

American Government and Christianity – A Biblical Worldview Perspective

Kerby Anderson looks at how a Christian, biblical framework operated as a critical force in establishing our constitution and governmental system. The founders views on the nature of man and the role of government were derived from their biblical foundation.

America's Christian Roots

The founding of this country as well as the framing of the key political documents rests upon a Christian foundation. That doesn't necessarily mean that the United States is a Christian nation, although some framers used that term. But it does mean that the foundations of this republic presuppose a Christian view of human nature and God's providence.

In previous articles we have discussed "The Christian Roots of the Declaration and Constitution" [on the Web as ["The Declaration and the Constitution: Their Christian Roots"](#)] and provided an overview of the books [On Two Wings](#) and [One Nation Under God](#). Our focus in this article will be to pull together many of the themes of these resources and combine them with additional facts and quotes from the founders.

First, what was the perspective of the founders of America? Consider some of these famous quotes.

John Adams was the second president of the United States. He saw the need for religious values to provide the moral baseline for society. He stated in a letter to the officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts:

We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.[{1}](#)

In fact, John Adams wasn't the only founding father to talk about the importance of religious values. Consider this statement from George Washington during his Farewell Address:

And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.[{2}](#)

Two hundred years after the establishment of the Plymouth colony in 1620, Americans gathered at that site to celebrate its bicentennial. Daniel Webster was the speaker at this 1820 celebration. He reminded those in attendance of this nation's origins:

Let us not forget the religious character of our origin. Our fathers were brought hither by their high veneration for the Christian religion. They journeyed by its light, and labored in its hope. They sought to incorporate its principles with the elements of their society, and to diffuse its influence through all their institutions, civil, political, or literary.[{3}](#)

Religion, and especially the Christian religion, was an important foundation to this republic.

Christian Character

It is clear that the framers of this new government believed that the people should elect and support leaders with character and integrity. George Washington expressed this in his Farewell Address when he said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports."

Benjamin Rush talked about the religious foundation of the republic that demanded virtuous leadership. He said that, "the only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid on the foundation of religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments." [\[4\]](#)

He went on to explain that

A Christian cannot fail of being a republican . . . for every precept of the Gospel inculcates those degrees of humility, self-denial, and brotherly kindness which are directly opposed to the pride of monarchy. . . . A Christian cannot fail of being useful to the republic, for his religion teaches him that no man "liveth to himself." And lastly a Christian cannot fail of being wholly inoffensive, for his religion teaches him in all things to do to others what he would wish, in like circumstances, they should do to him. [\[5\]](#)

Daniel Webster understood the importance of religion, and especially the Christian religion, in this form of government. In his famous Plymouth Rock speech of 1820 he said,

Lastly, our ancestors established their system of government on morality and religious sentiment. Moral habits, they believed, cannot safely be trusted on any other foundation than religious principle, nor any government be secure which is not supported by moral habits. . . .Whatever makes men

good Christians, makes them good citizens.[{6}](#)

John Jay was one of the authors of the Federalist Papers and became America's first Supreme Court Justice. He also served as the president of the American Bible Society. He understood the relationship between government and Christian values. He said, "Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."[{7}](#)

William Penn writing the *Frame of Government* for his new colony said, "Government, like clocks, go from the motion men give them; and as governments are made and moved by men, so by them they are ruined too. Wherefore governments rather depend upon men, than men upon governments. Let men be good, and the government cannot be bad."[{8}](#)

The founders believed that good character was vital to the health of the nation.

New Man

Historian C. Gregg Singer traces the line of influence from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century in his book, *A Theological Interpretation of American History*. He says,

Whether we look at the Puritans and their fellow colonists of the seventeenth century, or their descendants of the eighteenth century, or those who framed the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, we see that their political programs were the rather clear reflection of a consciously held political philosophy, and that the various political philosophies which emerged among the American people were intimately related to the theological developments which were taking place. . . . A Christian world and life view furnished the basis for this early political thought which guided the American people for nearly two

centuries and whose crowning lay in the writing of the Constitution of 1787.[{9}](#)

Actually, the line of influence extends back even further. Historian Arnold Toynbee, for example, has written that the American Revolution was made possible by American Protestantism. Page Smith, writing in the *Religious Origins of the American Revolution*, cites the influence of the Protestant Reformation. He believes that

The Protestant Reformation produced a new kind of consciousness and a new kind of man. The English Colonies in America, in turn, produced a new unique strain of that consciousness. It thus follows that it is impossible to understand the intellectual and moral forces behind the American Revolution without understanding the role that Protestant Christianity played in shaping the ideals, principles and institutions of colonial America.[{10}](#)

Smith argues that the American Revolution “started, in a sense, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenburg.” It received “its theological and philosophical underpinnings from John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and much of its social theory from the Puritan Revolution of 1640-1660.”[{11}](#)

Most people before the Reformation belonged to classes and social groups which set the boundaries of their worlds and established their identities. The Reformation, according to Smith, changed these perceptions. Luther and Calvin, in a sense, created a re-formed individual in a re-formed world.

Key to this is the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer where each person is “responsible directly to God for his or her own spiritual state... The individuals who formed the new congregations established their own churches, chose their own ministers, and managed their own affairs without reference to

an ecclesiastical hierarchy.”[{12}](#)

These re-formed individuals began to change their world including their view of government and authority.

Declaration of Independence

Let’s look at the Christian influence on the Declaration of Independence. Historian Page Smith points out that Thomas Jefferson was not only influenced by secular philosophers, but was also influenced by the Protestant Reformation. He says,

Jefferson and other secular-minded Americans subscribed to certain propositions about law and authority that had their roots in the Protestant Reformation. It is a scholarly common-place to point out how much Jefferson (and his fellow delegates to the Continental Congress) were influenced by Locke. Without disputing this we would simply add that an older and deeper influence – John Calvin – was of more profound importance.[{13}](#)

Another important influence was William Blackstone. Jefferson drew heavily on the writings of this highly respected jurist. In fact, Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* were among Jefferson’s most favorite books.

In his section on the “Nature of Laws in General,” Blackstone wrote, “as man depends absolutely upon his Maker for everything, it is necessary that he should, in all points, conform to his Maker’s will. This will of his Maker is called the law of nature.”[{14}](#)

In addition to the law of nature, the other source of law is from divine revelation. “The doctrines thus delivered we call the revealed or divine law, and they are to be found only in the Holy Scriptures.” According to Blackstone, all human laws depended either upon the law of nature or upon the law of revelation found in the Bible: “Upon these two foundations,

the law of nature and the law of revelation, depend all human laws.”{15}

Samuel Adams argues in “The Rights of the Colonists” that they had certain rights. “Among the natural Rights of the Colonists are these: First, a Right to Life; second, to Liberty; third, to Property; . . . and in the case of intolerable oppression, civil or religious, to leave the society they belong to, and enter into another. When men enter into society, it is by voluntary consent.”{16} This concept of natural rights also found its way into the Declaration of Independence and provided the justification for the American Revolution.

The Declaration was a bold document, but not a radical one. The colonists did not break with England for “light and transient causes.” They were mindful that they should be “in subjection to governing authorities” which “are established by God” (Rom. 13:1). Yet when they suffered from a “long train of abuses and usurpations,” they believed that “it is the right of the people to alter or abolish [the existing government] and to institute a new government.”

Constitution

The Christian influence on the Declaration is clear. What about the Constitution?

James Madison was the chief architect of the Constitution as well as one of the authors of the *Federalist Papers*. It is important to note that as a youth, he studied under a Scottish Presbyterian, Donald Robertson. Madison gave the credit to Robertson for “all that I have been in life.”{17} Later he was trained in theology at Princeton under the Reverend John Witherspoon. Scholars believe that Witherspoon’s Calvinism (which emphasized the fallen nature of man) was an important source for Madison’s political ideas.{18}

The Constitution was a contract between the people and had its

origins in American history a century earlier:

One of the obvious by-products [of the Reformation] was the notion of a contract entered into by two people or by the members of a community amongst themselves that needed no legal sanctions to make it binding. This concept of the Reformers made possible the formation of contractals or, as the Puritans called them, "covenanted" groups formed by individuals who signed a covenant or agreement to found a community. The most famous of these covenants was the Mayflower Compact. In it the Pilgrims formed a "civil body politic," and promised to obey the laws their own government might pass. In short, the individual Pilgrim invented on the spot a new community, one that would be ruled by laws of its making. [{19}](#)

Historian Page Smith believes, "The Federal Constitution was in this sense a monument to the reformed consciousness. This new sense of time as potentiality was a vital element in the new consciousness that was to make a revolution and, what was a good deal more difficult, form a new nation." [{20}](#)

Preaching and teaching within the churches provided the justification for the revolution and the establishment of a new nation. Alice Baldwin, writing in *The New England Clergy and the American Revolution*, says,

The teachings of the New England ministers provide one line of unbroken descent. For two generations and more New Englanders had . . . been taught that these rights were sacred and came from God and that to preserve them they had a legal right of resistance and, if necessary a right to . . . alter and abolish governments and by common consent establish new ones. [{21}](#)

Christian ideas were important in the founding of this republic and the framing of our American governmental

institutions. And I believe they are equally important in the maintenance of that republic.

