

## II. Review of the Literature

Thinking is a series of ideas that is directed, however vaguely, toward the solution of a problem. ... What thinking is after is simply the truth. When it results in truth, the thinker acquires new knowledge. ... That is what makes thinking *good* thinking.<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

This project builds on previous research and literature on the topic of thinking. The express purpose of this study is to enlighten a specific group of people concerning the importance of appropriately verifying, filtering, and managing the thoughts, ideas, emotions, and all other types of information that confront them every day.

It is hoped that in the near future true and valid information will be available, adequately understood and applied so the individual, the family, and the community of this people group will be empowered to minimize hindrances to their holistic development. This could result in the adoption of such healthy habits as good hygiene (to greatly reduce the severity of several devastating diseases such as cholera, malaria, measles, meningitis, tuberculosis, yellow fever, and even leprosy); good nutrition (to reduce deaths due to malnutrition and sclerosis of the liver); and good prenatal and child care (to reduce cretinism as well as reduce the number of deaths due to dehydration, detrimental traditions, and injury). It could also result in developing healthier relationships, which will greatly reduce all forms of abuse such as deception, exploitation, slander, violence, incest (which may result in: deafness, blindness, dwarfism, strabismus, hemophilia, etc.), rape, adultery, AIDS, and murder.

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<sup>1</sup>Monroe C. Beardsley, *Thinking Straight*, 3d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), 2. The exception to this is thinking that has no qualms about lying such as that employed by terrorists, addicts, and those rebelling against Christ. They have their own agenda.

According to their traditional beliefs, every death is caused by someone working witchcraft and the bereaved family's first order of business is get revenge by severely punishing that person, if not killing them. The introduction of Christianity has not yet overcome this vengeful attitude throughout the general community.

The specific focus of this study is to encourage them in their search for truth to regularly access the only power that will enable them to appropriately and effectively handle any person or situation they encounter. If any other person or group benefits from this study, so much the better.

### **Thinking in the literature**

No serious study should be written without considerable contemplation and comparison to known and verifiable truth. Trigg insists:

No one should be content with simply finding out what others think. We should all be prepared to think things out for ourselves in a disciplined way. ... philosophy ... is engaged in the search for truth ... [which] involves using one's reason. Thinking out arguments for yourself is part of that process.<sup>2</sup>

Elder and Paul remind us that "to maximize the quality of your thinking, you must learn how to become an effective 'critic' of your thinking. And to become an effective critic of your thinking, you have to make learning about thinking a priority."<sup>3</sup>

There are several systems of thinking that were utilized in the scientific community at one time or another. In the last few centuries, the most popular ones were:

- Rationalism: "a system of thought that emphasizes the role of reason in obtaining knowledge."

It has been attributed to René Descartes of the seventeenth century, who "held that by means of

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<sup>2</sup>Roger Trigg, *Philosophy Matters* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), vii.

<sup>3</sup>Linda Elder and Richard Paul, "Becoming a Critic of your Thinking" [article on-line]; available from <http://www.criticalthinking.org/professionalDev/business.shtml>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

reason alone, certain universal, self-evident truths could be discovered, from which the remaining content of philosophy and the sciences could be deductively derived. He assumed that these self-evident truths were innate, not derived from sense experience.”<sup>4</sup> This type of rationalism was developed by Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

- Epistemological rationalism has been applied to other fields of philosophical inquiry.

Rationalism in ethics is the claim that certain primary moral ideas are innate in humankind and that such first moral principles are self-evident to the rational faculty. Rationalism in the philosophy of religion is the claim that the fundamental principles of religion are innate or self-evident and that revelation is not necessary (see Deism). Since the end of the 1800s, however, rationalism has played chiefly an antireligious role in theology.<sup>5</sup>

- Empiricism was a doctrine popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It “affirms that all knowledge is based on experience, and denies the possibility of spontaneous ideas or a priori thought. ... John Locke was the first to give it systematic expression, although his compatriot, the philosopher Francis Bacon, had anticipated some of its characteristic conclusions.”<sup>6</sup>

Radical empiricism, a term coined by William James for his own philosophy. “John Dewey coined the term immediate empiricism for his view of experience. The term empirical laws is [*sic*] applied to those laws that express relationships observed to exist among phenomena, without implying the explanation or cause of the phenomena.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>*Encarta World English Dictionary* [CD-ROM] (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2003).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) was familiar with the basic premise: “There is nothing in the intellect,” he wrote, “that was not first in the senses.” But Aristotle sought to find a balance between “empiricism (observation and sense experience) and formalism (rational deduction),” which was not advocated by his teacher, Plato, in “*Theaetetus* (a denial that knowledge is to be identified with sense perception).”<sup>8</sup>

- Positivism—a “system of philosophy based on experience and empirical knowledge of natural phenomena, in which metaphysics and theology are regarded as inadequate and imperfect systems of knowledge.” This was rejected early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, and others who began to call themselves logical positivists. Today, those who hold to this “prefer to call themselves logical empiricists in order to dissociate themselves from the emphasis of the earlier thinkers on scientific verification. They maintain that the verification principle itself is philosophically unverifiable.”<sup>9</sup>

Westermeyer defines *metacognition* as “the ability to think about thinking.” He continues, “It is believed that the more effort put into changing automatic distorted and protective dysfunctional behaviors, the more automatic healthy thinking will become.”<sup>10</sup>

Although much data is available today on this and many related topics for those who have the time, ability and desire to find it,

we all know that our knowledge base is too small. ... you will never have enough data to resolve your questions. No matter how much information you collect, the accumulation of

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Robert W. Westermeyer, “The Structural Model of Cognition” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.habitsmart.com/struct.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

data never solves a problem any more than a pile of stones builds a wall.<sup>11</sup>

We also know: “God’s ontological uniqueness limits our understanding of God, and the essential hiddenness of the divine permeates all our theological reflection and formulations of doctrine.”<sup>12</sup>

Yet sufficient information has been provided for anyone who desires to live a productive and meaningful life (2 Pet. 1:3-3:18).

Lewis and Green encourage us to break down problems into two parts:

1. To realize that most of us have very capable hardware, our brain, and
2. To evaluate the software we have used to program our hardware.

From this perspective, distorted thinking is usually the result of flawed software, not hardware.

Chemical imbalance or problems with the hardware will not be addressed in this study. The flawed software may contain myths (such as “I just wasn’t born smart,” “I have a terrible memory,” or “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”), false rumors, as well as abusive, deceptive, or not quite accurate information, to name just a few. These myths have a part in distorting the thinking process.

Lewis and Green further declare,

Most of the programs we use were acquired in a haphazard manner. We are never taught *how* to think, only *what* to think. We are never told *how* best to make decisions, only given decisions to make. We are expected to learn a whole range of things from the first days of formal education, yet never provided with *lessons in how to learn*. Because of this we tend to use our minds in an unsystematic and often ineffective manner.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>John S. Veitch, “Developing Your Business Thinking,” 1996 [article on line]; available from <http://www.ate.co.nz/journal/thinking.html>; Internet; accessed 5 October 2002. See appendix.

<sup>12</sup>Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985), 14.

<sup>13</sup>David Lewis and James Green, *Thinking Better* (New York, NY: Rawson, Wade Publishers, Inc., 1982), 27-28.

This is supported by Richard W. Paul who confesses, “Most instructional practice in most academic institutions around the world presupposes a didactic theory of knowledge, learning, and literacy, ill-suited to the development of critical minds and persons.”<sup>14</sup> Duncan, of Montana State University, assures us: “If we accept the idea that thoughts are the seedbed of our eventual station in life, it’s clear that we need to be careful about the thoughts we choose to hold, that they are consistent with what we desire our outcomes to be.”<sup>15</sup> He then offers several helpful ideas, the full article of which is included in the appendix of this study.

Bloom bemoans the unhealthy state of Western culture by saying, “People sup ... play ... travel together, but they do not think together. Hardly any homes have any intellectual life whatsoever, let alone one that informs the vital interests of life. ... many have lost the practice and the taste for reading.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Thinking about philosophy and worldview**

Much has been written on Western Philosophy since it first emerged six centuries before Christ.<sup>17</sup> Holmes asserts: “the acceptance of what is right and good is determined only by the culture [or subculture] in which that question arises.”<sup>18</sup> Lewis concludes, “if there is no

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<sup>14</sup>John Chaffee, *Infusing Critical Thinking into College and University Instruction* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985), 2.

<sup>15</sup>Steve Duncan, “The Power of Attitudes” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/home/0223fam.html>; Internet; accessed 6 August 2002. See appendix.

<sup>16</sup>Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (ca. 1987); quoted in David Noebel, *Thinking Like A Christian: Understanding and Living a Biblical Worldview* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 179.

<sup>17</sup>Arthur F. Holmes, *Fact, Value, and God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 1.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Lewis with Rich Campbell, *Real Family Values: Keeping the Faith in an Age of Cultural Chaos* (Gresham, OR: Vision House Publishing, Inc., 1995), 106.

definitive standard guiding a people's behavior, if there is no universal ethic, then, by default, the bottom line becomes the ultimate value. ... there is always an absolute value ... [which] may be money or happiness or freedom. The individual decides."<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the pendulum swinging back and forth between the affirmation or denial of the existence of God, "three of the four kinds of positions on the fact-value relationship" make "a continuous tradition of grounding ethics not just in fact but in relation to some God-concept."<sup>20</sup> The fourth, Nietzsche's nihilism ("God is dead") has no universal grounding for ethics except for that which is created "by the power some of us exert over others, or by the useful fiction of a social contract."<sup>21</sup>

After claiming, "Everyone needs to know some philosophy in order to understand the major doctrines of Christianity or to read a great theologian intelligently," Allen laments:

Few seminary students take more than one course of philosophy in seminary or in their college days, and most take none. ... They have not been shown that philosophical knowledge enables one to appreciate more deeply the meaning of virtually every major doctrinal formulation and every major theologian. ... so they go their way, forfeiting the opportunity for a more fruitful engagement with theology. ... we would not have the discipline of theology without the Hellenic attitude in Christians that leads them to press questions about the Bible and the relations of the Bible to other knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the systems in place for training pastors, Mead regrets that many of these "prepare for a role and a world that parish pastors no longer face. Seminaries face the need for major changes

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 186-7.

<sup>20</sup>Holmes, 179.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 174.

<sup>22</sup>Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985), iv, 5.

while facing escalating costs and decreased resources.” He points out the need to “develop the tools, resources, or energy constantly to retrain clergy *after* seminary.”<sup>23</sup>

This lack of understanding of philosophy as well as a lack of understanding of logic has led Perkins and Simmons to encourage students to think properly by

refer[ring] to the systems of thought that [they] would like students to understand as paradigm ... involving four interlocked levels of knowledge named the content frame, the problem-solving frame, the epistemic frame, and the inquiry frame ... [where] ‘frame’ simply serves as a reminder that each of these is a system of schemata internally coherent and partially independent of the other frames.<sup>24</sup>

Rickett, having read a business magazine article entitled, “Failure: The Secret to My Success” which stated, “Leadership is moving from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm,” was inspired to write an article concerning the seven default distorted thinking patterns people often fall into when they fail to be proactive when partnering with others in ministry. The unhealthy patterns are: (1) Assuming you think alike, (2) Promising more than you can deliver, (3) Taking to the road without a map, (4) Underestimating cultural differences, (5) Taking shortcuts, (6) Forgetting to develop self-reliance, and (7) Running a race with no end. He offers helpful remedies for each of them.<sup>25</sup>

Some people (like the fictional character MacGyver, a “master of ingenuity” on an old U.S. television series named after him) seem to never be bound by fear, obstacles, or by past or present practices, but have a well defined vision and purpose and enjoy the challenge of developing successful strategies to extricate themselves from difficult situations by using

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<sup>23</sup>Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (New York, NY: The Alban Institute, 1991), 54.

<sup>24</sup>D. N. Perkins and Rebecca Simmons, “Patterns of Misunderstanding,” in *Infusing Critical Thinking into College and University Instruction*, ed. John Chaffee (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985) 5.

<sup>25</sup>Daniel Rickett, “Seven mistakes partners make and how to avoid them,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 2001): 308-17.

principles which are timeless, self-validating and empowering. Eight principles mentioned by Merrill are worth consideration for avoiding what this study considers distorted thinking: Identity, Vision, Purpose, Order, Concentration, Integrity, Harmony, and Progression. Doing the appropriate thing at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner for a given situation is what one normally wishes to do. This is personal leadership at its best. But this can only begin with well thought-out and evaluated personal mission and vision statements which must be translated into everyday life through roles and goals. These are prioritized first by focus, then by influence, and finally by general consensus as interconnections are made with others to appropriately implement them.<sup>26</sup>

Many people have a slightly different perspective on any given topic than others. Highly respected and educated people have many different and mutually exclusive perspectives or opinions which may be marketed as the best, or most logical, or whatever. It is a challenge to attempt to discern which or which part(s) of these are true, since all of them cannot be. Each perspective or opinion is based on a preferred worldview. Referring to his anthology, Cottingham warned: “Many of the arguments of the great philosophers rest on a daunting array of presuppositions and concealed premises, and careful guidance is needed if many readers are not to be overwhelmed.”<sup>27</sup>

Noebel offers a list of several worldviews held by various people throughout history. These were compiled from the following author’s books: Norman Geisler’s *Worlds Apart* (theological perspectives), James Sire’s *The Universe Next Door*, and R. C. Sproul’s *Lifeviews*. They include the following: atheism, theism, pantheism, panentheism, deism, finite Godism,

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<sup>26</sup>A. Roger Merrill, *Connections* (Salt Lake, UT: Institute for Principle-Centered Leadership, 1989), 2, 29.

<sup>27</sup>John Cottingham, ed., *Western Philosophy: An Anthology* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), xiv.

polytheism, naturalism, nihilism, existentialism, pantheistic monism, New Age, secularism, humanism, pragmatism, positivism, pluralism, relativism, and hedonism.<sup>28</sup>

To Berger, the director of Boston University's Institute for the Study of Economic Culture, the main tenet of many of the above worldviews most strongly held by "the 'reality policemen'—teachers, psychiatrists, commentators and the like [who] watch over the cognitive boundaries of [Western] culture"—and taught as indisputable fact is

The "modern scientific worldview" that was supposed to replace [God as well as all ancient gods and idols] has turned out to be a rather boring business for many people. The cosmos as a mathematical design may be inspiring to some physicists; [but] the vision gives metaphysical cold feet to many others. Secularization has both demystified and trivialized reality.<sup>29</sup>

Many of these "bored" people have resurrected and modernized the ancient gods who, supposedly, encourage the pursuit of any and all pleasures.<sup>30</sup>

Regarding the theories of evolution and of the "Big Bang" which many scientists still consider pillars of the "modern scientific worldview," Heinze reminds us they are "non-scientific," having nothing to do with the scientific method since they are "non-observable." In others words they are pure speculation—simply another theory or "human doctrine posing as science" because of "man's determination to make himself ultimate and evade his responsibility to a holy Creator."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>David Noebel, *Thinking Like A Christian: Understanding and Living a Biblical Worldview* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 3.

<sup>29</sup>Peter Berger, "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: 2,500 Years of Religious Ecstasy," *Christian Century* (25 December 1974): 1217-23 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1577>; Internet; accessed 20 December 2006.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>Charles E. Heinze, *Trinity and Triunity: Salvation and the Nature of the Godhead*, with a foreword by John F. MacArthur Jr. (Dale City, VA: Epaphras Press, 1995), 114.

Even Darwin himself admitted: “False facts are highly injurious to the progress of science, for they often endure long; but false views, if supported by some evidence, do little harm, for everyone takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness.”<sup>32</sup> Little did he realize how much his theories of evolution and of natural selection would hinder “the progress of science.” Contrary to his original beliefs, his theories were indeed “false views” supported by insufficient evidence that many today are taking “a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness. ... As the full implications of social Darwinianism gradually dawned on sociologists, they began searching for alternative theories.”<sup>33</sup> It is doubtful if anyone today would be willing to be a martyr for evolution though many are still able to maintain a lucrative career supported by those who still hope that evolution can someday be proven indisputably true.

But even among Christians, who believe in the biblical account of creation and in the virgin birth of Christ, there are many major differences of opinion or perspective regarding what God’s word actually means for us today in whatever culture or mix of cultures we may be striving to thrive, not merely survive.

Noebel prefers to define worldview by the following ten disciplines: “theology, philosophy, biology, psychology, ethics, sociology, law, politics, economics, and history [because] each of these disciplines is [(1.)] a part of God’s creative and redemptive order ... not artificially derived constructs ... [(2.)] relevant to every one of us,” (3.) connected to the other

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<sup>32</sup>Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (Chapter 21); quoted in John Bartlet, *Familiar Quotations* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1944), 449.

<sup>33</sup>Stephen A. Grunlan and Milton Reimer, eds., *Christian Perspectives on Sociology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 19.

disciplines, and (4.) “laden with values which have worldview implication” some of which are neither biblical nor valid.<sup>34</sup>

It is likely that Noebel used these ten disciplines because he is attempting to relate to or evangelize those who have already adopted the Enlightenment perspective as the best possible worldview. The adherents of this view believe:

The emphasis was no longer on the whole, but on the parts, which were assigned priority over the whole. Even humans were no longer regarded as whole entities but could be looked at and studied from a variety of perspectives: as thinking beings (philosophy), as social beings (sociology), as religious beings (religious studies), as physical beings (biology, physiology, anatomy, and related sciences), as cultural beings (cultural anthropology), and so forth.<sup>35</sup>

Engineering, for example, “is a theory for changing the outer world before all relevant scientific facts are in. When facts are not available or are difficult to demonstrate, an engineering plan for change substitutes heuristics—that is, nonscientific principles and practices ...—for elusive facts. Then, since the resulting plan is not scientifically defensible, the methods of engineering provide rhetorical arguments aimed at getting the parties potentially affected by the change to commit to that plan, regardless of the consequences possibly obtaining from error in its heuristics.”<sup>36</sup> Atkinson summarized the arguments for engineering:

Far from *ad hoc*, these arguments rise to one or the other of two sorts of standards of rigor. Some rise to conventional standards of practice that have been sanctioned by law and proven rhetorically effective over time. Other arguments support new practices on the promise that engineering would prosper from their experiences, whether those are successes or, as Petroski (1985) has observed, failures.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Noebel, 4-6.

<sup>35</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 264.

<sup>36</sup>Taft H. Broome Jr., “The heroic mentorship,” *Science Communication*, June 1996, 398.

<sup>37</sup>David Atkinson, *Pastoral Ethics: A Guide to the Key Issues of Daily Living* (London, UK: Lynx Communications, 1994), 78.

The philosophy or worldview of the general population of the focus group of this study is animism. The word “anima,” referring to “life, spirit,” was coined by Edward Tyler, an English Anthropologist in 1873.<sup>38</sup> Kane is right that “Animism is found in all parts of the world.” But he may be incorrect in stating that “modern Africans are deserting animism by the millions every year.”<sup>39</sup> Many Christians in both “developed” and “undeveloped” countries are unwittingly utilizing animistic thinking in their everyday life. Although most serious Christians do not believe that “natural objects, natural phenomena, and the universe itself possess souls,” they do believe “in spiritual beings”<sup>40</sup> and often do their best to manipulate, appease, or influence at least God or Jesus (if not also Jesus’ mother, the “saints,” angels, or their ancestors) to help them achieve their personal goals or desires.

### **Similar terms to distorted thinking used in the literature**

The term “distorted thinking” has been a popular one in the last several years, but no published books existed with a title containing this term as of this writing. Some books do mention it or some equivalent term, but none address this exact term as the main topic or title. Creative thinking has produced more than twenty similar terms in the literature for thinking that is not quite perfect.

One article cites two similar terms that are often used: “Distorted thinking, sometimes called ‘cognitive distortions’ or ‘thinking errors,’ are ways that people make it OK to do something that is not right.” This article describes several distorted patterns of thinking usually

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<sup>38</sup>Trevor Douglas, “Views of God” seminar in Bamenda, Cameroon, January 2005.

<sup>39</sup>J. Herbert Kane, *Understanding Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), 220.

<sup>40</sup>*Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (San Diego, CA: Thunder Bay Press, 2001), 82.

used by those who sexually assault others and concedes “many of the examples may be familiar to you in non-sexual situations as well.”<sup>41</sup> Another citation by Resick is as follows: “Corrections are made if the client confuses thoughts with feelings and the therapist mildly challenges the validity of cognitive distortions which become evident.”<sup>42</sup>

One book uses an equivalent term in its title, *Caution: Faulty Thinking Can Be Harmful To Your Happiness*. It categorized forty-eight types of faulty thinking under five main headings.<sup>43</sup> This author has also created a computer software program called “Belief-Scan” to assist people in avoiding such distortions in their writing.<sup>44</sup>

Another source listed fifty-five types of faulty thinking and categorized them under four headings. Each had at least two of the following subcategories: irrelevant premise, unacceptable reason, insufficient grounds, and ineffective rebuttal. This list is included in the appendix.<sup>45</sup>

Very similar to “faulty thinking” is “faulty beliefs.” It is conceded, though, that the latter may technically be a result of the former, but, as cited here and in the next paragraph, they were equated. Ph.D. student Steve Jefferson, the understudy of Professor Richard Nicki at the

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<sup>41</sup>Ken Singer, “Distorted Thinking,” National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization, 1995-2002 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.malesurvivor.org/Prevention%20&%20Education/Articles/dt.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>42</sup>Patricia A. Resick, “Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) For Rape Related PTSD and Depression,” NCP Clinical Quarterly, Summer/Fall 1994 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/publications/cq/v4/n3/resick.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>43</sup>Elliot D. Cohen, *Caution: Faulty Thinking Can Be Harmful To Your Happiness* (Fort Pierce, FL: Trace-WilCo Publishers, 1992).

<sup>44</sup>Cohen, *Belief Scan 4.0 Reasoning Checker* [CD]; [http://search.hotplugins.com/47709/Reference/Education/Distance\\_Learning/Online\\_Teaching\\_and\\_Learning/Software/](http://search.hotplugins.com/47709/Reference/Education/Distance_Learning/Online_Teaching_and_Learning/Software/); Internet; accessed 10 June 2003.

