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A photograph of an astronaut in a white spacesuit standing on the lunar surface. To the right is the Apollo Lunar Module (LM) with its gold thermal blankets and a large parabolic antenna. An American flag is planted in the ground. The background shows the dark sky and the grey, cratered surface of the moon.

CHRISTIANS and SCIENCE

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Editorial

I remember it quite well. It was in the year 1969 and I was in my first year of high school. We all listened to the radio to hear the news about the first men to land on the moon and to hear that unforgettable statement by astronaut Neil Armstrong as he stepped onto the moon's surface: "That's one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind".

That event was 53 years ago. As a result of that first lunar landing, there have been others that have fared as well with further exploration. Then came the age of the space shuttle, and now a manned space station orbits above the earth supplying all sorts of scientific data to NASA for their interpretation.

One could argue that these are monumentally significant achievements, especially considering that some forty or so years before the successful moon landing, it was doubtful that such a thing could be achieved.

However, none of those events nor any of the current space odysseys would be able to take place without understanding the laws of the cosmos – laws that govern gravity and flight, kinetics and speed, weightlessness, electronics and transmission etc. Many wonderful technological advances have been made since the early days of space exploration and as a result of it. There have been advances in the realms of medicine, telecommunications and the mobile phone you have in your pocket, food production, computer technology and so much more. And for all of these things a proper application of science has been the key, and Christians have been an intrinsic part of that pathway to discovering new things, because they understood their science in connection with a biblical world view and an Almighty Creator.

Christian scientists understood the "laws of the cosmos" were there from the beginning of creation, in fact they were built into it. As you consider the universe, you cannot just look at it as a massive space full of stars and galaxies with no value and having no purpose. They were created for a purpose. In fact, all the planets in our solar system have an effect on one another, they are part of a system which benefits the unique little blue planet called Earth! Everything is uniquely placed, not by accident, but by design.

Just a few months ago, the James Webb Space Telescope was sent into space so that scientists could observe more of the universe than ever before. A spokesman from the *European Space Agency* commented "We've really changed the understanding of our universe". Sadly, that understanding is without a recognition of the God Who created that universe, and that will sadly result in more faulty speculation about the origin of the universe and a denial of its Creator.

The point is, good science recognises and works within the dominion of our Creator and interprets accordingly.

Thank you to our contributors who all have degrees in science and write from a biblical and scientific perspective. *S.D.G.*

Featured in this issue:

Mr Reuben van Ameyde considers science and its liability to corruption.

Mr Leo Feitje writes about some famous Christian pioneers in science.

Mr Bruce Hoyt asks the question "what is science?"

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand unless they expound the biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

NB: In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

REUBEN VAN AMEYDE

A Christian perspective on Science:

Why science is good but liable to human corruption

Science is a beautiful subject and an inherently good pursuit. Observing and studying creation ought to point us to the Creator and illicit a response of humility and worship of God. Unfortunately, science can be twisted by the human heart into something self-promoting and God-denying.

The benefit of science

God created us with inquiring minds and set us in a world full of beauty to appreciate and observe. By admiring and appreciating God's creation we are helped to admire and appreciate God. By observing and learning about His creation we can learn about God's character and admire Him all the more as the Creator.

God reveals himself to us by His word. We have His word written down in the Bible but we also have his word of creation. Since God spoke the world into existence, we see the effects of his word all around us. In Psalm 19:1-2, David writes that the beauty of the sky speaks volumes about God. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." David appreciates the aesthetics of the heavens, but he also notes the glory of the sun in

verse 6 and its power to give off heat. "It's rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat." Both the beauty and the power of what David observes in the sky give him reason to praise God.

While our modern conception of the scientific method wasn't articulated until much more recently (see Rev. Bruce Hoyt's article for more on this), there are a few examples in Scripture where we see the observation and experimentation required for science. In the story of Solomon, we can infer that understanding of the natural world is one of the fruits of the wisdom given to him by God. In addition to the 3000 proverbs and 1,005 songs attributed to him, we read that, "He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish" (1 Kings 4:29-34).

Stopping to notice the world around should also have the effect of keeping us in our place before a mighty God. In Psalm 8:3-4 we read, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that

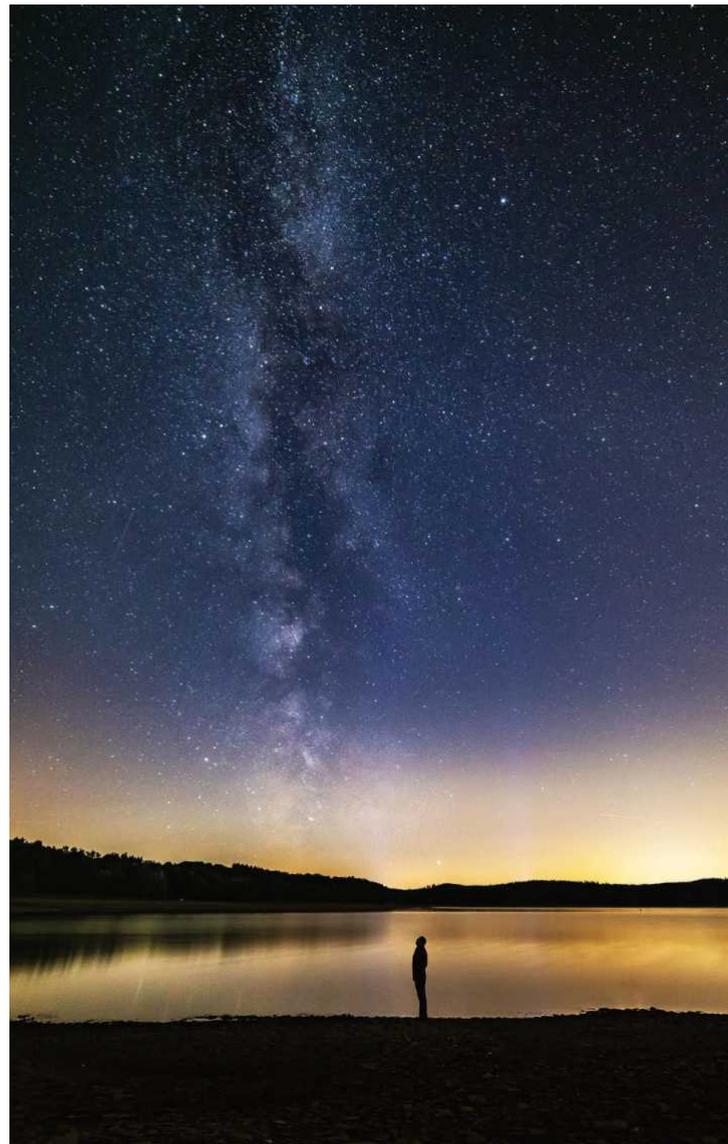


Photo by Evgeni on Pixabay

Greed has similar truth-distorting effects. Commercial incentives can often create biased outcomes in science.

you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" In the book of Job, (chapters 38-41) God interrogates Job by asking him if he can tell God about the mysteries of how the world was made and how it works. The point being that Job, and we, as finite creatures can only scratch the surface in our understanding of what God has made and therefore ought to humble ourselves before Him. From these passages we see that the Bible places value on understanding what God has made insofar as it points us to God's greatness and our smallness.

By studying the physical world, we will also be better equipped to fill the earth and subdue it according to God's command in Genesis 1 and to push back against the effects of sin on creation. It wasn't long before Adam's descendants learnt about animal husbandry, plant husbandry, metal working, and how to make musical instruments and perform with them (Genesis 4). All of these activities depend on a certain level of understanding of God's creation and how it works in order to succeed in them.

Fast forward to today and we are all beneficiaries of the technological applications of science. We don't need to understand the science behind antibiotics in order to benefit

from them when we have an infection, for example, but careful observation and experimentation was required in order to make the discovery in the first place. Louis Pasteur and others in the 19th century learnt that infectious diseases are caused by pathogenic microorganisms, which helped pave the way for modern medicine and the widespread adoption of improved hygiene (see Leo Fietje's article for more about Pasteur).

The corruption of science

Despite the intrinsic value of scientific enquiry, it is no less subject to error and corruption than any other human endeavour. Fallen human beings corrupt the scientific process by our idolatry, our pride, and our greed.

The desire to explain how the world works and how it came to be without the need for a creator God is a form of idolatry that corrupts science. At its heart is the same quest for autonomy from God that tripped up Adam and Eve. Some would say that rejecting God and religion has allowed science to push forward unhindered, however, this could not be further from the truth. It is precisely the acceptance of a creator God that unleashed much scientific discovery in the last three



Photo by nattan23 on Pixabay

centuries. Why would you expect to find laws that govern the natural world unless you believe in someone who gave the laws in the first place? If the events of the world are determined by petty gods or by pure time and chance, then how could we expect the natural world to behave with the regularity needed in order to study it usefully? Why should the same experiment that one scientist performs today have the same repeatable outcome tomorrow?² The lack of convincing answers to such questions reveals the inconsistency of science done without reference to God.

Pride is another corrupting influence on science in the academic world. Things quickly go astray when the desire for recognition and prestige trump the desire to discover the truth. Some scientific results, while they may add something to the body of knowledge on a subject, aren't particularly noteworthy. These results may not be included in prestigious journals, or win the author a Nobel Prize. Pride can lead to the fudging of results in research, so that the outcome will be a more significant discovery, rather than an obscure addition to the scientific literature that few ever read. Unfortunately, truth is the casualty when self-exaltation becomes the main goal.

Pride can also get in the way when results undermine previous work that may damage the reputation of the researcher. Along similar lines, we also tend to make our views part of our identity. When we're shown to be wrong about something it hurts our pride. We don't easily change our mind about things we believe, which slows down the discovery and adoption of new knowledge.

Greed has similar truth-distorting effects. Commercial incentives can often create biased outcomes in science. When a business is funding "research" into its own products, wanting to "prove" their efficacy, then the results can be arranged to fit the desired outcome. This happens in the pharmaceutical industry, where the results of drug trials can be skewed so that the alleged benefit of the drug is exaggerated¹.

A lot hangs on the integrity of the scientist. Without integrity, the attitude becomes one that says, "Don't let the truth get in the way of what I want". Whether that's significant findings that earn recognition, lucrative results for oneself or those who butter your bread, the buttressing of egos, strongly held beliefs, or previous work. The pitfalls and temptations are many. A sad outcome of such behaviour is the erosion of trust in science generally. It becomes increasingly difficult for us to filter out the bad science and arrive at the truth on many issues, like pandemics and the efficacy of various measures to combat them,



Photo by guvo59 on Pixabay

health and nutrition, climate change, and other polarising topics.

Herein lies a great opportunity for Christian witness in the field of science; to resist the temptations of idolatry, pride, and greed, by holding firmly to humility and honesty, even when it is costly. Not only is this the right thing to do, in the long run, it will result in much more progress in learning new things. Some of these things may be of much benefit to humanity, as many discoveries in the past have been.

Even though God is largely denied as the central truth from which all truth comes, much science is still carried out. This is the great inconsistency of post-Christian era science, however, God allows science and technology to continue to advance *despite* man's corruption and rejection of Him. We are certainly undeserving beneficiaries of God's grace, who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45).