Notes

1. John Adams, October 11, 1798, in a letter to the officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts. Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams – Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes, and Illustration* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1854), Vol. IX, 228-229.
2. George Washington, Farewell Address (September 19, 1796). Address of George Washington, President of the United States, and Late Commander in Chief of the American Army. To the People of the United States, Preparatory to His Declination.
3. Daniel Webster, December 22, 1820. *The Works of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1853), Vol. I, 48.
4. Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," Early American Imprints. *Benjamin Rush, Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical* (Philadelphia: Thomas and Samuel F. Bradford, 1798), 8.
5. Ibid.
6. Webster, *The Works of Daniel Webster*, 22ff.
7. John Jay, October 12, 1816, in *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, Henry P. Johnston, ed., (New York: G.P Putnam & Sons, 1893; reprinted NY: Burt Franklin, 1970), Vol. IV, 393.
8. William Penn, April 25, 1682, in the preface of his Frame of Government of Pennsylvania. A Collection of Charters and Other Public Acts Relating to the Province of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1740), 10-12.
9. C. Gregg Singer, *A Theological Interpretation of American History* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1964), 284-5.
10. Page Smith, *Religious Origins of the American Revolution* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 1.
11. Ibid, 2.

12. Ibid., 3.
13. Ibid, 185.
14. William Blackstone, "Of the Nature of Laws in General," *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Book 1, Section II.
15. Ibid.
16. Samuel Adams, "The Rights of the Colonists" (Boston, 1772), *The Annals of America*, Vol. II, 217.
17. John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 94.
18. James H. Smylie, "Madison and Witherspoon: Theological Roots of American Political Thought," *American Presbyterians*
19. *Smith, Religious Origins*,
20. *Ibid.*, 4
21. Alice M. Baldwin, *The New England Clergy and the American Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1928), 169.

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Homosexuality: Questions and Answers from a Biblical Perspective

Sue Bohlin provides distinctly biblical answers to your questions about homosexuality. As a Christian, it is important to understand what the Bible says and to be able to communicate this message of compassion.

Q. Some people say homosexuality is natural and moral; others say it is unnatural and immoral. How do we know?

A. Our standard can only be what God says. In Romans 1 we read,

God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion (Romans 1:26-27).

So even though homosexual desires *feel* natural, they are actually *unnatural*, because God says they are. He also calls all sexual involvement outside of marriage immoral. (There are 44 references to fornication—sexual immorality—in the Bible.) Therefore, any form of homosexual activity, whether a one-night stand or a long-term monogamous relationship, is by definition immoral—just as any abuse of heterosexuality outside of marriage is immoral.

Q. Is homosexuality an orientation God intended for some people, or is it a perversion of normal sexuality?

A. If God had intended homosexuality to be a viable sexual alternative for some people, He would not have condemned it as an abomination. It is never mentioned in Scripture in anything but negative terms, and nowhere does the Bible even hint at approving or giving instruction for homosexual relationships. Some theologians have argued that David and Jonathan's relationship was a homosexual one, but this claim has no basis in Scripture. David and Jonathan's deep friendship was not sexual; it was one of godly emotional intimacy that truly glorified the Lord.

Homosexuality is a manifestation of the sin nature that all people share. At the fall of man (Genesis 3), God's perfect creation was spoiled, and the taint of sin affected us physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually—and sexually. Homosexuality is a perversion of heterosexuality, which is God's plan for His creation. The Lord Jesus said,

In the beginning the Creator made them male and female. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh (Matthew 19:4, 5).

Homosexual activity and pre-marital or extra-marital heterosexual activity are all sinful attempts to find sexual and emotional expression in ways God never intended. God's desire for the person caught in the trap of homosexuality is the same as for every other person caught in the trap of the sin nature; that we submit every area of our lives to Him and be transformed from the inside out by the renewing of our minds and the purifying of our hearts.

Q. What causes a homosexual orientation?

A. This is a complex issue, and it is unfair to give simplistic answers or explanations. (However, for insight on this issue please consider our articles [Answers to Questions Most Asked by Gay-Identifying Youth](#) and ["Why Doesn't God Answer Prayers to Take Away Gay Feelings?"](#)) Some people start out as heterosexuals, but they rebel against God with such passionate self-indulgence that they end up embracing the gay lifestyle as another form of sexual expression. As one entertainer put it, "I'm not going to go through life with one arm tied behind my back!"

But the majority of those who experience same-sex attraction sense they are "different" or "other than" from very early in life, and at some point they are encouraged to identify this difference as being gay. These people may experience "pre-conditions" that dispose them toward homosexuality, such as a sensitive and gentle temperament in boys, which is not recognized as acceptably masculine in our culture. Another may be poor eye-hand coordination that prevents a boy from doing well at sports, which is a sure way to invite shame and taunting from other boys (and, most unfortunately, from some of their own fathers and family

members). Family relationships are usually very important in the development of homosexuality; the vast majority of those who struggle with same-sex attraction experienced a hurtful relationship with the same-sex parent in childhood. The presence of abuse is a recurring theme in the early lives of many homosexual strugglers. In one study, 91% of lesbian women reported childhood and adolescent abuse, 2/3 of them victims of sexual abuse.^{1} There is a huge difference, however, between predispositions that affects gender identity, and the choices we make in how we handle a predisposition. Because we are made in the image of God, we can choose how we respond to the various factors that may contribute to a homosexual orientation.

Q. Wouldn't the presence of pre-conditions let homosexuals "off the hook," so to speak?

A. Preconditions make it easier to sin in a particular area. They do not excuse the sin. We can draw a parallel with alcoholism. Alcoholics often experience a genetic or environmental pre-condition, which makes it easier for them to fall into the sin of drunkenness. Is it a sin to want a drink? No. It's a sin to drink to excess.

All of us experience various predispositions that make it easier for us to fall into certain sins. For example, highly intelligent people find it easier to fall into the sin of intellectual pride. People who were physically abused as children may fall into the sins of rage and violence more easily than others.

Current popular thinking says that our behavior is determined by our environment or our genes, or both. But the Bible gives us the dignity and responsibility missing from that mechanistic view of life. God has invested us with free will—the ability to make real, significant choices. We can choose our responses to the influences on our lives, or we can choose to let them control us.

Someone with a predisposition for homosexuality may fall into the sin of the homosexual behavior much more easily than a person without it. But each of us alone is responsible for giving ourselves permission to cross over from temptation into sin.

Q. What's the difference between homosexual temptation and sin?

A. Unmasked-for, uncultivated sexual desires for a person of the same sex constitute temptation, not sin. Since the Lord Jesus was "tempted in every way, just as we are (Hebrews 4:15)," He fully knows the intensity and nature of the temptations we face. But He never gave in to them.

The line between sexual temptation and sexual sin is the same for both heterosexuals and homosexuals. It is the point at which our conscious will gets involved. Sin begins with the internal acts of lusting and creating sexual fantasies. Lust is indulging one's sexual desires by deliberately choosing to feed sexual attraction—you might say it is the sinful opposite of meditation. Sexual fantasies are conscious acts of the imagination. It is creating mental pornographic home movies. Just as the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, all sexual sin starts in the mind long before it gets to the point of physical expression.

Many homosexuals claim, "I never asked for these feelings. I did not choose them," and this may be true. That is why it is significant to note that the Bible specifically condemns homosexual *practices*, but not undeveloped homosexual feelings (temptation). There is a difference between having sexual feelings and letting them grow into lust. When Martin Luther was talking about impure thoughts, he said, "You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

Q. Isn't it true that "Once gay, always gay?"

A. It is certainly true that most homosexuals never become heterosexual—some because they don't want to, but most others because their efforts to change were unsuccessful. It takes spiritual submission and much emotional work to repent of sexual sin and achieve a healthy self-concept that glorifies God.

But for the person caught in the trap of homosexual desires who wants sexual and emotional wholeness, there is hope in Christ. In addressing the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul lists an assortment of deep sins, including homosexual offenses. He says,

And that is what some of you *were*. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11).

This means there were former homosexuals in the church at Corinth! The Lord's loving redemption includes eventual freedom for *all* sin that is yielded to Him. Some (rare) people experience no homosexual temptations ever again. But for most others who *are* able to achieve change, homosexual desires are gradually reduced from a major problem to a minor nuisance that no longer dominates their lives. The probability of heterosexual desires returning or emerging depends on a person's sexual history.

But the potential for heterosexuality is present in everyone because God put it there.

See our article "Can Homosexuals Change?" at www.probe.org/can-homosexuals-change/.

Q. If homosexuality is such an abomination to God, why doesn't it disappear when someone becomes a Christian?

A. When we are born again, we bring with us all of our emotional needs and all of our old ways of relating. Homosexuality is a relational problem of meeting emotional

needs the wrong way; it is not an isolated problem of mere sexual preference. With the power of the indwelling Spirit, a Christian can cooperate with God to change this unacceptable part of life. Some people—a very few—are miraculously delivered from homosexual struggles. But for the majority, real change is slow. As in dealing with any besetting sin, it is a process, not an event. Sin's power over us is broken at the moment we are born again, but learning to depend on the Holy Spirit to say no to sin and yes to godliness takes time. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "We...are being transformed into His likeness from glory to glory." Transformation (*this side of eternity!*) is a process that takes a while. Life in a fallen world is a painful struggle. It is not a pleasant thing to have two oppositional natures at war within us!

Homosexuality is not one problem; it is symptomatic of other, deeper problems involving emotional needs and an unhealthy self-concept. Salvation is only the beginning of emotional health. It allows us to experience human intimacy as God intended us to, finding healing for our damaged emotions. It isn't that faith in Christ isn't enough; faith in Christ is the *beginning*.

Q. Does the fact that I had an early homosexual experience mean I'm gay?

A. Sex is strictly meant for adults. The Song of Solomon says three times, "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires." This is a warning not to raise sexual feelings until the time is right. Early sexual experience can be painful or pleasurable, but either way, it constitutes child abuse. It traumatizes a child or teen. This loss of innocence does need to be addressed and perhaps even grieved through, but *doesn't* mean you're gay.

