people of Jesus' day were the Pharisees. They knew the Old Testament by heart. They went to the synagogue three times a day and prayed seven times a day. They were respected in the community. But Jesus looked right through their religious veneer and, in their presence, admonished the crowds that "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

The crowds responded by staring at each other in bewilderment. "You mean the Pharisees aren't righteous enough to go to heaven? If *they* can't make it, who will?"

In the Garden of Eden we observe this conflict between two *kinds* of righteousness—*human righteousness*, which is clearly symbolized by the fig leaf garments Adam and Eve sewed together to make themselves presentable before God, and *divine righteousness*, which is symbolized by the adequate covering of the slain animals provided by God Himself. We find these two kinds of righteousness marching and clashing with each other all the way through both Testaments.

Paul referred to these same two righteousnesses when he said of his Jewish brethren, "I bear them witness, that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and *seeking to establish their own*, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:1).

In the former Soviet Union, rubles are printed and circulated. With those rubles you can buy your dinner, pay your hotel bill, and purchase things in the shops. But if you brought those rubles back to America and tried to do the same thing, the rubles would not be honored. It would be futile to try to

do business with rubles in America.

Let's think of these two righteousnesses in mathematical terms. Let's call God's righteousness "+R" and human righteousness "-R." The first righteousness is *absolute*, while the second is *relative*. Over a lifetime, a human being can accumulate a huge pile of -R, but added up, it still totals -R. To do business with God in heaven, we must deal with Him in the only "currency" honored and accepted by Him, and that is +R. It is futile to try to negotiate with God on the basis of relative, human goodness. We need +R.

Where do we get such "currency?" It is *given* to us as a gift if we will accept it—the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. The yardstick God uses to measure everyone is His Son. This +R righteousness is ours only in Christ: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

This gracious provision is a radical departure from all other religious ideas humans have ever conceived or set forth. It is so radical that human beings would never have thought of it.

The Uniqueness of Christian Grace

We have sought to arrive at a biblical answer to the question, "Will a good, moral life get me to heaven?" We have examined the bankruptcy of every attempt by people to reach that goal through any and every means of self-effort. We have discovered that the salvation offered by Christianity is uniquely opposed to all human efforts to secure it by working one's way into God's good graces. In fact, if God expected us to attain our salvation through good deeds, then God made a terrible mistake. He allowed His only-begotten Son to come to earth—robed in human flesh—and die a horrible death on a cross for our personal, eternal benefit. To choose a "good works" path to God is to negate the total significance of Christ's

death, making it meaningless and unnecessary.

What God has to offer is free. It is a gift that is not deserved by any of us, nor could we ever repay what the gift is worth. God has dealt with humankind in grace and love. The only thing that God has asked us to do is to humbly admit that we have broken His laws, acknowledge that He has indeed made things right through His Son's sacrificial death on the cross, and accept His forgiveness by faith. We are invited to lay aside our own "fig-leaf" costumes and freely submit to the covering God has provided for us, the blood-stained garment of His Son, the very righteousness of Christ.

This is what Jesus sought to communicate in Matthew 22:1-14, the parable about the wedding feast that a king was preparing to give his son: "So the servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, *both good and bad*: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he said unto him, 'Friend, how came you here not having on a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!'"

The text does not tell us whether this person was one of the "good" ones or the "bad" ones. Why? Because it is irrelevant to what Jesus wants us to understand. The important issue was proper *attire* for the occasion. God is telling us that the only acceptable attire for heaven is the righteousness of Christ.

As a gracious host, He stands holding out to humanity the most expensive, costly garment in the universe, and He eagerly desires to wrap us up in it—safe and warm and happy and secure:

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful

in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." (Isaiah 61:10).

So how does this apply to you and me? Simply this: Everything that *needed* to be done for your salvation and mine was *accomplished* the moment Christ died on the cross. The penalty has been paid and God's righteous demands satisfied. God is now free to extend eternal life as a free gift. He declares, "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Gifts, of course, must be received. For that reason, Jesus said, "He who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). "Believe" means "to trust or depend on." God is asking each person to come to Him as a sinner, recognize that His Son died on the cross of us, and trust His Son *alone* as our only hope of heaven.