References

1. Goldacre, Ben (2008). *Bad Science*. Fourth Estate. ISBN 978-0-00-724019-7.
2. Poythress, Verne S. (2006). *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach*. Crossway Books. ISBN 978-1-58134-731-9

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LEO FIETJE

Christians in the Sciences

Earlier this year Prime Minister Ardern delivered the commencement speech at Harvard University and spoke about the challenge of living in an age of disinformation, saying that "... we need to learn to analyse and critique information".

How true, when there is so much debate about just about every topic in the public arena – from the benefits of masks, use of vaccines, climate change, impacts of farming on our environment, to the behaviour of protestors at Parliament and so on.

But how do we analyse and critique information so we may know what to think and believe? Data is coming at us in this age of information overload, through a variety of media, from multiple sources, each with its own slant.

Scientists have a long-established method for analysing and critiquing information referred to as the 'scientific method'. The article by Rev. Bruce Hoyt explains the meaning of this term in greater detail, but I want to highlight one important component, namely the need for objectivity.

Objectivity is sadly missing in much of today's discourse as we're tempted to seek information from sources that reinforce our own views and discount or avoid those that challenge us to look at things from a different perspective.

But the need for objectivity requires a dispassionate consideration of *all* the evidence placed before us. So, no room for using shonky evidence or cherry-picking the bits that fit our predetermined views; and no room for drawing conclusions that don't fit the evidence.

More on this later when I discuss why we need Christian scientists as much today as we have in the past -a quick search of Wikipedia¹ shows us a long history of scientists who acknowledged their Creator while advancing our knowledge of His creation and the well-being of mankind.

Incidentally this same web-site states that a review of Nobel Prizes awarded between 1901 and 2000 reveals that nearly

two thirds of Nobel Prize Laureates identified Christianity in its various forms as their religious preference.

In this article I will briefly describe three scientists who acknowledged God as their Creator and who made a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge benefitting mankind. All three challenged existing views, sometimes at considerable personal cost, because they allowed themselves to be led by the evidence rather than attempting to fit the evidence into their existing worldview.

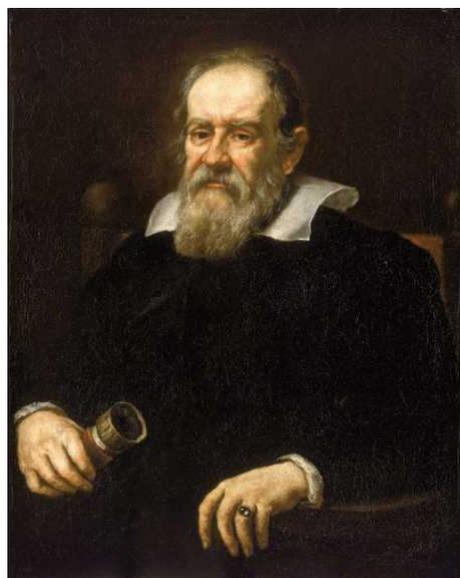
In other words, each one of them held strongly to the view that evidence should be looked at objectively, dispassionately and in its entirety, something we desperately need today not just in the sciences but as we analyse and critique information coming at us daily.

Galileo Galilei

Galileo Galilei was born in 1564 and died 77 years later in 1642. He was an Italian astronomer, physicist and engineer, best known for challenging the prevailing 'wisdom' of the day, that the earth was the centre of the known world and the sun revolved around the earth.

That idea wasn't new. It was first postulated by Nicolaus Copernicus some 50 years earlier, but Copernicus was much more moderate in his claims and did not publish his findings until shortly before his death in 1543. He was therefore a contemporary of both Luther (1483-1546) and Calvin (1509-1564) causing the Dutch historian and theologian Heiko Oberman to write "*The two great turning points of the Reformation age, the Lutheran and the Copernican, seem to have brought mankind nothing but humiliation. First man is robbed of his power over himself, and then he is pushed to the periphery of creation.*"

Galileo made several observations of his own including discovery of the four largest moons of Jupiter which challenged the geocentric model of the universe that had the earth at the



Portrait of Galileo Galilei, 1636, Justus Sustermans

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-14174>

centre and everything else circling around it.

He championed the Copernican (heliocentric) model that has the earth circling around the sun. This attracted strong opposition from church leaders², using Bible passages³ against him, such as Joshua asking the Lord to have the sun and moon stand still so he could continue the battle.

Galileo was made to stand trial before the Roman Inquisition in 1633 and found “vehemently suspect of heresy”, following which he was required to recant his views and spend the remaining nine years of his life under house arrest.

Through the work of Copernicus and Galileo we have a new appreciation of what the Psalmist means when he states⁴: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands*”.

Louis Pasteur

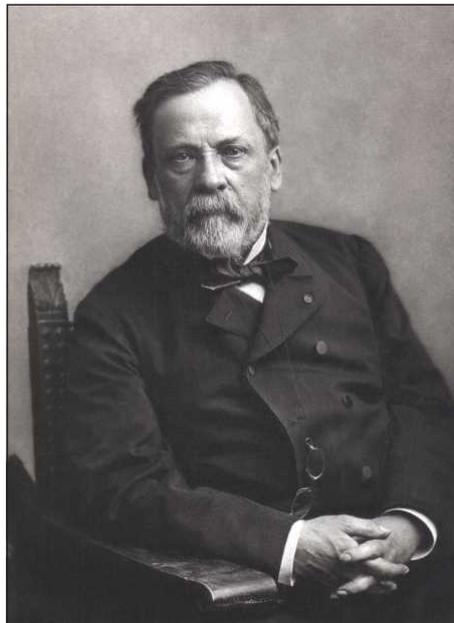
Louis Pasteur was born in 1822 and died 72 years later in 1895. He was a French chemist and microbiologist credited with debunking the theory of spontaneous generation⁵ and saving millions of lives through the development of vaccines, particularly for anthrax and rabies.

Pasteur’s findings that heat could kill or deactivate unwanted organisms is widely used today in the dairy and food processing industries – the process referred to as “pasteurisation” is named after him. Similarly, the sterilisation of medical instruments was pioneered by Pasteur and today is standard practice by every medical professional.

Pasteur suffered considerable personal tragedy with three of his five children dying before adulthood, two of them from typhoid for which a vaccine wasn’t developed until a year after his death.

Pasteur is credited with having a strong Christian faith and the following statement is attributed to him⁶.

“Posterity will one day laugh at the foolishness of modern materialistic philosophers. The more I study nature, the



Louis Pasteur, photo by Paul Nadar
<https://commons.wikimedia.org>

more I stand amazed at the work of the Creator. I pray while I am engaged at my work in the laboratory.”

Pasteur’s work in developing vaccines and the process of pasteurisation continues to benefit humanity to this day.

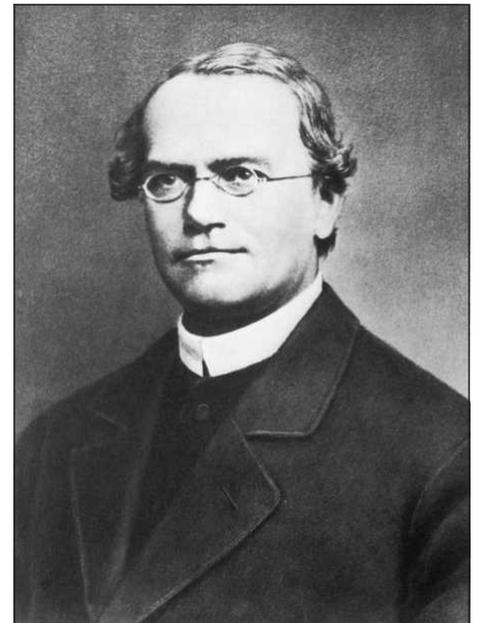
Gregor Mendel

Year 11 students studying biology will be very familiar with the Punnett square used to predict the ratio of dominant and recessive genes in the offspring of plants and animals. Punnett squares are a visual representation of Mendelian inheritance, named after Gregor Mendel, also known as the father of modern genetics.

Mendel was born the same year as Louis Pasteur (1822) but died earlier in 1884 at the age of 61. He was born into a German-speaking farming family in what is now known as the Czech Republic. His academic abilities were recognised by the local priest who persuaded his parents to send him away to be educated.

He excelled at his studies but struggled because his parents couldn’t afford to pay the fees, so he had to tutor other students to make ends meet. At University he excelled in physics and mathematics. Whilst he is best known for his work as a biologist, he was also a talented mathematician and meteorologist and most of his published papers are about meteorology.

Mendel became a monk and had access to an area of land where he could study the transmission of hereditary characteristics in the progeny of hybrids. It was noted that



Gregor Mendel
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

after initial “hybrid vigour”, progeny tended to lose that vigour and revert back to their originating species.

This is something every plant and animal breeder knows well. They also know that through careful selection it’s possible to end up with new varieties, something that concerned the monastery’s Abbott when thinking about future profits from the wool of its Merino sheep faced with competition from Australia.

The prevailing thinking about inheritance in Mendel’s time was that characteristics such as height, hair colour, eye colour etc. were averaged when passed from parents to offspring. What Mendel showed is that characteristics could be dominant or recessive and their ratio in subsequent offspring could be predicted very precisely. Some characteristics could also be passed on without them being physically apparent.

Mendel’s work received very little recognition when first published. It wasn’t till around the turn of the century, 35 years after his death that the significance of his work was posthumously recognised for its value.

Conclusion

So, what can we learn from these three examples? Is there anything that we can apply to help us analyse and critique information in this age of disinformation? And why do we need more Christians in the sciences today?

All three scientists acknowledged their

Creator so they weren't worried about finding any evidence that might conflict with His Word. Their discoveries were driven by real evidence which they observed first-hand. They formed conclusions consistent with the evidence and if the evidence challenged prevailing wisdom, so be it.

So, when we are called to "analyse and critique" information we need to think about what sources we rely on. Most of us won't be in a position to observe events happening around us first-hand but we should be very careful when relying on others to interpret those events for us. Primary sources are often available but it takes time and energy to locate and then to sift through them.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to interpret events in a truly objective way and this should not surprise us –we live in a fallen world and we have fallen minds. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

When we look down the same microscope as an atheist, we interpret what we see very differently. We see something God made. The atheist sees the product of random chance events, over a very long period, with no direction and no purpose. And depending on what they see they may have to re-assess their theory of origins. Pasteur's

debunking of the theory of spontaneous generation, coming at the same time as Darwin published his book "On the Origin of Species", required a complete re-think on the origins of life by those who didn't believe in a Creator. A few weeks ago, the James Webb space telescope sent back pictures that had scientists baffled because they showed order where chaos was expected.

Science is often regarded as being in tension with the Bible and the story of what happened to Galileo is often quoted as an example in support. But as Christians we have nothing to fear from new discoveries. We don't need to fit every new piece of evidence into a preconceived and God-less view of our origins. We know the Creator who made, owns and sustains His creation - "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it..."⁷ and "... in Him all things hold together..."⁸.