Sexual experimentation is something many children and teens do as a part of growing up. You may have enjoyed the feelings you experienced, but that is because God created our bodies to

respond to pleasure. It probably made you feel confused and ashamed, which is an appropriate response to an inappropriate behavior. Don't let anyone tell you it means you're gay: it means you're human.

Even apart from the sexual aspect, though, our culture has come to view close friendships with a certain amount of suspicion. If you enjoy emotional intimacy with a friend of the same sex, especially if it is accompanied by the presence of sexual feelings that emerge in adolescence, you can find yourself very confused. But it doesn't mean you're gay.

It is a tragic myth that once a person has a homosexual experience, or even *thinks* about one, that he or she is gay for life.

Q. Are homosexuals condemned to hell?

A. Homosexuality is not a "heaven or hell" issue. The *only* determining factor is whether a person has been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says that homosexual offenders and a whole list of other sinners will not inherit the kingdom of God. But then he reminds the Corinthians that they have been washed, sanctified, and justified in Jesus' name. Paul makes a distinction between unchristian behavior and Christian behavior. He's saying, "You're not pagans anymore, you are a holy people belonging to King Jesus. Now *act* like it!"

If homosexuality doesn't send anyone to hell, then can the believer indulge in homosexual behavior, safe in his or her eternal security? As Paul said, "May it never be!" If someone is truly a child of God, he or she cannot continue sinful behavior that offends and grieves the Father without suffering the consequences. God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6). This means that ultimately, no believer gets away with continued, unrepented sin. The discipline may not come immediately, but it will come.

Q. How do I respond when someone in my life tells me he or she is gay?

A. Take your cue from the Lord Jesus. He didn't avoid sinners; He ministered grace and compassion to them—without ever compromising His commitment to holiness. Start by cultivating a humble heart, especially concerning the temptation to react with judgmental condescension. As Billy Graham said, "Never take credit for not falling into a temptation that never tempted you in the first place."

Seek to understand your gay friends' feelings. Are they comfortable with their gayness, or bewildered and resentful of it? Understanding people doesn't mean that you have to agree with them—but it *is* the best way to minister grace and love in a difficult time. Accept the fact that, to this person, these feelings are normal. You can't change their minds or their feelings. Too often, parents will send their gay child to a counselor and say, "Fix him." It just doesn't work that way.

As a Christian, you are a light shining in a dark place. Be a friend with a tender heart and a winsome spirit; the biggest problem of homosexuals is not their sexuality, but their need for Jesus Christ. At the same time, pre-decide what your boundaries will be about what behavior you just cannot condone in your presence. One college student I know excuses herself from a group when the affection becomes physical; she just gets up and leaves. It is all right to be uncomfortable around blatant sin; you do not have to subject yourself—and the Holy Spirit within you—to what grieves Him. Consider how you would be a friend to people who are living promiscuous heterosexual lives. Like the Lord, we need to value and esteem the person without condoning the sin.

Note

1. Anne Paulk, *Restoring Sexual Identity* (Eugene OR: Harvest House, 2003), p. 246.

For further reading:

- Bergner, Mario. *Setting Love in Order: Hope and Healing for the Homosexual*. Baker, 1995.
- Paulk, Anne. *Restoring Sexual Identity*. Eugene OR: Harvest House, 2003.
- Dallas, Joe. *Desires in Conflict*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991. (Particularly good!)
- Konrad, Jeff. *You Don't Have to Be Gay*. Pacific Publishing, 1987. (This is directed at young men. I can't recommend this one highly enough.)
- Satinover, Jeffrey. *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*. Baker, 1996.
- Schmidt, Thomas E. *Straight & Narrow? : Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*. Intervarsity Press, 1995.
- Worthen, Anita and Bob Davies. *Someone I Love is Gay: How Family and Friends Can Respond*. Intervarsity Press, 1996.
- The website of Living Hope Ministries, an outreach in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Of particular interest are the online testimonies and especially an excellent online support group, a confidential, free, moderated message board for strugglers, overcomers and those who seek to encourage and uplift. www.livehope.org

Reiki: A Christian Perspective

Dr. Michael Gleghorn offers an overview and critical Christian worldview evaluation of Reiki energy medicine, an alternative health therapy that has grown in popularity in recent years.



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

What is Reiki?

In the past twenty-five years there has been a huge increase in both the general acceptance and public availability of various types of alternative health therapies. Although some of these therapies may be beneficial, others do little good, and some are downright harmful. Under the broad umbrella of alternative medicine there are a variety of therapies that might loosely be referred to as “energy medicine”:

Energy medicine is a broad field covering a variety of therapies from many parts of the world. While each is based on the existence of a nonphysical energy pervading the universe, the nature of the energy, the form of therapies, and how healing is believed to take place varies from culture to culture.[\[1\]](#)

This energy is variously referred to as *prana* in India, *chi* in China, and *ki* in Japan. One form of energy medicine that has been growing in popularity is called *Reiki*. According to some, *rei* means “universal,” and *ki* means “life force energy.” But the International Center for Reiki Training goes further, declaring that “Rei” is more accurately understood to mean “supernatural knowledge or spiritual consciousness . . . the wisdom that comes from God or the Higher Self.” Thus, according to the Center, “it is the God-consciousness called Rei that guides the life force called Ki in the practice we

call Reiki.”{2}

Reiki was discovered, or perhaps rediscovered, by Dr. Mikao Usui during a mystical experience at a mountain retreat in early twentieth century Japan. Some claim it is the same method of healing used by both the Buddha and Jesus, although the records of this have been lost.{3}

So how does Reiki work? To put it generally, and somewhat simply, Reiki claims to work by removing obstructions to the free flow of life force energy throughout the body. Such obstructions, which arise through negative thoughts, actions, and feelings, are believed to be the fundamental cause of illness and disease. But “Reiki clears, straightens and heals the energy pathways, thus allowing the life force to flow in a healthy and natural way.”{4} In this way, Reiki is believed to enhance physical, mental and emotional health.

In order to tap into this power and learn to channel Reiki one must first receive four attunements from a Reiki Master during a First Degree Reiki training session. These attunements are alleged to open “subtle mental and physical energy systems” that prepare the recipient “to channel Universal Life Force Energy.”{5} Supposedly, this creates a permanent connection with Reiki, thus allowing the recipient to channel this energy for life.

At this point, some may be wondering if there is any scientific evidence that corroborates the existence of this energy. Let’s look at the evidence.

Is there Scientific Support for Reiki?

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some proponents of life force energy claimed it was a form of electromagnetic radiation (of which light and heat are familiar examples).{6} Of course, electromagnetic radiation is a real, physical phenomenon of the world in which we live. But should it be

identified with life force energy? The answer is no, and today most of those who believe in such energy would say the same. After all, such energy is generally believed to be non-physical. But electromagnetic radiation is a form of physical energy.

Still, many Reiki practitioners believe that good evidence supports the existence of life force energy. For example, the aura is said to be “a field of subtle life-force energy that surrounds the body of every living being.”[\[7\]](#) Those properly attuned to this energy often claim that they can feel a person’s aura. A few even claim to see auras.

But it’s one thing to make such a claim, quite another to demonstrate it under properly supervised conditions. In one study, ten people who claimed to see auras were tested against a control group of ten people who made no such claim. “Four identical screens were placed in a room with volunteers who took turns standing behind one or another of them.”[\[8\]](#) Those who claimed to see auras believed that they could detect which screen the volunteer was standing behind. But out of 720 attempts, they only gave 185 correct answers – an accuracy rate consistent with guessing. The control group, however, gave 196 correct answers – eleven more than those who claimed to see auras! Apparently, not everyone who claims to see auras can actually demonstrate this claim.

But haven’t auras been photographed? One author claims, “Kirlian photography . . . enables us to . . . photograph auras.”[\[9\]](#) However, when such photographs are investigated by independent scientists, the images are seen to have a completely physical explanation. Also, Kirlian auras have been recorded for some things not usually believed to have a field of life force energy, like pennies and paper clips. Such evidence casts doubt on the claim that auras have been photographed.

Thus, if there is such a thing as life force energy, it has so

far eluded the detection of scientists. Such energy may still exist, and science may one day verify as much. But for now, scientific support is lacking. Still, some argue that “the proof of whether a therapeutic procedure is effective rests not on the gathering of data alone but on the client’s actual experience.”[{10}](#) In other words, if Reiki works, such life force energy must exist!

What About Reiki’s Success?

For many people, the most powerful evidence of Reiki’s effectiveness as an alternative health therapy are the testimonials of those who claim to have been personally helped by it. Consider what happened to Alex. He was in chronic pain due to a motorcycle accident that resulted in three crushed vertebrae. He attended a Reiki class, and after his first initiation was free of persistent pain![{11}](#)

How does one explain such a story? Does it prove that Reiki really works? While it cannot be denied that there is abundant anecdotal evidence of Reiki’s healing power, we must be very careful before we credit Reiki with relieving Alex’s pain. “With the exception of unsubstantiated opinion, anecdotal evidence is the least useful...evidence available to judge medical therapies.”[{12}](#)

This isn’t just the opinion of conventional Western medicine. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine acknowledges that there is a “hierarchy in the different types of evidence for therapies, with anecdotal at the bottom.”[{13}](#) Thus, anecdotal evidence counts for something, but it hardly *proves* that Reiki is an effective method of healing.

So how might we explain Alex’s pain relief? Although there are various possibilities, for the sake of time we will only mention two. First, we must honestly acknowledge that maybe Reiki was responsible for the elimination of Alex’s pain. After all, it was immediately after receiving Reiki that Alex

felt relief. However, it's crucial to recognize that there is another very sensible and well-documented explanation. Quite simply, Alex's pain relief may have been due to the "placebo effect."