This was the message, the good news which the first Christians took to the world: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

In reality, every human being is just a prayer away from receiving the grace and forgiveness of God and the promise of heaven. But it has to be the *right* prayer, based on the *right* facts: that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, not "Do-Gooders": "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners" (Matthew 9:13). You can begin to trust Christ for your salvation today instead of your own, futile efforts of trying to be a fairly nice person all your life. Obviously, your heart attitude, your sincerity, is what really counts. God knows your heart. But if the following suggested prayer will help to bring a sense of closure and certainty to your decision to believe in, to trust Christ, then please feel free to use it as a simple guide:

“Dear God, I admit that I am a sinner, and nothing I can do will ever get me to heaven. But I believe Jesus Christ died for me and rose from the grave to prove the validity of His claim to be my Savior. He took my place and my punishment. So right now, I place my trust in Christ alone to make me presentable and acceptable to you. Come into my life. I accept the gift of your Son. Thank you that you are now within me, not based upon my feelings, but upon your promise that if I open the door of my life and invite you to come live within me and be my Savior, you would (Rev. 3:20, John 1:12). Make me the kind of person you want me to be. Begin to show me that you really have entered my life and heart, and now give me the guidance I need to live a new life in fellowship with you. Amen.”

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The Relevance of Christianity: An Apologetic

Rick Wade develops and defends the relevancy of Christianity, encouraging believers to find points of contact with an unbelieving world.

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

Christianity and Human Experience

In his book, *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths*, theologian Alister McGrath tells about his friend's stamp-collecting hobby. His friend, he says, “is perfectly capable of telling me everything I could possibly want to know about the watermarks of stamps issued during the reign of

Queen Victoria by the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago. And while I have no doubt about the truth of what he is telling me, I cannot help but feel that it is an utter irrelevance to my life.”[\[1\]](#)

Christianity strikes many people the same way, McGrath says. They simply see no need for a religion that is 2000 years old and has had its day. How is it relevant to them?

One of the duties of Christian apologetics is that of making a case for the faith. We can prepare ourselves for such opportunities by memorizing many facts about our faith, such as evidences for the reliability of the Bible and the truth of the resurrection. We can learn logical arguments such as those for the existence of God or the logical consistency of Christian doctrines. While these are important components, such things can seem very remote from people today. They will not do much good in our apologetics if people are not listening.

This is why some Christian thinkers are now saying that before we can show Christianity to be *credible*, we must first make it *plausible*. In other words, we must get people’s attention first by bringing Christianity—at least in *their* thinking—into the position of being possibly true.[\[2\]](#) We need to find those points of contact with people that will encourage them to want to listen.

Why do we need to begin at such a basic level? A few reasons come to mind. First, many people think religion has nothing important to say regarding our public activities. So, in our daily lives religion is only allowed a minor role at best. This attitude quickly affects how we view our private lives as well. Second, many people hold that science is the only worthwhile source of meaningful knowledge. This often—although not necessarily—leads to a naturalistic worldview or at least causes people to think like naturalists. Scientism and naturalism seem to go hand-in-hand. Thus, in order to get a

person's attention, the first step we might need to take is to show him how Christianity applies to his life's experience.[{3}](#)

Even though we are physically better off because of our scientific knowledge applied through various technologies, are we better off all around than before we had such things? I am not deriding the benefit of science and technology; I am simply wondering about our spiritual and moral health. Our society is trying to find itself. This is clearly seen in current debates over important ethical and social issues. At the root of our culture wars is the question, Who are we, and what are we to be about? The age-old questions continue to haunt us: Where did I come from? Why am I here? What am I supposed to be doing? Where am I going? With the loss of his exalted place in the universe following the loss of a Christian world view, man now wonders what his place is. Am I significant in a universe that sees me as just one more piece of cosmic dust? Is there any intrinsic meaning to my existence? Or must I determine for myself what my place and role will be?

In addition to apologetic arguments from logic and factual evidence, we should also be prepared to answer questions such as these. We need to let people know that in Christ are found answers to the major issues of life. By doing this, we can engage people where they really live. We can show them that God is not some abstract force separated from the concerns of life, but "is intimately related to personal and human needs."[{4}](#) As one writer put it, "God must be shown to be necessitated or justified by *practical* or *existential* thinking."[{5}](#)

In this article I will address these three issues: meaning, morality, and hope.[{7}](#) offers and contrast it with the Christian view.

The Matter of Meaning

Let us begin with the matter of *meaning*. The question What is the meaning of life? might not be one which most people give serious attention to. But a similar question is often heard, namely, What's the *point*? When we look for the significance or the point of our activities, we are wondering about their meaning. Reflective individuals carry this idea further, wondering What's the point—or what is the *meaning*—of it *all*? Although many people would argue that life *has* no ultimate meaning, most people seem to expect it to. We search for it in creativity, in helping others, in “finding ourselves,” and in a variety of other ways.

The question of meaning encompasses other questions: Where did I come from? What is the significance of the experiences of my life? What is my overall purpose, and what should I be doing? Where is all this heading?

The prevailing view in the West today, for all practical purposes, is naturalism. This is not only the prevailing philosophy on college campuses, but we have all been encouraged by the successes of science to believe that if something is not scientific, it is not reliable. Since science investigates the natural order, we tend to see nature as all that is really important, or even as all that exists. This is called scientific reductionism.