References

- 1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christians_in_science_and_technology accessed 25 August 2022
- 2 Incidentally he also received strong opposition from fellow astronomers.
- 3 Joshua 10:12ff
- 4 Psalm 19:1
- 5 The theory that life can come from non-life.
- 6 Literary Digest 18 October 1902.
- 7 Psalm 24:1

8 Colossians 1:17

I recently retired from 35 years with Environment Canterbury during which time my main task was reviewing and auditing environmental impact statements. That task gave me a strong interest in both professional ethics and use of the scientific method, with many lessons learned which I enjoyed sharing with students at nearby Lincoln University as an Adjunct Lecturer. I graduated from Lincoln University with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science in 1978 and later completed a Masters in Civil Engineering at Canterbury University, both of which I found immensely helpful in applying the principles of good science to real-world challenges. My wife Julie and I worship at the Reformed Church of Bishopdale where I have recently finished a term as elder.

Christians and science

BRUCE HOYT

Trust the Science?

*Magna opera
Domini exquisita in
omnes voluntates
ejus.*

Psalm 111:2 – Carved on the great oak doors to the Cavendish Physics Laboratory at the wish of Sir James Clerk Maxwell.

"Trust the science" was repeated frequently in the media and by government officials during the COVID-19 period. We continue to hear it in connection with evolution, climate change, and sexual identity. What is meant? It seems to mean something like the following: "Scientists have done their research, analysed statistical data, verified their results and have concluded ... They are the experts, so we should trust their conclusions and follow their advice." But having read

media reports of scientific discoveries and policy decisions made by governments, I have come to a different conclusion about the meaning of "trust the science." I think it means: "Scientists we have selected have drawn conclusions we agree with, so they should be followed." 'We' refers to the people in power who hold the microphone. Thus "trust the science" is used as a political weapon.

However, this article is intended to be about science not politics. "Trust the

science” raises many questions that go far beyond the issues and politics surrounding its use. What is science? Should we trust it? Is there such a thing as “settled science”? Are differences among scientists fairly represented and carefully considered in science media reports? Are the philosophic assumptions and worldview perspectives of scientists recognised? Are there vested interests behind “the science” we are called to trust? Where does the research money come from, and how has that affected the research and the gathering and interpretation of the data?

How many books would be needed to address all these questions? Very many! And many are available. My purpose in this article is limited. I will scratch the surface of science for the readers of *Faith in Focus* to give a little insight on science that may guide you as a Christian when you read science articles making bold claims that do not seem to accord with what God says in his word.

What is science?

When we are called to “trust the science,” we need to know what it is that we are called to trust.

Definition: Science is what scientists do.

‘What?!’ you say. ‘That’s not very helpful.’ True, but it is very difficult to define science in a non-self-referential manner. To discover this you only have to read a few definitions. They are all idealistic and either too general or too restrictive.

For example, the British Science Council gives this definition: “Science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence.”¹ That definition includes history, investigative journalism, linguistics and theology! Not what we usually mean by science.

Another example is given by the online Cambridge Dictionary: “(knowledge from) the careful study of the structure and behaviour of the physical world, especially by watching, measuring, and doing experiments, and the development of

theories to describe the results of these activities.”² This definition excludes theoretical cosmology, mathematics, and theoretical computer science as well as all the social sciences. Many scientists would not be satisfied with this definition. Furthermore, the development of theories to describe the results of watching, measuring and doing experiments is idealistic and does not reflect the way science is actually done. Realistically a conceptual theory comes first and provides the motivation to do the hard work of watching, measuring and experimenting to provide evidence for the theory.

Perhaps “science is what scientists do” is about as good a definition as we can get.

What do scientists do?

If science is what scientists do then we must ask: what do they do? When we think of scientists, we tend to think of the stereotypes: safety glasses, a white lab coat, peering into a microscope, test tubes and electronic devices all around. That laboratory setting does describe the way much of the data gathering and research is done in, for example: chemistry, biology, genetics, materials science, etc. But many fields of science do not fit this stereotype, for example: astronomy, geology, archaeology, palaeontology, the social sciences, and the formal sciences³ like theoretical computer science, mathematics, and logic.

The following description of what scientists do is given in the British Science Council site referenced above.

Scientific methodology (as an ideal) includes the following:

- Objective observation: Measurement and data (possibly although not necessarily using mathematics as a tool)
- Evidence
- Experiment and/or observation as benchmarks for testing hypotheses
- Induction: reasoning to establish general rules or conclusions drawn from facts or examples
- Repetition
- Critical analysis

- Verification and testing: critical exposure to scrutiny, peer review and assessment

The above methods used by scientists fit the experimental sciences but the fields of cosmology, palaeontology, origin of life research, mathematics and theoretical computer science use only some of the above methods. So we see that there is considerable difficulty even when we try to answer the question, “What do scientists do?” The answer varies greatly depending on the specific scientific discipline.

To give a general answer: scientists investigate some aspect of the world by asking questions and seeking to find answers. They gather and analyse data, propose explanations (theories) and seek supporting evidence for them. *And they do all this from the perspective of their worldview.* In this process most scientists would publicly claim they go where the evidence leads. But if the evidence appears to undermine their theory or their worldview, their response will depend on several factors: the strength of their commitment to their theory or worldview, the social pressure to conform, their standing in the scientific community, the potential for future grants, and their integrity.

The scientist’s viewpoint

Some scientists (those with a materialist worldview) restrict science not only to the *investigation* of the material (and social) world but they also insist that scientific *explanations* must be materialist in nature (i.e., limited to matter and energy). From the materialist perspective any non-materialist explanation of phenomena is religious dogma or mysticism, not science. The famous Harvard biologist Richard Lewontin said, “we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism ... we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations ... for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door.”⁴ Why does Lewontin forbid any divine

1 <https://sciencecouncil.org/about-science/our-definition-of-science/>

2 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/science>

3 I am aware that the formal sciences, especially mathematics and logic, are often not considered science since they do not involve the study of the physical world. Mathematics is usually considered just a tool used by scientists. But anyone who has studied advanced mathematics and is aware of its historical development, will know that a great deal of experimentation, analysis and verification is required in the development of mathematics. I regard the formal sciences as legitimate science.

4 Cited by Neil Thomas in *Taking Leave of Darwin*, p. 97.



Photo by WikimAGES on Pixabay

explanation? Has he studied and found compelling evidence for that claim? No, he has a prior commitment to this anti-religious dogma which provides the basis for formulating his theories and his selection of data. His prior commitment also provides the interpretive grid for analysing the data which support his theories. Lewontin does his science the way any scientist must; he operates on the basis of his own worldview in the same way that non-materialist scientists and Christian scientists operate. All have a prior commitment to what they understand as reality and truth.

However, there is a fatal flaw in the materialist's worldview as C. S. Lewis⁵ and more recently John Lennox⁶ have made clear. Materialist reasoning is self-defeating. Why? Because reason and beliefs are non-material. The materialist *believes* that reality consists only of matter and energy and he *reasons* on that basis. But that commitment undermines both the materialist's beliefs and his reasoning because neither beliefs nor reasoning consist in matter or energy! From the materialist viewpoint beliefs and reasoning are unreal. One wonders why a materialist argues so strongly for his unreal belief and reasoning!

There is another flaw in materialist reductionism. It eliminates, in principle, certain very important sciences, archaeology and forensic science, both of which seek evidence of intelligent purpose and design (which are non-material) in the phenomena they observe and analyse.

Only if science is done without the materialist's reductionism can evidence that points to non-material causes be accepted. This is increasingly being acknowledged by many scientists and philosophers of science.⁷ Christians in science must certainly reject materialist reductionism because they know

5 "The Naturalists have been engaged in thinking about Nature. They have not attended to the fact that they were thinking. The moment one attends to this it is obvious that one's own thinking cannot be merely a natural event, and therefore something other than Nature exists." C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (Touchstone, 1996), p. 23.

6 John Lennox, *Can Science Explain Everything?* (The Good Book Company, 2019), p. 36.

7 For example, Thomas Nagel, who is not a theist, says in the introduction to his book, *Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*: "If contemporary research in molecular biology leaves open the possibility of legitimate doubts about a fully mechanistic account of the origin and evolution of life, dependent only on the laws of chemistry and physics, this can ... suggest that principles of a different kind are also at work in the history of nature, principles of the growth of order that are in their logical form teleological rather than mechanistic."

8 Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15,19-20; Job 28:25-27; Psalm 8:5-8; 24:1-2; 74:16-17.

9 "Extensive historical research has documented the fact that the scientific investigation of human origins is highly subjective – and bias, fraud, and even forgery are common." [Judson, H.F., *The Great Betrayal: Fraud in Science*, Harcourt, New York, pp. 82–83, 2004.] "Most identified cases of modern-day fraud are in the life sciences. In the biomedical field alone, 127 new misconduct cases were lodged with the Office of Research Integrity in 2001 alone. This was the third consecutive rise in the number of cases since 1998. This concern is not of mere academic interest, but also profoundly affects human health and life." [Jerry Bergman, *Evolution's Blunders, Frauds and Forgeries: How Efforts to Prove Darwinism Have Led to Many Blunders, Frauds and Outright Forgeries*, Creation Book Publishers, Oct. 2017.]

and trust God as the creator and sustainer of all things who has established order in the creation which humans, made in his image, have been given the capacity to study and explain.⁸

Science is done by humans

From a Christian perspective there are two important truths to remember when evaluating the claims of scientists.

First, science is done by humans. Being human means the scientist's observations, his collection of data, his analysis and interpretation of the data, and the reasoning he uses in the process are all limited and to some degree subjective. Scientists cannot observe everything. They select data that they deem relevant and significant. They analyse and interpret the selected data from their limited understanding of reality. Their reasoning is to some degree subjective not only because their knowledge is finite but because all human reasoning is affected by personal experience, feelings, fears, and hopes.

Second, science is done by sinful humans. So we should not be surprised to discover that scientists often have sinful motives and act in sinful ways while doing their science. A little reading about the work of scientists past and present will turn up many examples of reported experiments that don't exist, data manipulation, and skewed statistical analysis.⁹ For that reason verification by other scientists, critique and peer review of articles to be published, as well as outside, independent assessments are all important to maintain integrity in science. But sadly peer review and assessment are sometimes done "in house," so the pressure of money to obtain future grants and the pressure to maintain the accepted scientific models trump independent scrutiny and assessment.¹⁰ As

a result, serious critique from those with no vested interests rarely happens and, when it does, it is often unreported because it contradicts or questions the accepted scientific model.

The fact that science is done by sinful humans should caution us against uncritically "trusting the science." Of course, that kind of caution is necessary not only in science but in any field of knowledge. All human knowledge, scientific, historical, philosophical, economic, social, and theological is researched and presented by humans. We must always read and listen with our critical faculties fully engaged. One way to do that is to read critiques and viewpoints by those with differing theories on a particular subject. This wisdom is taught us in the book of Proverbs.

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice." Proverbs 12:15

"The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." Proverbs 18:17

However, our caution should not cause us to reject the innumerable discoveries of scientists over the centuries. We not only benefit in this life from their discoveries, but we can appreciate the greater insight they have given us of the glory of God revealed in his creation. If the Psalmist could praise God for his glory revealed in the world which he could see 3000 years ago (cf. Psalm 19:1–6 and Psalm 104), surely we must praise him all the more for his glory that has been revealed through countless scientific discoveries over the past 400 years?¹¹ For Christians who serve God in scientific research, theirs is a worthy calling that enables us to perceive ever more deeply the majesty, wisdom and power of God revealed in creation.