<sup>45</sup>“Truth: Awareness of Faulty Thinking” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.happyotter.com/hotools/truth.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

University of New Brunswick, wrote about the results of one study on gambling: “we found that the more severe your VLT [Video Lottery Terminal] problem is the more strongly you endorse faulty beliefs about the random outcomes of VLTs and the more depressed and anxious you are.”<sup>46</sup> A final example for this topic is: “Gambling involves a lot of ‘faulty thinking,’ e.g., I will win back the money I’ve lost if I keep on gambling.”<sup>47</sup>

Procrastination is one of several results of “faulty thinking” or “faulty beliefs.” Research done at a university verifies the stress this puts on people. Contributing factors were five different forms of “faulty thinking”:

People can only work when in the mood  
 You need to like the task in hand  
 The task has to be completed in one go  
 There’s plenty of time to get it done  
 People work better under pressure so should leave everything until the last minute.<sup>48</sup>

McMahon continues by contending: “Many practitioners now believe that helping people develop healthy thinking styles is a vital part of any stress management programme.”<sup>49</sup> Other results of “faulty thinking,” he says, are (1) All or nothing, (2) Mental filter, (3) Discounting the positives, (4) Jumping to conclusions, (5) Magnification, (6) Must do, should do and have to, (7) Personalization and blame, and (8) Perfectionism.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>“VLT users have little to win, everything to lose” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/Sightings/>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>47</sup>Kirsi Aalto, “Treatment of gambling addiction” [article on-line]; available from [http://www.paihdelinkki.fi/english/infobank/200\\_service\\_line/253e.htm](http://www.paihdelinkki.fi/english/infobank/200_service_line/253e.htm); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>48</sup>Gladeana McMahon, “Eliminate the negative,” of “Step 6: Positive thinking” [article on-line]; available from [http://www.channel4.com/health/microsites/H/health/magazine/stress/gym\\_step6.html](http://www.channel4.com/health/microsites/H/health/magazine/stress/gym_step6.html); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

Pavlina uses the term “erroneous thinking” in listing four types of “thinking that lead to procrastination,” only one of which is similar to those of McMahon above:

1. Thinking that you absolutely have to do something.
2. Thinking of a task as one big whole that you have to complete.
3. Perfectionism.
4. Associating deprivation with a task.<sup>51</sup>

Yoder, overlapping some with Cohen’s forty-eight types of faulty thinking mentioned above, categorized thirty-six fallacies under twelve headings. One of these headings includes *non sequitur* (literally, “it does not follow,” i.e., irrelevant reason).<sup>52</sup> Kies, a teacher at the College of DuPage claims, “All fallacies are non-sequiturs.”<sup>53</sup>

All the above fallacies could be viewed as the results of distorted thinking, but we will consider them in this study as forms or types of distorted thinking. Yoder also uses the term “fallacious reasoning” and defines fallacies as “errors in reasoning. If human beings were infallible, we wouldn’t have to worry about making such errors. But, since our fallen species is so susceptible to (and capable of) falsehood, we need to be able to protect ourselves against the same.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Steve Pavlina, “Overcoming Procrastination” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.dexterity.com/articles/overcoming-procrastination.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>52</sup>J. Snyder, “Fallacious Reasoning” [article on-line]; available from <http://users.mercyhurst.edu/jsnyder/www/Fallacious%20Reasoning%202.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>53</sup>Daniel Kies, “Lab 7” [article on-line]; available from <http://papyr.com/hypertextbooks/comp2/102lab7.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>54</sup>Yoder, “The Fallacy Zoo” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.goodart.org/fallazoo.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

Lieberman offers a list of “forty-six clues to deception, divided into seven sections.”<sup>55</sup> He is convinced, “Honesty is at the cornerstone of every relationship. ... But we live in a world of deception [Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-19]. And whether you want to play or not, you’re in the game. ... Everybody does it [lies, Ps. 12:2; Rom. 3:4; 1 John 2:4, 22; 4:20], but nobody likes it when it’s done to them”<sup>56</sup> except perhaps for some flattery. Even missionaries have to overcome “the pressure to lie.”<sup>57</sup> Ross stated unequivocally: “Every lie is a distortion of the truth.”<sup>58</sup> So lying and deception are two other terms that may be considered forms of distorted thinking.

Those who harbor secret vices are in denial of their unhealthy addiction(s) and will futilely attempt to deceive themselves and others with one or more lies. The sooner one repents and establishes a plan for recovery within a caring community, the less trouble it will be for everyone because they will all someday be exposed: “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known” (Luke 12:2). Huggins reminds us:

When we repent it means we change our mind or attitude about the kind of person we want to be. Instead of living to protect ourselves, we want to live to love. Repentance doesn’t mean we’re free to do it yet. It means we want to be. ... No matter how much we want to change the kind of person we are, we can’t without our Father’s help. We can envision what it means to be a servant, but only God can make us into one.<sup>59</sup>

Paul Biya, President of Cameroon since November 1982, commented on the dangers and hindrance of lying and deception: “There is no security in a social environment where people cannot trust each other ... liv[ing] in perpetual fear of being duped or swindled by others. ...

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<sup>55</sup>David Lieberman, *Never Be Lied To Again* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1998), 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

<sup>57</sup>James Lo, “The Pressure to Lie,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 2004): 362.

<sup>58</sup>Michael Ross, ed., *Boom: A Guy’s Guide to Growing Up* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2003), 78. Also cf. Exod. 20:16; Eph. 4:25.

<sup>59</sup> Huggins, 104-5.

There is no true development for the person who revels in lies, intrigues, and a total absence of principles.”<sup>60</sup>

The Apostle James clearly states that those who teach (which includes any servant leader) “will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1-2). Pastors and teachers must be sure their facts and information are as accurate as possible before teaching. They also need to humbly add a caveat that they are willing to be corrected if it is discovered that their information was not quite correct.

Distorted or faulty reasoning are two other alternative terms. Michael Scriven in his book *Reasoning* exposed the negative aspect first: “reasoning is the only ability that makes it possible for humans to rule the earth and to ruin it.”<sup>61</sup> Then he offered a more positive perspective:

There’s one supreme advantage for the use of reason. ... [It is] the best guide we have to the truth. That doesn’t mean you should never listen to your ‘inner voice,’ your instincts, or to authorities; it just means that you ought to use reason to decide when to listen to them. They are sometimes good indicators of truth, sometimes not. Reason is the only way to tell and even it won’t tell you for sure when to listen to instinct or authority.<sup>62</sup>

James D. Weinlang, in *How to Think Straight*, mentioned another alternative term. He categorized the following as “*substitutes for thinking*”: “magic, fatalism, Astrology, Palmistry, dreams, luck, escape, rationalization, suggestion, autosuggestion as well as positive and negative thinking.” He offers eight cautions in Chapter 3 to avoid errors in statistical thinking, and in Chapter 6 he expounds on eight “common errors in thinking.” He reminds us that our “facts and generalizations must be true and the reasoning must be valid.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Paul Biya, *Communal Liberalism* (London, UK: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1987), 90-1.

<sup>61</sup>Michael Scriven, *Reasoning* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 2.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>63</sup>Weinlang, 87.

Burns contends: “Most bad feelings come from illogical thoughts (‘distorted thinking’).”<sup>64</sup> He emphasizes: “Bad feelings like depression, anxiety, guilt hopelessness, frustration, and anger are often caused by *distorted* thoughts. When you put the lie to these *distorted* thoughts, you can CHANGE the way you FEEL.”<sup>65</sup>

“Irrational thinking” is perhaps a more commonly recognized term that is related to distorted thinking. Ball uses the term to refer to the type of distorted thinking this study refers to as “Polarized Thinking,” (which others may refer to as “dichotomous thinking” or “All or Nothing Thinking”).<sup>66</sup> Moore, on the topic of Traumatic Incident Reduction wrote:

While theorists have long held that irrational thinking tends to promote upset feelings, TIR suggests that one’s (traumatically) upset feelings also tend to promote irrational thinking. ... That is, not only does cognition significantly influence emotion, but emotion appears to significantly influence cognition.<sup>67</sup>

O’Brien and Sattler remind us there are risks to rational thinking: “A downside of rational thinking is the risk of distorted perceptions of the ‘facts,’ leading to wrong conclusions.”<sup>68</sup>

Shepherd writes:

When you feel angry or depressed, in a self-defeating way, this is the result of negative or irrational inner-speech that you may not even be aware of, as it is often very fleeting or below the threshold of consciousness, or simply not recognized as such. These evaluations are linked to earlier times, when they were instilled by force of painful experience. When such an experience was too uncomfortable to remember, the feelings (in the right brain) were

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<sup>64</sup>David D. Burns, *Ten Days to Self-Esteem* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993), 49.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup>Daniel R. Ball, “Cognitive strategies: learn to recognize distorted thinking and create an environment in which clients excel,” *IDEA Personal Trainer*, November-December 2001, 22-30.

<sup>67</sup>Robert H. Moore, “Traumatic Incident Reduction” [article on-line]; available from [http://www.trauma-tir.com/services/moore\\_entire.htm](http://www.trauma-tir.com/services/moore_entire.htm); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>68</sup>Teri O’Brien and Thomas P. Sattler, “Ordinary Manager or Manager Beyond the Ordinary?” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.fitnessmanagement.com/FM/tmpl/genPage.asp?p=/information/articles/library/mgtmtrs/mgtmtrs0199.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

repressed and made unconscious. Considerable mental energy is locked-up by continuing to repress feelings and emotions, and this is justified by irrational and over-generalized conclusions about self and others.<sup>69</sup>

Berger did not exaggerate about such repression when he said, “We can learn something from Freud here: ‘repressed’ drives have a way of coming back, often in grossly distorted and bizarre forms.”<sup>70</sup>

The term “mental distortions” is another possible reference to distorted thinking. Schmidt describes many of our thought processes as similar to the acquired skill of riding a bicycle. These can become “so automatic, so subconscious that we are not ever aware of them. ... Most attitudes and behavior are learned in this way. ... But other subconscious self-talk motivates us to engage in self-destructive and other destructive behavior.”<sup>71</sup> He offers three steps for overcoming unhealthy automatic thoughts and later comments on four results of distorted thinking:

First by discovering what undesirable thoughts are lurking beneath the surface.  
Second, by utilizing some promising methods for getting rid of these automatic beliefs.  
Third, by replacing these mental distortions with eternal truths ...  
Perfection, destructive guilt, debilitating stress, and feelings of worthlessness can be dramatically decreased. ... Helping people change what they say to themselves is a key in giving them a new perspective.”<sup>72</sup>

The term “emotional thinking” has received so much attention that a “new and improved version of the Globality-Differentiation Scale (Mehrabian, Stefl, and Mullen, 1997)” designed in 2000 was named after this term, The Emotional Thinking Scale (ETS). Although it is a simple

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<sup>69</sup>Peter Shepherd, “Transforming the Mind” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.trans4mind.com/transformation/transform.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>70</sup>Berger, Internet.

<sup>71</sup>Jerry A. Schmidt, *Do You Hear What You’re Thinking?* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 5.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

three-minute eight-item questionnaire, it has proven to be very effective. It seeks to determine a person's difficulty distinguishing "between emotions and thoughts. For some, strong emotions tend to interfere with balanced and realistic thought processes and can result in distorted views of situations and relationships."<sup>73</sup> Huggins relates how such emotional thinking began:

From infancy, each of us develops a mental strategy for coping with suffering—for avoiding it, alleviating it, and protecting ourselves from it. As we get older, the strategy becomes more refined and sophisticated. By the time we're adults it becomes so second-nature that we're barely aware of the control it exerts over us.<sup>74</sup>

Suffering here includes anything one *thinks* he or she does not desire, but in reality, one's self-protection from most "suffering is the greatest obstacle to the life [one] really want[s]."<sup>75</sup> Any thinking or belief which causes you to evaluate events and relationships including your "own and other people's actions differently than God does" is distorted and destructive.<sup>76</sup>

According to Rosenau, the term "stinking thinking" is an affectionate label used by the twelve-step community which specializes in assisting addicts to overcome their unhealthy addiction(s). He says it refers to "being in the zone or trance, that place where they know they are going to act out [have a relapse]. Before they realize it, they are on their way ... prone to

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<sup>73</sup>Albert Mehrabian, "Emotional Thinking Scale (ETS): An Important Component of Emotional Intelligence" [article on-line]; available from <http://www.kaaj.com/psych/scales/et.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006. See two other articles: Mehrabian, Albert. "Beyond IQ: Broad-based measurement of individual success potential or 'emotional intelligence.'" *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs* 126: 133-239, 2000; Mehrabian, Albert, C. A. Stefl, and M. Mullen. "Emotional thinking in the adult: Individual differences in mysticism and globality-differentiation." *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 16: 325-355, 1996-1997.

<sup>74</sup>Huggins, 104.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 168.

denial and some very slick thinking. ... Rationalizations and distorted thinking will come like second nature.”<sup>77</sup>

Welch summarized the main problem of all addicts with unhealthy addictions: “The basic theology for [unhealthy] addictions is that the root problem goes deeper than our genetic makeup. [Such] addictions are ultimately a disorder of worship.”<sup>78</sup> Instead of worshiping the Creator, addicts’ minds have become distorted to worshiping creatures—themselves. Instead of exercising patience to have their needs met at appropriate times in appropriate ways and by appropriate people, they impatiently (often at great expense which may involve money—even great debt—or loss of reputation, family, job, career, or life) gratify their own needs in their own way. (Some addictions such as praying, or giving may be very healthy.)

Mythical thinking is another form of distorted thinking, believing in things that may seem true, but the facts clearly prove that they actually have no objective reality. In chapter four of one of his many books, George Barna lists twenty of the many myths that have marred “the meaning, development and implementation of God’s vision for ministry.”<sup>79</sup>

“False assumption” is another well-recognized term this study will equate with distorted thinking. It is described by Cloud and Townsend as follows:

Time and time again, we’d find that our patients—sincere, Bible-loving believers struggling with emotional issues ... were also handicapped by certain teachings that sounded Christian, but weren’t. ... these ideas are emotional heresies. They are false assumptions about spiritual and emotional growth. They aren’t biblical, and they don’t work.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Douglas Rosenau, *A Celebration of Sex: A Guide to Enjoying God’s Gift of Sexual Intimacy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), 364.

<sup>78</sup>Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Co., 2001), 15-6.

<sup>79</sup>George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 44.

<sup>80</sup>Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *False Assumptions: Relief from 12 “Christian” Beliefs That Can Drive You Crazy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 9.

The authors go on to identify twelve false assumptions, “each containing a nugget of truth,” but which result instead in hindering believers from effective ministry. These assumptions are listed in the appendix.

Related to “false assumptions” are “false ideas.” One writer wrote the following under the heading “Purging Your False Ideas”:

Great new ideas are wonderful, but they are seldom the key to success. The KEY is usually getting rid of an old idea that everyone accepts as valid; that is in fact WRONG. It may be wrong in some point of detail that by force of habit everyone overlooks ... Sir Francis Crick, the Nobel Prize winner ... said, “It’s getting rid of false ideas that’s most important. ... That’s why collaboration is essential. ... People often miss the obvious because they are searching for something else.”<sup>81</sup>

The term “random thinking” is a very helpful one. Although it may be useful when “brainstorming” it is generally referring to thinking outside of legal or moral boundaries and often results in random behavior which is harmful to one or more persons. This would be offensive to God. “Christ warned us that random thoughts soon show up in our words and works (Matt. 12:33-37).”<sup>82</sup> More extreme forms of random thinking could include sophistry as well as nefarious or flagitious thinking.

Purcell mentioned another term attempting to overcome common distortions about decision making—“thinking kinks”:

There is only one right answer. Fortunately this is rarely the case, but thinking this way makes the prospect of decision-making overwhelming. Before making a decision you must be 100 percent sure of it. This condition is virtually impossible. Human beings are complex, and can react to a decision in many different ways at the same time. Further, we can’t see the future, so it is impossible to predict the outcome of a decision with certainty. In short, 85 percent is about as good as it gets. Do any of these “thinking kinks” sound familiar? If so, join the rest of us imperfect beings!

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<sup>81</sup> Veitch, Internet.

<sup>82</sup> Joseph M. Stowell, *Perilous Pursuits: Our Obsession with Significance* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), 56.

The good news is that there are ways to demystify the decision-making process.<sup>83</sup>

All the descriptions and terms above could be summed up as “unhealthy thinking” or “unhealthy thought patterns.” These last two terms are used by several authors mentioned above but almost exclusively by David Ferguson who also used the term “outlandish thinking patterns” to refer to the “deeply entrenched patterns of thinking programmed into us since childhood” which are often used as the means of expressing very unhealthy expectations, complaints, or conflicts within relationships, especially marriage. Ferguson concentrates on six of these patterns and describes in detail the destructiveness of each. They are labeled as follows:

Personalizing: “Life events are personal rejections and attacks”

Magnifying: “Mountains out of molehills”

Overgeneralizing: “History always repeats itself”

Emotional Reasoning: “Interpreting feelings as facts”

Polarizing: “Seeing everything as black or white”

Selective Abstraction: (An offshoot of Polarizing) “Missing the forest for the trees”

Minimizing: “It really doesn’t matter”<sup>84</sup>

The list of similar terms may include a few more than those cited above, such as warped (Prov. 12:8 NIV), foolish, idiotic, or perverse thinking, but we will end for now with one more in this section. A sermon by M. Blaine Smith of Nehemiah Ministries, Inc. included another term:

Fatal-error thinking may lead us to conclude unnecessarily that:

A thoughtless remark we uttered has forever doomed a good relationship

A foul-up in a project at work has sunk our prospects for promotion

A failed midterm has destroyed our chance to pass the course

A bad investment has fated us to an impoverished retirement.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Maud Purcell, “Demystifying Decision-Making,” 5 April 2001 [article on-line]; available from [http://psychcentral.com/library/decision\\_making.htm](http://psychcentral.com/library/decision_making.htm); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>84</sup>David and Teresa Ferguson, *Intimate Encounters* (Austin, TX: Intimacy Press, 1997), 157-81.

<sup>85</sup>M. Blaine Smith, “No Fatal Errors: Covering Your Missteps, Rebounding from Setbacks,” [article on-line]; available from <http://nehemiah.gospelcom.net/impro.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

His sermon elaborated on seven “points at which swallowing our pride may be necessary.”<sup>86</sup>

### **Distorted thinking in the literature**

Rahan Ali and the staff of the University of Cincinnati *Psychological Services Center* have put together a fact sheet about “Thoughts & Feelings: How they interact to maintain emotional balance.” Under the subtitle “So Where Does Distorted Thinking Come From?” they concluded:

All of us, depressed or not, anxious or not, will have distorted or negative automatic thoughts from time to time—it’s human nature. No one is always perfectly objective. But where do these distortions come from? A popular theory in psychology holds that our everyday automatic thoughts come from more stable beliefs we have about ourselves and the world. We call these core beliefs.

Core beliefs are formed from our life experiences, often in childhood but also throughout our lives, and they can be very stubborn. That’s because we tend to interpret our everyday life experiences in ways that fit our core beliefs, thus making the core beliefs even stronger. If you were to record the hundreds of automatic thoughts you have in a typical week, it’s likely that you’ll find common themes in them—those themes reflect the core beliefs you have.<sup>87</sup>

Jackson contends we were created for intimate relationship; recovery from any intimacy disorder “occurs when we are restored in oneness with our Lord.” He continues:

Distorted thinking usually fuels bad behavior. Instead of *responding* appropriately to troublesome people, events, urges, etc. ... we *react*, caving in to our damaged thoughts about them. We can’t change a single behavior until we change the thoughts that sanction and sponsor them.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Rahan Ali, “Thoughts & Feelings: How they interact to maintain emotional balance,” University of Cincinnati Psychological Services Center [article on-line]; available from <http://www.uc.edu/cc/Thoughts.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>88</sup>Rob Jackson, “Beneath the Surface of Our Behavior: The Iceberg Method to Understanding Intimacy Disorder” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.pureintimacy.org/gr/intimacy/redemption/a0000178.cfm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

The problem of distorted thinking, then, is whether or not one's core beliefs are actually based upon reality (i.e., God's perspective of reality). If not on reality, are they based upon one's own or someone else's ambitious but feeble attempt at constructing a meaningful worldview? Many authors from many disciplines have commented on the consequences of distorted thinking in lives of individuals, groups, and nations and have attempted to offer suggestions for overcoming such thinking while realizing that no one living today will ever completely overcome every type of distorted thinking in his or her lifetime.

Several books containing at least a few paragraphs or pages referring to the idea of distorted thinking are written from the cognitive approach in psychology. In 1998 the World Health Organization published *Mental Disorders in Primary Care, a WHO Education Package*. It states: "Anxious thinking is distorted thinking."<sup>89</sup> This and many other organizations use at least one popular theory of the cognitive approach, the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT, often abbreviated RET) which was proposed by Albert Ellis in 1955. RET is described in Webster's 2001 dictionary as "a form of therapy in which a patient is asked to reject irrational attitudes and assumptions in order to deal effectively with stressful situations."

Westermeyer wrote: "Cognitive therapy focuses on change at all levels; automatic thoughts, behaviors, protective rules, core beliefs."<sup>90</sup> He explains in another article: "In cognitive therapy, people learn how to pay attention to automatic thoughts and recognize those which are

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<sup>89</sup>"Dealing with anxious thinking," Adapted, with permission, from World Health Organization. *Mental Disorders in Primary Care, a WHO Education Package*, 1998., [article online]; available from [http://www.mentalneurologicalprimarycare.org/downloads/primary\\_care/04-2\\_dealing\\_with\\_anxious\\_thoughts.pdf](http://www.mentalneurologicalprimarycare.org/downloads/primary_care/04-2_dealing_with_anxious_thoughts.pdf); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006, 1.

<sup>90</sup>Westermeyer, "The Structural Model of Cognition," Internet.

distorted. There are a number of techniques which can be easily implemented when distorted thoughts are identified so that more balanced, realistic interpretations can be discovered.”<sup>91</sup>

Wyre, the pioneer behind Gracewell, Britain’s first clinic for treating sex offenders, indicated: “Legal definitions are stuck in trying to prove the content of an offence. But this feeds into the distorted thinking of offenders: ‘I only did this,’ ‘I only did that,’ ‘I only touched ... It was only partial ...’ and all that sort of stuff.” He is convinced: “Contact can never be the determinant of seriousness. It is the psychological components that go with the actual abuse which causes the long-term damage. It’s the threats, the control, the power issues, the passing on of the offender’s beliefs to the victim that cause the real damage.”<sup>92</sup>

The following statement from the same article is a sad commentary on the effectiveness of pastors and Christian counselors to deal with this problem that is very prevalent among Christian men: “I’ve worked with more born-again Christian abusers than any other. The religious sex offender is the bane of my life. A lot of our child killers are evangelical born-again abusers.”<sup>93</sup>

One relatively early example was found in a book published in 1988. *Traits of a Happy Couple* summarized the “landmark research that happened between 1975 and 1985 ... 130 family scholars completed seventy-five studies on the cause and cure for marriage breakdown.” The author wrote the following using our main term for this study: “Each of you came in today

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<sup>91</sup>Westermeyer, “Pin-Pointing Nasty Cognitions” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.habitsmart.com/pin.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>92</sup>Ray Wyre, “All Wyred Up,” *Men & Crime* (Summer 1992) [article on-line]; available from [http://www.achillesheel.freeuk.com/article13\\_2.html](http://www.achillesheel.freeuk.com/article13_2.html); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

believing that your partner was the problem, but the real problem was an incorrect perception, a blaming attitude, and distorted thinking.”<sup>94</sup>

Two recent citations of the term “distorted thinking” were found in a book by Rosenau published in 2002. One was mentioned above in the paragraph describing the similar term “stinking thinking” and the other is as follows:

The one cheated on often knows something is not quite right but can't put a finger on it. The one in the affair is often oblivious to the changes taking place: the different behavior patterns, the irritability or indifference toward the mate and the marriage, and *distorted thinking* [emphasis added] along these lines: the partner is becoming less attractive, the tension is somehow the mate's fault, the partner is no longer understanding, and the marriage was never that good anyway.<sup>95</sup>

In the paragraph that followed, Rosenau further expounds on the results of distorted thinking:

“Tremendous rationalizing and compartmentalizing occur in the mind of the unfaithful partner ... the dishonesty gets easier.”<sup>96</sup>

It appears from more recent literature that most therapies are ineffective in correcting the distorted thinking of some people, who have very deep distorted ruts in their thinking. Most chronic child molesters, for example, should be suspect for the rest of their life and are required in the United States to register with local authorities wherever they live since few have ever recovered completely. They have reached level three in sexual addiction—“behaviors which violate society's most significant boundaries ... child molestation, incest, and rape.”<sup>97</sup> The failure of the Roman Catholic Church to adequately deal with many of their priests worldwide who have yet to overcome this type of distorted thinking has angered both many of their

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<sup>94</sup>Larry L. Halter, *Traits of a Happy Couple* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 5, 23.