However, the scientific method is capable of dealing only with quantitative matters: How much? How big? How far? How fast? Philosopher Huston Smith has argued that, for all the achievements of science, it is incapable of speaking to such important issues as values, purpose, meaning, and quality.[\[8\]](#)

This focus on science is not meant to pick on this discipline, but to point out that science cannot give answers to some of the major issues of life. Moreover, if we go so far as to adopt naturalism as a world view, we are really in a bind, for

naturalism *has* no answers to give, at least to the question of ultimate meaning. Naturalism says there was no purpose for our coming into being; the only meaning we can have now is that which we superimpose on our own lives; and we are all just going back to the dust. If the universe is just a chance accident in space and time; if living beings intrinsically are nothing more than just so many molecules, no matter how marvelously arranged; if human beings are merely cousins to trees, trapped on a planet caught somewhere "between immensity and eternity," as Carl Sagan said; then there is no meaning to life that we ourselves do not give to it. Being finite, we are by nature incapable of providing ultimate meaning.

If we should seek to establish our *own* meanings, what is to guide us? By what shall we measure such things? What if that which is meaningful to me is offensive to you? Furthermore, what if the goals we pursue are not capable of bearing the meaning we try to put into them? Many people strive to move up the ladder, to attain the power and prestige that they think will fulfill them, only to find that it's not all it's cracked up to be. The possession of material goods defines many of our lives. But how much is enough? Does the one with the most toys when he dies really win? Or, as some have said, is it simply that the one who dies with the most toys . . . still dies?

Thus, there is no ultimate meaning in a universe without God, and our attempts at providing our own limited meanings often leave us looking for more.

If naturalism is true, we should be able to shake off the fantasies of our past and give up worrying about questions of ultimate meaning. However, we continue to look for something bigger than ourselves, something that will give our lives meaning. Christianity provides the explanation. We are drawn toward the One who created us and imbues our lives with meaning as part of His purposes. We are significant in ourselves because He made us, and there is meaning in our daily activities because that is the context in which we work

out His ambitions for us and our world. Recognizing the true God opens to us the reality of value and meaning. The meaning of life is found when we find our place in God's world.

The Matter of Morality

In his book, *Can Man Live Without God*, apologist Ravi Zacharias makes this bold assertion: "Antitheism provides every reason to be immoral and is bereft of any objective point of reference with which to condemn any choice. Any antitheist who lives a moral life merely lives better than his or her philosophy warrants." [\[9\]](#) What a bold thing to say! Is Zacharias saying that all atheists (or antitheists, as he calls them) are immoral? Not at all. But he is saying that atheism itself makes no provision for fixed moral standards.

One very important aspect of being human is morality. A basic understanding of the concept of right and wrong or good and bad is fixed in our nature. We constantly evaluate actions and events—and even people—as good or bad or, in some cases, neither. These are moral evaluations. They are significant for our personal choices, and they are critical to our participation in society.

In our culture today naturalism is the reigning public philosophy. Even if many people claim to believe in God, practical naturalism (or atheism) is the rule of the day. Regarding morality, the general attitude seems to be that there is no moral code to which we all are subject. We say in effect, I'll choose my morality, and you choose yours. But if Zacharias is correct, naturalism (or atheism) provides no solid foundation even for personal morality.

The question we might pose to an atheist (which could be directed at a practical atheist as well) is this: How do you justify your own actions? To that question the atheist could simply answer that he has need no for justification apart from his own desires and needs. While I think it is possible to

argue that naturalism cannot be trusted to provide a moral compass—even for one’s own needs—we can bring the real issue to the fore more quickly by asking two questions: How do you justify your moral outrage at the actions of others in any given instance? and, Do you expect others to take your objections seriously? To expect someone to take my objections to his behavior seriously, I must presuppose a moral standard that stands in authority above us all, unless, of course, I think that I *myself* am that standard. But what does that do to his right to determine his *own* morality? The atheist sometimes wants to have it both ways. He wants to be his own standard-maker. But is he willing to give this privilege to others?

Now, some atheist might respond that, of course, as a culture we have to have laws in order to live together peacefully. Individuals are not free to do anything they please; they have to obey the laws of society. The well-known humanist philosopher Paul Kurtz believes that “education, reason, science and democratic methods of persuasion” are adequate for establishing our norms.[\[10\]](#) But there are educated people who hold different beliefs. Intelligent reason has led people to different conclusions. Science can not instruct us in morality. And in a society where there are a variety of opinions about what is right and wrong, how do we know which opinion is correct? Simple majority rule? Sometimes the minority is in the right, as the issue of civil rights has shown. No, Kurtz’s reason, education, science, and democracy will not do by themselves. They need to be informed by a higher law.