"How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep!" Psalm 92:5

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." Psalm 139:14

"Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them." Psalm 111:2

God's Word provides the worldview for true science

Discovering the wonderful works of God was the motivation for most of the scientists during the 17th and 18th Centuries. This was still true for many scientists during the 19th Century as evidenced by Sir James Clerk Maxwell having Psalm 111:2 carved on the doors to his laboratory in Cambridge.

As historians of science have frequently noted, belief in one God, who created and sustains an ordered universe and who created humans in his image, giving them the mandate to care for it, provided the basis and motivation for the explosion of scientific investigation and discovery during the past 400-plus years. Nancy Pearcey writes:

In recent decades, the positivist¹² view of science has been assailed for both logical difficulties and historical inaccuracies. As a result, science historians have developed a new sensitivity to the role played by extra-scientific factors¹³ in the development of modern science. Historians have broadened their interest beyond the textbook presentation, with its simple chronology of discoveries, ... The new approach more readily recognizes the influence of Christianity on science. Up to the turn of the [20th] century, Christianity was the dominant

10 "One problem is that the journal refereeing system is controlled by a closed, elite group of scientists who often exercise censorship that, at times, can be pernicious to the extreme. The elitism problem in science results in ideas becoming accepted more because of who said them, instead of the merits of what was said. Poor ideas 'get accepted because their proponents are members of the elite' and, as a result, 'good ideas may be ignored because their advocates may have poor standing in the social structure of science.'" [Jerry Bergman, *Evolution's Blunders*; quoting Broad and Wade, *Betrayers of the Truth: Fraud and Deceit in the Halls of Science*, Simon and Schuster, New York, p. 98, 1982.]

11 Consider for example the discoveries of the circulation of blood by William Harvey in 1628; the elliptical orbits of the planets by Johannes Kepler in 1609; Boyle's law of gases in 1662; the calculus by Leibnitz and Newton in the late 17th C.; the archaeological discovery of the Hittite kingdom and Pasteur's developments in pasteurisation and vaccines in the latter half of the 19th C.; Einstein's famous equation $e = mc^2$ and his general and special theories of relativity early in the 20th C.; the structure of DNA by Crick and Watson in 1953; chaos theory by Edward Lorenz and Benoit Mandelbrot in the 1960s; epigenetics in developmental biology in the past 20 years. All of these and thousands of others have benefitted us in countless ways.

12 Accepting as fact only that which is derived by reason and logic from sensory experience.

13 That is factors outside science itself, such as one's worldview.



Photo by congerdesign at Pixabay

intellectual force in most areas of life and culture in the West. Christians were not a marginalized minority; they were the majority. The truth is that we cannot really understand a Newton, a Descartes, or a Cuvier without delving into the religious and philosophical ideas that drove their scientific work.¹⁴

Because these scientists believed that the universe had a consistent underlying order discoverable by humans, they pursued their investigations, dedicating years of arduous research, exploring and describing the workings of God's marvellous creation.

This foundational belief in God as creator and humans as God's image came under attack during the 19th Century, especially in the fields of biology, palaeontology and geology. This perspective was replaced by the belief that the universe can and must be understood and explained in terms of itself, as a closed system operating by physical laws, having always existed, no God needed. In this view the solar system formed itself, earth's environment somehow became suitable for life which spontaneously appeared and developed by physical laws with the help of propitious random occurrences. According to its proponents, this materialist perspective put

science on a secure foundation by eliminating faith and religion from science and by providing, they claimed, an objective foundation for scientific research.

This materialist worldview provides a wonderful and satisfying story for people who hate God! But it has arguably resulted in wasted years of research and millions of dollars on projects that are based on the evidentially empty theories of materialist scientists.¹⁵ Even worse, the materialist worldview has resulted in great evil being perpetrated on large populations: for example, the eugenics programmes of the early 20th Century and the treatment of aboriginal peoples in many countries as sub-human, both of which arose from a materialistic "scientific" worldview.

It is only by acknowledging reality as God has revealed it in his word that science will avoid such waste and such evils. The evils of eugenics, medical experimentation on humans, racism, genocide, enforced population control, were all pursued in the name of science – science that had removed God's word as its foundation. As Jesus said in John 17:17, "Your word is truth." God, by his word, created and defines reality. May that word always be the foundation for all we do in whatever vocation, including science.

Mr Bruce Hoyt, MSc. Is a member of the Dovedale Reformed Church and an emeritus minister.

My interest in science and mathematics and the issues surrounding creation and the flood occurred during my high school years when my father was given the manuscript of The Genesis Flood by Whitcomb and Morris (1961) and asked for his comments. After finishing my Master of Science degree in mathematics in 1971 from the University of South Carolina and later my Master of Divinity degree from the Reformed Theological Seminary in 1978, I continued an amateur interest in science, mathematics, and computers during my years as a pastor. That interest has grown in my retirement years resulting in an expanding library in those fields. I have benefitted especially from the excellent books written by people in the Intelligent Design movement.

14 Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*, "Introduction," Crossway Books, 1994.

15 Think of the millions spent on searching for life on other planets. Think of the man-years devoted to origin-of-life experiments and research. Think of the massive efforts to prop up the decaying Darwinian superstructure.

Death to the Patriarchy?

Complementarity and the scandal of 'Father Rule'

KEVIN DEYOUNG

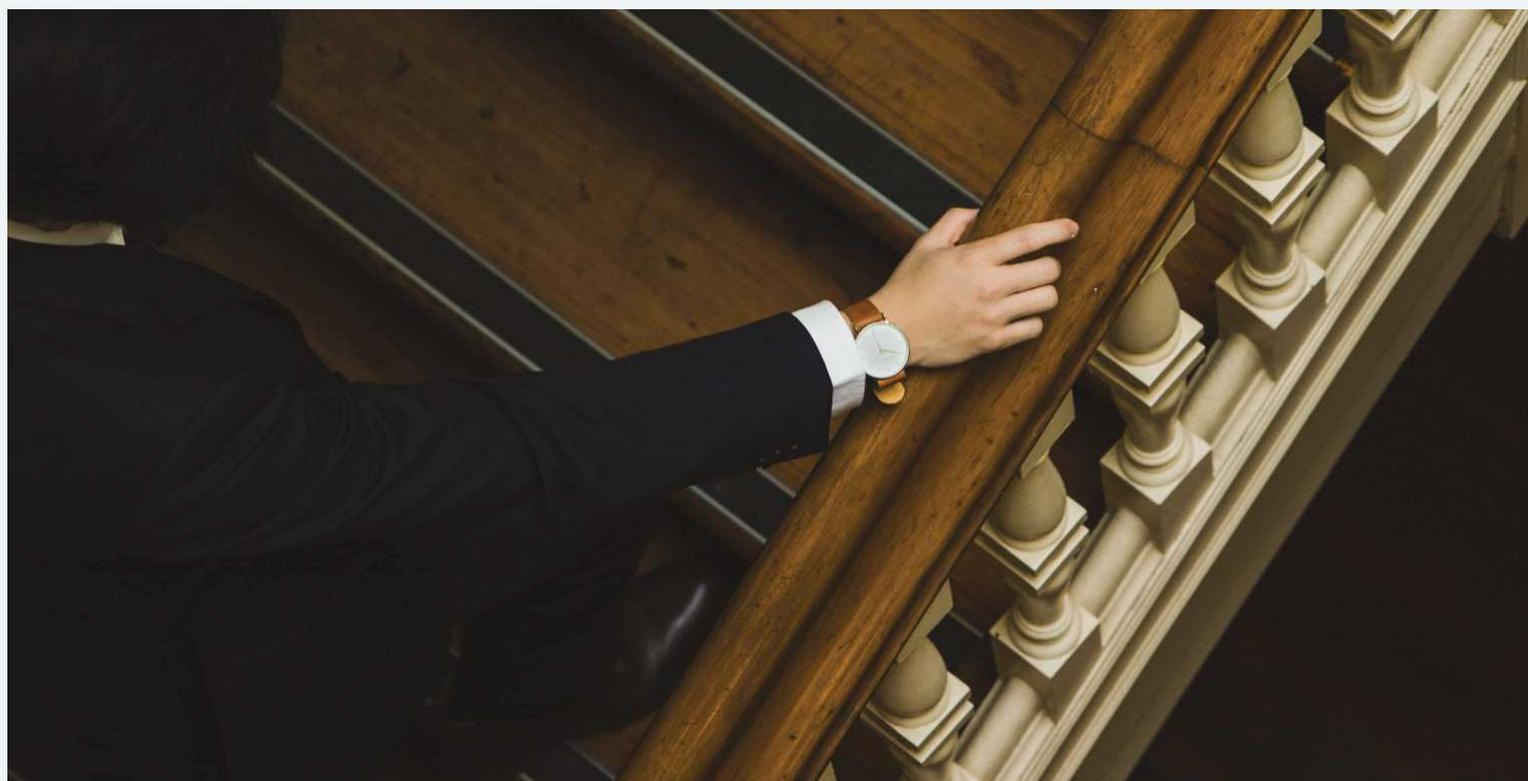


Photo by Hunters Race on Unsplash

What is the difference between patriarchy and complementarity – and which is the better term for capturing the full vision of Christian manhood and womanhood? Most complementarians steadfastly avoid the word *patriarchy*, wanting to distance themselves from any associations with oppression and prejudice. On the other hand, critics of complementarianism are eager to saddle their opponents with the charge of defending patriarchy. The terms often function as a way of communicating, “I’m not *that* kind of conservative Christian” – to which the reply is, “Oh yes, you are!” So what is the most accurate term for those who want to recapture a lost vision of sexual differentiation and order?

Defining, to everyone’s satisfaction, terms like *patriarchy* and *complementarity* is nearly impossible. I’ll do some definitional work in a moment, but I don’t want this article to become a tedious, academic inquiry into the usage and history of these terms. I also don’t want to define the terms so that *complementarity* becomes a convenient gloss for “good male leadership” and *patriarchy* ends up meaning “bad male leadership.” To be sure, that distinction isn’t totally misguided, but if that’s all I said, my argument would be entirely predictable.

And a bit superficial. As I’ll argue in a moment, there is nothing to be gained by Christians reclaiming the term *patriarchy* in itself. In fact, *reclaim* is not even the right

word, because I’m not sure Christians have ever argued for something called “patriarchy.” *Complementarity* is a better, safer term, with fewer negative connotations (though that is quickly changing). I’ve described myself as a complementarian hundreds of times; I’ve never called myself a patriarchalist.

Yet there is something in the broader idea of patriarchy – no matter how sinister the word itself has become – that is worth claiming. If the vision of male-female complementarity is to be more than a seemingly arbitrary commitment to men leading in the home and being pastors in the church, we cannot settle for a proper interpretation of 1 Timothy 2. Of course,

Careful exegesis is absolutely critical. But we need more than the right conclusions. We need to help people see that our exegetical conclusions do not just fit with the best hermeneutical principles; they fit with the way the world is and the way God made men and women.