<sup>95</sup>Rosenau, 348.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>Paul Forsythe, “A Christian Response to Internet Pornography” (D.Min. diss., Phoenix Seminary, 2001), 53.

parishioners and many in the general public.<sup>98</sup> But this organization, which claims to know and follow the truth, is not the only one struggling with this particular problem. The most studied literature of all time on the topic of questionable thinking speaks of a “hardened heart” or “seared conscience” referring to choices made in spite of known truth:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.<sup>2</sup> Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

### **Distorted thinking cited on the Internet**

A simple search on the Internet for the two words “distorted thinking” brought up thousands of references. Several explain the dangers of such thinking: “Irrational or *distorted thinking* blocks authentic communication, the source of cooperation, understanding and effective solutions.”<sup>99</sup> Castleman stated, “Cognitive therapy is a deceptively simple, do-it-yourself approach based on the idea that depression is often triggered by distorted thinking—and relieved by correcting it.”<sup>100</sup>

There are hundreds of other similar Internet citations from organizations and hospitals striving to empower people to overcome their depression or their unhealthy addictions to various things or ways of life. Much research has already been done to determine the specific distorted thoughts that lead to depression, specific addictions, or abuses. One of the worst forms of abuse which encompasses mental, emotional, and physical abuse together was cited as follows:

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<sup>98</sup> Kit R. Roane, “The long arm of abuse,” *U.S. News & World Report* (6 May 2002), 26-9.

<sup>99</sup> Steve Davis, “Recognize and Intervene on ‘Distorted Thinking’ – Part II,” *The Master Facilitator Journal* (5 February 2002) [article on-line]; available from <http://www.masterfacilitatorjournal.com/archives/skill40.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>100</sup> Michael Castleman, “Becoming Unblued” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.motherjones.com/news/outfront/1997/05/wellbeing.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

I would like to attempt to define sexual abuse for you, so that we understand the broad scope of the problem. (I say “attempt” because human beings motivated by *distorted thinking* and selfish desires continually discover additional methods such as the newer technologies to achieve self-gratification through sexualized relationships.) Sexual abuse may be overt, that is obvious and with no effort to hide the fact that it is sexual in nature. Or abuse may be covert, in which the offender behaves as if he or she is doing something non-sexual while all along he or she is being sexual. Many survivors of covert sexual abuse have learned to mistrust their own emotions and perceptions of reality.<sup>101</sup>

The most commonly cited list mentioned on the Internet concerned fifteen styles of distorted thinking, as in the article entitled, “Styles of Distorted Thinking by Adult Children Anonymous.”<sup>102</sup> Though not many sites gave credit for the sources of the list, some do credit Aaron Beck (who first developed cognitive therapy); some credit David Burns,<sup>103</sup> and others credit Albert Ellis.<sup>104</sup> The last one of the list of fifteen is: “Heaven’s Reward Fallacy: You expect all your sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if there were someone keeping score. You feel bitter when the reward doesn’t come.” Since many Christians (and even some non-Christians) seem to have trouble with this one, some, like Wilson, offer an alternative list of only ten distortions which were adapted from Burns.

In her article “Getting Out of the Distorted Thinking Trap,” Annie reduced the common list of fifteen down to thirteen, and reworded item fifteen to “The Sacrifice/Reward Game”

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<sup>101</sup>Kathy A. Goodrich, “The Dynamics of Sexual Abuse in a Sexualized Culture, Part One: An Overview” [article on-line]; available from [http://www.oneby1.org/dynamics\\_of\\_sexualabuse\\_impact.html](http://www.oneby1.org/dynamics_of_sexualabuse_impact.html); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>102</sup>“Styles of Distorted Thinking by Adult Children Anonymous” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.12stepforums.net/healingroom/sodt.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>103</sup>Peter Shepherd, “15 Styles of Distorted Thinking” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.trans4mind.com/transformation/transform2.13.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006. Only ten styles are listed in Burns, 1993), 50.

<sup>104</sup>Davis, Internet.

without any hint of a vendetta against Christianity. She included personal experiences of dealing with each type.<sup>105</sup>

Also listed on the Internet were a few sermon titles which employed the term “distorted thinking.” Siegfriedt, for example, cautions that such thinking can lead to legalistic thinking, ignoring grace and mercy:

Most people define themselves as being clear and rational thinkers. But the truth is, there are many times when all of us engage in *distorted thinking* or are misguided by our irrational beliefs. At the core of the gospel message is the imperative to seek the truth and to allow God’s thoughts to become our thoughts. If the Great Commandment calls us to love God and love our neighbor, then how should this affect the way we think and the way we respond to challenging situations? What I would like to do today, is to use the story of the “Good Samaritan” as a vehicle to explore *distorted thinking* and to show how *distorted thinking* turns us away from embracing the Great Commandment (emphasis mine).<sup>106</sup>

### **Definition of distorted thinking and reality**

The question, which may not even be answered in the non-religious literature, is this: what view of reality are the cognitive therapists proposing as the standard for their clients to use for overcoming distorted thinking? It is very likely there is not just one “reality,” but several that are acceptable, and at least one that the major media and educational authorities unanimously reject—the biblical view of reality. Each therapist may have his or her own unique understanding of reality. Two realities will be contrasted in the next several paragraphs, one from Ellis and another from some Christian counselors who practice a modified form of cognitive therapy.

Ellis estimates that about 90% of his cases are comprised of helping clients replace the self-talk phrases such as “It’s terrible,” “It’s awful,” and “It’s horrible” with something like “It’s

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<sup>105</sup>Annie Nelson, “Getting Out of the Distorted Thinking Trap” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.sandf.org/articles/ThinkTrap.asp>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>106</sup>Karen Siegfriedt, “Distorted Thinking vs. Love Command,” 15 July 2001 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.saintjudes.org/src/Sermons/20010715ks.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

too bad,” or “Tough luck.” He briefly explained RET by writing, “virtually all human disturbance is self-created by the human individual because he [or she] pig-headedly and devoutly believes in using two nonsensical words or their equivalents: ‘It’s terrible!’”<sup>107</sup> Christ, however, made it clear that someday it actually will be “terrible” (the meaning of “Woe”) for some people who are rich, full, laughing, or popular (cf. Luke 6:24-26), as well as for those who are legalistic, greedy, unrepentant hypocrites, and those fearing man more than God (cf. Luke 11:37-12:11).

There is sufficient evidence that Ellis, to use his own term mentioned above, prefers to “pig-headedly” use an abundant amount of profanity and verbal abuse in a loud and boisterous manner as a means of challenging some clients to straighten out their distorted thinking.<sup>108</sup> Using one unhealthy kind of thinking to straighten out another may be no better than replacing one unhealthy addiction or phobia with another harmful behavior such as profanity or rudeness. This could be counterproductive. It may resolve the immediate problem of the client (fear, in two cases he mentions below), but it could be just as unhealthy in the long term if the client adhered to the modeled obloquy. There is scant evidence, if at all, that Ellis has any place in his system for God or the Bible.

In chapters 4 and 8 of this same book, Ellis presented the transcript of what he and his clients said in two different cases. Other chapters written by other counselors who follow his model were even clearer in their disdain for God and the Bible. Ellis was adhering to “The Case Against Religion: A Psychotherapist’s View,” which he wrote in 1962. Fortunately he realized later that he “was unduly negative in this respect and thoroughly revised [his] essay in 1983,”

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<sup>107</sup> Albert Ellis, *Growth Through Reason* (Hollywood, CA: Wilshire Book Co., 1971), 10-1.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 228-9.

which resulted in “accepting the sinner but not the sin” or in his REBT vocabulary, “unconditional self-acceptance” and “unconditional other acceptance.”<sup>109</sup>

He now assumes that the key to mental health is the development of the following traits: “self-interest, self-direction, social interest, tolerance, acceptance of ambiguity, acceptance of reality [his perspective, of course], commitment, risk-taking, self-acceptance, rationality, and scientific thinking.” His own interpretation of reality, however, contrasts starkly with the perspective promoted by this present study because he is convinced that people who have “a vague, general, or moderate set of ‘religious beliefs’ or ‘mild religion’ do not need as much help or counseling as those who have ‘a devout and pious brand of religiosity.’”<sup>110</sup>

Although Ellis may appear to be completely against Christianity, there is, according to Cloud and Townsend, some truth in this: “One problem we often see in the Christian community is that people get more into religion and less into the connectedness the Bible prescribes, with the result that they get sicker.”<sup>111</sup> They also noted:

Some people from conservative backgrounds were taught a lot of Bible content, but not in helpful ways. They might have experienced legalism, judgmentalism, or profound guilt in their study of the Bible. Thus, they were wounded by errant teachings on the Book that is meant to heal them.<sup>112</sup>

Although Ellis *et al.* may defend their actions by claiming that some clients need a bit of the abuse or a harsh and frank confrontational approach at least to the same level if not a bit more than what the clients themselves usually dispense to others in order to obtain their attention and get them to at least seriously consider their advice, it may be very destructive, damaging, or

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<sup>109</sup> Albert Ellis and Shawn Blau, eds., *The Albert Ellis Reader: A Guide to Well-Being Using Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy* (New York, NY: Carol Publishing Group, 1998), 235.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>111</sup> Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *How People Grow: What the Bible Reveals about Personal Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 123.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

scary to some of them. By this strategy, perhaps they are attempting to establish that they are significant and must therefore be heard and heeded. Their clients, though, may need to be debriefed soon afterwards by a non-Ellis type counselor because “verbal abuse can be quite subtle but nonetheless damaging. The effects [could be] permanent and [are] often life-shaping.”<sup>113</sup> Kitterman continues: “While there may be little you can do to change your abuser, there is much you can learn about how to stop absorbing such hurtful words as truth. You can learn to eradicate their power over you.”<sup>114</sup> The definition used in this study for the term “verbal abuse” is as follows:

“Verbal abuse is any statement to a victim that results in emotional damage. Such damage limits his or her happiness and productivity.”<sup>115</sup> Forgiveness and healing are possible so that the damage need not last a lifetime.

Actually, verbal, emotional, mental, sexual, and physical abuse are all *consequences* of distorted thinking, the first two often being precursors to the latter two. For example: “Violence,” wrote Tournier, “is a way of proving that one exists, when one believes oneself to be insignificant.”<sup>116</sup> Believing that what one feels must be true—automatically is called emotional reasoning in the literature and is one of the fifteen types of distorted thinking discussed in this paper. All types of abuse utilize at least this distortion.

Only God can give genuine significance. It is not something one can earn on his or her own. Stowell reminds us that our God-given instincts of pride, pleasure, and passion when submitted to our Creator can lead us into “great good and significance, ... [but when]

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<sup>113</sup>Grace Kitterman, *Verbal Abuse: Healing the Hidden Wound* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1992), 7.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>116</sup>Paul Tournier, *The Violence Within* (New York, NY: Harper & Roe, 1978), 10.

unharnessed ... they do major damage and leave us at best empty and at worst wasted and in despair.”<sup>117</sup> He continues by stating the search for personal significance apart from God may be:

a risky and treacherous adventure ... [not only] because ... of other significance seekers who either carelessly or purposely are willing to damage our sense of worth to establish theirs ... [in their] attempt to overpower us personally, relationally, sexually, socially, and athletically ... [but also because] the debilitating effects of our [unhealthy] addiction to the enlargement, protection and maintenance of our significance always strike at our personhood ... [this] ultimately brings loss, shame, guilt, emptiness, and regret. ... this addiction is why we refuse to forgive and [why we] even seek revenge against those who have hurt us.<sup>118</sup>

Some cultures encourage men “to keep a stiff upper lip and show no emotion ... ‘they ... have no friends. ... They have something else—companions, buddies, pals, chums, [etc.] ... but no one when it comes to saying how they feel—especially how they hurt’ ... Men who have no outlet for ordinary, everyday anger are at risk of finally exploding in rage toward the people who have to put up with it: their wives,”<sup>119</sup> kids, subordinates, pets, etc.

Several counselors have taken the cognitive approach a step further than Ellis by allowing room for the comforting and directing work of the Holy Spirit to transform a person’s mind and lifestyle. This was the approach of Noebel, Hunt, and others such as Crabb and Allender (the latter two together wrote *Hope When You’re Hurting* and several other books independently) and Wilson (who wrote *Hurt People Hurt People: Hope and Healing for Yourself and Your Relationships*, 2001, as well as *Released from Shame*, 2002). There are many others who also follow this view of reality.

But some, like Huggins, have realized the limitations of professional counseling:

The impact we can have on people’s character as professional counselors doesn’t compare to the impact we can have as friendship-counselors—sharing community with them in churches,

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<sup>117</sup>Stowell, 33-4.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 17-20.

<sup>119</sup>James Alsdurf and Phillis Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 42.

homes, and restaurants, and on campuses, outings, retreats, and mission trips. ... Jesus' way of building friendship-counseling relationships has become a lost practice.<sup>120</sup>

Of the nine ingredients of a character-shaping relationship which Jesus modeled, professional or clinical counseling cannot achieve three of them (intimate involvement, personal modeling, and lifelong friendship) and is seldom involved in the other six (hand selection, open moral intent, moral insight, moral responsibility, prescribed selflessness, and inward accountability).<sup>121</sup>

Cloud contends that those who have the character it takes to succeed and finish well will demonstrate genuine integrity. This kind of character:

1. Creates and maintains trust
2. Is able to see and face reality
3. Works in a way that brings results
4. Embraces negative realities and solves them
5. Causes growth and increase
6. Achieves transcendence and meaning in life<sup>122</sup>

The present study is a result of interest piqued after reading Wilson's *Released from Shame*. Those, who hold to the view of co-operating with the Holy Spirit, strongly encourage us to deepen our relationship with God and with others: "Until one discovers this primal truth, human life will be distorted ... efforts at self-validation, efforts to ward off shame and condemnation—in short, a lifestyle (especially for clergy) of drivenness."<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>Huggins, 86-7.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>122</sup>Henry Cloud, *Integrity: the courage to meet the demands of reality*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), xii.

<sup>123</sup>Hands, Donald R., and Wayne L. Fehr, *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy With God, Self and Others* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 1993), 55.

For the purposes of this study, the term distorted thinking shall refer to “any reasoning process that distorts reality.”<sup>124</sup> All the similar terms mentioned above could fall under this definition. The aspects of distorted thinking that will not be addressed here are humor, comedy, raillery, and stories such as those of Greek or Roman mythology.

To adequately grasp the definition above, a clarification of the term “reality” as used in this study is in order. The first of the four assumptions of Cognitive Coaching is: “All people actively construct their own reality. All of us actively construct personal meanings out of our life experiences”<sup>125</sup> (cf. appendix for all four assumptions).

In recent years Academia in some government Universities has been proposing that reality is a personal choice and that science has not been much help in this area. Peter Menzies of the Department of Philosophy of Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia lamented:

Many of the undergraduates I teach are attracted by the heady idea that truth is ‘relative to us’ and reality is ‘dependent on our minds.’ This idea is not just confined to philosophy undergraduates. A veritable army of philosophers, historians, and sociologists of science has been working over the last forty years to persuade us that science itself does not deliver objective truths, but is rather an elaborate social construction that creates the reality it purports to study. It is a dismal reflection on academic faddism that this form of skepticism has become the prevailing orthodoxy in science studies.

He then reviewed two books that seek to rectify this problem: *Theory and Truth: Philosophical Critique within Foundational Science* by Lawrence Sklar, and *Critical Scientific Realism* by Ilka Niiniluoto.

Peter Shepherd has described reality known to man as:

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<sup>124</sup>Reneau Peurifoy, “What is Distorted Thinking?” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.rpeurifoy.com/anger/distthnk.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>125</sup>“Checklist of Habitual Thinking Distortions (or automatic thoughts),” adapted from David Burns, *Ten Days to Self-Esteem* [article on-line]; available from <http://www.accessmasterminds.com/distortions.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2002. (No longer on Internet, see article in appendix).

1. Objective Reality (Physical objects and states – organic, inorganic, and human artifacts)
2. Subjective Reality (Knowledge in objective sense – composed of:
  - a. Encoded cultural heritage – philosophical, socio-economic, moral, historical, literary, artistic, and technological
  - b. Cognitive systems – scientific method, critical argument, and logical analysis)
3. Personal Subjective Reality (States of consciousness – perception, thinking, emotion, intentions, dreams, and imaginations).<sup>126</sup>

Johnston believed “Modern man’s worldview for the last 250 years has been shaped by an illusion. Nature has replaced God as the ultimate reality. Nation-state has taken the place of God as the ultimate source to which we look for happiness, health, and welfare.”<sup>127</sup> Next he contrasted two common belief systems in his fourth chapter entitled, “What Can We Know? The Dialogue with Science”:

Aristotelian belief: things are to be understood in terms of their end or purpose.  
 Lord Bacon (modern belief): things are to be understood in terms of their causes. This is value-free relative to purpose. This is the world of “facts.” Personal beliefs and values do not enter into this picture. In “science” one does not write “I believe” but simply these are the facts whether one believes them or not. Thus, “science” relieves one of the responsibilities of deciding whether or not to commit [one]self to the truth of its statements.<sup>128</sup>

One no longer needs to wonder why so many people misbehave and think distortedly as they do today since God has been “explained” away by “scientists.” But if one is serious to understand the founder of the scientific method, they will discover that other sources provide a more complete view of Bacon’s beliefs:

Sir Francis Bacon (22 January 1561 - 9 April 1626) ... as Lord Chancellor of England (1618-21), he was significantly responsible for the formulation and acceptance of the scientific method, which stressed gathering data from experimentation and induction rather than through the practice of philosophical deduction promulgated by Aristotle. ... He wrote:

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<sup>126</sup>Shepherd, “Transforming the Mind.”

<sup>127</sup>Mark H. Johnston, “Profile of a Culture,” Chapter 2 of his ACE class on 7 April 2002. See article in appendix.

<sup>128</sup>Johnston, “What Can We Know? The Dialogue with Science,” Chapter 4 of his ACE Class on 28 April 2002. See article in appendix.

There are two books laid before us to study, to prevent our falling into error; first, the volume of Scriptures, which reveal the will of God; then the volume of the Creatures, which express His power.<sup>129</sup>

There never was found, in any age of the world, either philosophy, or sect, or religion, or law, or discipline, which did so highly exalt the good of the community, and increase private and particular good as the holy Christian faith. Hence, it clearly appears that it was one and the same God that gave the Christian law to men, who gave the laws of nature to the creatures.<sup>130</sup>

Although there are many different perceptions and definitions of reality, this study will hopefully draw the reader's attention to the fact that only God knows reality as it was, is, and will be. Humans at best can only make an educated guess based upon experiments, documents, experience, trial and error, analysis, empiricism, etc., but even these are presented according to their own biased worldview.

Our task is to allow God to transform our minds as we read and study within a community of fellow believers his revealed Word, our weapon, used for

... pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments [false wisdom and sophisticated debates] and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” so that we may increasingly “bring every thought [every idea, motive, desire, and decision] into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, NKJV; additions from The Reformation Study Bible notes).

As to whether or not this study is adhering to an adequate definition of reality, one need only look at the history of any country which was run by tyrants, or by tyrannical governments—

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<sup>129</sup>Henry M. Morris, *Men of Science – Men of God* (El Cajon, CA: Masters Books, 1990), 13-5.

<sup>130</sup>Sir Francis Bacon, “Essays: Of Goodness,” in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts – A Cyclopaedia of Quotations*, ed. Tryon Edwards (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1852; revised and enlarged by C. H. Catrevas, Ralph Emerson Browns, and Jonathan Edwards, 1891; The Standard Book Co., 1955, 1963), 91; quoted in Burton Stevenson, *The Home Book of Quotations – Classical & Modern* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1967), 265.

all attempts “to exterminate the idea of God” ultimately fail—“He rises up to outlive His pallbearers.”<sup>131</sup> Zacharias goes on to say that:

“Apart from God, Chaos is the norm: with God, the hungers of the mind and heart find their fulfillment.”<sup>132</sup>

“Reality can be lost when reason and language have been violated.”<sup>133</sup>

“If the reasoning process is not properly pursued as other disciplines are, what compelling influences determine our decisions and shape our values?”<sup>134</sup>

God himself laughs in derision at national leaders who seriously believe in their own personally defined reality and he laughs at their feeble attempts to fight against him and his anointed one.

The entire second chapter of the book of Psalms is dedicated to this topic.

Grenz clarified how anyone can find reality is in this way: “We are not isolated entities existing to ourselves; nor are we the source of our fulfillment. On the contrary, we derive fulfillment beyond ourselves. This need to find fulfillment beyond ourselves is the dynamic that leads to the desire to develop relationships with others and ultimately with God.”<sup>135</sup> Wakefield and Broolsma used the phrase a “new paradigm of reality” to describe what occurs when a person becomes a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17): “It is rooted in how he [God] sees life—our Lord’s reality.”<sup>136</sup>

Hoffecker has compiled a useful book of articles from many writers (including a few articles he has written) that can assist Christians in avoiding distorted thinking by encouraging them to develop a Christian worldview: “A person’s worldview is the collection of his [or her]

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<sup>131</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1994), xv.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*, back cover.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>135</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 32.

<sup>136</sup>Norman Wakefield and Jody Broolsma, *Men are from Israel, Women are from Moab* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 21.

presuppositions or convictions about reality, which represent his total outlook on life ... evaluating our worldview entails discovering the underlying roots of what we say, think, and do.”<sup>137</sup>

Care must be taken when constructing one’s worldview to allow for doubt as well as for truth because “once in operation, a belief system [tends to process] all information, all evidence in its own terms, appropriating that which verifies its outlook and defusing or ignoring anything else.”<sup>138</sup> He offers this example: “The notion of absolutes is a *human* attempt to explain the ways of God to ourselves (not, by the way, the approach used in biblical revelation), just as our desire for certainty is part of a very human longing for security.”<sup>139</sup> Any belief or religion that cannot “stand the test of truth, regardless of the mood of the day” does not earn the right to be treated with intellectual respect.<sup>140</sup>

There are thousands of resources available today which demonstrate the futility of arguing against this reality. One very helpful book, which also addresses the exclusiveness of this perspective, is entitled, “*True For You But Not For Me*”: *Deflating the slogans that leave Christians speechless*, by Paul Copan. Although some who follow the Eastern way of thinking claim that their truth is “all-inclusive” rather than exclusive,

Every religion, without exception, has some foundational beliefs that are categorically nonnegotiable and exclude everything to the contrary. ... Truth by definition is exclusive. If truth were all-inclusive, nothing would be false. And if nothing were false, what would be the meaning of truth?<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Hoffecker, ix-x.

<sup>138</sup>Daniel Taylor, *The Myth of Certainty* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 23.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>140</sup>Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2000), ix.

<sup>141</sup>Zacharias, 1996, 221.

Below are a few passages of scripture that may help one to understand reality as God sees it. Basically it says that we will never know all we want to know in our lifetime, but we can know enough to believe and do what God requires of us. So, let us not get sidetracked on peripheral issues, debates, and arguments because:

The secret things belong to the LORD our God,  
but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever,  
that we may observe all the words of this law. (Deut. 29:29, NASB)

The Lord tells his secrets to those who respect him. (Ps. 25:14, NCV)

For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa. 55: 8-9, KJV)

Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received! We were also given absolutely terrific promises to pass on to you—your tickets to participation in the life of God after you turned your back on a world corrupted by lust. So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. (2 Pet. 1:3-8, The Message)

Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed." (John 20:29, NKJV)

It is indeed a risk to believe anything, including what has not been seen or proven by the scientific method. We do not have the original manuscripts of the sixty-six canonical books of the Bible, only about 5,000 later biblical manuscripts discovered thus far and no two are exactly alike in all particulars, but there is more evidence for the accuracy of these books than for any other books produced before the invention of the printing press. We can only take God at his Word as we have it trusting his promise that his Word is pure and eternal (Ps. 119:89, 149-2, 152; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). No one else comes close to being an expert on reality. Of course, there are some scriptures which are

hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. ... therefore ... be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall away from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:16-18, NASB).