Besides all this, Kurtz has certain presupposed ideas about the proper end of our laws. For example, does furthering the human race mean giving everyone an equal opportunity? Or does it mean joining with Hitler and seeking to exterminate the weak and inferior?

Naturalism provides no transcendent law that stands over all people at all times to which we can appeal to establish a

moral order. Nor is there a solid basis upon which to complain when we are wronged. Christianity, on the other hand, *does* provide a transcendent moral structure and specific moral laws that serve to both restrain us and protect us.

When the question of morality arises, atheists will often offer the rebuttal that Christian morality is apparently not sufficient to lead people into the “good life” because Christians have done some terrible things to other people (and to each other) over the years. While it is true that Christians have done some terrible things, there is nothing in Christianity that requires it, and there are definite commands not to do such things. The Christian who does evil goes against the religion he or she professes. The atheist, however, can justify almost any kind of activity since man becomes the measure of all things. Again, this does not mean that all or even most atheists lead blatantly immoral lives. It just means that they have no fixed point of reference by which to establish laws or to condemn the actions of others.

Christianity not only provides a moral structure and specific moral laws, it also provides for the power to do what is right. The atheist is left on his own to do what is right. Those who submit to God also have the Spirit to enable them to obey God’s moral law.

There is turmoil in our society today as we try to decide all over again what is good and what is evil. In our encounters with non-believers, by tapping into the need we all have for a moral structure suitable for both our preservation and our betterment, we can pave the way for their consideration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Matter of Hope

You have likely heard the expression “hope against hope.” It refers to those times when there is no hope in sight, yet we keep on hoping anyway. There is something within us—most of

us, anyway—which continues to see some possibility for good beyond a present crisis, or at least causes us to long for it.

As we consider the role human experience can play in apologetics, we should give serious attention to the question of hope because it quickly finds a home in our souls. Few of us have absolutely no hope. What worse state can we imagine than to have no hope at all? What we are more likely to see than no hope at all is hope in things that are not worthy. Nonetheless, the presence of hope in the darkest of places is something with which we are all familiar.

Nowadays, however, hope seems to be in short supply. In spite of all the glorious advances made in a number of areas of life, there is a prevailing mood of unease. Americans seem to be scrambling for something in which to put their confidence for the future.

For centuries the Western world found its hope in God, the One who was working out His purposes toward a glorious end. But by the early part of this century, naturalism had taken hold of the academy and then our social consciousness as well.

From there, people went in different directions in their thinking. Secular humanists took the optimistic route and declared their hope in mankind. They continue to do so in spite of the fact that, in this “enlightened” era, our means of advancing the cause of humanity include aborting the unborn and helping the desperate kill themselves. Education, reason, science, and democracy—the gods of humanism—have yet to give us any real cause for hope.

Other people have grown cynical. With nothing more to hope in than what they see around them, they have lost faith in everything. They do not trust anyone anymore; they doubt that anyone can be truly virtuous; and they have simply settled into hopelessness. [\[11\]](#) Still others of a more philosophical bent have been drawn to atheistic existentialism, the

philosophy of despair, which declares that God is dead and with Him that in which we once put our hope. [{12}](#)

A good illustration of someone trying to find something positive in the loss of hope in the Christian God is found in Albert Camus' novel, *The Stranger*. [{13}](#) The protagonist, Meursault, winds up in jail for the senseless murder of a man on a beach. After his trial, as he is awaiting either an appeal or his execution, Meursault is visited by a chaplain who tries to get him to confess belief in God. Meursault informs him that he does not have much time left, "and [he] wasn't going to waste it on God." [{14}](#) Meursault angrily rejects all the priest says. He believes that the fate of death to which everyone is subject levels out everything people believe. One action is as good as another; one way of life is as good as another.

After the priest leaves and Meursault has slept for awhile, he says this as he considers his fate:

[I] felt ready to start life all over again. It was as if that great gush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and, gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe. [{15}](#)

If there is no God out there, the best we can do is accept the reality of our nothingness, and begin to make of ourselves whatever we can. Like the bumper sticker I once saw which read, "I've been much happier since I gave up hope." Previously Meursault had admitted being afraid, and he had betrayed his own humanity when, after coolly thinking about how death comes to everyone, and how it really does not matter when or how one dies, the thought of a possible appeal brought a sudden rush of joy through his body and brought tears to his eyes. [{16}](#) Now he bravely faces a universe that does not care, and he feels free.

If anyone ever truly feels this way in real life, that person is the exception rather than the rule. The word *hopeless* has negative connotations; we do not normally think of it as a positive thing. The atheistic existentialist must go against what appears to be the norm to achieve this state of happiness in the face of a purposeless universe.