Complementarity and Patriarchy

The idea of complementarity – that men and women were designed with a special fittedness, each for the other – is not new. The term *complementarianism*, however, is relatively recent. In their seminal 1991 work *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, John Piper and Wayne Grudem deliberately termed their recovery mission “a vision of biblical ‘complementarity’” because they wanted to both correct the “selfish and hurtful practices” of the traditionalist view and avoid the opposite mistakes coming from evangelical feminists (14).

No one committed to intellectual honesty and fairness should treat *traditionalist*, *hierarchicalist*, or *patriarchalist* as synonyms for complementarianism. In coining the term *complementarian*, Piper and Grudem explicitly rejected the first two terms, while the third term (*patriarchalist* or *patriarchy* or *patriarchal*) is never used in a positive sense in the book. “If one word must be used to describe our position,” they wrote, “we prefer the term *complementarian*, since it suggests both equality and beneficial differences between men and women” (14). Thirty years later, this vision of complementarity is still worth carefully defining and gladly defending.

The term *patriarchy* is much harder to define. Strictly speaking, *patriarchy* is simply the Greek word meaning “father rule.” There is nothing in its etymology to make the term an epithet of abuse. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are often called “the patriarchs” (Romans 9:5, for example). The spiritual leader of the Orthodox Church is the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. In a generic sense, every Christian believes in patriarchy because we affirm the rule and authority of God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

Despite these positive associations, as a sociological and historical category, patriarchy is almost always used in a pejorative sense. Here, for example, is the first sentence of the Wikipedia entry on patriarchy.

Patriarchy is an institutionalized social system in which men dominate over others, but can also refer to dominance over women specifically;

it can also extend to a variety of manifestations in which men have social privileges over others to cause exploitation or oppression, such as through male dominance of moral authority and control of property.

In this one (long) sentence, we have a host of pejorative words: *dominate*, *dominance* (2x), *exploitation*, and *oppression*. No one is expected to read this definition and think of patriarchy as something good, or even something that could possibly be good.

In a recent longform article in *The Guardian*, Charlotte Higgins argues that at its simplest, patriarchy “conveys the existence of a societal structure of male supremacy that operates at the expense of women.” Higgins admits the patriarchy is virtually dead as an academic idea – too blunt and monolithic a concept to be useful – but in popular usage the term has experienced an unprecedented revival, one Higgins supports. “Only ‘patriarchy’ seems to capture the peculiar elusiveness of gendered power,” she writes. Higgins’s street-level definition is helpful insofar as it reveals that for most people, including most Christians (I suspect), *patriarchy* is shorthand for all the ways our world promotes male supremacy and encourages female oppression.

If that’s patriarchy, the world can have it. It’s not a term you’ll find in Christian confessional statements from the past. It’s not a term you’ll find employed frequently (or at all) in the tradition of the church as it defends biblical views of the family, the church, and society. As a conservative, Reformed, evangelical Christian, I applaud the vision of “equality with beneficial differences” and stand resolutely opposed to all forms of domination, exploitation, and oppression.

Cost of dismantling Patriarchy

Why not end the article right here? Complementarianism is good; patriarchy is bad. Case closed. Enough said, right?

Not quite. We should be careful not to banish patriarchy to the ash heap of history too quickly. For starters, we should question the notion that patriarchy equals oppression. In his book *Ancestors: The Loving Family in Old Europe*, Steven Ozment argues that family life, even in the patriarchal past, is not wholly different from our own age. Parents loved their children, husbands performed household duties, and most women preferred marriage and homemaking to other arrangements.

History is complex and rarely allows for meta-theories and monocausal explanations. If women had fewer opportunities and rights in the past (almost everyone had fewer opportunities and fewer rights), women also lived enmeshed in stronger communities, and their roles as wife and mother were more highly honored. Accounting for differences in economic prosperity, it is entirely debatable (and, perhaps, ultimately unknowable) whether women are happier in the present than they were in the past. As Ozment puts it, “For every historian who believes that the modern family is a recent, superior evolution, there is another who is ready to expose it as a fallen archetype” (45).

Second, we should question the unstated assumptions that hold together the pejorative understanding of patriarchy. If sexual differentiation, subordination, and role distinctions are *prima facie* evidence of exploitation, then patriarchy, of any sort at any point in history, is going to be undesirable. Writing over forty years ago, Stephen B. Clark noted that feminist social scientists “apply liberally such terms as ‘dominance,’ ‘oppression,’ ‘repression,’ ‘inferiority,’ and ‘subservience’ to men’s and women’s roles.” These terms did not come from dispassionate historical observation. As Clark puts it, “This terminology, based on a political power model of social analysis derived from modern political ideologies, is designed to make all social role differences appear repulsive” (*Man and Woman in Christ*, 475).

The rhetorical deck has been stacked. To defend patriarchy, as presently and popularly understood, is to defend the indefensible. And yet, most complementarians do not realize that in rejecting patriarchy, they have, according to the contemporary rules of the game, rejected the very reality they thought they could reclaim by an appeal to complementarity.

Most importantly, and along the lines of the last point, we should be careful that in dismantling patriarchy we don’t end up kicking out the cultural ladder from underneath us and then hoping that people can reach the right conclusions by jumping to extraordinary heights.

One of my great concerns – which, sadly, seems to be coming more and more true with each passing year – is that complementarianism, for many Christians, amounts to little more than a couple of narrow conclusions about wives submitting to husbands in the home and ordination in the church being reserved for men. If that’s all we have in our vision for men and

“To ignore, minimize, or repudiate the differences between men and women is to reject our creational design.”

women, it's not a vision we will hold on to for long. We need to help church members (especially the younger generations) see that God didn't create the world with one or two arbitrary commands called “complementarianism” to test our obedience in the home and in the church. God created the world with sexual differentiation at the heart of what it means to be human beings made in his image. We cannot understand the created order as we should until we understand that God made us male and female.

Like and unlike Adam

The creation story is so familiar to most of us that we overlook the obvious. God could have created human beings to reproduce on their own. God could have created every subsequent human being out of the ground, just as he created Adam. God could have created a group of male companions to hang out in Adam's man cave so that Adam wouldn't be alone. God could have given Adam a golden retriever or a gaggle of little Adams to keep him company.

But God created Eve. God made someone from Adam to be like Adam, and God made that same someone from Adam to be unlike Adam. According to God's biological design, only Eve (not another Adam) was a suitable helper because only Eve (together with Adam) could obey the creation mandate. That's why she was “a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:18). Only as a complementarian pair could Adam and Eve fill the earth and subdue it. Different languages and cultures and peoples will come later in Genesis – and these differences will be, in part, because of sin

(Genesis 11). But the differences between men and women were God's idea from the beginning. To ignore, minimize, or repudiate the differences between men and women is to reject our creational design and the God who designed it.

At the level of common sense, most people know to be true what social-science research and biology tell us is true: sex differences are real and they matter. There is a reason that humor regarding men and women has often been a staple of comedy – whether in sitcoms, in standup, or in informal conversation. Most people know by intuition and by experience that a host of patterns and stereotypes are generally true of men and women.

In his book *Taking Sex Difference Seriously*, Steven Rhoades argues that traditional patterns of male initiative and female domesticity have been constant throughout history because the most fundamental human passions – sex, nurturing, and aggression – manifest themselves differently in men and women (5). One-day-old female infants, for example, respond more strongly to the sound of a human in distress than one-day-old male infants. Unlike their male counterparts, one-week-old baby girls can distinguish an infant's cry from other noise (25).

According to Leonard Sax, a medical doctor and PhD, no amount of nurture can change the nature of our sexual differentiation. In his book *Why Gender Matters*, he writes that girls can see better, hear better, and smell better than boys. Conversely, boys are hardwired to be more aggressive, to take more risks, and to be drawn to violent stories.

Sax – who is not a Christian (that I can tell) or even particularly conservative when it comes to insisting on traditional moral behavior – criticizes those who think sex differences are simply the result of prejudice. Sax chides gender theorist Judith Butler and her followers for showing no awareness of sex differences in vision, sex differences in hearing, sex differences in risk-taking, or sex differences in sex itself (283).

Moreover, these differences cannot be laid at the feet of environment and social engineering. “The biggest sex differences in expression of genes in the human brain

occurs not in adulthood, nor in puberty, but in the prenatal period before the baby is born” (208). Or as Moses put it, “Male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

Embracing reality

Everyone can see that, on average, men are taller and physically stronger than women. Most everyone agrees that men and women have occupied different roles in the home, in religion, and in the world for most (if not all) of human history. Virtually everyone would also agree that boys and girls don't play the same or develop in the same ways. And nearly everyone would agree that men and women – taken as a whole – tend to form friendships differently, talk to their peers differently, and manifest different instincts related to children, sex, and career. Almost everyone sees these things.

What we don't see in the same way is how to interpret these phenomena. The question is whether we view these distinctions as reflecting innate differences between men and women – differences not to be exploited or eradicated – or whether the distinctions we see are the result of centuries of oppression and ongoing prejudice. This brief article is written in hope that Christians might consider the former to be truer than the latter.

In 1973, Steven Goldberg published *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, a book he claims was listed as a world record in *Guinness* for the book rejected by the most publishers before final acceptance (69 rejections by 55 publishers). Building off that earlier work, Goldberg released *Why Men Rule* in 1993, arguing that given the physiological differentiation between the sexes, men have always occupied the overwhelming number of high-status positions and roles in every society (44). In other words, patriarchy is inevitable. Decades later, Rhoades said the same thing: “Matriarchies – societies where women have more political, economic and social power than men – do not exist; in fact, there is no evidence that they have ever existed” (*Taking Sex Differences Seriously*, 151).

We are told that dismantling patriarchy is one of the chief concerns of our time. Surely, Voltaire's battle cry *Écrasez l'infâme!* (Crush the infamy!) is no less suitable for the ancient regime of father rule. Except that where patriarchy is already absent, dysfunction and desperation have multiplied. That's because patriarchy, rightly conceived, is not about the subjugation of women as

“Women were made to be women, not a different kind of man.”

much as it is about the subjugation of the male aggression and male irresponsibility that runs wild when women are forced to be in charge because the men are nowhere to be found. What school or church or city center or rural hamlet is better off when fathers no longer rule? Where communities of women and children can no longer depend upon men to protect and provide, the result is not freedom and independence. Fifty years of social science research confirms what common sense and natural law never forgot: as go the men, so goes the health of families and neighborhoods. The choice is not between patriarchy and enlightened democracy, but between patriarchy and anarchy.

Observations like these sound offensive to almost everyone, but they don't have to be. If patriarchy (as a descriptive rather than

a pejorative term) reflects innate differences between the sexes, then we would do well to embrace what *is* – while fighting the natural effects of sin in the way things are – rather than pursuing what never will be. You can sand a piece of wood in any direction you like, but the experience will be more enjoyable – and the end product more beautiful – if you go with the grain. As Goldberg puts it, “If [a woman] believes that it is preferable to have her sex associated with authority and leadership rather than with the creation of life, then she is doomed to perpetual disappointment” (*Why Men Rule*, 32).

Women were made to be women, not a different kind of man. The stubborn fact of nature, almost never mentioned, is that men cannot do the one thing most necessary and most miraculous in our existence: they will not nurture life in the womb; they will not give birth to the propagation of the species; they will not nurse an infant from their own flesh.