"The placebo effect is the combination of factors that give therapies beneficial effects, but which are not caused by any direct physiological action."[\[14\]](#) A classic example is the sugar pill. In itself it can neither cure illness nor relieve pain. However, when given to a patient by a trusted, confident physician, who says it's just what the patient needs to recover from his or her ailments, it can be incredibly effective in relieving a wide variety of psychosomatic disorders. Since such disorders have a psychological or emotional (rather than physiological) cause, they can be relieved without directly treating the patient's body.

Many studies indicate that the placebo effect can account for a full third (or more) "of the improvements found with any therapy."[\[15\]](#) But can it explain Alex's sudden relief from pain? Indeed it can. Pain can be treated very effectively with placebos.

Of course, some may argue that the really important thing is not so much *why* Alex was healed, but simply *that* he was healed! To some degree, I can sympathize with this argument. But it does have problems.

Should Christians Be Concerned About Reiki?

Most people, myself included, consider physical health to be good and valuable. All things being equal, it's better to be healthy than sick. But if this is so, then does it really matter *how*, or *why*, the sick are healed? Isn't the only important thing simply *that* they're healed? And how can anyone object to Reiki if it helps accomplish this?

These are important questions and they deserve a sympathetic response. But first, let's consider an important question: Is physical health *always* preferable to sickness? After all, most people consider such qualities as compassion, patience, courage, and love to be great and noble virtues. But what if there were people who could only acquire such virtues through the pain and suffering brought on by physical illness? So long as they're healthy, they will lack these virtues. But if they're sick, they will acquire them. Let me suggest that if you truly value these virtues, you might decide that it's better to be morally and spiritually healthy (though physically sick), than physically healthy alone.

Let's now return to our initial question. Does it really matter *if, how, and why* Reiki works? I think it does. Suppose there is no genuine power in Reiki. Suppose it "works" merely as a placebo. In that case, would you want to send a loved one to a Reiki practitioner to be treated for strep throat? Without proper treatment this would likely result in rheumatic fever, permanent heart disease, and maybe even death. Real antibiotics are needed; a placebo cannot cure this kind of infection.[{16}](#) Under circumstances such as these, I suspect that no one would want their loved ones treated by Reiki alone.

But now suppose that there *is* genuine power in Reiki. Is it not important to know *where* this power comes from and *what* it is? What if Reiki offers physical health only at the expense of spiritual health? Should Christians be concerned about this?

The International Center for Reiki Training describes Reiki as "spiritually guided life force energy."[{17}](#) After receiving the necessary attunements, a Reiki practitioner can channel this energy for life. The Center describes the attunement process as "a powerful spiritual experience" that "is guided by the Rei or God-consciousness." What's more, this experience "is also attended by Reiki guides and other spiritual beings

who help implement the process.”[{18}](#)

What are Christians to make of this? Should we be concerned about the nature of this attunement process? Exactly who, or what, are these Reiki spirit guides? Should we be cautious about becoming involved with these spirits? Or should we simply trust that they’re doing God’s work? After all, doesn’t *all* healing come from God?

Does All Healing Come From God?

Does all healing come from God? The International Center for Reiki Training declares that “Reiki comes from God.”[{19}](#) But if we read the material on their Web site, we see that the Center advocates an Eastern or New Age view of “God.” This view is radically different from that of the Bible. For example, the Center equates “God” with man’s Higher Self, thus blurring the distinction between God and humanity that is taught in the Bible. Practically speaking, this difference between the God of the Bible and the “God” of Eastern or New Age philosophy means that adherents of these two systems are asserting something very different when they claim to have been healed by God.

The God of the Bible is a personal being, capable of miraculously healing people according to His will (Exodus 15:26). Nevertheless, the Bible does not teach that *all* signs and wonders come from God. On the contrary, Jesus warned His disciples that in the last days there would be false Christs and false prophets who would show great signs and wonders (Matt. 24:24). In his second letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul linked such events to the power of Satan (2 Thess. 2:9).

But does Satan have the power to perform marvelous healings? Indeed, it appears that he might. In Revelation 13 we learn that after receiving power from Satan, the beast is healed of

a near-fatal head wound (vv. 2-3). The context seems to imply that this amazing healing is the work of Satan. From a biblical perspective, this raises an important question about the healing power of Reiki. Exactly where does this healing energy come from?

We've already seen that there is not convincing evidence to regard this energy as a physical phenomenon. Biblically, this seems to leave only two main options. Either the energy comes from God, or it does not. Although the International Center for Reiki Training declares that "Reiki comes from God," we've already seen that this cannot be the God of the Bible. Is it possible, then, that the source of this energy is demonic?

As I mentioned previously, the ability to channel life force energy involves first going through an attunement process. The Center claims that these attunements are attended "by Reiki guides and other spiritual beings who help implement the process."^{20} Is it possible that by involving themselves with spirit guides, Reiki practitioners may unwittingly be opening themselves, as well as their patients, to demonic influences? Although it may not be possible to categorically affirm that the source of Reiki energy medicine is demonic, the Bible, in condemning all forms of spiritism, does seem to at least allow for this possibility (see Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Deut. 18:9-14; Acts 16:16-18). Therefore, it seems to me that Christians should take the wiser, safer, and probably even healthier course of action, and carefully avoid all involvement with Reiki energy medicine.

Notes

1. Donald O'Mathuna & Walt Larimore, *Alternative Medicine: The Christian Handbook* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), 193.
2. "Reiki FAQ: What is Reiki?" at www.reiki.org/FAQ/WhatIsReiki.html.
3. Gary P. Stewart, et al. *Basic Questions on Alternative Medicine: What is Good and What*

- is Not?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1998), 61.
4. "Reiki FAQ: How Does Reiki Work?" at www.reiki.org/FAQ/HowDoesReikiWork.html.
 5. David F. Vennells, *Reiki for Beginners: Mastering Natural Healing Techniques* (St. Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn Publications, 2000), 41-42.
 6. Mathuna & Larimore, *Alternative Medicine*, 195. I have relied heavily on the chapter on "Energy Medicine," pp. 193-99, in this section.
 7. Vennells, *Reiki for Beginners*, 106.
 8. Mathuna & Larimore, *Alternative Medicine*, 197.
 9. Vennells, *Reiki for Beginners*, 106.
 10. Libby Barnett, Maggie Chambers and Susan Davidson, *Reiki Energy Medicine* (Rochester, Vt.: Healing Arts Press, 1996), 15.
 11. *Ibid.*, 29.
 12. Mathuna & Larimore, *Alternative Medicine*, 115. I have relied heavily on chapter 10, "How Science Tests Therapies and Remedies," in this section.
 13. *Ibid.*, 116.
 14. *Ibid.*, 118.
 15. *Ibid.*, 124.
 16. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 487.
 17. "Reiki FAQ: What is Reiki?" at www.reiki.org/FAQ/WhatIsReiki.html.
 18. "Reiki FAQ: Learning Reiki" at www.reiki.org/FAQ/LearningReiki.html.
 19. "Reiki FAQ: What is Reiki?" at www.reiki.org/FAQ/WhatIsReiki.html.
 20. "Reiki FAQ: Learning Reiki" at www.reiki.org/FAQ/LearningReiki.html.

Feminism: A Christian Perspective

Sue Bohlin provides a Christian view on feminism. How does this prevalent view of women measure up from a biblical perspective?

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

The worldview of feminism has permeated just about every aspect of American life, education and culture. We see it in the way men are portrayed as lovable but stupid buffoons on TV sitcoms. We see it in the way boys are punished and marginalized in school for not being enough like girls. We see it in politically correct speech that attempts to change the way people think by harassing them for their choice of words.

The anger and frustration that drove feminism's history is legitimate; women have been devalued and dishonored ever since the fall of man. Very real, harmful inequities needed to be addressed, and it's important to honor some of the success of feminist activists. But at the same time, we need to examine and expose the worldview that fuels much of feminist thought.

Modern-day feminism got its major start when Betty Friedan wrote her landmark book *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she coined the phrase "The Housewife Blahs" to describe millions of unfulfilled women. There are many reasons that women can feel unfulfilled and dishonored, but from a Christian perspective I would suggest that this is what life feels like when we are disconnected from God and disconnected from living out *His* purpose for our lives. As Augustine said, "We are restless, O God, until we find our rest in Thee."

Betty Friedan looked at unhappy, unfulfilled women and diagnosed the problem as *patriarchy*, which means a male-dominated society. If women are unhappy, the reason is that men are in charge.

The early feminists decided that women are oppressed because bearing and raising children is a severe limitation and liability. What makes women *different* from men equals *weakness*. The next step, then, was to overcome that difference so that women could be just like men. The invention of the birth control pill helped fuel that illusion.

Out of the consciousness-raising groups in the '70s came a shift in the view of women's differences. Instead of seeing those differences as weakness, they now saw those differences as a source of pride and confidence. It was now a good thing to be a woman.

The next step in feminist thought was that women were not just *equal* to men, they were *better* than men. This spawned famous quotes like Gloria Steinem's comment that "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle."^{1} Male-bashing became the sport of the '90s.

Feminism says, "The problem is patriarchy—male dominated society." The problem is actually the sin of people within a God-ordained hierarchy. In a fallen world, there are going to be problems between men and women, and especially abuses of power. We must not confuse the abuses of the structure with the structure itself.^{2}

Feminism and the Church

Feminism has so permeated our culture that we should not be surprised that it has impacted the church as well. Religious feminists uncovered the "Church Women Blahs." People became aware that for the most part, women were relegated to service positions like making coffee and rocking babies. If a woman

had gifts in teaching, shepherding, administration or evangelism, she was out of luck.