Of course, not all atheists will opt for Camus' philosophy. To some extent, hope for the fulfillment of our various earthly ambitions fits in with a naturalistic worldview. A boy can practice his swing with the hope of doing better in the batter's box. A woman with the hope of getting married can very likely see that hope fulfilled. A man may get that promotion he hopes for by working hard. Yet frequently people find that what they had hoped for fails to provide the fulfillment they expected.

And what about hope for the future? Is there anything to hope for after death? When old age creeps up and the elderly man reviews his life, is there any hope that something will come of all the labors and heartaches and wins and losses of his life? Was it all leading somewhere? The most naturalism can allow is that our lives might benefit others. But naturalism cannot of itself undergird such a hope. An impersonal universe offers no rewards. And no one can predict what the next generation will do with one's efforts. Besides, we might wonder why we should worry about the benefit of others who, like ourselves, are just pieces of cosmic dust. To take this even further, naturalism can just as easily allow for the destruction of the weak and the development of a master race as it can for an altruistic attitude toward all people.

Of course, naturalism has nothing beyond the grave to offer the individual him- or herself. There is no culmination, no reward, no "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21). You live, you do your best (according to your own standards, of course), and you die.

Yet, we continue to hope. I wonder if the “hope [that] springs eternal” is rooted within us in that “eternity” which is “set . . . in the hearts of men”(Eccl. 3:11)? Or, maybe it stems from the knowledge we all have of Deity, even though that knowledge might be warped by sin. An inescapable awareness of something transcendent continually draws us upward.

Christianity holds that the psychological reality of hope, and the content of hope that does not fail, is found in Jesus who is our hope (1 Tim. 1:1). Let us look at that in more detail.

The Answer Found in Jesus

One of the great benefits of addressing the matters of meaning, morality, and hope in Christian apologetics is that they take us right into the Gospel message. Our meaning is rooted in the personal God who created us and is actively involved in our affairs. Lasting, objective moral values to which we all are accountable and which serve to protect us find their source in God’s nature and will. And hope is what He sent His Son to give us along with forgiveness and new life and a host of other things.

Before looking at these issues more closely, I should address a couple of potential objections to bringing human experience into apologetics. One objection is that the apologist can quickly fall into *selling* the faith by an appeal to the felt needs of consumeristic Americans. Such needs are not always valid.

Another objection is that such matters are subjective. To appeal to them is to become trapped in matters that are at best non-rational and at worst irrational. Our consideration of Christianity should not be based upon such flimsy foundations.

These problems can be avoided by concentrating on those aspects of our experience which are universally shared.

Someone has called these “objective-subjective” matters. That is, they are subjective matters of a kind shared by all of us by virtue of our membership in the human race. The desire for moral order is something felt inwardly, but it is a universal need. Faith is subjective, but the disposition to believe is a universal one. Personal meaning also is an inward desire, but it is one we all have.

Let us consider now the answers the Bible gives to the questions we’re considering.

Remember that one of the questions encompassed by the question of meaning is, Where did I come from? In John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16-17, and Hebrews 1:2 we learn that we were created by God through Jesus. Furthermore, we learn from the examples of David and Jeremiah that God created us and knows us individually (Ps. 139:13-16; Jer. 1:5). Unless we are prepared to argue that we were made on a whim or maybe just for sport—and nothing in Scripture indicates that God does anything like that—we must conclude that He made us for a purpose.

The question, Is there meaning in the experiences of daily life?, is answered by the understanding that God is working out His own purposes in our lives (Phil. 2:12-13; Rom. 8:28; 9:11,17; Eph. 1:11).

Finally, to the questions, What is my purpose? and What should I be doing?, Scripture teaches that I am to obey God’s moral precepts (Jn. 14:23,24; 1 Jn. [entire book]), and that I am to participate in God’s work by doing the things He has given me to do in particular (Jn. 13:12-17; Eph. 2:10; 1 Pe. 4:10).

Regarding morality, the noble acts of people and the ravages of war are understandable in light of our being created in God’s image, on the one hand, and corrupted by sin, on the other. Although we typically do not think of Jesus as the law-giver as much as the exemplar of moral goodness, this is not

to say that He does not Himself define for us what is good. Being fully God He shares the moral perfection of God the Father. He also created us as moral creatures and planted in us the awareness of right and wrong. Furthermore, His central position in the plan of redemption—which was put into effect because of our sin-induced estrangement from God—makes Him a focal point in the matter of good and evil. Thus, in Jesus is found an understanding of our consciousness of sin and judgment as well as the solution to the crucial issue of guilt and forgiveness.