Deep down, men are aware of these limitations of manhood, which is why they feel the urge to protect women and children and why in every society, Goldberg writes, “they look to women for gentleness, kindness, and love, for refuge from a world of pain and force, for safety from their own

excesses” (229). When a woman sacrifices all this to meet men on male terms, it is to everyone's detriment, especially her own. Men and women are not the same, and if we want to acknowledge that in the home and in the church, we need to acknowledge it in all of life and in all of history. The biblical vision of complementarity cannot be true without something like patriarchy also being true.

Kevin DeYoung (@RevKevDeYoung) is the senior pastor at Christ Covenant Church (PCA) in Matthews, North Carolina and Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary (Charlotte). He is the author of more than twenty books and a popular columnist, blogger, and podcaster. Kevin and his wife, Trisha, have nine children. Browse all of Kevin's articles, sermons, books, podcasts, and more at KevinDeYoung.org.

70th Anniversary

2023 marks **70 years** since our churches (by God's grace) became the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

To commemorate this milestone, *Faith in Focus* will be producing an anniversary issue next year, Lord willing. We would be interested in receiving articles/memories, either long or short about some of the events that have helped shape our churches over this time. You may want to submit your own personal reflections on the life and times of your particular congregation or photos that could be of interest (with captions please so we know who's who!).

If you are, or have been a minister, elder or deacon in our churches you too are welcome to send us your story of up to 1000 words or less. We hope to receive a wide variety of material to cover this 70 year timeframe, so thank you in advance for your contributions.

Send by email to the editor: walterwalraven@icloud.com

Letter to the editor

Dear Sir,

I would like to respond to the articles by Moana Leenders, in the July 2022 edition of *Faith in Focus*.

Firstly, I would like to say that there is much in the articles with which I wholeheartedly agree. I, too, believe that pornography use is destructive, both in the user's relationship with God and with other relations – to spouse, other family members and fellow-believers. I also agree that it is particularly demeaning to the spouse to be supplemented or supplanted, not by a real relationship with another person, but with a false image: false in the sense that the pornography involves actors playing a part in order to exploit the weakness and lust of other sinners, outside of any personal relationship.

Furthermore, I want to make it absolutely clear that where I disagree with the article, it is in no way because I want to minimize the seriousness of pornography use or allow men to be “let off the hook.” On the contrary, I will be arguing that this matter must be treated with great seriousness, as I hope to make clear. But not along quite the same pathway that Sr. Leenders has outlined.

My concern with the articles lies first in the exegesis of the relevant Scripture and second in the application of it. Talking about exegesis may appear to some to be neglecting the hurt experienced by women whose husbands have indulged in pornography. I do not want to minimize recognition of that hurt. But the point of exegesis is to consider carefully what God has said in His Word. It is argued that pornography use (especially addiction) is *porneia* (fornication) and *porneia* is a ground for divorce (Mt. 5:32, 19:9). I believe that this reads more into these passages than the language allows. There are two relevant Hebrew words in the OT (*za`na`* and *na`ap*) and two Greek word-groups in the NT (*porneia* and *moicheia*). These words have very specific meanings. One of the Hebrew words (*za`na`*) is matched by one of the Greek words (*porneia*), meaning any kind of unlawful sexual intercourse, including adultery. It is often translated fornication

or harlotry. The other two words (*na`ap* and *moicheia*) refer specifically to adultery = intercourse with someone other than your spouse.

The point I want to make is that all these words refer to the physical act of intercourse. The reason this breaks the marriage covenant in such an extreme manner is that it creates a new and unlawful one-flesh union. Hence the apostle Paul warns against consorting with a prostitute on the ground that this union is incompatible with union with Christ (1 Cor. 6:16). That is also why unlawful sexual union is used throughout the Bible to describe idolatry. To argue from the other direction – God uses these words to describe covenant-breaking with Him, therefore pornography use breaks the marriage covenant with parallel consequences – changes the meaning of these words and ignores the greater degree of seriousness when a new, unlawful union takes place. When these words are used in connection with divorce grounds, these have to do with unlawful, physical unions *with* another. Figuratively, they are often applied to unlawful “spiritual” unions with another (false) god.

Sr. Leenders has rightly drawn our attention to another use of these terms, especially in Mt. 5:28: Everyone who looks with lust upon a woman has committed adultery (*moicheia*) with her in his heart. In Mt. 15:18-20, the Lord adds that men are defiled by what comes out of the inner person, the heart. From the heart arise evil thoughts (such as associated with pornography use), as well as “adulteries and fornication,” i.e., the physical acts. Note the distinction that the Lord is making here. Evil, lustful thoughts are not *identical* to physical adultery and fornication, but they can lead to it. There is a distinction between adultery of the heart and physical adultery. Pornography use is, of course, another step up from adultery of the heart and evil thoughts, for it involves sight as well. Yet it is not a new physical union as such. Physical adultery is the given lawful ground for divorce between two who claim to be believers; adultery of the heart, mind and eyes is not given as

such a ground – though it may lead to things that are.

Having said this, though, I want to stress that adultery of the heart and mind still involves sin. It must be taken with the utmost seriousness. It can indicate a broken relationship with the Lord. It can lead to church discipline when what is in the heart manifests openly – for we cannot see directly what is in the heart. Ultimately, it can lead to divorce from one's spouse. Nevertheless, we must consider that there is a progression of sin, involving different degrees – from lust to sin to death – paralleled in James 1:14-15 to the progression from conception to birth. 1 Jn. 2:16 uses a different order but adds in the “lust of the eyes.” My point is that there are degrees by which sin progresses. Pornography use is essentially “lust of the eyes.” But that is not the “ultimate betrayal.” A sexual relationship with another person is an even more extreme betrayal.

To explain this further, we can consider the other laws treated in the Sermon on the Mount. Murder in the heart is a serious sin. But the penalties and most serious consequences come from physical murder. Desiring the property of another is a serious sin, but the penalties and most serious consequences come from actually stealing something. These various sins of the heart can lead to hell. They can affect our relationships with others. But we should nevertheless be clear on the distinction between sin in the heart, mind – and eyes – over against so-called “gross sins” that involves the whole body.

If we do not make this distinction, we potentially provide grounds for divorce in virtually every marriage. Sr. Leenders argument proves too much. Who is free of these sins of the heart, mind and eyes (and I address this not just to the men)? Christian men are urged to “make a covenant with their eyes” (Job 31:1) because it is all-too-easy to look at another woman in the wrong way. Hopefully, Christian men repent of this – and yet, perhaps it keeps happening. Any wife, if she would become aware of this, might say, “That is *porneia* and *porneia* is a

ground of divorce.” But on that argument, there might be a ground for every marriage to be ended.

I said before that pornography use/addiction must be taken seriously. It is a sin against God and against one’s spouse. If there is no repentance – indicated by either playing-down and minimizing the sin or repeated turning back to the trough – the Church ought to follow through with discipline. If there is still no repentance, the final result would be excommunication. Once that has taken place, the guilty party is regarded as an unbeliever. Then the other ground for divorce becomes an option.

The other ground for divorce is indicated in 1 Cor. 7:12f. When an *unbelieving* spouse “leaves” the marriage, the believer is free to divorce. If he “consents” (*suneudokeo*) to live with the Christian spouse, divorce is not permitted. This word “consent” means more than bare compliance. It means that the person is *pleased* to do so. He wants to keep his marriage together. A man who pleads with his wife to stay, but continues with pornography, shows that he does not really delight in his marriage. He is divorcing his wife, so to speak, while living under the same roof! She has a ground for divorce.

I am arguing that a Christian woman, married to a purportedly Christian man who has been indulging in pornography, should inform the elders and wait until any disciplinary process is complete before she divorces him. I am aware that I am asking for something that is extremely difficult for the wife. She has been deeply hurt and betrayed. She is probably disgusted with her husband and has trouble regarding him as a Christian. Yet I ask Christian wives to do the hard thing, much as the apostle did in 1 Pet. 3:1-2 (which is not to say that the wife should refrain from telling her husband how she has been hurt so much by his actions). I am asking Christian wives in this situation not to run ahead of the Church’s discipline. Rather, that she should wait until she clearly has a lawful ground for divorce. Then she would also be free to re-marry, should that eventuate.

This also shows the importance of the Church’s response. If the Church makes light of this sin, or accepts a superficial remorse in lieu of true repentance, the wife may well feel doubly betrayed. This can become a stumbling-block for her, tempting her to divorce before she has Biblical grounds. It may even result in her departing from the church that she feels

has let her down.

Thus, I am arguing for keeping two Biblical teachings in their proper balance: taking seriously the sin of pornography use; AND protecting marriage by upholding only the two Biblical grounds for divorce – physical adultery; or desertion by an unbelieving spouse (WCF 24:5-6). This is similar to the conclusion of Sr. Leenders’ articles, in that unrepented pornography use can end in divorce. But it involves the Church’s judgement, rather than leaving that judgement wholly in the hands of a very hurt and traumatized individual (WCF 24:6). By this approach, I believe that some marriages may be saved, which might otherwise be lost by a premature divorce. By this approach, there is a way of ending a marriage that has already been demolished by a man’s lust, deception and defilement.

Paul N Archbald – Silverstream

Moana Leenders responds

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Rev Paul Archbald’s letter.

Rev Archbald makes the point that when the Biblical writers use the word *Porneia*, the word can only mean physical sexual intercourse. I would like to respond with two points.

1. *Porneia* is not purely physical, because in Scripture the word is also used to describe a heart of unfaithfulness.

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis gives an extensive explanation of the meaning and historical use of *Porneia*.¹ *Porneia* means to practice prostitution, fornication, or sexual immorality; the main concept being immorality. Early use of *Porneia* in the Septuagint is in Leviticus 19:29 “Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, lest the land fall into prostitution and the land become full of depravity.” (Note that the sin of the father, which is not physical, brings depravity to the land.) The Hebrew is *za.nah* – which already carried the meaning of unfaithfulness. The Septuagint translates *za.nah* as

Porneia to mean prostitution, but also gives the word a broader sense applied to sexual immorality.

The Old Testament repeatedly uses *za.nah* / *Porneia* to name Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. Including: Psalm 73:27, Hosea 4:1, Ezekiel 6:9, Ezekiel 16 and 23. As well as sinful acts, it is the absolute lack of personal faithfulness to God that shocks and angers the prophets. Sexual immorality is a sin of the heart and the body.

In the New Testament Paul uses *Porneia* to name any kind of illegitimate sexual activity. Paul rejects the Greek gnostic dualism – we are physically and spiritually one person; our sins affect us entirely.

2. Pornography use is physical sin

Using pornography for self-gratification changes the neurology of the user’s brain. Pornography use changes how the attraction/stimulation impulses of the brain work. MRI scans have shown how the physical makeup of the brain and its response to hormones can change over time in response to pornographic images.² Chemical hormones reward sexual activity and create close relational bonds between spouses as part of God’s plan to encourage intimacy and procreation. However, over time, the pornography user’s brain is ‘bonded’ to the images on the screen, and not to his wife. He is ‘united’ to pornographic images.

Visiting the website of your favourite porn star is a physical sexual relationship. If one feeds their lust through voyeurism, one cannot plead ‘I haven’t touched anyone’ with any integrity.