The *Magna Carta* for Christian feminists is Galatians 3:28: "In Christ there is no male or female." However, the context of this verse is not about equal rights, but that all believers have the same position of humility at the foot of the Cross. The issue is not capability, but God-ordained positions within a God-ordained authority structure of male leadership. Other biblical passages that go into detail about gender-dependent roles show that Galatians 3:28 cannot mean the obliteration of those roles.

There are two main areas where religious feminists seek to change gender roles: the role of women in the church, and the role of women in marriage. The discussion has produced two camps: egalitarians and complementarians.

Egalitarians are the feminist camp, with an emphasis on equality of *roles*, not just *value*. They believe that hierarchy produces inequality, and that different means unequal. The solution, therefore, is to get rid of the differences between men's and women's roles. Women should be ordained, allowed to occupy the office of pastor and elder, and exercise authority over others in the church. Instead of differences in the roles of husband and wife, both spouses are called to mutual submission.

Egalitarians are reacting against a very real problem in the church. But the problem of authoritarian men, and women relegated to minor serving positions, is due to an abuse and distortion of the hierarchy God designed. Egalitarians reject the male authority structure along with the abuse of that structure.

Complementarians believe that God has ordained a hierarchy of authority in the church and within the family that reflects the hierarchy of authority within the Trinity. And just as

there is equality in the Trinity, there is equality in the church and in marriage because we are all made in the image of God. Women are just as gifted as men, but there are biblical restrictions on the exercise of some of those gifts, such as not teaching men from a position of authority, and not occupying the office of pastor or elder. In marriage, wives are called to submit to their husbands. Mutual submission in marriage is no more appropriate than submission of parents to children.

Christian feminists did not evaluate whether the structures or hierarchies of leadership were there because God designed them that way. They just demanded wholesale change. But some things are worth keeping!

Feminism on Campus

As with the family and the church, feminism has had an impact on our college campuses. Abraham Lincoln once warned, "The philosophy of the school room in one generation will become the philosophy of government in the next." What happens on college campuses eventually affects the rest of the culture, and nowhere is feminism's pervasiveness more evident than in our colleges.

A new discipline of Women's Studies has arisen in many universities. These courses usually stress women's literature, treating with contempt anything written by "dead white European males." They often incorporate women's religions in the curricula, especially the Goddess worship of Wicca on campus. The main tenet of this pagan religion is that the worshipper is in harmony with Mother Earth and with all life. They worship the Goddess, which is described as "the immanent life force, . . . Mother Nature, the Earth, the Cosmos, the interconnectedness of all life."³ Many witches (followers of Wicca, not Satanists) and pagans are involved in women's studies programs because, as one Wiccan Web site put it, "Many feminists have turned to Wicca and the role of priestess for

healing and strength after the patriarchal oppression and lack of voice for women in the major world religions.”[\[4\]](#)

Christianity is often portrayed on college campuses, and especially within Women’s Studies, as an abusive religion. There are several reasons. First, because Christianity is hierarchical, teaching differentiation of roles and that some are to submit to and follow others. Second, their skewed view of the Bible is that Christianity teaches that women are inferior to men. Third, Christ was male, so he is insufficient as a role model for women and can’t possibly understand what it means to be a woman. And fourth, since the language of the Bible is male-oriented and patriarchal (both of which are evil), it must be dismissed or changed.

Feminism impacts dating relationships on campus. Heterosexual dating is often colored by an attempt to persuade women that all men are potential rapists and cannot be trusted. Even a remark meant to compliment a woman is taken as sexist and unacceptable. One woman, wearing a short skirt on campus, heard someone whistle appreciatively. She strode into the women’s study center complaining, “I’ve just been raped!”

Angry feminists convey a hatred and fear of men as part of the feminist ideology. When it comes to dating, for a number of feminists, lesbianism is considered the only appropriate option. If men are brutes and idiots, why would anyone want to have an intimate relationship with one? In fact, there’s a new acronym on campus, GUG: “Gay until graduation.” But the fact is, most women really like men; that’s always been a problem for feminists. Let’s consider more problems that result from feminism.

The Problematic Legacy of Feminism

Feminists started from a reasonable point in recognizing a most unhappy aspect of life in a fallen world: women tend to be dishonored, disrespected, and devalued by many men. This is

as true in religious systems as it is in society and political systems. Feminists started out trying to rectify this problem first by trying to prove that women were as good as men. Then they decided that women were better than men. They ended up trying to erase the lines of distinction between men and women altogether. This has resulted in tremendous confusion about what it means to be a woman, as well as what it means to be a man. And naturally, it has produced a lot of confusion in relationships as well. This confusion ranges from men who are afraid to open doors for women for fear of receiving a rude tongue-lashing, to women who are baffled in the workplace because the men they compete against at work won't ask them out on a date.

Radical feminist thought despised much of what it means to be a woman—to be receptive and responsive and relational, to treasure marriage and family. Only masculine traits and behaviors and jobs were deemed valuable. Nonetheless, many young women are confused by the messages they are getting from the culture: that an education and a job are the only worthwhile pursuits, and the social capital of marriage and family is no longer valued. However, these same women feel guilty and confused for finding themselves still longing for marriage and family when they're supposed to be content without them. One college student said, "I've taken all the women's studies courses—I know that marriage and motherhood are traps—but I still want to do both." [\[5\]](#)

The legacy of feminism is the refusal of the God-given role of men to be initiator, protector and provider. And the God-given role of women to be responder, nurturer and helper is equally disdained. The consequence of this rebellion is relational confusion, especially in the home. Dads aren't communicating to their sons why it's a blessing to be male, because frankly, they're not sure that it is. The message of feminism is that being male is a joke or a curse. Moms aren't teaching their daughters the basic skill sets that homemakers need because

they're too busy at their jobs and besides, haven't we been taught that being a homemaker is demeaning? As a mentoring Mom to mothers of preschoolers, I see how many young women are totally clueless about how to be a wife and mother because those essential skills just weren't considered important by their mothers. Radical feminism hates family and families, and we all suffer as a result.

Feminism says, "The problem is patriarchy—male dominated society." The problem is actually the sin of people within a God-ordained hierarchy. The heart of feminism is a rebellion against the abuses of this God-ordained hierarchy, but it's also a rebellion against God's plan itself. This is a perfect example of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Feminists believe they have the right to reinvent reality and to change the rules to suit them. This rebellious belief system has had some disastrous effects on our culture and society.

For example, one of feminism's biggest achievements was the legalization of abortion. *Keeping* it legal is one of feminism's biggest goals: see, if women are to be truly free, then they must be free to decide whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term. A woman's ability to conceive, give birth, and nurture babies is seen as weakness and vulnerability, because women can be forced to be impregnated and to bear unwanted babies. Removing the consequence of sexual activity, and getting rid of unwanted pregnancy to cancel out a woman's so-called "weakness," is important to many feminists. So, since 1973, there have been over 40 million abortions in the U.S. [\[6\]](#). But that only tells part of the story; "while some women report relatively little trauma following abortion, for many, the experience is devastating, causing severe and long-lasting emotional, psychological and spiritual trauma." [\[7\]](#) I have the privilege of helping post-abortal women grieve the loss of their babies and receive God's forgiveness for their sin. They know that feminism's insistence that abortion is every woman's right is a lie.

Another impact of feminism is seen in the feminization of American schools. Feminism's disrespect for men and boys has shaped schools and educational policy around values and methods that favor girls over boys. Competition, a natural state of being for many boys, is considered harmful and evil, to be replaced with girl-friendly cooperative, relational activities. "Schools are denying the very behavior that makes little boys boys. In Southern California, a mother was stunned to find out that her son was disciplined for running and jumping over a bench at recess." {8} My colleague Don Closson wrote, "Gender crusaders believe that if they can influence little boys early enough, they can make them more like little girls." {9}

To despise the glory of masculinity is to reject the very image of God. To despise the treasure of femininity is to reject what the Bible calls the glory of man. {10} That's the problem with feminism: it is a rejection of what God has called good. It has gone too far in addressing the inequities of living in a fallen world. It's a rebellion against God's right to be God and our responsibility to submit joyfully to Him.

Notes

1. Actually, I have discovered, it wasn't original with Ms. Steinem. She had this to say in a letter she wrote to *Time* magazine in autumn 2000: "In your note on my new and happy marital partnership with David Bale, you credit me with the witticism 'A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.' In fact, Irina Dunn, a distinguished Australian educator, journalist and politician, coined the phrase back in 1970 when she was a student at the University of Sydney." Irina Dunn has confirmed this story, in an e-mail of January 28, 2002: "Yes, indeed, I am the one Gloria referred to. I was paraphrasing from a phrase I read in a philosophical text I was reading for my Honours year in English Literature and Language in 1970. It

was “A man needs God like a fish needs a bicycle.” My inspiration arose from being involved in the nascent women’s movement at the time, and from being a bit of a smart-arse. I scribbled the phrase on the backs of two toilet doors, would you believe, one at Sydney University where I was a student, and the other at Soren’s Wine Bar at Woolloomooloo, a seedy suburb in south Sydney. The doors, I have to add, were already favoured graffiti sites.”

www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/414150.html

2. I am indebted to the wisdom and insight of Mary Kassian as expressed in her excellent book *The Feminist Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992).

3. www.cog.org/wicca/about.html

4. Ibid.

5. Quoted by Barbara DeFoe Whitehead, *Mars Hill Audio Journal* No. 61, Mar./Apr. 2003.

6. www.nrlc.org/abortion/aboramt.html

7. www.hopeafterabortion.com/aftermath/

8. William Pollack, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998),

94. The entire quote is from Don Closson, “[The Feminization of American Schools](#)”.

9. Ibid.

10. 1 Cor. 11:7

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Are We Alone in the Universe? A Biblical View of Aliens

Dr. Ray Bohlin provides a Christian view on the probability and meaning of life on other planets. From a biblical

perspective, what would it mean to find evidence of life beyond this earth?