This is all too often forgotten in evangelical witness today. One theologian has noted that the central theme of the Gospel is no longer justification by faith, but the new life. But people know that they do wrong, and they want to have the burden of guilt lifted. Many do this by denying any kind of universal morality. All they have to do to maintain a clear conscience, they think, is to be “true” to themselves. But in practice this does not work. We react negatively when an individual who is being “true” to himself does something mean to us. We also know that others are justified in objecting to our actions that are hurtful to them. Our moral outrage at the actions and words of others betrays our sense that there is a moral law that transcends us. Naturalism has no means of dealing with all this, but Jesus does.

I have already touched on the important place that hope occupies in the Christian life. We have something specific to hope for, and in our walk with Christ we can experience hope on the psychological level.

For the apostles Paul and Peter, hope finds its objective focal point in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 23:6; 24:14-15; 1 Pe. 1:3). For our hope is eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7), and Jesus’ resurrection is objective, concrete evidence that the promise of eternal life is sure. It is with the objective content of our hope in mind that Paul can say the Gentiles had no hope and were without God in the world (Eph. 2:12).

The hope we have is not something we can see (Rom. 8:24-25); it is waiting for us in heaven (Col. 1:5). Nonetheless it provides the context for our joy today (Rom. 12:12). Hope is strengthened as we learn what God has done in the past, and as we persevere in our Christian walk (Rom. 15:4). As our faith grows and we experience the joy and peace Jesus gives, our hope is brought alive (Rom. 15:13). Rather than put our hope in earthly riches (1 Tim. 6:17), we put our hope in the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

In short, the answers to the questions of meaning, law, and hope—which have no answers in naturalism – are found in Jesus. These truths, buttressed by the facts and logical consistency of Christianity, can be a significant part of our case for the truth of Jesus Christ. Although truth is not ultimately determined by experience, the common experience of humanity provides a point of contact for the Gospel. Even if such matters are not persuasive by themselves, they might at least serve to show that Christianity is relevant to our lives today.

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Business and Ethics

This essay grapples with some of the problems Christians face trying to operate ethically in today's business world.



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

Can “business” and “ethics” be used in the same sentence?

A while back, a member of the Probe lecture team was invited to speak on the topic of “Business Ethics” in a class at

Colorado State University. When the Probe speaker arrived at the classroom, the professor explained that the reason the class chose to have him speak on this topic was their overwhelming sense of curiosity. They could not comprehend how the words business and ethics could be used in the same title.

Business enterprise has received a very diverse review from the ethicists of this generation. In the "Me First" era of the 80s, there was very little concern for ethics in the world of business, and you would have been hard pressed to find a university that dealt seriously with the need for ethics in its business school curriculum. A case in point concerns John Shad, former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. He donated \$35 million dollars to the Harvard Business School to establish an ethics department. Yet two years later, Harvard had only come up with one rather flimsy-sounding course, and they had been unable to find an ethicist to head up the department. [\(1\)](#)

The 90s saw an awakening to the need for ethics because of the many scandals that were beginning to erupt within the world of business and finance, moral failures such as the disgraceful actions that brought down Michael Milken and Ivan Boesky. The problem is that in the 90s, the concern for ethics has not returned us to any absolute standard of ethics, but rather to a search for relative balance between ethics and the bottom line or personal values. The following statement by a state representative from Tennessee demonstrates this tendency all too well. While explaining why he was for fair trade price controls on milk, but against it for liquors, he said, "I've got 423 dairy farmers in my district, and I've got to rise above principle."

Often, today, the highest ethic is "tolerance." By that, I don't mean the traditional view of tolerance in which one tries to recognize and respect other people's values without necessarily accepting those values as being correct. I'm talking about a whole new meaning to the word tolerance. Today

the word is used in a way to imply that all values, beliefs, and claims to truth and life-styles are equal. It becomes extremely difficult to run a business when (1) you have to walk the tightrope of balancing everyone's values and (2) you are expected to treat all these values as equally valid. Our society today has lost its ability to determine what is right from what is wrong. Business enterprise requires a level of trust among the participants. Where is that trust going to come from if we have no common platform upon which to base our ethics and must rely, instead, on the assorted and conflicting individual values of whatever group we're a part of? This essay will grapple with some of the problems we must face as Christians in trying to operate in the business world, while surrounded with people who believe their personal values are not subject to any higher standard than their own reasoning.

Who Makes the Rules?

The fundamental question we need to address is, Who makes the rules, God or man? That is what the issue of ethics is all about. Either there is a source for what is morally right that is beyond ourselves, i.e., God, and that standard is absolute and universal, or we are left to ourselves to figure out what is right and what is wrong, if we can even agree among ourselves that there is a right and a wrong. If we were, in fact, left to ourselves, how could we say one person's values were any better than another's? In the age of the industrial and scientific revolution, people believed they could reason themselves toward better behavior, but today, having seen the horrors of what the industrial and scientific revolution has brought upon us, many have given up any hope of finding a unified answer for right and wrong. In fact, many now actually fear anyone who thinks that he or she has a handle on any absolute standard by which we might live.