To understand his reality we must be diligent students of the Bible, not ignoring what other godly scholars before us have discovered, and even then realizing that neither we nor they will have ever fully grasped how deep and broad the truth and wisdom it contains before life as we now know it has ended (2 Tim. 2:15).

Earl Radmacher commented on the importance of knowing and properly relating to God: “Until we understand who God really is, our lives will not be all that different from what they have been. Right living begins with right thinking. And right thinking begins with thinking right about God.”<sup>142</sup> There is only thing that God allows people to boast about and it is not our good deeds (Isa. 64:6; 2 Cor. 10:12) or how well think (Isa. 55:8-9):

This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD (Jer. 9:23-24).

### **The origin of distorted thinking**

The first occurrence of distorted thinking by a human being happened just before Adam’s wife, Eve, ate the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:1-6a). In his conversation with Eve, the Serpent (Lucifer, the first fallen angel, and the originator of distorted thinking; John 8:44-47), successfully enticed her “to distort and discredit” God.<sup>143</sup> He encouraged her to doubt God’s

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<sup>142</sup>Earl D. Radmacher, *You & your thoughts: The power of right thinking* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1977), 41.

<sup>143</sup>Norm Wakefield, *Who Gives a R-I-P About Sin?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 27.

veracity, love, generosity, reliability, and to doubt his desire and ability to meet her needs and fully satisfy her.

Even though “Adam and Eve were both significant and secure ... their needs were fully met in their relationship with God”<sup>144</sup> and with each other, the Serpent easily convinced Eve that she wasn’t good or significant enough because she was less than God. Then he promised her that if she would follow his advice she could become like God after her eyes were opened from eating the fruit and thereby gaining knowledge of both good and evil. Of course, this was actually a half truth. He lied about death not being the consequence of eating the forbidden fruit.

Though the serpent did not actually deceive him (1 Tim. 2:4), Adam afterwards deliberately chose to join his wife in disobeying God, thereby accepting the serpent’s lies and rejecting God’s truth, timing, and provision.<sup>145</sup> They both found themselves for the first time in their lives questioning God’s provision and care for them, as well as questioning his truthfulness. After eating the fruit they no longer felt significant or secure, so they attempted to clothe their bodies and to hide from God. They were held accountable for their distorted thinking and resultant disobedient behavior by being evicted from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:6b-24). Their son Cain followed their example by doing things his own way when he behaved as though he was a special exception to the guidelines God laid down for offering sacrifices (Gen. 4:1-7).

Wright concurs with this in a chapter entitled, “When Thoughts Get in the Way,” of his book, *The Marriage Checkup*:

The world still reaps the results of or damage from original sin—in the way we behave, feel and think. And our thoughts are where sin takes root ... in our minds is where sin begins ...

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<sup>144</sup>Larry Crabb Jr., *Effective Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 61.

<sup>145</sup>John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 115-6.

our thought life ... is marred. It has an inkling toward negative thinking as a carryover from the fall of mankind.<sup>146</sup>

Jesus Christ himself assured us that we are as guilty for thinking certain things in our minds as we would be if we had actually done them. He equated hatred with murder and lust with adultery (Matt. 5:21-30; Luke 6:7-9). He was simply explaining the full meaning of the sixth and seventh commandments of Exodus 20. The Apostle James succinctly summed up this process of sinning in the mind before sinning in action: “Temptation is the pull of man’s [or woman’s] own evil thoughts and wishes. These evil thoughts lead to evil actions and afterwards to the death penalty from God.” (James 1:14-15, LB)

And so it went throughout the rest of the Bible, each person (except Christ) trying one or more times in their lives to “buck” or beat the system or systems God put into place, looking for loopholes, shortcuts, the easy way in, out, or around. People today do this with God as well as with their parents (Eph. 6:1), their government (Rom. 13:1-3), and other organizations or institutions including churches they profess to serve (Heb. 13:7). Weber plainly states: “We twist the Word to our own liking. We question the plain meaning of Scripture. We convince ourselves, “Oh, He couldn’t have really meant *that*.”<sup>147</sup>

According to the Bible, Christ, Adam, and Eve were the only persons who were not tainted by sin when they first arrived on earth (Gen. 1:26-31; Luke 4:1-13; 23:24; John 8:46). How is it that the sin of Adam and Eve has affected every one of their descendents except Christ (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:19-22, 45)? There have been several theories constructed to attempt to

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<sup>146</sup>Norman Wright, *The Marriage Checkup* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002), 64-5.

<sup>147</sup>Stu Weber, *Spirit Warriors: Strategies for Battles Christian Men and Women Face Every Day* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001), 105.

explain this. One which was popular in the last few centuries was called “Traducianism.”<sup>148</sup>

There have been others and no doubt more will be proposed someday to better explain this point.

Since the Fall, every person, except Christ, has been guilty of one or more wrong thoughts or actions (Mark 7:20-23; Rom. 3:23; Gal. 5:19-21; James 2:10-11). Every person does what is right in his or her own eyes (Deut. 12:1, 8; Prov. 21:2; Jude 17:6). Brandt and Skinner described this as follows:

A massive group of people—intelligent, educated, influential, politically powerful people—who have the best interests of humanity at heart, firmly and fiercely reject the concepts of sin, a creator, and a God. “No deity can save us. We must save ourselves.” This is the position taken in secular colleges, secular textbooks, in most graduate training, and in a formidable mass of “scientific research” ... the operating philosophy of [the U.S.] government ... [which] spend[s] billions of dollars annually searching for solutions.”<sup>149</sup>

Some governments have listened to their leading “intellectuals” and chosen to do what was right according to them, but this as well as “a public-opinion poll is no substitute for thought.”<sup>150</sup> All the facts and evidence need to be considered. Everyone, including government leaders, is responsible for thinking things out for him or herself and for doing what is right. So much pain and suffering that results from such failure to adequately think things through could have been avoided and funds better spent if the above people would have been tolerant enough to at least consider the possibility that Creation was not an accident and that Jesus Christ may very well have been the smartest person who ever lived on earth.<sup>151</sup>

When one, whether Christian or not, makes up his or her own list of guidelines that can be easily kept without too much trouble or inconvenience, he or she can feel good about

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<sup>148</sup>August Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1976; Original ed., 1907), 494.

<sup>149</sup>Brandt and Skinner; quoted in Noebel, 50.

<sup>150</sup>Warren Buffett, from “Quotable Quotes,” *Reader’s Digest*, June 1993, 157.

<sup>151</sup>James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 178.

successfully abiding by it, and may look down on or perhaps even condemn others who are not doing so. This is the distorted thinking of legalism. The Pharisees and teachers of the law, both religious leaders of the time of Christ, were often guilty of this (Luke 11:37-54). But Adeney reminds us that

Moral rules and commandments should not be stripped of their power by abstraction into principles or dispositions, as if the rule could then be discarded as merely local. The rules put flesh on principles. It is more helpful to think of principles as abstractions from rules rather than rules as applications of principles. A theological, narrative understanding of the commandments protects them from an ahistorical legalism and makes possible their application in altered form to new historical situations. Principles help transfer the meaning of good and evil from one context to another.<sup>152</sup>

Materialism is another type of distorted thinking that is well documented in the literature and clearly addressed in the book of Luke (12:13-15): “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Here Christ was elaborating on at least the eighth and tenth commandments (if not also the sixth and seventh mentioned above, murder and adultery).

Bruce Wilkinson, of Walk Through the Bible, in his videotape series entitled, “*A Biblical Portrait of Marriage*,” reminds us that God expects us to be content simply with food and clothing.<sup>153</sup> Money is an issue of the heart—we can store up for ourselves later by giving it away in this life as God leads us to do so. Thanks to advertisers, sales persons, television and more recently the Internet, Western culture over the last century has increasingly insisted that we are entitled to have not only the best foods and finest clothing that money can buy but everything else “successful” people have if we want others to admire or respect us.

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<sup>152</sup>Bernard T. Adeney, *Strange Virtues: Ethics in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 94-5.

<sup>153</sup>Bruce Wilkinson, *A Biblical Portrait of Marriage* (Atlanta, GA: Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, Inc., 1995).

### **The basis of distorted thinking**

Distorted thinking is partially due to a lack of awareness of or a failure to accept truth. All societies have created or adopted a set of general beliefs and values according to their understanding or preference of truth. Without some agreement within society about what is to be accepted as true, there would be no meaningful civilization, but rather mistrust and chaos. Society in this study will be defined as: “the interaction of people sharing a given culture resulting in a sociocultural setting.”<sup>154</sup> Culture will be defined herein as:

Everything with which an individual is concerned and involved in a society ... every thought a person thinks, every hope he has, every step he takes, every belief he holds, and every interaction he undertakes is controlled by his culture. Every move he makes is trained into him by his culture.<sup>155</sup>

Another concise definition of culture offered by sociologist Daniel Bell “is the effort to provide a coherent set of answers to the existentialist situations that confront all human beings in the passage of their lives.”<sup>156</sup> Within a culture, there may be subcultures striving to change the culture.

Mayers further states: “Some African societies [including the Esimbi in this study] have interlinked age-level groupings that bring together all the men of a given age as well as sociopolitical groupings such as councils within the larger tribal organization.”<sup>157</sup> Such groupings usually have as their unifying adhesive a set of agreements which they stipulate in the form of laws, rules, guidelines, or codes. Siegfriedt provides an example:

All societies have purity codes. These codes determine what is clean and what is unclean; what is permissible and what is forbidden. Purity codes establish the identity of a group of

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<sup>154</sup>Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 12.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>156</sup>Zacharias, 1996, 88.

<sup>157</sup>Mayers, 102.

people whether it be a religious group, an ethnic group, or a social group. ... Throughout the gospel stories, Jesus challenges the purity codes when they interfere with a person's ability to act compassionately. He is basically saying that institutionalized purity codes need to be radically subordinate to the purity of the heart. Thus, when external purity codes fail to engender love and justice, then they need to be broken. When purity codes prevent us from taking the path of compassion, then they are in fact a form of distorted thinking that alienates us from one another.<sup>158</sup>

In addition to “a lack of awareness of or a failure to accept truth” as mentioned above, people often resort to distorted thinking to lessen (or cope with) the pains they experience in their lives, but unfortunately,

The church is split on how to deal with these hurting people. [Some] say that people who struggle emotionally are ‘in sin.’ They ‘don’t have enough faith,’ ‘are not obedient’ or don’t spend enough time in the Word.’ ... [These] answers ... sound a lot like the ones Job received from his friends ... contain elements of truth, but do not often help the person in pain.

The help offered to Christians in emotional pain over the years has done untold damage and has led many to reach the conclusion Job did: ‘You smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you! If only you would be altogether silent! For you that would be wisdom.’ (Job 13:4-5).

Faced with this kind of help, sufferers either learn to fake healing to remain in the church, or leave the church, deciding that their faith provides little solace [relief] for their emotional pain.”<sup>159</sup>

Conway contended, “Our culture conditions men not to share their troubles.”<sup>160</sup>

MacDonald has observed that men tend to

avoid disclosure because they want to keep themselves and their sin secret ... because they fear the pain that experience tells them inevitably comes from self-disclosure ... [they] choose the pain of seeing their lives collapse and their relationships disintegrate over the pain of making themselves known in a way that would uncover their deepest sin and sadness.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup>Siegfriedt, Internet.

<sup>159</sup>Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Changes That Heal: How to understand your past to ensure a healthier future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 11.

<sup>160</sup>Jim Conway, *Men in MidLife Crisis* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook, 1978), 23.

<sup>161</sup>James S. MacDonald, “Confession of Sin Among Christian Men” (D.Min. diss., Phoenix Seminary, 1996), 9-11.

But Wakefield's premise, "a conflict is a mismanaged problem," implies that (1) "problems are our friends," "not our enemies," (2) "conflict is unhealthy," and (3) "the root issue is not problems but people [because] people bring anger, fear, distrust, and a variety of other emotions that muddy the water. They are often tired, confused, or uninformed so they cannot think clearly."<sup>162</sup> By default, therefore, they succumb to distorted thinking. The type of distorted thinking used by the men above who refused to disclose their sins could be Catastrophizing—fear of what people would think of them if they did disclose; fear of not being accepted; fear of their polished image being terribly marred; and perhaps fear of surrendering their preferred means of numbing their pain of loneliness and insecurity.

In another one of his books, Wakefield simply states the following:

The evil one's strategy is always to distort and discredit our Lord. He tries to convince us that our Lord is:  
 not reliable. He won't be there when we need him.  
 not generous. He won't supply our needs.  
 not loving. We're not perfect enough, not important enough, etc.  
 not satisfying. He is boring, unfulfilling, cold, and impersonal and so on.  
 not caring. He has more important things to do. We're not worthy of his care.  
 not available when we need him. We can't count on him.<sup>163</sup>

We could also add that Satan often suggests the Lord is not fully aware of our situation. He does not really understand our dilemma. It is unlike that of anyone else. Satan promotes the belief that that God is not omniscient or all wise.

This list could be further expanded because Satan enjoys trying to convince us that none (or very few) of God's attributes described in the Bible are true. But allegations in the above list are all lies because God is reliable, generous, loving, satisfying, caring, available, and fully aware of every situation. This is just a small sample of Satan's arsenal of deceitful tricks. Each

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<sup>162</sup>Norman Wakefield, "Solving Problems Before They Become Conflicts" (unpublished class handout), 3-4.

<sup>163</sup>Wakefield, 2002, 27.

one he uses seeks to “draw us away from God’s love.” When we adopt one or more of such distortions and accept them as true for us, we have distorted the truth, deceived ourselves and have allowed distorted thinking to control us (John 8:44-47). Wakefield goes on to say:

Sin distorts our view of ourselves. ... Sin always looks like an attractive alternative. ... Sin always distorts our true needs and our Lord’s means to meet them. ... The best motivation for dealing with sin is an intimate relationship with our loving Father. The power of unconditional love moves us to respond positively ... laws and rules don’t work.<sup>164</sup>

Innes offered another perspective by relating distorted thinking to unresolved conflict:

“As ‘every unshed tear is a prism through which all of life’s hurts are distorted,’ so every unresolved conflict is a filter through which all of my beliefs about life, myself, others, friends, love, and about God are distorted too.”<sup>165</sup>

### **Theories of truth in the literature**

Turning to the discipline of philosophy, or more particularly epistemology, there are many distinct theories outside the Bible that attempt to answer Pilate’s question to Jesus, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Of the theories mentioned on the Internet, the first five below were from the Web site of Stanford University:

1. The Correspondence Theory of Truth – “Narrowly speaking ... the view that truth is correspondence to a fact ... [b]ut ... usually applied much more broadly to any view explicitly embracing the idea that truth consists in a relation to reality. This theory is “often traced back to Aristotle’s well-known definition of truth ... but virtually identical formulations can be found in Plato.”
2. The Coherence Theory of Truth – “the truth of any (true) proposition consists in its coherence with some specified set of propositions.”
3. The Deflationary Theory of Truth – “to assert that a statement is true is just to assert the statement itself.”

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<sup>164</sup>Ibid., 27-30, 52.

<sup>165</sup>Dick Innes [poem on-line]; available from <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/10124.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

4. The Identity Theory of Truth – “when a truth-bearer (e.g., a proposition) is true, there is a truth-maker (e.g., a fact) with which it is identical and the truth of the former consists in its identity with the latter.”

5. The Revision Theory of Truth – “developed independently by Gupta (1982) and Herzberger (1982) in an attempt to analyze paradoxes such as the liar paradox that appear to show that common-sense beliefs about truth are inconsistent.”

6. A Pragmatic Theory of Truth – “If experience must accord with a reality beyond itself, the test of truth will be a correspondence of its structure with the structure of external reality; or if reality is an absolute of which experience is an incomplete phase, then truth will be in the congruence of the process of experience with that of the absolute. In both these alternatives, experience itself constitutes in epistemological problem of which other problems are only separate instances, a problem which is given in the assumed cognitive reference of experience to something beyond itself.<sup>166</sup>

There are many other theories of truth such as the “Diamond Theory of truth” and the “Story Theory of truth”<sup>167</sup>—known to more traditional philosophers as “realism” and “nominalism”—and the theories revered in Eastern religions. But these will be left for others to investigate.

Jesus said in John 8:32, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” He also said of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (in John 16:13), “when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” Cloud and Townsend remind us that God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the scriptures are each

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<sup>166</sup>George Herbert Mead, “A Pragmatic Theory of Truth,” in “Studies in the Nature of Truth,” *University of California Publications in Philosophy* 11, (1929): 86 [article on-line]; available from [http://spartan.ac.brocku.ca/~lward/Mead/pubs2/papers/Mead\\_1929a.html](http://spartan.ac.brocku.ca/~lward/Mead/pubs2/papers/Mead_1929a.html); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>167</sup>Steven H. Cullinane, “The Diamond Theory of Truth” [article on-line]; available from <http://math16.com>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

described in the Bible by the word “truth.”<sup>168</sup> They also state: “truth is married to love and grace” and “when love is separated from truth, people cannot grow.”<sup>169</sup>

Heibert mentions and contrasts the following epistemological positions: Absolute Idealism, Critical Idealism, Naïve Idealism/Naïve Realism, Critical Realism, Instrumentalism (Pragmatism), and Determinism. Pragmatism is not concerned with truth, but only with what works—helpful perhaps, but not a sufficient resolution for understanding or accepting reality. Most scientists hold to critical realism and Heibert “is convinced that critical realism is a biblical approach to knowledge (1 Cor. 13:12).” But he does caution that even theology as critical realism can lead “us into a morass of theological pluralism” so he offers

three checks against theological error: First, all theology must be rooted in the Scriptures. Second, the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of God’s people revealing the meaning of the Scriptures to individuals and churches in their particular settings. Third, Believers and congregations must help one another discern the leading of the Holy Spirit. They must test one another’s theology and be open to critique. Just as others see our sins more clearly than we do, so also they see our theological errors more clearly ... in a spirit of humility ... and with a willingness to learn.<sup>170</sup>

The focus and authority for reality, therefore, in this study is *sola scriptura*. The main source of our understanding of truth and reality as God sees it is found in the sixty six canonical books referred to as the Holy Scriptures, or the Bible. Speer wrote that truth is compromised when a person’s

conception of truth is so capricious and insecure that he is willing, when the price seems to him sufficient, to betray it. “Will the man lie?” ... If he will, then what is there about the man that is absolutely dependable? ... deeds and thoughts and inward parts and all the character must be brought into obedience, without evasion or qualification or hedging of any sort, to

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<sup>168</sup>Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *How People Grow: What the Bible Reveals about Personal Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 319. Cf. Ps. 31:5; 119:43; John 14:6; 17:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 John 5:6.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., 321. Cf. Ps. 40:10; John 1:14; 2 John 3.

<sup>170</sup>Paul G. Heibert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 31, 51.

the clean and inviolable truth.<sup>171</sup>

A person who refuses to acknowledge God’s truth and his guidelines for living, may soon discover the fruitless, injurious, and unfulfilling consequences of no restraint, no rules, no boundaries, no unconditional love, no respect for others and no submission to authority—unbridled selfishness and shamelessness (Rom. 1:18-32).

Many Christians are justifiably still very concerned about the cultural supremacy of psychology to Christianity in the West. It appears that there is a

debilitating deference which the ministry shows to the enterprise of psychology ... ministers are especially vulnerable to seeking license and legitimation from the kingdom of psychology ... the key assumption of the therapeutic is that self-actualization and mental health are the highest good ... the purpose ... reconciliation to self.<sup>172</sup>

The objective should instead be reconciliation to God and to others. According to the above view, “Paul, Jerome, Luther ... all thought and behaved in ways that would readily get them certified as psychotic in a reputable [secular] mental health clinic today. ... What is the psychological term for holiness?”<sup>173</sup>

In summary, the basis of distorted thinking is the rationalization for choosing to deny or ignore the truth which includes revelation from God. Such a negative attitude may include choosing not to discover the truth. Wilson wrote: “If we run from truth we will continue to wander through life following a map marked with distortion and denial.”<sup>174</sup> This truth includes living gracefully since the two are paired together (John 1:14, 17):

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<sup>171</sup>Robert Elliott Speer, *The Marks of a Man; Or, The Essentials of Christian Character* (Chicago, IL: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1907), 17.

<sup>172</sup>Richard John Newhaus, *Freedom for Ministry*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 78-9, 86.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

<sup>174</sup>Sandra D. Wilson, *Released from Shame* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, rev. ed., 2002), 82.

Truth is distorted, rejected, or ignored mainly because of pride, the first, worst, and most prevalent of the seven deadly sins. It is either the source, or the chief component of all other sin ... the one vice of which its perpetrator is frequently unaware ... [But this view] shared by Jews, Christians, and Greeks ... flies in the face of modern attitudes. The contemporary world has transformed this vice into a virtue ... by confusing pride with self-respect—so that to be opposed to pride is to be seen as unhealthy ... in the biblical view, pride is the fundamental violation and disordering of love because it puts the love of the human self before the love of God ... breaking the first great commandment ... and inevitably goes on to break the second.<sup>175</sup>

This kind of pride results in the person claiming the right to the throne of the cosmos, asserting that he or she is more knowledgeable than everyone else including God in at least one particular situation. We isolate ourselves from God and others by becoming our own boss, establishing our own independence and self-rule, and foolishly attempt to control and judge other things and people according to our own personal standards. “In reality, the Fall [of both humanity and Satan] was complete, and all the dynamics are present in every situation.”<sup>176</sup> This is similar to what the King of Tyre claimed (Ezek. 28:2-8). God said to him (and says to anyone today who is proud): “In the pride of your heart you say, ‘I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god.’ ... But you are a man and not a god. ... Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you? ... I will bring you down.” We are encouraged to repent of such thinking, humble ourselves and acknowledge God as the sovereign ruler (Exod. 10:3, Job 22:18; Jer. 13:18; James 4:6-9).

Feinberg, a management consultant, “studied a wide assortment of stupid decisions and weird actions taken by people with off-the-chart I.Q.’s ... [and noticed that] “most of us make

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<sup>175</sup>Os Guinness, *When No One Sees: The Importance of Character in an Age of Image* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2000), 35, 37.

<sup>176</sup>Cloud and Townsend, 2001, 311, 53.

such mistakes sometimes in our lives. ... [To help us all understand why] the supper-smart make career killing bloopers”<sup>177</sup> and how we can avoid similar mistakes, he offers these reasons:

Arrogance ... knowing more than anybody else ... to thinking you know everything ...  
 Isolation ... relying on brilliance to the exclusion of experience ... and ... feedback ...  
 Recklessness ... ‘Now for my next trick’ ... Spurred by a feeling of omniscience, brilliant people can develop into risk junkies ...  
 Overreaching. Many super-brains don’t grasp a simple fact: brilliance in one area is no guarantee of success in another.<sup>178</sup>

In the same article, Harold Tinker, a teacher, stated that “Students who go on to achieve the most ... are almost never the top students ... partly because of the self-defeating ways of the super-smart. ... an even more important reason: these achievers learn ... when you’re No. 2, you try harder.”<sup>179</sup>

Unfortunately, past and present high intelligence inventories have had no reliable means for measuring a person’s wisdom, experience, or openness to feedback from “normal” people. Worldly wisdom, though, is foolishness compared to wisdom given only by God (see the character trait of wisdom in chapter 4).