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

Life on Mars?

There was great excitement in the media when a group of scientists from NASA announced they had found evidence of life on Mars. Their evidence, an alleged Martian meteorite, was vaulted to center stage, and everyone from CNN to *Nightline* ran special programs with interviews and video footage of the scientists and their prized specimen. President Clinton was so excited by the announcement that he praised the U.S. space program and took the opportunity to establish a bipartisan space summit headed up by Vice President Al Gore to study the future of U.S. space research. Aren't we already doing that?

Anyway, clearly this announcement took the country by storm. Some of the scientists were embarrassingly gushing about how significant these findings were. The media frenzy was prompted by the early release of an article from the journal *Science*, the premier scientific journal in the U.S. The article was due out the following week, but *Science* decided to release it early because it had leaked out.

Here's what the excitement was about. A group of scientists had studied a meteorite that had been found in the ice of Antarctica. Previously, it had been determined that this meteorite had originated on Mars by studying the gaseous content of glass-like components of the meteor. The gas composition matched very well the atmosphere of Mars. This conclusion seems reasonable.

So, they presumed they had a meteor from Mars. Next they looked for evidence of life on and in the crevices of the meteor. They found two types of molecules that can form as a result of life processes, carbonates and complex molecules

called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons or PAHs. They also found shapes in the rock that resembled those of known microfossils on Earth. Microfossils are fossils of one-celled organisms which are rather tricky to interpret.

Well, what does this mean? Obviously, the NASA scientists felt the things just mentioned provided ample evidence to conclude that life once existed on Mars. However, the chemical signs could all be due to processes that have nothing to do with life, and the supposed microfossils are 100 times smaller than any such fossil found on Earth. Other groups that studied this same meteorite concluded that either the temperature of formation of the chemicals was far too high to allow life (over 700 degrees C) or that other chemical signals for life were absent. John Kerridge, a planetary scientist from the University of California at San Diego, said, "The conclusion is at best premature and more probably wrong." But listen to the concluding statement in the paper in *Science*:

Although there are alternative explanations for each of these phenomena taken individually, when they are considered collectively, particularly in view of their spatial association, we conclude that they are evidence for primitive life on Mars.[\[1\]](#)

In plain English, there are reasonable non-life explanations for each of the evidences presented, but we just think that they mean there is life on Mars. The evidence **is** very equivocal and was challenged by many other scientists, but the media did not report that as fully. But maybe they are right! In fact, there is one simple explanation that is consistently ignored by media and scientists alike. If there really is, or has been, life on Mars, what could that possibly mean for evolution, and more importantly, does it somehow refute creation? We'll look at that next.

What Would Life on Mars Mean?

Because of the recent announcement of signs of life on Mars, many people were encouraged in their belief that we are not alone in the universe. These signs are far from certain and probably wrong, but if it's true, what would these results mean to evolutionists? Moreover, is there any reason for Christians to fear confirmation of life on Mars?

Let us assume, then, for the moment that the evidence from this Martian meteorite is legitimate evidence for life on Mars—life that at some point in the past actually existed on Mars. What would it mean?

For evolutionists the evidence is perceived as confirmation that life actually arises from non-life by purely chemical processes. In addition, evolutionists draw the conclusion that life must be able to evolve very easily since it did so on two adjacent planets in the same solar system. Therefore, even though origin of life research is actually at a standstill, such a discovery seemingly confirms the notion that *some* chemical evolution scenario *must work*. I will address this assumption later.

On the other hand, some have stated that if there is life on Mars, creationism has been dealt a death blow. They rationalize that since (1) we now know that life can evolve just about anywhere, and (2) the Bible never speaks of life anywhere but on Earth, the Bible is, therefore, unreliable. Besides, they reason, why would God create life on a planet with no humans? However, since the Bible is absolutely silent on the subject of extra-terrestrial life, we can make no predictions about its possibility. God is certainly free to create life on planets other than Earth if He chooses.

Getting back to the evolutionists' glee at the possibility of life evolving on other planets, the real question is whether this is the proper conclusion if life is indeed found on Mars?

The simple answer, inexplicably avoided by the media, is NO! The simplest answer to the possible discovery of life on Mars is that the so-called "Martian life" actually came from Earth!

Think about it this way. The meteorite that was found is supposed to have existed on Mars previously. How did it get to Earth? Well, it is hypothesized that a large meteorite crashed into Mars throwing up lots of debris into space, some of which finds its way to Earth and at least a few of which are found by Earthlings. If you are thinking with me, you now realize that the same scenario could have been played out on Earth.

Evolutionists suggest that the Earth was under heavy meteor bombardment until at least 3.8 billion years ago—about the time they say life appeared on Earth. Christian astronomer Hugh Ross states it this way:

Meteorites large enough to make a crater greater than 60 miles across will cause Earth rocks to escape Earth's gravity. Out of 1,000 such rocks ejected, 291 strike Venus, 20 go to Mercury, 17 hit Mars, 14 make it to Jupiter, and 1 goes all the way to Saturn. Traveling the distance with these rocks will be many varieties of Earth life. [\[2\]](#)

Ross also documents that many forms of microscopic life are quite capable of surviving such a journey. All this is quite well known in the scientific community, but I have not seen it mentioned once in any public discussion. I believe the reason is that the possibility of life having evolved on Mars is too juicy to pass up.

The Improbability of Life Elsewhere in the Universe

I would like to address the amazing optimism of so many that the universe is teeming with life. No doubt this is fueled by the tremendous success of such science fiction works as *Star*

Wars and *Star Trek* which eloquently present the reasonableness of a universe pregnant with intelligent life forms.

Inherent within this optimism is the evolutionary assumption that if life evolved here, certainly we should not arrogantly suppose that life could not have evolved elsewhere in the universe. And if life in general exists in the universe, then, of course, there must be intelligent life out there as well.

This is the basic assumption of the SETI program, the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence. This is the program, now privately funded instead of federally funded, that searches space for radio waves emanating from another planet that would indicate the presence of intelligent life. But is such a hope realistic? Is there a justifiable reason for suspecting that planets suitable to life exist elsewhere in the universe?

Over the last two decades scientists have begun tabulating many characteristics of our universe, galaxy, solar system, and planet that appear to have been finely-tuned for life to exist. Christian astronomer and apologist, Dr. Hugh Ross documents all these characteristics in his book *Creator and the Cosmos*, [\[3\]](#) and is constantly updating them. In the book's third edition (2001), Ross documents 35 characteristics of the universe and 66 characteristics of our galaxy, solar system, and planet that are finely-tuned for life to exist.

Some examples include the size, temperature, and brightness of our sun, the size, chemical composition, and stable orbit of Earth. The fact that we have one moon and not none or two or three. The distance of the Earth from the sun, the tilt of the earth's axis, the speed of the earth's rotation, the time it takes Earth to orbit the sun. If any of these factors were different by even a few percent, the ability of Earth to sustain life would be severely compromised. Recently it has been noted that even the presence of Jupiter and Saturn serve to stabilize the orbit of Earth. Without these two large planets present exactly where they are, the Earth would be

knocked out of its present near circular orbit into an elliptical one causing higher temperature differences between seasons and subjecting Earth to greater meteor interference. Neither condition is hospitable to the continuing presence of life.

Ross has further calculated the probabilities of all these factors coming together by natural processes alone to be 1×10^{-166} ; that's a decimal point followed by 165 zeroes and then a one. A very liberal estimate of how many planets there may be, though we have only documented less than 100, is 10^{22} or 10 billion trillion planets, one for every star in the universe. Combining these two probabilities tells us that there are 10^{-144} planets in the entire universe that could support life. Obviously this is far less than one; therefore, by natural processes alone, we shouldn't even be here—let alone some kind of alien life form.

So unless God created life elsewhere, we are alone, and for the materialistic evolutionist, this is a frightening thought.

Problems with Chemical Evolution on Earth

The statistics given above mean that we are really alone in the universe and that there is no hope of finding intelligent civilizations as in the television program *Star Trek*. While it means there is no one out there to threaten our survival, there is also no one out there to save us from our own mistakes.

This observation highlights why I believe the scientific community and the media became so excited about the possibilities of life on Mars. Efforts to determine how life could have evolved from non-living matter have been so fraught with problems that it makes the possibility of life elsewhere extremely remote. But if it could be proved that life evolved elsewhere, then it would demonstrate that life springs up

rather easily, and we just haven't found the right trick here on Earth to prove it. But this just leapfrogs the problem.

But is the evolution of life from non-living chemicals really that impossible? The difficulties fall into three categories, the Chemical Problem, the Thermodynamic Problem, and the Informational Problem. These issues are presented comprehensively in a book by Thaxton, Bradley, and Olsen titled *The Mystery of Life's Origin*^{4} and in a chapter in the edited volume by J. P. Moreland, *The Creation Hypothesis*.^{5}

Chemical Problems are illustrated by the difficulty in synthesizing even the simplest building block molecules necessary for life from inorganic precursors. Amino acids, sugars, and the bases for the important nucleotide molecules that make up DNA and RNA were all thought to be easily synthesized in an early Earth atmosphere of ammonia, methane, water vapor, and hydrogen. But further experiments showed this scenario to be unrealistic. Ammonia and methane would have been short-lived in this atmosphere; the multiple energy sources available would have destroyed the necessary molecules and water would have broken apart into hydrogen and oxygen. The oxygen was scrupulously avoided in all prebiotic scenarios because it would have poisoned all the necessary reactions.