Society has moved from a Christian base, which held that there is a source of ultimate truth, through modernism, which saw

truth as relative to circumstances, duty, consequences, situations, etc., to post-modernism, which asserts that there is no truth, only the power to put forth one's values.

King Solomon, who was hailed as the wisest leader ever to govern any nation, said, "Be wise and give serious thought to the way you live." In all endeavors, including our work, we must realize that morality is the single most important guiding principle behind all that we do and say. Our morality molds our ultimate being, who we really are.

Today most professional organizations have a code of ethics. The problem is that their codes are often ignored or not made known. For example, a few years ago Probe was speaking in the engineering department at Southern Methodist University. One of the students, after hearing the lecture on engineering ethics, came up to the speaker afterwards and said, "I have been an engineering student for four years, and this is the first time I ever heard that there was an engineering code of ethics."

There are some companies working hard to communicate to their employees a corporate goal and standard that puts forth biblical values. One company like this is the Servicemaster Company. Their corporate goals are: (1) Honor God in all we do, (2) Help people to develop, (3) Pursue excellence, and (4) Grow profitably. Notice that the profitability goal, although one of their four key goals, is listed last. Making a profit is a necessary goal, but there are things more important than surviving in this world. In fact, there are a lot of businesses that should shut down, for their only legitimate goal is that they do make a profit. In this regard, the vast pornography business comes to mind, not to mention state lotteries and all the other forms of gambling.

So, as an individual or a business, do our personal or corporate goals demonstrate a commitment to a standard beyond ourselves? Do we have a set of guidelines that helps us to

steer a course that is straight and narrow in a world that is adrift—floating all over the ethical map? What we need are some guidelines that will help us to steer that straight and narrow course.

Ethical Guidelines for the Real World

In his book, *Honesty, Morality & Conscience*, published by NavPress, [\(2\)](#) Jerry White gives us five excellent guidelines for conducting our business activities.

First, there is the guideline of a **just weight** as found in Deuteronomy 25:13-15. The principle of a just weight is to give a full amount in exchange for a fair payment. Another way to look at it is to give full quality for what is paid for and according to what is advertised. We must accept responsibility for both the quality and the amount of our product or service. As a business owner, do I fairly represent my product or service? As an employee, do I give a full day's work for a full day's pay? Remember, as it says in Colossians 3:23, we are working for the Lord and not for men.

Second, the Lord demands our **total honesty**. Ephesians 4:25 calls upon us to speak the truth. Jerry White reminds us that, "Although we will frequently fail, our intent must be total honesty with our employer, our co-worker, our employees, and our customers." [\(3\)](#) This is a difficult principle to adhere to. James 3:2 says this is where we often fail, but if we can control our tongue we will be able to control the rest of our body as well. The Living Bible best sums it up in Romans 12:17 which says, "Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest clear through." We must ask ourselves, are we totally honest in reporting our use of time, money, and accomplishments?

The third principle is **being a servant**. Someone has said Christians like to be *called* servants, but don't appreciate being *treated* like servants. To serve God sounds glorious, but

to serve others is another matter. As usual, Jesus Christ is our example. Matthew 20:28 says that Christ did not come to be served, but to serve others, in fact, to give up his life for others. The value of a business is its service. How well it serves the needs of its customers will determine its success. The business, in turn, is made up of people who must do the serving. The value of the employees is in how well they serve the customer's needs. This is putting the needs of others before our own and then trusting God to meet our needs in the process.

The fourth guideline is **personal responsibility**. We must take full responsibility for our own actions and decisions. We should not try to excuse our actions based on pressure within our business or organization to do what we know is not right. We all fail at times to do what we know we should do. We must then accept the responsibility for what we have said or done and not try to pass that responsibility on to someone else or try to blame it on some set of circumstances. Romans 12:2 warns us about the danger of allowing the world to shape us into its mold.

Finally, there is the issue of **reasonable profits**. This principle is quite a bit harder to get a handle on, but it is still vital to have guidelines to follow. What is a reasonable profit? This is something each person has to deal with on his own. Luke 6:31 is a great help on this. It says that we should treat others the same way we would want to be treated. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and ask yourself how you would want to be treated in a particular situation. To the business person this is the price of our service or product above our cost. To the employee it is the amount of our wages for our service to the organization. Luke 3:14 says to be content with our wages, but the Bible also reminds the employer in 1 Timothy 5:18 that the laborer is worthy of his wages.

It is all too easy to rationalize our way around many of these

principles, but God will hold us accountable in the end. Ultimately it is God whom we serve and to whom we must give account.