There are millions of “intelligent” people, who are convinced “The fall never happened, we just think it did.”<sup>180</sup> Among these are those involved in Eastern religions as mentioned in this article. But this is just another example of distorted thinking, ignoring reality as God sees it. This article (and many publications like it) seems to imply that John 14:6 should have stated that both

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<sup>177</sup>Mortimer R. Feinberg, “Why Smart People Do Dumb Things ... and how to avoid their career killing mistakes,” *Reader’s Digest*, June 1993, 87; adapted from *The Wall Street Journal* (21 December 1992).

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 87-9. See also Robert J. Sternberg, ed., *Why Smart People Can Be So Stupid* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>180</sup>Joshua David Stone, “The 15 Major Tests of the Spiritual Path” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.aksworld.com/FreeReports/FifteenTests.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

Jesus and Buddha are “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” and “no one comes to the Father but by” either one of them. Others would add their own guru or founder of their religion to the list.

Instead of ordering their lives according to the truths that they are aware of, many people insist that they live by certain favorite principles, but they may not adequately understand the dangers of doing so:

With the exception of the great commandment, principles should not be rigidified into a strict hierarchy. It is not clear from the biblical record that a life is always of more value than the truth, or that, to quote Norman Geisler, ‘a complete person is more valuable than an incomplete person’ nor should a particular cultural interpretation of a principle be taken as a rule for all time [and all cultures]. Honoring parents (a principle) does not necessarily mean patriarchy (a sociocultural structure).<sup>181</sup>

In an attempt to correct the distorted thinking of those who are convinced that Christianity is the most “rational” choice, the accurate reality is as Taylor wrote:

There is no objective, neutral thing called ‘reason’ which anyone with some training can use to get at the ‘truth.’ ... The reasoning process does not first serve truth, but rather the needs of the person exercising it... It is a myth that certainty is required for faith and commitment. And it is a myth that certainty is something the secular intellectual has through reason while the person of faith has only wishing. ... I feel certain that the commitment to faith is a risk worth taking ... [not] all the books of apologetics in the world—or even the Bible itself—entirely erase the element of risk ... [nor] is God displeased with this understanding. ... I do not expect to leave this life with all my doubts resolved; I do hope to leave it in good standing with Him from whom all meaning flows.<sup>182</sup>

If certainty in this life were possible there would be no need for faith, but faith in the Supreme Being, the Creator, and the King of Kings may be more superior to faith in any other thing or person (Heb. 11). As the old saying goes, “Life is a gamble,” so would not faith in the Supreme Being not be a safer bet than to be caught off guard, enjoying “no boundaries” and finding out too late that there was a purpose for our lives and that we will be held accountable for everything we think, say or do?

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<sup>181</sup>Bernard T. Adeney, *Strange Virtues: Ethics in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 93-5.

<sup>182</sup>Taylor, 68-9, 153.

### **Distorted thinking affects athletes' behavior and performance**

In sports, an article was entitled, “Why smart people play dumb golf: What to do if you’re a victim of distorted thinking.”<sup>183</sup> It serves a reminder that no matter what the sport or activity, people often continue doing the same behavior over and over again out of habit even when it is not productive, effective, efficient, legal, or biblical. It is not easy to break bad habits. Doing the appropriate thing in the appropriate way at the appropriate time may appear to require too much time, effort, and sacrifice.

Ball quotes from Van Raalte using the terms “inappropriate or misguided thinking” in relation to enhancing an athlete’s performance:

Thoughts play a critical role in determining emotional responses to events. What we think about ourselves, our performances, and how we interpret specific situations directly impact our feelings and behaviors. By relating the dynamic between cognition (thoughts) and beliefs to athletic and exercise performance, trainers can help clients alter counterproductive thinking and get on with the business of goal setting and attainment.

Many sport psychologists believe that peak performers use little or no conscious thought during high-level physical performances. Elite athletes perform their skills so often that they become automatic. This is an unrealistic expectation of day-to-day exercisers, for whom inappropriate or misguided thinking inhibits consistent, quality performance. The key for average exercisers then becomes not whether to think, but what, when and how to think.<sup>184</sup>

### **Distorted thinking affects character**

Broome wrote a helpful introduction for this section reminding us that the goal of developing character is growth toward maturity and healthy influence of others. A mature person is capable of reducing his or her distorted thinking as well as inappropriate behavior:

According to Kohlberg (1981) and other human development psychologists, the ability a person has to embrace moral argumentation as a matter of conviction is conditioned by the

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<sup>183</sup>Dan Owens and DeDe Kirschenbaum, “Why smart people play dumb golf: What to do if you’re a victim of distorted thinking,” *Golf Digest* 48, no. 12: 115.

<sup>184</sup>J. L. Van Raalte and B. W. Brewer, *Exploring Sport and Exercise Psychology* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1998); quoted in Ball, Internet

stage of character development in which that person is to be found. As a person ages, however, his or her character does not necessarily continue to mature.<sup>185</sup>

This section and most of the subsequent sections concern the discipline of ethics. There was a time when nothing had been written on the topic of character development or ethics because everything appeared to be as it was intended. But this state of affairs soon changed and the struggle to live a moral life became increasingly difficult just before the first two human beings were evicted from the most perfect and peaceful place on earth because of their distorted thinking and resultant covetous behavior. They listened to the wrong coach or adviser (Gen. 3:1).

Most people would welcome coaching from someone, who knows how to do something right, successfully, effectively, and perhaps even efficiently. But care must be taken in selecting the coach or mentor, whether for sports, spiritual direction, or whatever. Many coaches of various sports, academics, as well as of spiritual direction have “crossed the line” by abusive behavior (verbal, sexual, physical, emotional, or spiritual) toward those they coach. This has made it necessary for rules and regulations to be spelled out by many sports and other organizations to make it clear that such behavior will not be tolerated and that such distorted thinking is counterproductive.

From the perspective of sports,

The essential elements of character-building and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core principles: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these ‘six pillars of character.’<sup>186</sup>

This is supported by the Joseph & Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics (“based in Los Angeles and active nationally”) which “helps people make principled decisions and live with greater

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<sup>185</sup>Broome Jr.,

<sup>186</sup>Arizona Sports Summit Accord [article on-line]; available from <http://aiaacademy.org/pdfs/Arizona%20Accord.pdf>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006, 1.

integrity.”<sup>187</sup> Joseph concluded that it is “unethical to violate these standards of duty by being dishonest, disrespectful, irresponsible, unfair, uncaring or ignoring requirements of good citizenship.”<sup>188</sup>

The literature on character development has greatly increased in both depth and breadth since the early 1980’s. Auger, for example, claimed in his dissertation:

Current theories of moral education, in particular the cognitive-structuralist, the developmental, values clarification, character development, and social learning theories, are unable fully to account for moral life. ... Moral lives unfold within communities, which as communities of practice, each represent experiments in human perfection, [... be holy, because I am holy.” Lev. 11:45] to which we ‘apprentice,’ and which have a right and a responsibility to pass on their ideals.”<sup>189</sup>

This is confirmed by Maxson, who “cites several prominent theorists in the field of moral and character education who conclude [as does Maxson] that neither the socialization model nor the cognitive developmental model are [sic] sufficient to address the full complexity of human character. ... Thomas Lickona (1991) and William Damon (1988) ... promote an integrative view of the moral child that includes the child’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions and the child’s social relationship with the community.”<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup>Michael Josephson, “About Michael Josephson” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.charactercounts.org/mj-bio.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>188</sup>Josephson, “A Training Program for Coaches on Ethics, Sportsmanship and Character Building in Sports,” *Ethics & Sportsmanship* [article on-line]; available from <http://www.charactercounts.org/sports/Olympic/olympic-report-ethicssportsmanship.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>189</sup>Andre Auger, “Getting Beyond the Impasse in Theories of Moral Education: The Contribution of a Phenomenology of Moral Life” (Ph.D. diss., University of Guelph, 1991); available from [http://trellis3.tug-libraries.on.ca/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?Search\\_Arg=Getting%20Beyond%20the%20Impasse%20in%20Theories%20of%20Moral%20Education&SL=None&Search\\_Code=TALL&PID=1601&SEQ=20061127005811&CNT=25&DB=local](http://trellis3.tug-libraries.on.ca/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?Search_Arg=Getting%20Beyond%20the%20Impasse%20in%20Theories%20of%20Moral%20Education&SL=None&Search_Code=TALL&PID=1601&SEQ=20061127005811&CNT=25&DB=local); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>190</sup>Richard Gregory Maxson, “A comprehensive character education program at Lochearn Camp for Girls” (Ed.D. diss., Harvard University, 2000); available from <http://www.lib.umi.com/dissertations/cart?add=9968314>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

Much has also been written on the topic of leadership, leadership development, and holistic ministry, but in the rush to fill the leadership void with “fast track” leaders, serious gaps in their training have resulted in the fall of many who appeared to have great potential. Which gaps are most often overlooked? Lindheim suggests: “Holistic ministry requires a people-centered approach, which integrates mission in word, deed, and sign. Integration happens in people and leader development must therefore give priority to character development and spiritual formation.”<sup>191</sup> Some progress has already begun in filling the character gap in leadership development: “Current trends in the world of work are for the leaders to have character development training along with leadership training.”<sup>192</sup>

But those trained in the West (or trained elsewhere by Westerners), tend to think compartmentally rather than holistically. This can result in their thinking that something may be fine to do from the perspective of one of their roles, but not from another. Most individuals have to fill several roles, such as child, sibling, relative, spouse, parent, guardian, friend, employee, employer, volunteer, and member of one or more groups (class, team, organization, committee, club, board, etc.).

Too often people, even some pastors, lower their personal standards of acceptable behavior when they are not actively involved in their leadership role or when they think that they are far enough away from anyone who would know or recognize them. They perceive that they are taking a break from that role. But this is just another form of distorted thinking. One’s

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<sup>191</sup>Tone Lindheim, “Value-based leader development for holistic ministry” (Th.M. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Missions, 2000); available from U.M.1398307, <http://www.fullerseminary.net/sis/abstracts/genmiss.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 06.

<sup>192</sup>Marvin Edward Neill, “A Model for a magnet school based on the interrelation between leadership skills and character education” (Ed.D. diss., Tennessee State University, 1998); available from <http://e-research.tnstate.edu/dissertations/AAI9907856/>; Internet; accessed 20 November 06.

character should not vary according to the different roles in one's life—rather it should be consistent throughout to one's mission—transcending “instant gratification in the moment of choice.”<sup>193</sup>

This review revealed some underlying components, which, taken together, may increase the probability of developing and maintaining good character. Several writers and researchers have concluded that culture has a great influence on character development. These also agreed that there are several essential principles that will need to be included in a person's lifestyle in order for one to be considered as having good character. The importance of developing and maintaining quality relationships with others in order to have a safe place to learn and grow through the inevitable ups and downs of life was also stressed by many.<sup>194</sup>

Several researchers have provided very detailed reviews of the literature on the topic of character, tracing it from biblical literature, through the turn of this century—such as James Davison Hunter in *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil* and Os Guinness in *When No One Sees: The Importance of Character in an Age of Image*.

The Bible was once the standard for behavior and thought in the West, at least for the Protestants, even in regard to science. But the importance of character development began to diminish in popularity in the West when public opinion was being swayed by several psychologists (Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Benjamin Spock, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, Albert Ellis, Haim Ginott, and Rudolf Driekurs). These all contributed to the gradual deterioration of the high standards of character development which had previously existed in America, but they were not alone. Others are mentioned below.

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<sup>193</sup>Stephen Covey, *First Things First* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), summarizing 124-5, 138, and quoting from 183.

<sup>194</sup>Summarizing from books by Crabb, Covey, Thrall, and Willard.

The first McGuffey Reader, once the main textbook for teaching reading in primary schools in the United States, quoted freely from the Bible. McGuffey only regretted that he did not quote even more from it. But beginning with the second and especially the third editions of these readers, the quotations from the Bible were removed thanks to several “educators,” who contributed to the process of divorcing “godliness” from character in Western culture. Hunter states that these include John Lock, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Horace Mann, and John Dewey. Bosch includes several others besides some of these:

Gradually, Western people began to subscribe to a new way of thinking introduced by Nicholas Copernicus ... Francis Bacon ... Galileo Galilei ... Rene Descartes ... and others. A generation or two later when John Locke ... Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz ... and Isaac Newton ... appeared on the scene, the Enlightenment worldview was firmly established. Two scientific approaches characterized the Enlightenment traditions: The Empiricism of Bacon ... and the Rationalism of Descartes. ... Both these approaches operated on the premise that human reason had a certain degree of autonomy. However, neither Bacon nor Descartes saw their theories on scientific progress as in any sense jeopardizing the Christian faith.<sup>195</sup>

Unfortunately most of the scientific community which embraced the Enlightenment worldview preferred to believe:

The individual experienced himself or herself as liberated from the tutelage of God and Church, who were no longer needed to legitimize specific titles, classes, and prerogatives. ... All were born equal and had equal rights. These were, however, not derived from religion, but from ‘nature.’ Thus human beings were, on the one hand, more important than God; on the other hand, however were not fundamentally different from animals and plants (cf. Guardini 1950:53f). Individuals could therefore also be degraded to machines, manipulated, exploited by those who sought to use them for their own purposes. Both capitalism and Marxism, says Newbiggin (1986:118), derive from this Enlightenment vision of human beings as autonomous individuals without any supernatural reference.<sup>196</sup>

For centuries children were raised under the philosophy of “original sin” and were encouraged to be saved from sin. Martin Luther once said: “I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures,

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<sup>195</sup>Bosch, 263.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid., 267.

engraving them in the hearts of youth. ... I advise no one to place his child where the scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.<sup>197</sup>

Santrock of the University of Texas – Dallas unknowingly traced some of the ensuing history of deteriorating morals:

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, the **tabula rasa** [“blank tablet”] view was proposed by English philosopher John Locke. ... In the eighteenth century, the **innate goodness view** [*sic*] was presented by Swiss-born French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau ... they [needed] little parental monitoring or constraint.<sup>198</sup>

Dewey’s *Reconstruction in Philosophy* resulted in a major reconstruction of philosophy in the middle of the last century with his elevation of the scientific method.<sup>199</sup> His ideas had much influence in removing Christianity from government educational institutions.

Honesty is another gauge of a person’s character. Statistics from a Gallup poll using a sample of 1,013 adults to answer the question of “Which professions are the most honest?” reads as follows:

Nurses	73%
Pharmacists	69%
Veterinarians	63%
Medical Doctors	58%
K-12 Teachers	57%
Clergy	56%
Judges	53%
Policemen	52%
Dentists	52%
College Teachers	52% <sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup>Robert Flood, *The Rebirth of America* (Philadelphia, PA: Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation, 1986), 127.

<sup>198</sup>John W. Santrock, *Life-Span Development* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 6-7.

<sup>199</sup>John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston, MA: The Beacon Press, 1964).

<sup>200</sup>“Which professions are the most honest?” *Christianity Today* (6 March 2000), 22.

A University study done that same year showed some consequences of this on children: “Even at early ages, both realistic assessments and popular prejudices about wealth and poverty were firmly fixed in the ... minds [of children]. Their prejudgments likely prevent them from reaching across economic boundaries on the basis of inherent factors of common interest and friendship.”<sup>201</sup>

Another researcher “suggested that understanding the changing social context in relation to [children as consumers, as interpreters, and as actors] ... helps to explain some of the tensions and disruptions that characterize the lives of some children, especially those at the margins.”<sup>202</sup>

Everyone is developing their character one way or another, either for the “good” or the “not so good.” But the pendulum is beginning to swing back from the unpopularity of good character. There appears to be a basic set of acceptable and desirable values, which many are realizing will benefit all mankind:

Character education holds, as a starting philosophical principle, that there are widely shared, pivotally important core ethical values—such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others—that form the basis of good character ... the validity of these values derive[s] from the fact that such values affirm our human dignity; they promote the development and welfare of the individual person; they serve the common good; they meet the classical tests of reversibility (Would you want to be treated this way?) and universality (Would you want all persons to act this way in a similar situation?); and they define our rights and responsibilities in a democratic society ... these ... transcend religious and cultural differences and express our common humanity.<sup>203</sup>

Kennedy discovered several values which were acceptable to twenty-eight middle school systems in the state of Georgia: “Principals believe that the most important character words ...

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<sup>201</sup>Susan Weinger, “Economic status: Middle class and poor children’s views,” *Children & Society*, Vol. 14 No. 2 (2000): 135.

<sup>202</sup>Roger Smith, “Order and disorder: the contradictions of childhood,” *Children & Society*, Vol. 14 No. 1 (2000), 3.

<sup>203</sup>Tom Lickona, Eric Schaps, and Catherine Lewis, “Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.forcharacter.com/page12.html>; Internet; accessed 15 November 2006.

were ... respect for others ... self-control, self-respect, honesty, responsibility, tolerance, kindness, courtesy, and respect for property.”<sup>204</sup>

In spite of several poor character qualities demonstrated by the former U.S. Commander In Chief during his two terms of office in the 1990’s,<sup>205</sup>

The United States Naval Academy has a deep and abiding commitment to the ethical growth of its midshipmen ... and ... in 1994 established the Character Development Division. Its mission is to provide oversight and coordination in the development of midshipmen with particular focus on the associated attributes of *honor, integrity and mutual respect* ... and responsibility.

Navy instructors have categorized all other desirable human attributes under these headings.

Those who do not care about striving to develop or maintain good character have little, if any, regard for their Creator or what he has declared in the Bible: “These individuals tend to live according to their impulses and feelings.”<sup>206</sup>

What is character? Rakes continues, “Character is the connection between what one knows to be right and what one actually does. Character is cultivated and developed by daily choices.” This is reminiscent of the old adage “Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.”

Rennick proposed “a theory of spiritual transformation as the antecedent and avenue of character formation.”<sup>207</sup> People who have experienced such a transformation tend to be

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<sup>204</sup>Kiawana Detrina Kennedy, “Character education programs in Georgia middle schools” (Ed.D. diss., University of Georgia, 2000); available from <http://www.coe.uga.edu/welsf/leadership/students/dissertations.html>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>205</sup>C. J. Carnacchio, “President Lacks Character,” *The Michigan Review*, 11 March 1998.

<sup>206</sup>Michael Rakes, “Spiritual fitness: Practical steps to character development” (D.Min. diss., Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, 2000); available from <http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/cart?add=9964956>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>207</sup>Steven Levi Rennick, “Attract and impact: Investigating character education among church youth workers” (Ph.D. diss., George Mason University, 2000); available from <http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/cart?add=9966652>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

increasingly more cautious about trusting the non-transformed with certain things, especially with their children and churches. Spiritually thriving—not just surviving—is the underlying vision behind this study for individuals, families, churches, and organizations.

A study of three administrators by Link “revealed that religious faith was used as a practical approach to problem solving, conflict resolution, and decision-making practices in [their] lives ...” It also “showed that faith in God has given ... strength of character to make faith-informed administrative decisions, which is the ability to use the qualities of the spiritual life intermingled with expertise and gifts from God for the good of the organization.”<sup>208</sup>

Thrall and his co-authors warn:

... no matter how well designed [a program] is, it is wrong to assume that character can be developed by enforced adherence to a set of rules or performance requirements. ... Sometimes religious organizations ... by requiring strict adherence to a set of do’s and don’ts in order to be accepted, affirmed, or received with respect, dignity, and honor” do not provide the “environment of grace” which is so essential for character development. “But ... to launch a character-development program into a culture lacking the environment, relationships, and principles to support character development is about as useful as a snowmobile in the Sahara desert.”<sup>209</sup>

Cox found: “Empathy [an aspect of the relationship component] was the only component of leader character that retained a direct effect on perceptions of leader openness.”<sup>210</sup> An article

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<sup>208</sup>Nancy Ann Link, “The role of faith in God in administrative decision-making: A descriptive multiple case study of three African-American Christian women administrators of American higher education” (Ph.D. diss. Andrews University, 2001); available from <http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/cart?add=9979886>; Internet; accessed 20 November 06.

<sup>209</sup>Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 36.

<sup>210</sup>Sally Pearce Cox, “Leader character: A model of personality and moral development” (Ph.D. diss. University of Tulsa, 2000); available from <http://library.utulsa.edu/search~/a?a;> Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

about this written in *The Wall Street Journal* states: “People want to know how much you care before they care how much you know.”<sup>211</sup>

Ahn argued convincingly: “... the concept of moral and communal wisdom is essential for confronting and transcending the change and conflict endemic to the vocation of any community. And, then, in demonstrating the character of wisdom, historical persons who were examined were significant change agents and moral agents, to show the relationship between wisdom and leadership in these persons.”<sup>212</sup> And Hess reported:

God, the Holy Spirit, and simple daily life give us constant feedback about where we are in our pursuit of godliness. But if we distort that feedback by representing anything other than the truth, our perception of ourselves as well as others is distorted and the pursuit of godliness is impossible. As many people discover, no tool will be of enduring value without a strong commitment to personal integrity. ... Because people are often as ill as the secrets they keep, appropriate disclosure is the first step in embracing integrity.”<sup>213</sup>

Barclay was convinced: “A man’s character, his honesty or his dishonesty, his straightness or his crookedness, can be seen, and nowhere better, in his daily business and financial dealings.”<sup>214</sup> Personal integrity cannot coexist with dishonesty, poor character, or intentional distorted thinking.

Peisner, of Talbot Seminary, states, “... studies show that most people who do not finish well fall prey to character issues rather than inadequacies in pastoral skills and competencies.”

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<sup>211</sup>James Hind, *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 December 1989, A-10:3.

<sup>212</sup>Kyung Seung Ahn, “Wisdom and the art of leadership: A practical theology of leadership development through nurturing wisdom” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 2000); available from <http://www.lib.umi.com/dissertations/cart?add=9975587>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>213</sup>Christopher D. Hess, “Embracing Integrity” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.familylife.com/articles/guest/article.asp?id=78>; Internet; accessed 9 November 2006.

<sup>214</sup>William Barclay, *Ethics in a permissive society* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1971), 161.

He defines character “as a Christ-led transformation that permeates and integrates the physical, emotional, mental, relational, and moral aspects of spiritual life into a Godly wholeness ...”<sup>215</sup>

Among others things, good character can also be demonstrated by appropriately handling wrong or distorted information before it results in distorted thoughts. What a person thinks affects what is actually believed and done. This may or may not reflect what a person claims to believe. A person is characterized by the types of thoughts which are predominant in their thinking because these are eventually manifested in behavior or words (Prov. 23:7; Matt. 12:34-37; Luke 6:43-49; John 8:44-47). It is these thoughts and beliefs which motivate behavior. What should motivate and guide our thoughts, the foundation for appropriate and successful thinking is the standard for living a moral life. It was first written out by God (the Ten Commandments; Exod. 20), reduced in the next Old Testament book to one phrase (“be holy, for I am holy,” Lev. 11:44; cf. 1 Pet. 1:16) and summarized in the New Testament by Christ into two great commandments:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matt. 22:37, 38; cf. Mark 12:29; Luke 10:27—based on Exod. 20:1-7 and Deut. 6:4-5).