Thermodynamic Problems arise from the difficulty in assembling all these complex molecules that would have been floating around in some prebiotic soup into a highly organized and complex cell. To accomplish the task of achieving specified complexity in life's molecules such as DNA and proteins, the availability of raw energy for millions of years is not enough. All systems where specified complexity is produced from simple components requires an energy conversion mechanism to channel the energy in the right direction to accomplish the necessary work. Without photosynthesis, there is no such mechanism in the prebiotic Earth.

The Informational Problem shows that there is no way to

account for the origin of the genetic code, which is a language, without intelligent input. Informational codes require intelligent preprogramming. No evolutionary mechanism can accomplish this. Life requires intelligence.

So you can see why evolutionists would get excited about the possibility of finding evolved life elsewhere. It's because life is seemingly impossible to evolve here. So, if it did happen elsewhere, maybe our experiments are just missing something.

Independence Day, The Movie

In the movie *Independence Day*, an alien battle force swoops down on Earth with the intention of destroying the human race, sucking the planet dry of all available resources and then moving on to some other unlucky civilization in the galaxy. But, those indomitable humans aided by good old American ingenuity outsmart those dull-witted aliens and Earth is saved. The story has been told many times, but perhaps never as well or never with such great special effects. The movie was a huge success.

But why are we continually fascinated by the possibility of alien cultures? The movie gave the clear impression that there must be great numbers of intelligent civilizations out there in the universe. This notion has become widely accepted in our culture.

Few recognize that the supposed existence of alien civilizations is based on evolutionary assumptions. The science fiction of *Star Trek* and the *Star Wars* begins with evolution. As I've stated earlier, evolutionists simply rationalize that since life evolved here with no outside interference, the universe must be pregnant with life. Astronomer Carl Sagan put it this way after he had reviewed the so-called success of early Earth chemical evolution experiments:

Nothing in such experiments is unique to the earth. The initial gases, and the energy sources, are common throughout the Cosmos. Chemical reactions like those in our laboratory vessels may be responsible for the organic matter in interstellar space and the amino acids found in meteorites. Some similar chemistry must have occurred on a billion other worlds in the Milky Way Galaxy. The molecules of life fill the Cosmos. {6}

Sagan strongly suggests that the probabilities and chemistry of the universe dictate that life is ubiquitous in the galaxy. But as I stated earlier, the odds overwhelmingly dictate that our planet is the only one suitable for life in the universe. And the chemistry on Earth also indicates that life is extremely hard to come by. The probability of life simply based on chance occurrences is admitted by many evolutionists to be remote indeed. Many are now suggesting that life is inevitable because there are yet undiscovered laws of nature that automatically lead to complex life forms. In other words, the deck of cards is fixed. Listen to Nobel Laureate and biochemist, Christian de Duve:

We are being dealt thirteen spades not once but thousands of times in succession! This is utterly impossible, unless the deck is doctored. What this doctoring implies with respect to the assembly of the first cell is that most of the steps involved must have had a very high likelihood of taking place under the prevailing conditions. Make them even moderately improbable and the process must abort, however many times it is initiated, because of the very number of successive steps involved. In other words, contrary to Monod's affirmation, the universe was—and presumably still is—pregnant with life. {7}

The only problem with de Duve's suggestion is that we know of no natural processes that will lead automatically to the

complexity of life. Everything we know of life leads to the opposite conclusion. Life is not a product of chance or necessity. Life is a product of intelligence.

Without Divine interference we are alone in the universe and without Christ we are—and should be—terrified. The gospel is as relevant as ever.

Notes

1. *Science*, 16 August 1996, 273:924-30.
2. *Creator and the Cosmos*, NavPress, 2001, p. 210.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-199.
4. Lewis and Stanley, 1984.
5. InterVarsity Press, 1994, pp. 173-210.
6. *Cosmos*, Random House, 1980, p. 40.
7. *Vital Dust*, Basic Books, 1995, p. 9.

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Islam and the Sword

Don Closson provides a consideration of the role that violence has played in both historical and contemporary Islam.

On September 11, 2001 Americans found themselves confronted by an enemy they knew little about. We had suddenly lost more lives to a sneak attack than had been lost in the attack on Pearl Harbor and yet few understood the reasons for the hatred that prompted the destruction of the World Trade Center towers and part of the Pentagon. Even in the days that followed, Americans were getting mixed signals from the media and from national politicians. One voice focused on the peaceful nature of Islam, going so far as to argue that Osama bin Laden could not be a faithful Muslim and commit the acts attributed to

him. Others warned that bin Laden has a considerable following in the Muslim world and that even if he was removed as a potential threat many would step in to replace him with equal or greater fervor.

Some argued that fundamentalist Muslims are no different than fundamentalist believers of any religion. The problem is not Islam, but religious belief of any type when taken too seriously. This view holds that all forms of religious belief, Christian, Jewish, or Islamic can promote terrorism. Robert Wright, a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania writes that:

If Osama Bin Laden were a Christian, and he still wanted to destroy the World Trade Center, he would cite Jesus' rampage against the money-changers. If he didn't want to destroy the World Trade Center, he could stress the Sermon on the Mount.[{1}](#)

His view is that terrorism can be justified by any religion when people are economically depressed. He adds "there is no timeless, immutable essence of Islam, rooted in the Quran, that condemns it to a medieval morality."[{2}](#)

This claim points to the question: Is there something inherent in Islam that makes it more likely to resort to violence than other world religions like Christianity or Buddhism? While it is important to admit that all religions and ideologies have adherents that are willing to use violence to achieve what they believe are justified ends, it does not follow that all religions and ideologies teach equally the legitimacy of violent means.

People have committed horrible atrocities in the name of Jesus Christ, from the inquisitions to the slaying of abortionists. However, it is my position that it is not possible to justify these actions from the teachings of Christ Himself. Nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus teach that one should kill for

the sake of the Gospel, the Kingdom of God, or to defend the honor of Jesus Himself.

What about Islam? My contention is that Islam's founder Muhammad, and the Qur'an, its holy book, condone violence as a legitimate tool for furthering Allah's goals. And that those who use violence in the name of Allah are following a tradition that began with the very birth of Islam.

Muhammad

As mentioned earlier, there are followers in most of the world's belief systems that justify the use of violence to achieve their religious or political goals. However, this says more about the sinfulness of humanity than it does about the belief system itself. It is important to look past the individual behavior of a few followers to the message and actions of the founder of each system and his or her closest disciples. In the case of Islam, this means Muhammad and the leadership of Islam after Muhammad's death.

One cannot overstate the centrality of Muhammad's example within the religion of Islam. One of the greatest Muslim theologians, al- Ghazzali, writes of Muhammad:

Know that the key to happiness is to follow the sunna [Muhammad's actions] and to imitate the Messenger of God in all his coming and going, his movement and rest, in his way of eating, his attitude, his sleep and his talk . . . God has said: "What the messenger has brought—accept it, and what he has prohibited—refrain from it!" (59:7). That means, you have to sit while putting on trousers, and to stand when winding a turban, and to begin with the right foot when putting on shoes. {3}

Although considered only human, one Muslim writer describes Muhammad as "[T]he best model for man in piety and perfection. He is a living proof of what man can be and of what he can

accomplish in the realm of excellence and virtue. . . .”{4} So it is important to note that Muhammad believed that violence is a natural part of Islam. Many passages of the Quran, which came from Muhammad’s lips support violence. Followers are told to “fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them (9:5),” and to “Fight those who believe not in God, nor the Last Day.” (9:29) Muhammad also promises paradise for those who die in battle for Allah, “Those who left their homes . . . or fought or been slain,—Verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath;—A reward from the Presence of God.” (3:195; cf. 2:244; 4:95)

While living in Medina, having escaped from persecution in Mecca, Muhammad supported himself and his group of followers by raiding Meccan caravans. His fame grew after a stunning defeat of a large, well-defended caravan at Badr. Muhammad was also willing to have assassinated those who merely ridiculed his prophetic claims. The list of those killed included Jews, old men and women, slaves, and a mother of five children who was killed while she slept.{5} Also, in order to violate a long-standing ban against warfare during a sacred month, he claimed a new revelation that gave him permission to kill his enemies.{6}

Violent expediency seems to have been the guiding rule of Muhammad’s ethics.

Early Islam

Muhammad’s life as a prophet was a precarious one. After fleeing Mecca and establishing himself in Medina, Muhammad was constantly being tested militarily by those who considered him a religious and political threat. Although at an initial disadvantage, Muhammad wore down his opponents by raiding their caravans, seizing valuable property, taking hostages and disrupting the all-important economic trade Mecca enjoyed with

the surrounding area.^{7} The turning point for Muhammad and his followers seems to have come in what is known as the Battle of the Ditch or the Siege of Medina. A large Meccan force failed to take the city and destroy the new religion. Suspecting that a local Jewish tribe had plotted with the Meccans to destroy him, Muhammad had all the men of the tribe killed and the women and children sold into slavery.^{8} In A.D. 630 Muhammad returned to Mecca with a large force and took it with little bloodshed. He rewarded many of its leaders financially for surrendering and within a short period of time a large number of the surrounding tribes came over to this new and powerful religious and political movement.

Muhammad continued building his following by using a combination of material enticements, his religious message, and force when necessary. With the fall of Mecca, many other tribes realized Muhammad's position as the most powerful political leader in western Arabia and sent representatives to negotiate agreements with him.