The Cost of Living Ethically

The media is awash with reports of faulty business ethics: frauds, manipulations, thefts, industrial espionage, corruption, kickbacks, conspiracy, thefts, tax evasion, embezzling, and unfair competition proliferate. Either a lot more unethical acts are taking place today or those behaviors that have always existed are being exploited more in contemporary society. A Gallup report concluded that “you can’t trust Americans as much as you used to.” The *Wall Street Journal* reported that church-going persons appear only slightly more likely to walk the straight and narrow than their less-pious compatriots.

Why is it so hard to walk the straight and narrow in our business dealings? We are continually under the stress of performance on the job and in the competitive work environment. Often our very livelihood is threatened under pressure of the job. Usually we know what we should do, but we count the cost of doing the right thing and then back down due to pressure from people or circumstances. If we feel that we must do whatever is necessary to keep our jobs, we may end up serving the wrong master.

Steven Covey, in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, [\(4\)](#) addresses the issue of the need to become principle-centered individuals. Are we living principle-centered lives? This means that there are some principles that are more important than the success or even the continuance of our business. Are there some ethical standards for which we are prepared to die if necessary? Those who let their business die rather than set aside their ethical standards can return to do business again someday, since they were able to maintain their integrity and their reputation. Those who cave in to the

pressures to keep the business alive may be caught and end up losing their reputation and thus deprive themselves of a platform from which to rebuild their lives and businesses.

Ten Global Principles for Success

We are going to close this essay on business ethics with *Ten Global Principles for Business and Professional Success* from the booklet *Mega Values* by Colonel Nimrod McNair.[\(5\)](#) These principles are modeled after the Ten Commandments.

The first principle is, "Show proper respect for authority." This is the invisible superstructure of productive enterprise. God clearly commands us to respect those in authority over us. God uses this command to bring order out of chaos. Authority is a necessary prerequisite to order.

The second rule is, "Have a singleness of purpose." Divided purposes dilute effectiveness when interests conflict. We cannot serve two masters effectively. We must evaluate our time, talent, and resources and make sure we are using these God-given elements in a way that ultimately brings Him the glory.

Precept number three is, "Use effective communication in word and deed." Complete communications and predictable follow-through are the basic expressions of personal integrity. It means doing what you say you'll do, even if it is uncomfortable or inconvenient. This commandment is honored when promises are kept and accurate recounting of transactions is given.

A fourth truth is, "Provide proper rest, recreation, and reflection." This ensures a quality of life that will be reflected in creativity, productivity, and motivation. Rest is a necessity for effectiveness. Recreation guards the mind against mental and emotional fatigue. Reflection promotes self-monitoring, allows for mid-course corrections, and

ensures single-mindedness. The fifth tenet is, "Show respect for the older and more experienced." Our parents, teachers, coaches, employers, pastors, and other elders in our lives have an investment in us. It is to our benefit to honor that investment and to draw fully from the wisdom and expertise of those more experienced than ourselves.

The sixth axiom is, "Show respect for human life, dignity, and rights." This encompasses product quality and service, the work environment, health and safety, personnel policies and responsibilities, and competitive practices. It is simply the Golden Rule—treating others as you would want to be treated.

The seventh principle is, "Maintain a stability of sexes and the family." Wisdom and good business practice dictate equal regard for men and women as persons irrespective of gender or marital status. Respect for the family structure as the crucial foundation of our cultural system must be reflected in our decisions regarding the conflicts between business demands and the value of the family and personal life.

Precept number eight is, "Demonstrate the proper allocation of resources." Two fundamental responsibilities and privileges of business are optimal use of material resources and wise leadership of people. We must treat all our business assets, whether they be people, funds, or materials, as a gift from the Lord.

The ninth truth is, "Demonstrate honesty and integrity." Integrity is the cornerstone of any good relationship. Without demonstrating the willingness to give and the worthiness to receive trust, no business can survive or prosper. A reputation for honesty is a comprehensive statement of both a person's character and how he or she treats others. It is a fundamental mindset against stealing, lying, or deceiving.

The tenth and final business commandment is, "Maintain the right of ownership of property." Those who are disciplined,

creative, prudent, and industrious are entitled to the fruits of their labor. We must not covet that which belongs to another.

Business ethics is more than a list of do's and don'ts, but these principles can help us get off to a good start.

Notes

1. Chuck Colson, Jubilee (October 1989).
2. Jerry White, Honesty, Morality & Conscience (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1978).
3. Ibid.
4. Stephen R. Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).
5. Colonel Nimrod McNair, *Mega Values: 10 Global Principles for Business and Professional Success Written in Stone* (Executive Leadership Foundation, Inc., 2179 Northlake Pkwy. Suite 119, Tucker, GA 30084-9885).

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