A few well known individuals in the first several centuries succeeded by the grace of God in maintaining good character without even a single negative statement recorded about them in scripture: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Job, Nehemiah, and Daniel. Of these five, Noah, Daniel and Job were cited twice by God as being righteous above all others up to that time (Ezek. 14:14, 20). Before Daniel’s time, though, Moses and Samuel were singled out as the most likely ones to influence God if he was willing to allow them to influence him (Jer. 15:1). The scriptures

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<sup>215</sup>Stephen Peisner, “Intentional Character Development: Preparing Students for a Lifetime of Faithfulness,” *Sundulos*, Spring 1999. Cover story of Talbot alumni magazine entitled, “Character: Leadership’s Missing Piece.”

indicate that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David and Solomon had at least one or more difficulties in “towing the line,” yet David was singled out by God as being “a man after my own heart” (1 Sam.13:14; Acts 13:22) in spite of his major sins, because his repentance was always very deep and genuine (Ps. 51). Solomon was considered the wisest man (until the birth of Christ) in spite of his many faults (1 Kings 3:12).

Stott once wrote:

We are not satisfied by a superficial modification of behaviour patterns in conformity to some Christian sub-culture which expects this, commands that and prohibits the other. No, what we long for is a deep inward change of character, resulting from a change of nature and leading to a radical change of conduct. In a word we want to be *like Christ*, and that thoroughly, profoundly, entirely. Nothing less than this will do. But how? ... We must come daily and continuously to Jesus Christ to ask for the fullness of his Holy Spirit. Only then will he reveal Christ to us and form Christ in us.<sup>216</sup>

So, the more we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, the better we (1) know Christ, (2) understand how he thinks, (3) conform our thinking to his, and (4) conform our character and lifestyle to his (Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 2:5; 3:10).

### **Literature from the business world relating to thinking and character**

There is another category of books which do not actually mention the term distorted thinking but were clearly written in response to its devastating effects. In one of these, Wilkins defined corporate character as:

the distinctive hopes, beliefs, commitments, and skills of the people in an organization. ... Just as a person of character is aware of personal strengths and weaknesses and has the integrity to hold steady and even grow stronger with adversity, so too does an organization with character change and grow without undermining its own values or losing sight of its distinctive skills.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup>John Stott, *Focus on Christ* (Glasgow, UK: Collins Sons & Co Ltd., 1979), 153-4.

<sup>217</sup>Alan L. Wilkins, *Developing Corporate Character: How to Successfully Change an Organization Without Destroying It* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989), front flap and back cover.

Distorted thinking can not only mar and sabotage one's character, reputation, credit, credibility,<sup>218</sup> but it can also bring ruin by “destroying faith in the fairness and ability” of people and of organizations.<sup>219</sup> Good leaders with good vision are few and far between but are necessary for the enduring survival of a nation or an organization. Without adequate leadership, there is only chaos. Ramsey quoted Goleman: “in studying successful people, [I] discovered that 15 percent of success could be attributed to training and education, while 85 percent was attributed to attitude, perseverance, diligence and vision.”<sup>220</sup>

Bergeson, CEO of Colle & McVoy, takes character development and servant leadership seriously by eliminating the distorted thinking of fear of failure from his organization. He encourages his employees:

to take risks and to be creative in helping their customers succeed. They [employees] are empowered to make decisions. They are given the freedom to communicate openly and honestly. And they are supported [not fired] even if they make mistakes ... [because he] knows that a basic desire of his employees is to contribute to the organization.<sup>221</sup>

Julian provides nineteen other examples of successful CEO servant leaders who are not afraid to demonstrate godly character in their business dealings or to empower their employees to remain loyal and trustworthy.

### **Distorted thinking and sexuality**

One area that has been greatly soiled and spoiled by distorted thinking perhaps more than any other and that has also made a laughing stock of an increasing number of Christian leaders is

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<sup>218</sup>Cloud and Townsend, 1994, 166-9.

<sup>219</sup>Wilkins, 181.

<sup>220</sup>Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1997) quoted in Ramsey, 169.

<sup>221</sup>Larry Julian, *God is My CEO: Following God's Principles in a Bottom-Line World* (Holebrook, MA: Adams Media Corp., 2001), 161.

that of sexuality and intimacy. Rosenau, “a pioneer in Christian sex therapy” and a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, decried: “Since the Fall, sex has been in a downhill spiral of immaturity and distortion.”<sup>222</sup> Sexual addiction begins, as does any unhealthy addiction, with the distortion of lies and self-deception:

I don't really have a problem,  
I can handle this alone.  
This [the secret activity] is helping me be a better husband [or father, or worker].  
It relaxes me and makes me happier to be around.  
As long as I'm not hurting anyone else—and ... no one finds out—this activity is alright.  
I'm an exception. This activity is *normally* wrong, but circumstances are so extreme [my marriage is so bad, my job is so stressful] that this activity is okay for me ... [as long as an unhealthy addiction] doesn't take place ... I'd never go *that* far.<sup>223</sup>

It appears that there is much greater participation world wide in every type of sexual sin mentioned in the Bible today than ever before. A key reason for this increase in recent years has been the Internet, wrote Hodge and Lindquist, which “provides the ultimate in affordability, accessibility and anonymity to enable sexual addictions.”<sup>224</sup> Other disturbing statistics in this same article include:

Women had only slightly lower rates of sexually compulsive Internet behavior [than men].  
Fifty-one percent of pastors say cyberporn is a possible temptation. Thirty-seven percent say it is a current struggle.  
There are an estimated 400,000 pornographic Web sites, mostly outside of the U.S. ... a Web search for “free porn” generated 1.65 million references.<sup>225</sup>

The article which followed stated that people “felt that their resistance level against pornography decreased the more fatigued they became ... emotionally ‘numb’ ... not feel[ing] much sorrow, joy sadness or excitement.” One person who had felt numb for several months

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<sup>222</sup>Rosenau, 1.

<sup>223</sup>Patrick A. Means, *Men's Secret Wars* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 176.

<sup>224</sup>Robert Hodge and Brent Lindquist, “The Dark Side of the Internet,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (January 2003): 54-5.

<sup>225</sup>*Ibid.*, 53-5.

reported finally feeling emotionally “alive” again after having accidentally opened an X-rated site while searching for information about starting a new ministry. The solution offered to avoid fatigue from overwork was that people need “to learn how to rest, relax and pace themselves.”<sup>226</sup>

There may still be some pastors, parents, or other Christian leaders who not aware of the major shifts which occurred in the early seventies and eighties in what used to be called the “soft-core” pornography magazines. Many of these have gone a step or more beyond that category. These people should consider the advice which Dobson advocated to one pastor after having served on the U.S. Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography: “Get yourself educated ... first hand ... and then just do as God leads from that point on.”<sup>227</sup> The caveat that should be mentioned to avoid getting this education privately and becoming addicted in the process is that it is best done in the company of other mature believers who are serious about helping those who are addicted as Hybles did with his pastoral staff. In 1989 there were “240 million pornographic magazines printed ... in [America]. ... Pornography [was] a \$6-8 billion-a-year industry. Most of it is controlled by organized crime, almost all of it going untouched, and it’s growing exponentially.”<sup>228</sup> In 1996 one article mentioned that the figure was between eight and ten billion dollars a year. No doubt it is much higher today.

This same article uses the term “distorted thinking” in describing man’s inhumanity to women:

Most of pornography’s customers are men. As a result, women are most often the victims of the distorted thinking of the addict: The belief that any kind of sex, even that involving

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<sup>226</sup>James Lo, “The Missionary and Porn,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (January 2003): 62-3.

<sup>227</sup>Bill Hybles, *Christians in a Sex-Crazed Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), 91-2.

<sup>228</sup>*Ibid.*, 92-3.

violence, is pleasurable. This can lead to an acceptance of coercive acts in sexual relationships, both married and non-married.<sup>229</sup>

Since the advent of the World Wide Web with its lack of restraint on any type of information, chat forums, pictures, or videos, the “slippery slope to secretive lives and wounded relationships,”<sup>230</sup> has become even more slippery. Although this is can be true in a moral sense, and is used as a warning to others of the dangers involved, the term “slippery slope” is also known as one of the “fallacies of fact gathering ... a kind of straw man in which you exaggerate the negative effects of an action or event so that you make them seem harder to ‘swallow.’” Cohen continued with another variation of slippery slope in which someone is “suggesting that these effects will ‘snowball,’ so that one bad effect will gradually lead to further even worse ones.” For example, one may fear that if he fails something, he will “never amount to anything.”<sup>231</sup> Some have feared or even concluded that they should never marry because of having committed a major sin. Another article defines “Domino Effect/Slippery Slope: arguing against by linking a first decision with possible unproved negative future outcomes.”<sup>232</sup> Many Christians, who are caught in the bind of sexual or any other type of unhealthy addiction, attempt to live a double life under a cloud of guilt. Eventually they will discover that they cannot successfully overcome it without divulging their secret and without community support.

A few pornographic pictures or videos from whatever source are never enough because just as “Death and destruction are never satisfied ... neither are the eyes of man” (Prov. 27:20).

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<sup>229</sup>Minnesota Family Council, “Pornography: Don’t Protect It, Reject It,” 1993 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.mfc.org/resources/backgrounders/pornography.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>230</sup>Forsythe, 3.

<sup>231</sup>Cohen, 22, 23.

<sup>232</sup>“Truth: Awareness Of Faulty Thinking” [article on-line]; available from <http://www.happyotter.com/hotools/truth.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006. See article in appendix.

George claims that a person's "imagination is always more titillating than what his eyes actually see."<sup>233</sup> Hybles observes: "Reality can never live up to fantasy. ... Once we become comfortable in Fantasyland ... [it] becomes reality to us, and so we are easily deceived ... we can find happiness only in satisfying our sexual appetites."<sup>234</sup> Hughes reports: "Eight-one percent of the students responding to the GRIP poll admitted to intentionally downloading pornography on their home computer."<sup>235</sup>

No matter what the unhealthy addiction may be, sexual or not, it is a

pathological love and trust relationship with an object or event ... which will always be there when he needs it. ... the addict begins to build his defense system to protect himself from those who would attempt to rid him of this fantasy. ... He ... will shift blame, shade the truth, lie, and intimidate those around him. ... His distorted view of reality will be the means by which he will now judge others ... the addict becomes increasingly isolated ... [he] is angry that everyone does not see his point of view ... His world will become increasingly more secretive, more isolated, more necessary ... ending a[n] addiction is not easy.<sup>236</sup>

The pornographic magazines and similar sites on the Web would not have been so appealing to Christians if they had been adequately mentored by godly parents (or men and women) first and foremost in the area of their attitudes and character, and then in the area of sex. They could recommend helpful resources such as those mentioned in an appendix of this study.

One of the major reasons that Christian husbands (or fiancées) gravitate secretly to pornographic sites, videos, books and magazines is that they have not adequately discussed the topic of sex with their wife (or wife to be). Many marriage counselors encourage couples to

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<sup>233</sup>Bob George, *Classic Christianity: Life's Too Short to Miss the Real Thing* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, Inc., 1989), 143.

<sup>234</sup>Hybles, 19.

<sup>235</sup>Donna Rice Hughes, *Kids Online: Protecting Your Children in Cyberspace*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1998), 63.

<sup>236</sup>Lutz, 72-3.

expand their understanding together, filling in the gaps of their knowledge and enjoyment of each other:<sup>237</sup>

“The principle of what is loving and caring for the other person must be addressed. On the other hand, the teaching that our bodies are each other’s to enjoy must also be incorporated.”<sup>238</sup> Allender and Longman describe three barriers to experiencing the joy of uninhibited, passionate sex as God had intended within marriage: “Every couple faces three great enemies to desire, arousal, and climax: *anxiety*, *disgust*, and *anger*. *Anxiety* is often due to a fear of performance ... *Disgust* is often related to parental and/or church shame that has impugned the desirability and delight of sexuality ... [and to] shame related to past sexual abuse or even past immorality ... [*Anger* ... arises when one or both spouses feel used ... and soul ignored or denigrated ... Sexual dissatisfaction [by either spouse] is a sensitive indicator that God’s plan for marriage is off track.”<sup>239</sup>

Apart from sadomasochism which is not conducive to one’s marriage, there are still several sexual activities considered by some spouses as disgusting, but newer Christian books from the West are beginning to challenge such negative or fearful attitudes. No authors, however, are as urgent as African Christian authors, who believe that the only hope of effectively fighting AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases is to encourage spouses to so please their mates (both sexually and otherwise, Eph. 4:32; 5:25-33) that the enticement of prostitutes and

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<sup>237</sup>Les Parrott and Leslie Parrot, *Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), 93-8. See also Dianne Hales, “5. Don’t shy away from touchy topics” in “What No Marriage Can Do Without,” *Reader’s Digest*, June 1993, 122 (Condensed from *Working Mothers*).

<sup>238</sup>Clifford and Joyce Penner, *The Gift of Sex: A Christian Guide to Sexual Fulfillment* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1981), 229.

<sup>239</sup>Dan Allender and Temper Longman III, *Intimate Allies* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999), 230-1.

affairs will be nullified: “I feel free to do things to him and he also feels free to do things to me. Isn’t that the best way to make sure that one will not be tempted to engage in risky behaviors outside one’s marriage?”<sup>240</sup> This book is highly recommended by many conservative Christian missionaries in Cameroon who are concerned about the spread of AIDS.

The attitude of being used, degraded, or denigrated is also being challenged in light of mutual submission and trying to out-serve the other: “Love and happiness are not found by seeking them for oneself but rather by giving out. Let us, as married couples, try to out love one another ... without any restrictions, the couples should feel free to experiment and to ‘know’ each other in the most intimate sense possible.”<sup>241</sup> Such an attitude may also result in eliminating fanaticizing with pornography which is oftentimes done in revenge for a spouse’s refusal to engage in certain sexual activities which are not forbidden by the Bible.<sup>242</sup>

The boundaries for mutual enjoyment are sufficiently delineated in 1 Cor. 6:12; 7:5; 10:23; and Heb. 13:4 taken together. An in-depth study of The Song of Solomon would also be very helpful. Intimacy improves as couples experience greater ease, empathy, and understanding in openly discussing this and any other topic. There should not be any forbidden topic or issue, nothing “swept under the carpet” or postponed indefinitely. Resolution should be the goal for harmonious unity in marriage: “If a couple does not routinely clean their relationship of damaging emotions and lingering pain, they are bound to drift apart.”<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>240</sup>Philippe Mutaka and Flora A. Molima, eds., *Wish I had Known* (Yaoundé, Cameroon: Editions Sherpa, 2004), 89.

<sup>241</sup>Funmi Akingbade, *Sexual Intimacy in Marriage* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Evangel Publishers Ltd., 2000), 120.

<sup>242</sup>Joseph and Linda Dillow and Peter and Lorraine Pintus, *Intimacy Ignited: Conversations Couple to Couple*. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 273-4.

<sup>243</sup>Parrott and Parrot, 76.

One commonly quoted statistic in the literacy is stated by the Mayhalls: “If the sex life of a married couple is happy, it is a small fraction of the total relationship—perhaps 5%. But if it is unhappy, it colors everything else and becomes closer to the 90% of the relationship because it affects many other parts of life.”<sup>244</sup> They continue by explaining that when one spouse withholds rendering pleasure to the other, thus violating 1 Cor. 7:5, he or she has become equally guilty for the inevitable increase in temptation the other will face (Matt. 18:7).

Two other verses that could serve as important guidelines for healthy marital relationships (along with the backdrop of the Golden Rule and the passages mentioned in the previous paragraph) could include Eph. 5:18, 21. These could all be summarized as follows: “Do not become obsessed or intoxicated by anything or by anyone except by the Holy Spirit. Only by his enablement can one show courteous reverence, submission, and unconditional love to one’s mate and thereby experience guilt-free, mutually intoxicating, uninhibited, pleasurable intimacy.”<sup>245</sup>

Intimate companionship is what people are actually seeking, but many are frustrated in their attempt to find it even within a faithful monogamous marriage. The root of this difficulty can partially be traced at least as far back as the “dualism inherited from the Greeks who saw the mind as positive and the body as negative ... we worship with our minds and sin with our bodies.”<sup>246</sup> In reality we are expected to worship with both as well as with our heart, but “we sin above all with our minds.” Thus we separate and elevate the enjoyment of the pleasurable

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<sup>244</sup>Jack Mayhall and Carole Mayhall, *Marriage Takes More Than Love* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1978, 219).

<sup>245</sup>A summarization of the verses from *The Message*, as well as from statements made by several Christian marriage counselors cited in this study: Parrott, Penner, Rosenau, Wright, etc.

<sup>246</sup>Guinness, 2000, 240

experiences of the sexual union above the enjoyment of the closeness of the intimate relationship. Guinness proposes that this has led to dissecting the word

lust ... in terms of such components as promiscuity, pornography, adultery, incest, seduction, prostitution, rape and unnatural vice. But at its heart lust is an idolizing of sex in the sense of an unethical and unrestrained expression of the sexual impulse. It happens even in proper sexual relations when the object of sexual desire is not the sexual partner but rather the pleasure or services that the partner can provide. ... Happiness, runs the “Grand Modern Lie,” depends upon being forever sexually attractive and fulfilled ... the mournful and medical aspect of twentieth-century pornography and promiscuity strongly suggests that we have reached one of those periods of spiritual depression, where people go to bed because they have nothing better to do ... the two main pangs of lust are dehumanization and self-deception [resulting in loneliness and] an even deeper longing [for fulfillment].<sup>247</sup>

This longing can only find its ultimate fulfillment in a deeper more intimate relationship with Christ since no other human can fill this gap. Just as “the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ” (Gal. 3:24, NASB), it may be that this strong desire for intimacy with another person is also a tutor to increase one’s hunger and thirst for the deepest intimate relationship possible in this life with another human (a spouse of the opposite sex) and with God. Sex was “designed to lead us into relationships,” the relationship with God being the most crucial.<sup>248</sup> Such intimacy would enable us to (1) experience genuine unconditional love, (2) find meaning, (3) find purpose, (4) have a transparent, honest, guilt free conscience, and to (5) have a healthy motivation to live the abundant life we were promised (John 10:10).

The main obstacle to genuine intimacy, many mistakenly believe, is that it “is costly, it is much easier to turn to cheap [and more convenient] substitutes such as masturbation, pornography, [romance novels, soap operas, or videos with sex scenes], and promiscuity.”<sup>249</sup> But in reality this cost is miniscule compared to the much higher cost of the possible consequences of

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<sup>247</sup>Ibid., 240-1.

<sup>248</sup>Forsythe, 12.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid., 13.

using some of these substitutes: loss of productive time (time wasted in fantasizing, viewing, downloading, organizing downloads, and in struggling to eliminate the incriminating evidence such as embarrassing desktop wall paper, screen saver programs, pop-up videos or pictures, dial-up icons as well as intruding programs or harmful viruses from your computer), loss of respect by family and community, loss of promotion, of pay increase or of job or career; the cost of divorce lawyers, child support or of rebuilding trust in the existing marriage; the cost of books, videos, phone calls (for phone sex), Internet charges, software to eliminate evidence. The costs may be even greater in the case of extra-marital affairs as well as of professional counseling to overcome the weight of guilt and to resolve the underlying issues and unhealthy relationships.

Alcorn mentions eight steps which could encourage one to avoid distorted thinking in the sexual area. The eighth one is to regularly review the costly consequences of sexual sin. Recommending that each person write his or her own list to personalize it, he mentions the twenty-one that he reminds himself about on a regular basis.<sup>250</sup> Schaumburg admits, however, that some people, though fully aware of the consequences, “are willing to sacrifice family, career and reputation in exchange for an intimacy that’s not even real!”<sup>251</sup>

Failure to achieve intimacy in marriage is the result of one or both mates being selfish, a form of distorted thinking. Furman insists that the “authoritative” husband and what used to be called the “ideal” husband are both basically selfish husbands. Authoritative husbands “are thinking directly of self in the husband-wife relationship” while the “ideal” husbands “are really thinking indirectly of self most of the time because their actions are done more out of pride than out of love. They enjoy telling other husbands how ‘ideal’ they are; seldom do they do anything

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<sup>250</sup> Alcorn, “Strategies to keep from falling,” *Leadership* (Summer 1996).

<sup>251</sup> Harry W. Schaumburg, *False Intimacy* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997) [quotation on-line]; available from <http://www.parsonage.org/articles/reviews/A000001044.cfm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

secretly or quietly for their wives, without any fanfare attached.”<sup>252</sup> Furman, who wrote both *Reaching Your Full Potential*, and *The Intimate Husband*, used the term “full-potential” husband to describe the Eph. 5:21, 22 type of husband; the selfless man who seeks (1) to understand his wife, her preferences, dislikes, dreams and wishes, allowing them to have priority over his own,<sup>253</sup> (2) to invest more time and effort to train his mind to think often of her and how he might build her up rather than point out her faults and complain about her attitude or service,<sup>254</sup> (3) to let God love her through him,<sup>255</sup> and (4) to strive for true intimacy.

Some wives have difficulty understanding how they are to submit to their husbands according to Eph. 5. Furman used the illustration of the musician submitting to the conductor who encourages her to reach her potential so they can work together in harmony. “Couples need to get their views in the open, study them together, and talk about new ways of understanding the concept of submission.”<sup>256</sup>

Although it is not easy for a person seeking intimacy through pornography to outgrow this immature attitude, Crabb and Allender remind us that:

Hope for the man losing the struggle with sexual temptation can be found in the good heart that remains within him despite his failures, a good heart that wants to bless others. As he enters into the miracle of “Christ in him” and releases his longing to give what God has uniquely placed within him, he will discover that godly affections are stronger than ungodly ones, that the joy of living in community can be more powerful than the urge to view another video. As he walks in the Spirit, he will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>252</sup>Richard Furman, *The Intimate Husband* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, Inc., 1986), 14.

<sup>253</sup>Ibid., 61-70.

<sup>254</sup>Ibid.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>256</sup>Penner, 1981, 223.

<sup>257</sup>Larry Crabb and Dan Allender, *Hope When You're Hurting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 204.

One must not only avoid the seductive trap of secret lives and wounded relationships resulting from private lustful viewing of pornography, but also to be avoided are traps resulting from seeking inappropriate levels of intimacy in the work environment:

In the new infidelity, one doesn't have to have sex to be unfaithful. In fact, secret emotional attachments outside a marriage can be just as great a betrayal as extramarital sex. When sex and emotional involvement combine, as they do increasingly in these new workplace affairs with professional colleagues, the threat to the marriage is more catastrophic—much more so than traditional affairs used to be. In the current crisis of infidelity, men are more likely to fall in love with their affair partners—in the past, they were more likely to have uncomplicated sexual liaisons. Today, women are also getting more sexually involved than they did in previous generations.<sup>258</sup>

The signs of an emotional affair according to Glass are:

Emotional Intimacy ... When you share more about who you are—your hopes and dreams, frustrations and failures—with the other person than you do with your spouse ...

Secrecy and Deception ... Are you telling your spouse you're meeting that wonderful colleague for lunch in the cafeteria every day? Lying reduces intimacy in a marriage.

Sexual Chemistry ... If there is sexual chemistry between you, then at the very least there is an unacknowledged sexual attraction—even if you never act on it.<sup>259</sup>

Thus, “Infidelity is any emotional or sexual intimacy that violates trust.” And “Friendships, work relationships, and Internet liaisons have become the latest threat to marriages.”<sup>260</sup>

Yates encourages marriage partners to work seriously at becoming good friends. This is best done if certain traps are avoided: *The picky trap*, *the comparison trap*, and *the hopeless trap*. Instead, the following qualities should be cultivated: *A thankful spirit*, *an accepting atmosphere*, *a fresh vision for your marriage*, a forgiving spirit, and humbleness to ask for forgiveness.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup>Shirley Glass, *NOT “Just Friends”: Protect Your Relationship from Infidelity and Heal the Trauma of Betrayal* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2003) [quotation on-line]; available from <http://www.shirleyglass.com/book.htm>; Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>259</sup>Ibid.