Matthew 5: 29-30:

“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”

Michael Wilkin’s commentary explains: “Jesus illustrates the seriousness of lust destroying the marriage bond through two graphic examples. The eye is the medium through which the temptation first comes to stimulate the lust, and the hand represents the instrument by which lust is physically committed.”³ The sins of the

eye and the hand damage the marriage relationship.

Jesus' teaching frames marriage as interpersonal intimacy (one flesh) and personal loyalty (hold fast to his wife). Relational intimacy dies when a spouse is unfaithful by using pornography for self-pleasure. A marriage with one partner addicted to pornography has lost trust, honesty, loyalty, and there is no mutually intimate relationship.

Rev Archbald expresses a concern that wives will quickly choose to divorce unfaithful husbands. In my experience these dear wives are slow to enact a divorce. They have desired a Christian marriage but are heartbroken and exhausted. They have prayed earnestly for their husband's healing. One of the fears that keeps Christian women married to an unfaithful husband is fear that she will be judged not to have cared enough about her marriage.⁴ As church communities we must trust that women who leave their husbands do so as a last resort. A betrayed wife comes to her church leaders and asks them to bear witness to the injustice she has suffered. The people of God must support her desire for justice.

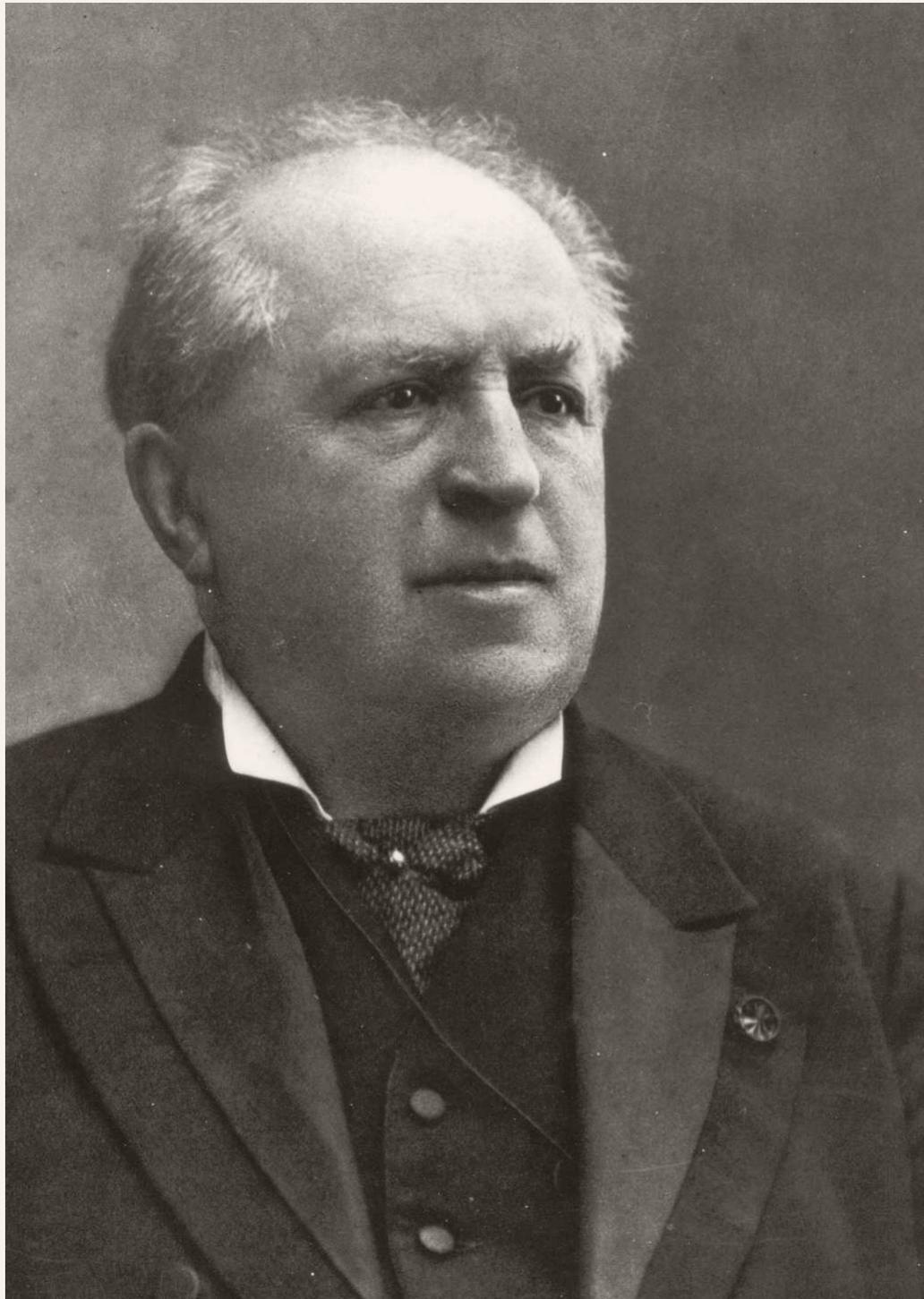
1 *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Volume 4, Editor Moises Silva, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014) 109-116.

2 Timothy Allen, "Digital Pornography Addiction, what you need to know and where to find help," focusonthefamily.com

3 Michael J. Wilkins *Matthew: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004) 245-247, 657.

4 Natalie Collins, "Words make Worlds: How We Speak about Abuse," in *Created to Thrive*.

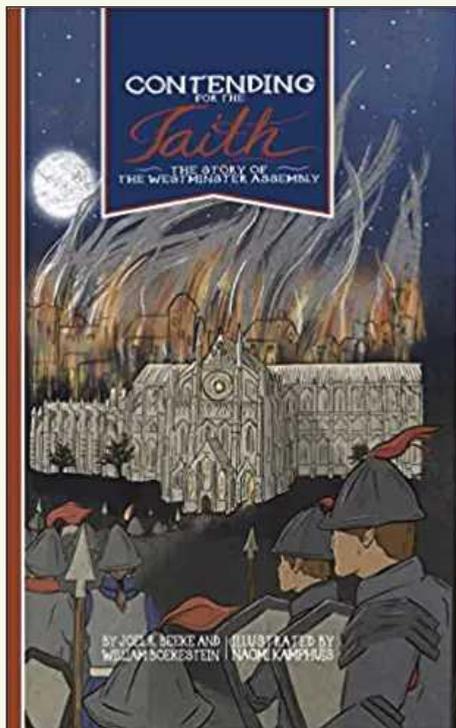
Moana Leenders – Pukekohe



<https://josdouma.files.wordpress.com/>
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“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”

— Abraham Kuyper



Contending for the Faith: The Story of the Westminster Assembly

Written and illustrated by William Boekestein and Joel R. Beeke.

40 pages

Reviewed by Margé Davies.

This easy read book is absolutely wonderful. The story is geared towards primary school children. Simple text and wonderful imaginative art work give a clear understanding of the story behind the Westminster Confession. Having grown up in a Reformed church with a strong Dutch heritage, I knew little about the Westminster Assembly and the Confessions they produced. This book is written in such a way that it is highly informative and engaging even for an adult. One added bonus for me was that it points out the difference between this Confession and the Shorter Catechism. As the story unfolds it does an excellent job in conveying the political and religious climate in England during the 17th century, and gives an understanding of the history of how England found itself there. The book would work best as a read aloud, since it reads as a documentary, without dialogue or main character. However, with parental input, it helps us value what we have in this Confession, and leads to an increased appreciation for the work done by our forbearers. As our own political climate changes it inspires us to work just as hard fighting for and preserving these hard won truths.

There are 3 other books in this series, all the same length and similar format to this book. For those that are looking to give their children or themselves a greater appreciation for the history of the Church and the Confessions, I highly recommend this series.

The other titles are as follows:

Three Forms of Unity: The Quest for Comfort: The Story of the Heidelberg Catechism

The Glory of Grace: The Story of the Canons of Dort

Faithfulness Under Fire: The Story of Guido de Brès

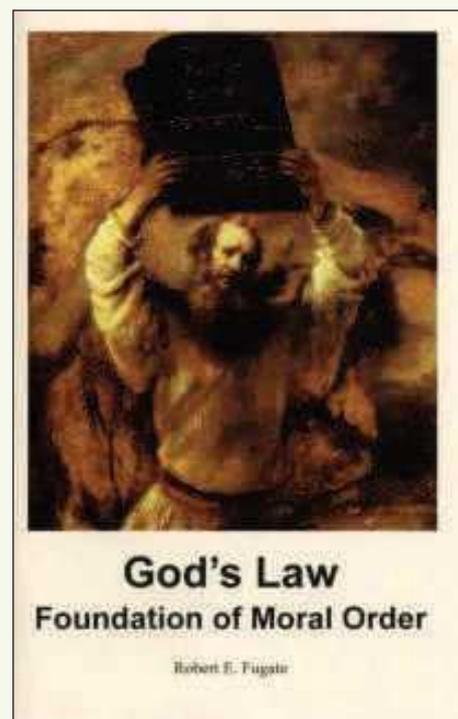
Key Biblical Principles for Civil Government- Proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the nation.

By Robert Fugate

Reviewed by Will Van Kessel

“The bible offers no blueprints for society”- asserts 75% of seminary professors in the western world. “Separation of church and state” has now morphed to mean that the Bible cannot be used to direct public policy or judicial decisions. Even Evangelical politicians shun publicly using the Bible, strictly abiding by the Four Commandments for “Successful” Evangelical Politicians:

1. Thou shalt not use Scripture as an authoritative standard in public debate or policymaking.
2. Thou shalt not speak the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in public discourse. [If you must mention deity, use the generic



and undefined term, "god."]

3. Thou shalt not prefer, nor promote, the establishment of the Christian faith as the foundation for the fundamentals laws of the land. [Always advocate pluralism, polytheism, ethical relativism, and egalitarian toleration for all religious and ethical viewpoints.]
4. Thou shalt not cite or speak favourably about Biblical law. [Always use vague, sentimental terms such as "family values," "traditional values," "the beliefs of the founding fathers, etc."]

What does Jesus, the Lord and Messiah, think of these developments?

"Whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven." [Mat 10 v33] The triune God thunders, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." [Isa 8 v20]

All nations must look to the Word of God as the only infallible source of truth for every area of life- including the civil sphere. We must pledge allegiance to the only sovereign and true God, for "the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King: and He will save us." [Isa 33v22]

An excellent and inspiring book to bring us back to true biblical thinking on the task of government and the standards for civil law and magistrates.

It provides scriptural perspective on civil government in terms of man's responsibility to obey the law-word of God in the civic sphere.

Thoroughly recommend this book, especially in these days- [the last 3 years] of blurred lines between the government, the church and the individual/family spheres of sovereignty.