<sup>260</sup>Ibid.

<sup>261</sup>Susan Yates. “Befriend Your Spouse,” *Today's Christian Woman* (September/October 2000), 42-5.

On a lighter side of this area, Rosenau uses an improved version of Albert Ellis' A-B-C method, the "A-B-C-D way of viewing life and his [Ellis'] concept of a rational and irrational way of living life." By rejecting the fact "God created each of us unique and special" many men and women's belief systems have become distorted regarding their bodies. They think that because they do not have the "perfect" or "ideal" body shape they will be less desirable to others. Rosenau strongly states: "Try to learn some ways to dispute your irrational, self-denigrating thinking:

1. Search out the rational truth.
2. Create positive self-statements.
3. Use mental imagery."<sup>262</sup>

Sills admits that old habits or ruts, whether good or bad, are difficult to change when they must be changed because "change is disruptive, uncomfortable, all for an end that is uncertain ... requires loss—loss of the old things, old people, old, comfy ways of doing and being."<sup>263</sup> This is followed by a generalized method for handling distorted thinking in any area of life:

*Change what you see* [your perception]. Then *change what you think* [because "even though it feels good to satisfy them," "it hurts you to satisfy your ruling passions all the time"]. And then, with the momentum of these shifts in your view of yourself, *change what you do* [satisfy other needs, other people, and in so doing, you make your family, your friends, and you colleagues nicer people to be around].<sup>264</sup>

Storms declares unequivocally "God is a hedonist."<sup>265</sup> Crabb helps us face reality by stating,

Real pleasure, the only kind that satisfies the human soul and at the same time, transforms

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<sup>262</sup>Rosenau, 192-3.

<sup>263</sup>Judith Sills, *Excess Baggage: Getting Out of Your Own Way* (New York, NY: Viking Penguin, 1993), 17.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>265</sup> Sam Storm, *Pleasures Evermore: The Life-Changing Power of Enjoying God*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2000), 11.

[one] into a marvelously decent person, is the sheer pleasure of living for the glory of God. It's what each of us was designed to do... The core battle is to believe that the Eternal Community of God is a party that we all long to attend and to discover and freely indulge our deepest passions for their kind of fun.<sup>266</sup>

The main obstacle to enjoying the abundant life which God promised (John 1:10) Storm explains,

... we have been duped by the devil. We have believed what is perhaps the most pernicious lie ever told, namely that the pleasures and delights of the world, the flesh, and the devil are more enjoyable and satisfying than who God is for us in Jesus ... [but] God is delicious! ... we were made to enjoy Him.<sup>267</sup>

To summarize, distorted thinking in the sexual area occurs because:

1. People naturally tend to be selfish, non-empathetic, and to seek their own personal gratification above that of others. Instead they should “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3), and their conversation should “be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Col. 4:6). Older men should be treated as fathers, younger men “as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity” (1 Tim. 5:1-2). “[W]e fail to realize ... that *grace*, not [just] *truth* is that miraculous adhesive that bonds us to us to each other. ... Both ... are inseparable essential elements in living the Christian life. ... see John 1:14.”<sup>268</sup> Forgiveness is key to healing the inevitable hurts within relationships.

2. “Enlightened people today have [allowed themselves to] become trapped in a cultural paradigm that shapes how they see themselves as men and women ... focusing on gender differences and fail[ing] to recognize the importance of what is shared in common.” The focus

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<sup>266</sup>Larry Crabb, foreword to Sam Storm, *Pleasures Evermore*, 8-9.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid., 48. (See Storm's ideas on “How to overcome temptation” in appendix.)

<sup>268</sup>Wakefield and Brolsma, 33-4.

on gender differences leads to the despair that neither will ever understand the other or work well together.<sup>269</sup>

3. People have become more isolated resulting in the weakening of their interpersonal infrastructure:

We're losing human contact with one another, even though we don't mean to. We're busy. We're otherwise engaged. We're *somewhere else*. More and more of us ache inside, yearning to connect but wondering how to. If you feel this way, don't feel alone. ... It is time for us to find one another once again. It is time to reconnect in this busy, disconnected world.<sup>270</sup>

4. Many people seek to master "some powerful technique to make them stand out as a lover." But "fantastic lovemaking is based upon who you are as a person, not what you do. Attitudes and character are what counts."<sup>271</sup> It is a Christ-like attitude and godly character—not chemistry, or romance that keeps love alive. The latter two are just "icing on the cake." Without the "cake" there is no adequate infrastructure to support a relationship in difficult times. After a presentation of "ten reasonable desires based on God's economy for intimate companionship" (listed in the appendix), the eight basic techniques are adequately addressed.<sup>272</sup>

Healthy resolution between husband and wife in the sexual area can result in resolution of many other areas. An adequate biblical understanding of this area for anyone can improve their own self-esteem as well as their relationships with others as they seek to influence everyone to honor and imitate Christ.

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<sup>269</sup>Wakefield and Broolsma, 20-1.

<sup>270</sup>Edward M. Hallowell, *Connect* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1999), xi-xii.

<sup>271</sup>Rosenau, 12.

<sup>272</sup>*Ibid.*, xi.

## Distorted thinking in the media

Sometimes people or organizations in an attempt to meet a deadline do not gather adequate information or may even intentionally distort the truth. Robinson states:

Lying and spreading biased information in the public domain is a common practice in courts, in history books and in the media. This brings up the question of why people uncritically accept distorted information. Public acceptance of these lies could be attributed to ignorance or to the subjective perception of events. Acceptance is also a reflection of an action-oriented rather than a truth-oriented society.<sup>273</sup>

Regarding Muslim terrorists, Ehud Barrak once stated: “They don’t suffer from the problem of telling lies that exist in Judeo-Christian culture. Truth is seen as an irrelevant category. There is only that which serves your purpose and that which doesn’t. There is no such thing as ‘the truth.’”<sup>274</sup>

In his article “News Coverage of Globalism is Distorted,” David W. Neuendorf laments, “What is a conscientious [person] to do to find the truth? Since the major media can be shown to distort the truth, we must look for information outside that source for balance.” Leaders of the world, including those in media, are visionary leaders. Burt Nanus believes that:

Leaders, like artists, attempt to create extraordinary new realities out of ordinary materials through the force of vision. Visionary leaders astute and perhaps idiosyncratic observers and interpreters of the real world ... try to rearrange the materials at their disposal—that is, the people, processes, and structures of an organization—to create a new and more powerful order that will succeed and endure over time ... [they] are always seeking to communicate directly and viscerally a vision of the world that will resonate with the deepest meanings of people and cause them to embrace it as worthwhile and elevating.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>273</sup>W. Peter Robinson, “Lying in the public domain,” *American Behavioral Scientist* (January-February 1993): 359(24).

<sup>274</sup>Ann Coulter, *Treason: liberal treachery from the cold war to the war on terrorism* (New York, NY: Crown Forum, 2003), 291-2.

<sup>275</sup>Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership: Creating A Compelling Sense Of Direction For Your Organization* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 61, 33.

Unfortunately, many of these leaders have their own agenda and are not seeking anything beyond their own gain. Many have no concern at all for others or God and hence no regard for the two greatest commandments.

Four specific examples of the media deliberately misinforming the public (or in some cases not verifying the veracity of the information as they should before reporting it) resulting in the distorted thinking of millions of people was presented by:

1. Those who convinced the U.S. Supreme Court to vote in favor of *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973:

We persuaded the media that the cause of permissive abortion was a liberal, enlightened, sophisticated one,” recalls the movement’s co-founder. “Knowing that if a true poll were taken, we would be soundly defeated, we simply fabricated the results of fictional polls. We announced to the media that we had taken polls and that 60 percent of Americans were in favor of permissive abortion. This is the tactic of the self-fulfilling lie. Few people care to be in the minority. We aroused enough sympathy to sell our program of permissive abortion by fabricating the number of illegal abortions done annually in the U.S. The actual figure was approaching 100,000, but the figure we gave to the media repeatedly was 1,000,000.

Repeating the big lie often enough convinces the public. The number of women dying from illegal abortions was around 200-250 annually. The figure we constantly fed to the media was 10,000. These false figures took root in the consciousness of Americans, convincing many that we needed to crack the abortion law.”<sup>276</sup>

Another deception used was replacing Norma McCorvey’s name with one made up just for the court case—Jane Roe. Norma’s book, *Won by Love*, describes her role and her regret of having anything to do with supporting abortions. Although she was a “pro-abortionist” at that time she had since realized the distorted thinking, and acknowledged the truth.

2. The gay community and those in the media who dare not “offend them.” The typical verses argued against by the homosexuals include: Gen. 19; Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:19-32; 1 Cor. 6:9; Jude

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<sup>276</sup>*Whistleblower Magazine*, 20 December 2002. Quotation also available from [http://www.prca.org/standard\\_bearer/volume79/2003mar01.html](http://www.prca.org/standard_bearer/volume79/2003mar01.html); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006. [“**Whistleblower**, formerly WorldNet, is the monthly news magazine companion of WorldNetDaily.” from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whistleblower\\_\(magazine\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whistleblower_(magazine))].

19; and 1 Tim. 1:10.<sup>277</sup> The Leviticus passage clearly states, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it [is] abomination.” Peter Coleman summarized: “St. Paul’s writings repudiate homosexual behaviour as a vice of the Gentiles in Romans, as a bar to the Kingdom in Corinthians, and as an offence to be repudiated by the moral law in 1 Timothy.”<sup>278</sup>

Sue Johnson, a self-proclaimed “Sex Educator,” openly condones this lifestyle, on her Sunday Night Sex Show (in reruns nearly every night on a major broadcast channel in the United States in 2002-3). She mistakenly insists that the homosexual orientation of people cannot be changed. But Satinover presented research which demonstrated a lack of clear evidence of any genetic connection and instead shows that it is not much different than looking at the traits which are conducive to producing a good basketball player or even an alcoholic. In each case choice is required. It is the result of choices made over a period of time that one becomes gay or straight, an alcoholic or an abstainer, a basketball player or a bus driver, a doctor or a lawyer. It is all a matter of personal choice. He states, “alcoholism is estimated to be between 50 percent and 60 percent heritable; homosexuality to be less than 50 percent even by activists, probably considerably less.” Just as alcoholics are “responsible for controlling, changing, or stopping the behavior,” homosexuals are even more so due to the much lower “heritable” trait and because of the much greater potential to cause more people to die by spreading AIDS. Both are stoppable and healable in spite of what the gay community says. Neither alcoholism nor homosexual orientation has proven to be linked to any specific gene.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup>Atkinson, 46.

<sup>278</sup>Ibid., 46-7.

<sup>279</sup>Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 95-7.

More recent movies, such as one by Paramount entitled, “In and Out” (PG-13), continue to promote the lie loud and often in hopes that more people will join their movement. This film stereotypes “straight” men as “slobs,” who do not dress well and never dance. It claims that one will never experience life as it was meant to be enjoyed unless he or she tries out this lifestyle. Although AIDS and much research say otherwise, it is sufficient that God never intended anyone to live like this.

3. Media’s glowing report of the advances of democracy throughout the world. But the truth is,

“Of the dozens of new republics that have come into being since World War II, most have, in fact, displayed a definite trend away from democratic ideals and instead assumed the nature of oligarchies, single-party states, or military dictatorships.”<sup>280</sup>

The governments of both Cameroon and of the United States of America claim to be Republics. But are they not in the original sense, because “in the 20th century the term republic is freely used by dictatorships, one-party states, and democracies alike. Republic has, in fact, come to signify any form of state headed by a president or some similarly titled figure, and not a monarch.”<sup>281</sup> It is debatable whether or not the United States is a true Republic. Many feel that it has degenerated significantly from the original intention of its founding fathers (see further comments below).

Jacob Ihims, a former Parliamentarian in Cameroon, plainly stated that democracy will never work in Africa because of tribalism. No matter what the issue, each tribe wants what is

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<sup>280</sup>“Republic” [article on-line]; available from [http://uk.encarta.msn.com/text\\_761554383\\_\\_\\_4/Republic.html](http://uk.encarta.msn.com/text_761554383___4/Republic.html); Internet; accessed 20 November 2006.

<sup>281</sup>“Republic” [article on-line]; available from <http://newfirstsearch.oclc.org/WebZ/FSFETCH?fetchtype=fullrecord:sessionid=sp04sw05-61809-d1sp2v7g-e4p4qv:entitypagenum=57:0:recno=error/badfetch.html::entitytoprecno=2:entitycurrecno=2:numrecs=1>; Internet; accessed 28 May 2002

best for it, even to the extent of having an advantage over other tribes.<sup>282</sup> Both Cameroon and the United States have experienced a considerable amount of corruption in the last few decades, thanks to distorted thinking. These two and many other countries have ignored what King Solomon, the wisest man before Christ, once said (in Prov. 29:18): “Where there is no vision [prophetic revelation from God] the people are unrestrained.”

Several people have verified this in the last few centuries. Barton summarized from much research: “Religion and morality were the ... indispensable supports for good government, political prosperity, and national well-being.”<sup>283</sup> Although once considered the most corrupt nation in the world according to BBC a few years ago, Cameroon still allows prayers and the reading of the Bible in their public schools.

Samuel Adams declared: “Religion and good morals are the only solid foundations of public liberty and happiness. ... neither the wisest constitution nor the wisest laws will secure the liberty and happiness of a people whose manners are universally corrupt.” Benjamin Franklin once said “only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters.”<sup>284</sup>

Unfortunately, corruption in the West has increased in the last several years while it has basically remained the same in Cameroon. Americans “seem unwilling to accept that there will be times when chance, accident, bias, or corruption will defeat the best rules and regulations” including superfluous warning labels on nearly every product and this does not hinder them from

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<sup>282</sup>Jacob Ihims, interview by author.

<sup>283</sup>David Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, and Religion* (Aledo, TX: Wallbuilder Press, 2000), 319.

<sup>284</sup>Barton, 320-1.

suings each other over anything for whatever amount they wish.<sup>285</sup> Crier documents throughout that:

In barely a generation, lawyers, politicians, and bureaucrats have taken the palace without firing a shot. ... Their ability to write rules and manipulate them at will has established a new tyranny in America ... we have traded away our liberties. ... Our great cornerstone of democracy, the rule of law, has become a source of power and influence, not liberty and justice.<sup>286</sup>

George Washington modeled the example which is now largely being ignored when he said “I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man.”<sup>287</sup>

4. The media has convinced us that Postmodernism is what it is all about today. But this is just semantics, another new word to dress up and cover up older anti-Christian philosophies because:

Postmodern philosophy adamantly resists unifying narratives, even those descriptive of itself. Yet for all its antagonism toward unifying principles, postmodernism rests on the four interrelated philosophical constructs or characteristics: Nihilism, Relativism, Deconstructionism, and Consumerism. Each reflects a variation on the theme of pluralism.<sup>288</sup>

Those who believe in a pluralistic society insist that Christians be more “tolerant” and less offensive to those of other beliefs. Pluralism offers them much in the way of variety.<sup>289</sup>

Taylor declares that many who call themselves pluralists believe “there are many different and equally valid ways of explaining the world and solving its problems ... [but they are] no more tolerant of *truly* divergent points of view than those they criticize for intolerance.” He also

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<sup>285</sup>Catherine Crier, *The Case Against Lawyers: How Lawyers, Politicians, and Bureaucrats Have Turned the Law into an Instrument of Tyranny—and What We as Citizens Have to Do About It* (New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2002), 7-8.

<sup>286</sup>Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>287</sup>Wakefield, 2000, 80.

<sup>288</sup>Mark Benadom, “The Ministry of a Shepherd in a Postmodern Age” (D.Min. diss., Phoenix Seminary), 2002.

<sup>289</sup>Zacharias, 1996, 95.

describes the tactics involved: “Every belief system repels competitors in a variety of ways ... includ[ing] ignoring their existence, belittling and caricaturing the enemy to make it unattractive, considering only selective evidence ... appealing to tradition, ostracizing, and so on.”<sup>290</sup>

How can anyone claim: “All religions are right and that it does not matter whether the claims they make are objectively true? All religions are not the same ... do not point to God ... [and] *do not say* that all religions are the same. ... Every religion at its core is exclusive.”<sup>291</sup>

Sutton summarized the impact of pluralism on Christians: “Exclusivism obviously creates emotional and intellectual hostility in non-Christians, pressuring some orthodox Christians to soften their theological position, at least in emphasis, in order to appear more tolerant.” He quotes Hunter’s conclusion that seminarians are “much less likely to choose missions as a career path—by two to one.”<sup>292</sup>

Hunter goes on to say, “Theological tradition is conforming in its own unique way to the cognitive and normative assumptions of modern culture.”<sup>293</sup> But Minnery reminds us with many examples throughout history (including several from the last 25 years before its publication) that even one person with God’s help can make a difference in a community to stop or slow the downward spiral toward chaos because “it’s right to do what’s right. ... Like John Wesley and William Booth” we have “deep concern for the lost souls of the unredeemed.”<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>290</sup>Taylor, 24-5.

<sup>291</sup>Zacharias, 2000, 7.

<sup>292</sup>James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The coming generation* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 258, footnote 44; quoted in Glenn Charles Sutton, “Beliefs of Entering Bible College Students with Reference to Religious Pluralization” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity International University, 1997), 113.

<sup>293</sup>Ibid., 115, (or Hunter, 1987, 46).

<sup>294</sup>Tom Minnery, *Why You Can’t Stay Silent: A Biblical Mandate to Shape Our Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2002), 41.

Noebel promotes “Christian pluralism” which places neither society above man (as in Marxist collectivism), nor man above society (individualism). Instead, it “holds both man and society accountable to God (2 Kings 17:7f; Acts 17:31).”<sup>295</sup> He continues by explaining: “people must face the consequences for the choices they make in creating society ... including family, state and church.”<sup>296</sup>

### **Literature regarding Africa**

Africans claim: “Days are gone when one people, epoch, or tradition could arrogantly claim to have either singularly invented philosophy, or to have a monopoly over the specific yet diverse processes of search for knowledge typical to the discipline of philosophy.”<sup>297</sup> But “Africa will not really attain its cultural maturity as long as it does not elevate itself resolutely to a profound thinking of its essential problems, that is to say, to philosophical reflection.”<sup>298</sup>

Except for one country, “Africa lives on the international dole. ... The end of colonialism has not brought genuine freedom. ... Africa has become a cluster of welfare states, surviving at the whim of foreign donors and aid agencies.”<sup>299</sup> But much of this dependence is due to corrupt leaders who permit very little of the country’s profits to trickle down to others. Forces of nature which impede progress include heat, locusts and other creatures (which reduce crops), tsetse flies (causing sleeping sickness), black flies (causing Filaria and river blindness), mosquitoes (causing

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<sup>295</sup>Noebel, 97.

<sup>296</sup>Ibid., 100

<sup>297</sup>Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *African Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), ix.

<sup>298</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>299</sup>David Lamb, *The Africans* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., rev. ed., 1985), 23.

Malaria and Dengue Fever), as well as other sickness such as diarrhea (which kills thousands of infants), meningitis, measles and other common diseases few are vaccinated against.

Bujo and McNeil claim that a major problem of industrialization is:

modern technology creates a *monoculture*. This applies especially to the cultures of the non-Western world, which can scarcely assert themselves technologically and make their voices heard in the process of globalization ... but globalization and a kind of “cloning” on the level of the “human cultures” are taken for granted—it seems to be forgotten that the progress and future of humanity can be realized only in the plural. Their presupposition is often that what is good for Europe or North America must be equally good everywhere and for all cultures.<sup>300</sup>

The biggest cause for conflict between Africans and Euro-Americans, though, is their difference in worldview due to vastly different cultural backgrounds.

Missionaries, ill-acquainted with the findings of the social sciences and burdened with the cultural pride of their own Western world, have been notoriously obtuse in their approaches to the peoples of the larger world. ... For them, Euro-American social institutions and cultural values were inseparable from Christianity.<sup>301</sup>

Asana contends: “One aspect of polygyny hotly debated is that of the widow who is taken over by a member of her husband’s clan as his wife or cared for in the levirate system of providing for children in the name of the late husband.”<sup>302</sup> Some Western trained churches refuse to grant full church membership to polygamists. Some withhold communion, while others require that polygamists take communion separately from the monogamists so as to make it clear that the church does not recommend polygamy.

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<sup>300</sup> Bénédet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, trans. Brian McNeil (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2001), xi-xii.

<sup>301</sup> Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Christian Churches* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975), 50.

<sup>302</sup> Festus Ambe Asana, “Problems of Marriage and Family Life in an African context, viewed from the perspective of Christian Pastor as Counselor” (Ph.D. diss., Boston University School of Theology, 1990), 148.

President Paul Biya of Cameroon wrote: “Africa’s great backwardness is first and foremost in the area of creativity ... Actions which do not seek to attain some form of excellence deserve no attention ... There can be no real development for a person who lives in fear and ignorance.”<sup>303</sup>

This fear and ignorance is explained by Abogunrin: “In spite of the influence of Christianity and Westernism in Africa today, the African worldview is still dominated by belief in the reality of spirits, witches, wizards, ancestors, and divinities.” Although he claims in the next sentence that this belief “is not caused by ignorance nor is it a means of filling the gaps that Africans cannot explain for lack of scientific knowledge,” in the last sentence of the previous paragraph he asserted, “In Luke’s understanding, the salvation provided by God in Jesus His Son is total.” This is where the ignorance is to be found. He mentions that even some university professors wear charms, rings, or amulets. Then he states the cause of their misunderstanding:

A salvation that does not cover the total person and his or her needs cannot be meaningful in the African context. Salvation must be related to the person’s body, health, victory over demonic powers, provision of daily needs, and security and total well-being of the society in which the person lives. Here, many mission churches have failed in their evangelical vocabulary.<sup>304</sup>

Will Coleman, reviewing the literature, states: “The system of traditional African religions consisted of belief in a supreme being, intermediate deities, and ancestral spirits, all of which were mediated through leaders of a family and/or tribe or clan.” He later offered the following description:

In a typical West African religious ceremony, participants danced clockwise in a circle. As the spirits possessed them they would clap their hands, nod their head, and tap their feet to the rhythm of the drums ... their glazed stare would become fixed, their eyes glassy. Their

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<sup>303</sup>Biya, 93-4.

<sup>304</sup>S. O. Abogunrin, “The Lucan View of Jesus Christ the Savior of the World from the African Perspective,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 55:1 (2000): 30.

bodies would move faster and faster. Sometimes they would throw their heads backward and thrash their arms about. Other signs of possession were falling on the ground, jumping up and down, rolling or whirling around, and speaking in unknown tongues ... all ... powerful manifestations were evidence of spirit possessions.<sup>305</sup>

Although Africans see the “supreme God” as “unique, the creator of all other beings, eternal and omniscient,” Palmer quotes Imasogie who claims Africans believe God “created lesser divinities to be in charge of specific realms (e.g., food production, human reproduction, death, bodies of water) ... as his ministers, carrying out his purposes in the day to day activities of the Kingdom. As a consequence, people communicate with, and sacrifice to these deities, not to the Supreme Being directly.<sup>306</sup>

Abogunrin next reminds us: “Africa is perhaps the most pluralistic continent in the world with regard to language, culture, and religion.”<sup>307</sup> After examining the seven-fold manifesto of Christ in Luke 4:14-30 (which was based upon Isa. 52:7), he proposed how fear and ignorance can be overcome by church leaders:

The message of the Gospel will be more meaningful if the church does not compromise its prophetic voice in Africa, but speaks as the mouthpiece of the oppressed, the downtrodden, the poor, the homeless, and the hungry and if the church proclaims peace in the war-torn areas.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup>Will Coleman, *Tribal Talk* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 32, 46.

<sup>306</sup>Nancy Nyberg Palmer, “The Impact of Maternal Education on Infant and Child Mortality and Morbidity in the Cameroon Grasslands” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1993), 105, paraphrasing O. Imasogie, *African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1985).

<sup>307</sup>Abogunrin, 42.

<sup>308</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

There is no dichotomy in Africa between the body and the soul as in the West: “Africa could never accept this mutilation of the human being.”<sup>309</sup> Therefore, they have trouble accepting a Western Christianity. Christian holism and the old Hebrew “Shalom” instead portray “that life in creation under the sovereignty of God was alright ... people did not have to reconcile their spiritual comfort in the midst of physical despair.”<sup>310</sup>

Tienou discerned “that the idea of Christianity being an African religion sounds polemical.” He quotes from Richard France’s “five areas of challenge for African Christianity,” from his book, *Christianity on the March*:

African Christianity needs more than numbers; ... must become more than a relic of the colonial past; ... must think and live in ways that are authentically African and Christian; ... must demonstrate care for the concerns of Africans; ... [and] the Christian faith in Africa must not be either purely pietistic nor exclusively this-worldly.<sup>311</sup>

Though recognizing this book is over twenty-five years old, Tienou has “noted their relevance to discussions of Christianity in Africa again and again” and suggests that they could be “helpful in providing a roadmap for evaluating the state of the Gospel in Africa.”<sup>312</sup>

Asana believes, “The traditional African’s worldview cannot remain the same” and “of all the continents of the world ... during this century Africa is experiencing the most rapid of changes in the widest scale,” which has been “strongly affected and hastened by Western influence.”<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>309</sup>Bénézet Bujo, *African Theology in Its Social Context* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 31.

<sup>310</sup>Bruce Bradshaw, *Bridging the Gap: Evangelism, Development and Shalom*. (Monrovia, CA: World Vision International, 1993), 175.

<sup>311</sup>Tite Tienou, “The state of the gospel in Africa,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (April 2001), 155.

<sup>312</sup>Ibid.

<sup>313</sup>Asana, 100, 101, 103.

In *Theological Studies*, Jean-Marc Ela is quoted as follows:

New paths of evangelization open up to Christians wherever they and their churches make an effort to redefine themselves in terms of service to persons stripped of their rights ... African reality [autocratic rule, corruption, rampant AIDS, etc.] imposes on the church a kind of *pedagogy of the discovery of situations of sin and oppression*—situations that rear their heads in contradiction with the project of the salvation and liberation in Jesus Christ.”<sup>314</sup>

Economically there are several “leveling mechanisms” common in sub-Saharan Africa, which have also been observed in the focus group of Cameroon. These are “ways that are used in societies to keep people from getting ahead financially or of achieving something that most people would desire ... a break to keeping people on the same economic level”: (1) Fatalism, (2) Reciprocal obligation, (3) Imperative social obligation, (4) Public and family opinion, (5) Jealousy, envy, and distrust, (6) Threats of sorcery or witchcraft, (7) Rule of elders, (8) Fear of gossip, (9) Demands of “kin and friends who lay claim to any and all resources that seem to be within their grasp.”<sup>315</sup>

Those who are “lucky” enough to overcome these leveling devices can best do so by (1) Obtaining “cash advances from their [trusting] employers against future work” (such funds are not considered an available resource for others to “borrow”), (2) Moving out of their village—far enough away from their kin and friends that they cannot easily be shamed into helping them (or called “wicked”) and by (3) Spending or investing their funds as quickly as possible in something or someone (as sponsoring a person in school so that they can honestly say that they have no money to offer when someone requests it of them. This investment is a form of

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<sup>314</sup>William R. O’Neill, “African Moral Theology,” *Theological Studies* 62 (March 2001), 134.

<sup>315</sup>David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2001), 148-150.

insurance for them to make a withdrawal when they experience hard times.<sup>316</sup> Another popular way to avoid lending money is investing it in a building, such as their dream house, that may never be finished or even lived in. Many homes and buildings can be seen in this country without roofs for ten or more years.

With the arrival of dirt roads, though ill maintained, cheap transportation costs, and the lure of the more “advanced” urban areas and opportunities therein, many are fleeing their home villages. Asana informs us about rural Africa:

Life in rural areas is often restricted by traditional obligations, customary law, and exigencies of the land. Among the reasons that have been given for leaving rural homes are oppression and extortion by traditional or warrant chiefs, demand for communal labor, customary punishment for ‘woman damage,’ financial exploitation by one’s own family, the menace of sorcery, and loss of dignity.”<sup>317</sup>

One aspect of imperative social obligation which is difficult for many missionaries and some of their poorer Christian converts is African hospitality because it can be costly to properly host people. Some may stay as long as they want, even for days, weeks, or months. Many of them expect reciprocal visits to their own home in order for relationships to deepen. There is no need to inform people before visiting them. It is not considered an imposition. You honor them by visiting them and vice versa. Del Chinchén informs us:

[Anyone] could jeopardize their reputation by not being hospitable and by not visiting others ... [this is] unforgivable ... a sin of the highest order. ... But if the missionary observes the hospitality etiquette of visiting and being visited in Africa, the door is gently opened, like no other means for evangelism and discipleship opportunities ... If we apply ... our American concept of hospitality to an African context, we will severely hamper our ministry.”<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>316</sup>Ibid., 140-8.

<sup>317</sup>Hanna and Hanna, *Urban dynamics in Black Africa* (1981); quoted in Asana, 103.

<sup>318</sup>Del Chinchén, “The Art of Hospitality African Style,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (October 2000), 475-6.

President Paul Biya (of Cameroon) has observed the rich cultural diversity and is appealing to his citizens to examine their own culture as well as that of other tribes because “Cultural Universals are values that have to be recorded and fostered in the interest of the national community ... unity ...”<sup>319</sup>

It is these values which must be understood by those who minister to Africans. Finding the common ground between biblical values and those of any other religion, such as African Traditional Religion (ATR), is the first step to communicating the message of the Gospel. Both ATR and the Bible acknowledge the following:

- a. The existence of God
- b. The concept of creation
- c. The reality of the Spirit World
- d. Man’s spiritual nature
- e. Estrangement from God
- f. The concept of substitutionary death
- g. Values of unity, purity and peace (more so than Western values today)

ATR relies largely on FEAR of the spirit beings in charge of the various domains of life to enforce its system of values. ... each element of truth in ATR is surrounded by serious error so that the system as a whole leads man away from God rather than towards God. ATR cannot be regarded as a belief system that can be redeemed by adding further light from the scriptures.<sup>320</sup>

The first crucial point of departure of ATR from Christianity is: “God is not wholly good and cannot be fully trusted.”<sup>321</sup> Secondly, ATR is in direct contradiction with scripture in its encouragement of “dealing with spirits, mystical powers,” and of “worshiping ancestors” and idols.<sup>322</sup> Once this bridge of contact is made and their eyes are opened to the truth, they will be

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<sup>319</sup>Biya, 98.

<sup>320</sup>Karl Grebe and Wilfred Fon, *African Traditional Religion and Christian Counseling* (Bamenda, Cameroon: SIL, 1995), 21-2.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

less fearful of trusting God and will begin to produce the fruit of the Spirit which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23, NASB). If they do not comprehend that salvation is sufficient for every area of their life, they will continue with their ATR to one degree or another to meet their felt needs and troubling crises as so many still do today.

O’Donovan summarized the major dilemma by listing 20 culture clashes between Africa and the West that must be addressed (see appendix) and proposes the following:

What is an African Christian to do? Which culture should he or she follow? ... a Christian must learn to choose the ways of God rather than the ways of any particular culture. No culture is best. No culture is right in everything. There are things in every culture which must be rejected ... because they are not pleasing to God. There are also beneficial things which can be learned from every culture.<sup>323</sup>

He further explains that the priority of individualism, freedom and privacy in the West (which tends to result in pride, selfishness and personal rebellion) has been transported by missionaries, tourists, and business ventures (including Hollywood and the pornography industry) to Africa and promoted economic greed, lack of community, accountability, and moral restraint. These combined with the rampant tribalism, ethnic prejudice and unity at any cost has greatly slowed the progress of healthy development in Africa.<sup>324</sup>

### **Literature regarding the Esimbi people**

First, we will begin with the commonalities between the Esimbi and many other tribal groups within Cameroon (and perhaps in other countries). One important belief relates to the medical aspect of life:

To the traditional healers, there are virtually no illnesses that are natural. Every single disease

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<sup>323</sup>Wilbur O’Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Publishing, 2000), 15-6.

<sup>324</sup>Ibid., and a general summary of much of the book.

must have been caused by someone for one reason or another. No illness arises from the independent action of germs. Somebody must be responsible through witchcraft, through a mystical medium or through direct poisoning ... those who have placed their entire lives in the palms of native doctors, soothsayers and fortune-tellers, are some of the most educated people in our communities. Some of them are also the front-line Christians in our churches. They have a common defense for entrusting their lives to the manipulation of these 'self-styled intermediaries between the natural and supernatural world ... it is that *heaven helps those who help themselves*.<sup>325</sup>

The Western mindset is very foreign to many Africans—even incomprehensible not only because of the above, but also because: “Conventional Western political thought brings one to understand the world as a system of nation-states, bound by anarchy and their own respective interests. Politics is defined as the interactions and exchanges of any given state, as primary actor, with other states.<sup>326</sup> But Desmond Tutu and many other Africans see it differently: “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. ... A person is a person through other persons. ... It is not I think therefore I am. ... It says rather: I am human because I belong, I participate, I share.”<sup>327</sup>

O’Neill argues that framing human rights: “... must be guided by the African relational notion of the person. African anthropology parts company with modern Western [individualism] to insist that communicability is of the very essence of the person. The autonomy and rights of the individual subject are enjoyed in relationship, in communication ... the uniqueness of moral

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<sup>325</sup> Fodje John Taiti, *The Twisted Nature of Man* (Bamenda, Cameroon: Neba Publishers, 1999), 55, 57-8.

<sup>326</sup> Fatima Ayub, “otherness/humanness: finding the ethicopolitical” [article on-line]; available from <http://mason.gmu.edu/~fayub/otherness.doc>; Internet; accessed 26 August 2004, 1. See also her proclivity for Islamic rule in Lee Kaplan “Campus Rally for Terror” [article-on-line]; <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=11010>.

<sup>327</sup> Desmond Tutu; quoted in Ayub, 1.

persons rests not in abstracting the Individual from the ensemble of social relations but precisely in ‘the communitarian dimension of life.’”<sup>328</sup>

But the danger of this perspective may be a waffling, chameleon type character explained by Douw as follows:

... individuals only exist *in* their relationships with others, and as these relationships change, so do the characters of the individuals. Thus understood, the word “individual” signifies a plurality of personalities corresponding to the multiplicity of relationships in which the individual in question stands. Being an individual by definition means “being-with-others.” ... This is all somewhat boggling for the Cartesian mind, whose conception of individuality now has to move from solitary to solidarity, from independence to interdependence, from individuality *vis-à-vis* community to individuality *à la* community.<sup>329</sup>

Such a perspective may explain why it is so difficult for a Westerner to feel successful about discipling some Africans. Because of all the above many Africans do not see the importance of striving only for Godly character.

Focusing now on the particular people group investigated in this study, the following quotation will provide some background:

The “Esimbi [are] primarily in Menchum Valley Sub-Division, Menchum Division, of the North West Province of Cameroon. The Esimbi people number about 20,000 and live along the valley of the Menchum River, extending from Benakuma (60 kilometers northwest of Bamenda) and northwestward 30 kilometers to the Nigeria border. The Esimbi area lies between the towns of Akwaya to the west, and Wum to the east. According to Ihims (1994: 1), the Esimbi clan is composed of eleven main villages—Benakuma, Benange, Benahundu, Benade, Bufi, Benagudi, Benatidi, Benabinge, Benakuhu, Benefum, and Baworu—the latter being a recent creation. There are many additional hamlets as well. ... The *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1996: 196) classifies the language family of Esimbi as Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Tivoid.<sup>330</sup>

Their habitat is grassland, at elevations of about three hundred to six hundred meters (one

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<sup>328</sup>William R. O’Neill, “African Moral Theology,” *Theological Studies* (March 2001); quoted in Ayub, 7.

<sup>329</sup>Douw; quoted in Ayub, 5-6.

<sup>330</sup>Arnie Coleman, Karen Coleman, and Brad Koenig, “Grammar Sketch of Esimbi,” Manuscript, 2003, 1.

thousand to two thousand feet), with mountains and forests. Hundreds of Esimbi speakers live in other parts of Cameroon as well. ... The Esimbi are primarily farmers who practice slash and burn agriculture with hand tools. They are known for their cash crop of groundnuts (peanuts). They also grow corn, cocoyams, yams, cassava (manioc), egusi (melon/seeds), beans, greens, bananas, plantains, sugar cane, pineapples, and palm trees for oil and wine. The people raise a small number of chickens, goats and pigs, and men hunt small wild animals. There is no use made of larger animals for transport or farming. The area has been largely isolated from outside development, as there are no navigable rivers and only one unpaved road, which extends from Benakuma to Baworo at the border [of Nigeria] and is not generally accessible by vehicle during rainy season from March through October.

The people live in compounds of extended family groups. Each village has a chief and quarter heads who serve as leaders in the community. These leaders, along with the other male elders of the village, form a traditional council that makes decisions for the community as a whole, settling land disputes, for example. The area has been influenced by other organized religions for over 35 years, and the main denominations operating among the Esimbi are Baptist, Full Gospel, Presbyterian and Catholic. Polygamy is common, but this practice has decreased with the growth of the churches.<sup>331</sup>

Ihims, a former Principal of Government High School Mbengwi and former Parliamentarian of Menchum Valley Sub-Division, also wrote the following about his people, the Esimbi:

The traditional religion of the people ... is based on Ancestral Worship. This refers to the worship of one's ancestors who lived and died long ago and are believed to be now living in the world beyond and are also believed to possess the powers of determining the destinies of their descendants who are still living. In light of this, all prayers for their health, success and protection must be directed to their dead parents, who alone can bless or curse their living descendants when and where deemed necessary. ... Misfortune or sicknesses were more often than not attributed to failure on the part of the victim to pay attention to rites when and wherever deemed necessary by tradition.<sup>332</sup>

Beliefs in taboo and witchcraft help in some measure to make intelligible, and therefore bearable, the recurrent threats of hunger, disease and a fearful incidence of infant mortality.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup>Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>332</sup>Ihims, 22, 24.

<sup>333</sup>Richard Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 101.

The culture of the Esimbi appears to be based upon shame. Those who do not conform to the Esimbi ATR are often shamed into conforming if they do not have strong Christian convictions. There is a high value place on deception. People in the general population who are not mature Christians admire those who are cunning, crafty, and who successfully deceive certain other people. When showing them the Jesus Film (by Campus Crusade for Christ), it was not unusual to hear the non-Christians cheer Judas who deceived Christ by betraying him to the soldiers with a kiss.<sup>334</sup>

### **Literature on thinking from God’s perspective**

God is serious about everyone being careful about what and how they think.<sup>335</sup> Distorted thinking can result from self-deception: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9). This may or may not be due to ignorance or an inadequate understanding of reality, but it is a choice one makes regardless of the motivation (whether pleasure, pain or fear) since no else can legitimately be blamed for our choices.

One very explicit passage states:

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (Heb. 4:12, NASB; cf. also Eccles. 12:14; Rom. 14:12)

Simeon prophesied that when Jesus grew up he would reveal the thoughts of many hearts (Luke 2:33). The reason God is so concerned about how and what we think is because he knows that we naturally do not think properly about reality as he does: “The LORD knows the thoughts

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<sup>334</sup>Personal observations verified by former Esimbi missionaries.

<sup>330</sup>Cf. Ps. 10:4; 33:1; 139:2-4; Prov. 12:1; Isa. 55:7-9 (vs. Gen. 6:5); Micah 4:12; Matt. 15:19; Phil. 2:12-15; 1 Thess. 5:21-22.

of man; he knows that they are futile,” (Ps. 94:11). It is only as we allow our minds to be renewed that we can begin to conform to the attitude and thinking of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 2:1-5)

Jesus either implied or directly stated one way or another to those he confronted that their vision was clouded or veiled, they were not sufficiently aware of reality, their thinking was faulty or distorted—all of which caused them to come to erroneous conclusions. Sometimes he did so by use of rhetorical questions because many may have recognized the problem and realized that there was no need for him to explicitly say anything about it. In a few of the situations Jesus not only addressed the originally presented type of distorted thinking, but other related ones as well in the process of his discourse.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus was (and still is) concerned about what people think. The common probing questions he asked were:

1. “What do you think?” This word “δοκέω (*aor.* ἔδοξα) *trans.* think, suppose, consider, imagine; *intrans.* seem; be recognized, have a reputation” is best translated as: “What seems right?”<sup>336</sup> It is the impersonal form which may mean: “to hold an opinion based upon appearances which may be significantly different from reality—‘to seem, to appear, to assume, to think.’”<sup>337</sup> Thus, Jesus is encouraging everyone to seriously evaluate whether or not their personal view of reality is accurate. (Matt. 17:25; 18:12; 21:28; 22:42).
2. “Do you think?” The same word used in this way regards “something as presumably true, but without particular certainty—‘to suppose, to presume, to assume, to imagine, to believe, to think.’”<sup>338</sup> (Matt. 26:53; Luke 10:36; 13:4)

And the statements he often made using a form of the same Greek word were:

1. “Do not think ...” (Matt. 3:9; 5:17; John 5:45).

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<sup>336</sup>Barclay M. Newman Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (United Bible Societies, 1971).

<sup>337</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains* (United Bible Societies, 1988).

<sup>338</sup>*Ibid.*

2. "... you (or they, or they will) think ..." (John 5:39; Matt. 6:7; and John 16:2 respectively).

In each of the above cases, the meaning could be "suppose, consider, think" or perhaps "it appears or seems to be."<sup>339</sup> He was not asking for his own information because he knew very well their thoughts and motives as well as their feelings and passions (John 2:24, 25). The intent was to hold people accountable for their thinking by exposing their worldview and their thinking process to themselves, to those nearby, and to future listeners and readers as a means to encourage everyone to understand things from God's perspective rather than from their own narrow, biased, preferred personal, traditional, or corporate view. "By asking them to reflect on what they were feeling, doing, thinking and desiring at a given moment, Jesus helped them discover how inadequate they were to govern their lives without his help."<sup>340</sup> Jesus was especially concerned about the thinking of those who truly wanted to know and serve him: "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent" (Rev. 3:19). Apart from God's perspective, all other perspectives are distorted. Those who are wise attempt to understand things from God's perspective, but even their best attempts are mere approximations.

Our best theories and guesses in every field of endeavor are often shown later to be erroneous by newly discovered information or insight. Take dispensationalism, for example. There have been many theories strongly preached from many pulpits for many years by many very godly biblical scholars, but some in very recent years have come to view them all as inadequate and have proposed a newer and perhaps a more comprehensive one called "progressive dispensationalism." For his own reasons, God has chosen not to reveal everything

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<sup>339</sup>*BibleWorks*, version 5.0 [CD-ROM].

<sup>340</sup>Huggins, 151.

to us that we would like to know (Deut. 29:29), but he has revealed to us “everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3).

### **Exegetical studies of the Gospel of Luke**

Abogunrin writes that the Gospel of Luke “has been described as the loveliest book in the world and the best life of Jesus ever written. ... Luke ... was more interested in conveying religious and theological truth than he was in writing history. ... However ... [he] was a meticulous historian. ... The Gospel of Luke is sometimes called the ‘Gospel of the underdog.’”<sup>341</sup>

Several major English commentaries have been done in the last half century on the Gospel of Luke (Arndt, 1956; Bock, 1996; Caird, 1963; Ellis, 1974; Evans, 1990; Fitzmyer, 1979; Gooding, 1987; Green, 1997; Hendriksen, 1978; Liefeld, 1984; Nolland, 1989, 1993; Schwiezer, 1984; Stein, 1992), but none have adequately focused explicitly on the topic of Jesus confronting different types of distorted thinking of anyone.

Bock, though, had discussed Christ’s confrontation of wrong thinking in general more than others. An excerpt from his commentary will serve as a listing of the twenty-seven possible passages that could be analyzed for this topic:

the opponents who are the biggest obstacles to the community [Christ strove to establish by training disciples] are the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees—that is, the religious leaders of Judaism. Their opposition is virtually constant once Jesus claims to have authority to forgive sin and challenges Sabbath tradition (Luke 5:24; 6:1-11). The roots of this rejection go back to their refusal to respond to John the Baptist (Luke 7:29-30; 20:1-8). At various meals they are warned (Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-52; 14:1-24). The leaders are at the center of Jesus’ condemnation in the journey section, as well as in Jerusalem (Luke 11:37-52; 12:1; 14:1-4; 15:1-2; 16:14-15; 19:45-47; 20:45-47) ... There are, however, [two] exceptions—such as Jairus (Luke 8:41) and Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50-53) [where the Sadducees are confronted but Pharisees and scribes are not]. But it is mostly the leadership who oppose Jesus and plot his demise (Luke 6:11; 11:53-54; 20:19; 22:3-6, 52-53; 23:3-5)... Jesus [also]

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<sup>341</sup>Abogunrin, 27-8, 40.

offers many warnings to the [crowd whose response is “superficial and sometimes fickle”] in Luke 12:49-14:24. He rebukes “this generation” (Luke 11:29-32), he condemns various cities of the nation (Luke 10:13-16), and he tells a few parables about the fault of the nation (Luke 13:6-9; 20:9-19).<sup>342</sup>

Using a quotation from Schwiezer, Bock indicates how crucial it is for a person to be made aware of his or her distorted thinking:

A salvation that does not reveal and thereby change what stands in its way would not be real salvation ... That God opened someone’s eyes to that which is distorted in such a way that the person is re-formed, not simply shattered, is a demonstration of the Living God.<sup>343</sup>

Another indication of Jesus’ concern for our thinking was his twelve uses of the Greek word “δεῖ” in the book of Luke alone (2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 12:12; 13:16, 33; 17:25; 19:5; 21:9; 22:37; 24:7, 44). Used 101 times throughout the New Testament, it has been translated as “it is necessary,” “there is need of,” “it behooves” or “it is right and proper.” This implies that any other opinion or thought contrary to these which he was declaring would be distorted thinking. There is a purpose and design by God for what has been fulfilled and for what is yet to be fulfilled.<sup>344</sup> Much research has been done on distorted thinking, but most of it ignored the Bible.

Jesus was alert to opportunities for enabling those who have a desire to know the truth to improve their understanding and perspective. He made it clear that there was no excuse for any type of distorted thinking. The scriptures he quoted and the stories he told contained sufficient information to enable us to be liberated from such thinking as we rely more fully on him. He also warned us of those who seek to distort our thinking for their own gain (Luke 12:15; 20:46-47; 21:8, 36).

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<sup>342</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 2 vols., of *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 38.

<sup>343</sup>E. Schwiezer, *The Good News according to Luke*, trans. D. E. Green (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1984), 23; quoted in Bock, 93.

<sup>344</sup>Bock, 29.