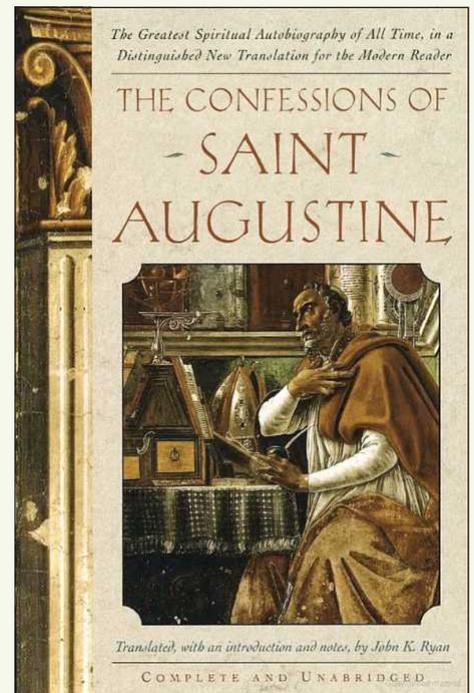
God bless the readers

Will Van Kessel – Reformed church of Dovedale

Excerpt from Augustine's Confessions Aug. de Trin.xii. 11.

"Can it at any time or place be unjust to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind; and his neighbour as himself? Therefore are those foul offences which be against nature to be every where and at all times detested and punished; such as were those of the men of Sodom: which should all nations commit, they should all stand guilty of the same crime, by the law of God, which hath not so made men that they should so abuse one another. For even that intercourse which should be between God and us is violated, when that same nature, of which he is Author, is polluted by the perversity of lust. But those actions which are offences against the customs of men, are to be avoided according to the customs severally prevailing; so that a thing agreed upon, and confirmed, by custom or law of any city or nation, may not be violated at the lawless pleasure of any, whether native or foreigner. For any part, which harmonises not with its whole, is offensive. But when God commands a thing to be done, against the customs or compact of any people, though it were never by them done heretofore, it is to be done; and if intermitted, it is to be restored; and if never ordained, is now to be ordained. For if it be lawful for a king, in the state which he reigns over, to command that which no one before him, nor he himself heretofore, had commanded, and to obey him cannot be against the common weal of the state; (nay, it were against it if he were not obeyed, for to obey princes is a general compact of human society;) how much more unhesitatingly ought we to obey God, in all which he commands, the Ruler of all his creatures! For as among the powers in man's society, the greater authority is obeyed in preference to the lesser, so must God above all.

... And these things are done when Thou art forsaken, O Fountain of Life, who art the only and true Creator and Governor of the Universe, and by a self-willed pride,



any one false thing is selected therefrom and loved.* So then by a humble devoutness we return to Thee; and Thou clearest us from our evil habits, and art merciful to their sins who confess, and *hearest the groaning of the prisoner*, and loosest us from the chains which we made for ourselves, if we lift not up against Thee the horns of an unreal liberty, suffering the loss of all, through covetousness of more, by loving more our own private good, than Thee, the Good of all." [VIII] 15, 16.

* "Man's true honour is the image and likeness of God, which is only retained by reference to him by whom it is impressed. Men cleave then the more to God, the less they love any thing of their own." Aug. de Trin.xii. 11.

KYLE BORG

Peaceful and Quiet Living

We live in a society marked by unrest, controversy, and hostility. More and more the church is feeling the pressure that comes with that. The cultural table isn't giving Christians a lot of elbow room, and soon we may find ourselves banished from the table altogether. In these times, we need to be careful to understand what God's will is because there's a dangerous tendency in our hearts to abandon ourselves to something other than the privileges that belong to us in Jesus Christ.

Paul knew that tendency in the Christian heart. The Thessalonians were a remarkable church. Their lives had been turned around

by the ministry of the Word, and they were examples of faith, love, and hope. But their daily routines were also lived in a context of hostility and suffering for the sake of Jesus. That's why in writing to them, Paul wanted them to know how to honor God. How does a Christian living in an aggressive world please God? In part, Paul says, by aspiring "to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands" (1 Thess. 4:11).

It's hard to imagine an Apostolic command that is more mundanely practical than this. God's will for our sanctification is lived out in the ordinary routines and habits of life. But this isn't easily achieved. That's why Paul says we should "aspire" to it – to desire very strongly and strive eagerly. One might rephrase Paul and say we are to make it our ambition to live life in this way.

First, he says we should live quietly. We

sometimes think of quiet in terms of volume. But here it means keeping still. There's actually a brilliant oxymoron in Paul's thought: We are to eagerly strive to be still or be ambitious about living calmly. It's not our place as Christians to be antagonists and seek out trouble and quarrels. And when they do come, we don't need to be riled up and lose our minds. After all, Jesus said our inheritance is one of peace: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (John 14:27). Even when the world gnashes and thrashes, the Christian is commanded to quietly repose on God's character and promise as united in Jesus Christ.

Second, Paul says we should mind our own affairs. It's interesting that the Apostle Peter cautioned that when we are insulted by the world, we should be sure that it's for the name of Christ and not for being a meddler (see 1 Peter 4:15). He was saying

Without Grumbling or Disputing

DARRELL B. HARRISON

Christians are otherworldly people. I say that against the backdrop of Jesus' declaration that His elect are not of this world (John 17:14). That reality is further affirmed by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:11, where he refers to believers in Christ as "sojourners" and "exiles" in this world.

That Christians are otherworldly people means we are to conduct ourselves in such a way as to exemplify in this temporal world who our Lord has declared us to be with regard to the world to come. To live in a state of estrangement from the world is part and parcel of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:15–17). And yet before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed very specifically that those whom His heavenly Father had given Him would remain in the world rather than being removed from it

(John 17:6, 9–10, 15).

Jesus offered that prayer to His Father out of a divine desire that you and I live as visible reflections of Him in a world altogether darkened by sin (Rom. 5:12; 8:19–20). One of the ways we do that is by taking to heart the exhortation given to us by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:14–18:

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

It is our tendency as Christians to view our sinfulness primarily in terms of acts we commit in disobedience to God. But

in the passage above, Paul is reminding us that our attitude is just as important as our actions, if not more so. Every sinful deed is preceded and accompanied by a sinful disposition. A biblical case in point is Genesis 4:6, where God asked Cain before he killed his brother Abel, "Why are you angry?" From God's perspective, Cain had already murdered Abel in his heart before he murdered him with his hands (Matt. 5:21–22).

The nineteenth-century Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Frequently the murmuring against man is only a covert way of murmuring against God." I can't help believing that in saying those words, Spurgeon had in mind the Israelites who "murmured in their tents" against Moses and Aaron out of an attitude of jealousy toward them (Ps. 106:16–25). Scripture defines "murmuring," which is the same word as "grumbling," as secret displeasure of the heart that is not openly avowed. It is precisely that kind of hidden heart-attitude that the Apostle Peter is addressing in 1 Peter 4:9, where he encourages believers to "show hospitality to one another without grumbling."

that when we suffer, we need to be sure we are suffering for the right reasons. In a hostile society, it's easy to borrow troubles that don't belong to us and to insert ourselves into fights that we don't need to be in. Solomon warned, "Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears" (Prov. 26:17). Positively, Paul's admonition means minding what is your business. There's a demand here to concentrate on your own life – yourself, family, church, work, and community.

Third, he says we need to work with our hands. Work was woven into our creation and is an expression of our re-creation (see Gen. 2:15; Eph. 4:28). It's likely that many of the Thessalonians were employed in some kind of manual labor. But the heart of Paul's command isn't about the kind of work a Christian must do; rather, the emphasis is on continued usefulness and productivity even in a society that is contentious and inhospitable. After all, while we labor in the world, we work ultimately not for men but for the Lord (Col. 3:23).

The degree to which you and I remain faithful in carrying out Paul's Apostolic charge is as much a matter of our attitude as it is of our behavior. The act of grumbling and disputing is born from an attitude of discontentment. Conversely, discontentment is the attitudinal byproduct of a heart that is oriented toward pleasing self rather than God. It is the latter of those two motives – pleasing God – that Paul is encouraging believers to adopt as they strive to illuminate this lost world with the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is not to suggest, however, that consistently maintaining such a Christ-centered mindset is easy (Col. 3:1–2).

Though we may find it difficult to admit, we nonetheless must confess that, as sinners, we are selfish by nature. Even when it comes to our obedience to God, we sometimes wonder, "What's in it for me?" Thankfully, the Apostle Paul answers that question for us: we will one day be able to stand unashamed in the presence of our glorious Lord and Savior knowing that we did not run in vain or labor in vain in serving Him.

It's important, however, that a quiet life, minding your own business, and working are means to an end. Paul went on to say: "... so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one" (1 Thess. 4:12). Not only is the Christian to earn his own living (see 2 Thess. 3:12), but this is the way to appropriately live toward and around those who aren't Christians. The hostility of the world doesn't exempt us from this pattern of life. It's one of the distinguishing features of Christianity. We're often tempted to think of our evangelism in programmatic ways. But Paul says these ordinary routines themselves bear the evidence of God's transforming grace.

Rev. Kyle Borg is senior pastor of Winchester Reformed Presbyterian Church in Winchester, Kans.

First published in Tabletalk Magazine, an outreach of Ligonier.

The beloved Welsh preacher and theologian D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones described Christians as "living epistles for the Lord Jesus Christ, known and read of all men." If, as followers of Christ, you and I are to be "known and read" by others, it stands to reason, then, that we must be seen and observed by them. And what better way to ensure that happens than to shine the light of the truth of the gospel to a world in such desperate need of it – not only in our actions but in our attitudes as well.

Darrell B. Harrison is dean of social media at Grace to You in Sun Valley, Calif., and cohost of the Just Thinking podcast. He is a fellow of the Black Theology and Leadership Institute at Princeton Theological Seminary.

First published in Tabletalk Magazine, an outreach of Ligonier.



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For more information, contact the Principal, Mr Daniel Coote

- E-mail: cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au

Focus on faith

LETTERS OF JOHN NEWTON

The *theaters* are fountains of vice!

"The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, eating of meat and drinking of wine! 'Let us eat and drink,' you say, 'for tomorrow we die!' The Lord Almighty has revealed this in my hearing: 'Till your dying day, this sin will not be atoned for!' says the Lord, the Lord Almighty." Isaiah 22:12-14

My dear Madam,

I am well convinced that if there is any practice in this land which is *sinful* – attendance on the *playhouse* is eminently so. **The theaters are fountains of vice!** I can hardly think there is a Christian upon earth who would dare to be seen there – if the

nature and *effects* of the theater were properly set before him! By its innumerable train of dissipations, the *god of this world* blinds the eyes of multitudes, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine in upon them.

I wish you, therefore, to use all your influence to make them *shunned* as *pest-houses*, and *dangerous nuisances* to precious souls! Especially if you know any who you hope, in the main, are seriously disposed, who yet venture into those *haunts of Satan* – endeavor earnestly and faithfully to undeceive them!

The *time* is short! *Eternity* is at the door! Was there no other evil in these vain amusements, than the loss of precious time (but alas! their name is *legion*) – we have not leisure time to regard them.

And, blessed be God, we have no **need** for them! The gospel opens a source of purer, sweeter, and more substantial pleasures! We are invited to communion with God! The wonders of redeeming love

are laid open to our view. Well then, may we bid *adieu* to the *perishing pleasures of sin!*

Well may we *pity* those who can find pleasure in those places and parties ...

- where Jesus is shut out;
- where His name is only mentioned to be profaned;
- where His commandments are not only broken, but insulted;
- where sinners proclaim their *shame*, as in Sodom, and make no attempt to hide it;
- where *wickedness* is veiled in the *disguise of amusement* – to make it more insinuating!

"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?"

Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." James 4:4



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