Muhammad's death in 632, just two years after his triumphant return to Mecca, thrust an important decision on the community of believers. Should they choose one person to lead in Muhammad's place or do they separate into many communities. The decision was made to pick Abu Bakr, the Prophet's father-in-law and early supporter to assume the role of caliph or successor to Muhammad. Immediately, many who had submitted to Muhammad refused to do so to Abu Bakr. Several tribes wanted political independence, some sought to break religiously as well. The result is known as the Apostasy wars. At the end of two years of fighting to put down both religious and political threats, Abu Bakr had extended his control to include the entire Arabian Peninsula. Islam was now in position to extend its influence beyond Arabia with a large standing army of believers.

Violence and warfare seems to have dominated early Islam. Two of the first four caliphs were assassinated by internal

rivals, and within the first fifty years of its existence Islam experienced two bloody civil wars. Rival tribal loyalties within and the religious struggle or jihad against the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires made the first century of Islam a bloody one.

Jihad

Historian Paul Johnson writes,

[T]he history of Islam has essentially been a history of conquest and re-conquest. The 7th-century “breakout” of Islam from Arabia was followed by the rapid conquest of North Africa, the invasion and virtual conquest of Spain, and a thrust into France that carried the crescent to the gates of Paris.[{9}](#)

From the beginning, Muslims “saw their mission as jihad, or militant effort to combat evil and to spread Muhammad’s message of monotheism and righteousness far and wide.”[{10}](#) Although many Muslims in America have argued that jihad primarily refers to a struggle or striving for personal righteousness, Bernard Lewis, professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University writes that, “The more common interpretation, and that of the overwhelming majority of the classical jurists and commentators, presents jihad as armed struggle for Islam against infidels and apostates.”[{11}](#)

Although highly regulated by Islamic law, the call for every able-bodied Muslim to defend Islam began with Muhammad and has continued with the fatwas of Osama bin Laden in 1996 and 1998. Bin Laden argues that his attacks on American civilians and military personnel conform to Islamic law because America is acting as an imperialistic aggressor against Islam. He has three specific complaints: America has placed infidel troops on holy soil in Saudi Arabia; America has caused the death of over a million Iraqi children since Desert Storm; and American

support for the evil Zionist nation of Israel.

Regarding the history of jihad in Islam, an ex-chief justice of Saudi Arabia has written “[A]t first ‘the fighting’ was forbidden, then it was permitted and after that it was made obligatory, . . .” Muslims are to fight against those who oppress Islam and who worship others along with Allah.[{12}](#) He adds that even though fighting is disliked by the human soul, Allah has made ready an immense reward beyond imagination for those who obey. He also quotes Islamic tradition, which says, “Paradise has one hundred grades which Allah has reserved for the Mujahidin who fight in His Cause.”[{13}](#)

Numerous passages in the Qur’an refer to Allah’s use of violence. A surah titled “The Spoils of War” states, “O Prophet! Rouse the Believers to the fight. If there are twenty amongst you . . . they will vanquish two hundred: if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the Unbelievers: for these are a people without understanding.”[{14}](#) Another says, “O ye who believe! When ye meet the Unbelievers in hostile array, never turn your backs to them. . . .”[{15}](#) It adds that those who do will find themselves in hell, a significant incentive to fight on.

Muslims and Modernity

Islam was born in the midst of persecution and eventually conquest. Muhammad was adept at both religious and military leadership, but what about modern Islam? Do all Muslims see jihad in the light of conquest and warfare?

While it is probably safe to say that American born Muslims apply the teachings of Muhammad and Islamic traditions differently than Saudi or Iranian Muslims. The use of violence in the propagation of Islam enjoys wide support. Part of the reason is that the concept of separation of church and state is alien to Islam. Muhammad Iqbal, architect of Pakistan’s

split from Hindu India, wrote, "The truth is that Islam is not a church. It is a state conceived as a contractual organism. . . ." [\[16\]](#) Responding to the inability of Islam to accommodate the modern world, an Algerian Islamic activist points to the example of Muhammad:

The Prophet himself did not opt to live far away from the camp of men. He did not say to youth: "Sell what you have and follow me. . . ." At Medina, he was not content merely to be the preacher of the new faith: he became also the leader of the new city, where he organized the religious, social and economic life. . . . Later, carrying arms, he put himself at the head of his troops. [\[17\]](#)

The powerful combination within Islam of immediate paradise for those who die while fighting for Allah and the unity of political, religious, and economic structures, helps us to understand the source of suicide bombers and children who dream of becoming one. Young Palestinians are lining up by the hundreds in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to volunteer for suicide missions. Eyad Sarraj, the director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Project, detects a widespread zeal. "If they are turned down they become depressed. They feel they have been deprived of the ultimate award of dying for God." [\[18\]](#) Palestinian support for suicide bombers is now at 70 to 80 percent.

Islam and Christianity both require its followers to sacrifice and turn from the world and self. Yet while Islam equates political conquest with the furtherance of Allah's reign, Jesus taught that we render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's. Christianity recognizes that the advancement of God's kingdom is not necessarily a political one. The New Testament did not advocate the overthrow of the Roman Empire. Muslims are given the example of Muhammad's personal sacrifice in battle so that Allah's enemies might be defeated. Christians are given the example of Christ who gave His life as a sacrifice, so that even His enemies might

believe and have eternal life.

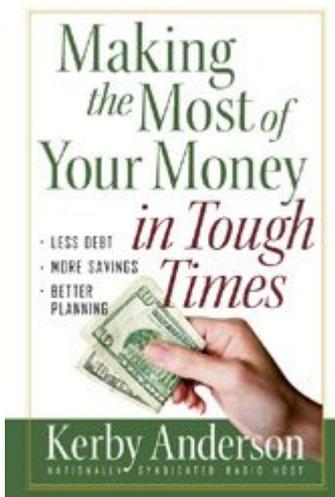
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1. Robert Wright, www.msnbc.com/news, 10/30/2001.
2. Ibid.
3. Norman L. Geisler & Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), p 82.
4. Ibid., 84.
5. Ibid., 175.
6. The Quran states, "They ask thee Concerning fighting in the Prohibited Month. Say: 'Fighting therein is a grave (offense)'; But graver is it In the sight of God To prevent access to the path of God." (2:217)
7. John Esposito, *The Oxford History of Islam*, (Oxford University Press, 1999), p 10.
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10. John Esposito, *The Oxford History of Islam*, p 13.
11. Bernard Lewis, "Jihad vs. Crusade," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 27, 2001.
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14. Qur'an 8:65.
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17. Ibid., p 228.
18. Eric Silver, "Bomber quit intelligence service to join Hamas two days before attack," *Independent Digital* (UK) Ltd, 03 December 2001, www.independent.co.uk.

A Biblical View of Economics – A Christian Life Perspective

Kerby Anderson shows that economics is an important part of one's Christian worldview. Our view of economics is where many of Christ's teachings find their daily application.

In this article we are going to be developing a Christian view of economics. Although most of us do not think of economics in moral terms, there has (until the last century) always been a strong connection between economics and Christian thought.



If you look at the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, you find whole sections of his theological work devoted to economic issues. He asked such questions as: “What is a just price?” or “How should we deal with poverty?”

Today, these questions, if they are even discussed at all, would be discussed in a class on economic theory. But in his time, these were theological questions that were a critical and integral part of the educational curricula.

In the Protestant Reformation, we find the same thing. In John

Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, whole sections are devoted to government and economics. So Christians should not feel that economics is outside the domain of Christian thinking. If anything, we need to recapture this arena and bring a strong biblical message to it.

In reality, the Bible speaks to economic issues more than any other issue. Whole sections of the book of Proverbs and many of the parables of Jesus deal with economic matters. They tell us what our attitude should be toward wealth and how a Christian should handle his or her finances. The Bible also provides a description of human nature, which helps us evaluate the possible success of an economic system in society.

The Bible teaches that there are two aspects to human nature. First, we are created in the image of God and thus able to control the economic system. But second, human beings are sinful and thus tend towards greed and exploitation. This points to the need to protect individuals from human sinfulness in the economic system. So Christians have a much more balanced view of economics and can therefore construct economic theories and analyze existing economic systems.

Christians should see the fallacy of such utopian economic theories because they fail to take seriously human sinfulness. Instead of changing people from the inside out as the gospel does, Marxists believe that people will be changed from the outside in. Change the economic base, they say, and you will change human beings. This is one of the reasons that Marxism was doomed to failure, because it did not take into account human sinfulness and our need for spiritual redemption.

It is important for Christians to think about the economic arena. It is a place where much of everyday life takes place, and we can evaluate economics from a biblical perspective. When we use the Bible as our framework, we can begin to construct a government and an economy that liberates human

potentiality and limits human sinfulness.

Many Christians are surprised to find out how much the Bible says about economic issues. And one of the most important aspects of the biblical teaching is not the specific economic matters it explores, but the more general description of human nature.

Economics and Human Nature

When we are looking at either theories of government or theories of economics, an important starting point is our view of human nature. This helps us analyze these theories and predict their possible success in society. Therefore, we must go to the Scriptures to evaluate the very foundation of each economic theory.

First, the Bible says that human beings are created in the image of God. This implies that we have rationality and responsibility. Because we have rationality and volition, we can choose between various competing products and services. Furthermore, we can function within a market system in which people can exercise their power of choice. We are not like the animals that are governed by instinct. We are governed by rationality and can make meaningful choices within a market system.

We can also assume that private property can exist within this system because of the biblical idea of dominion. In Genesis 1:28, God says we are to subdue the earth and have dominion over the creation. Certainly one aspect of this is that humans can own property in which they can exercise their dominion.

Since we have both volition and private property rights, we can then assume that we should have the freedom to exchange these private property rights in a free market where goods and services can be exchanged.

The second part of human nature is also important. The Bible

describes the fall of the world and the fall of mankind. We are fallen creatures with a sin nature. This sinfulness manifests itself in selfishness, greed, and exploitation. Thus, we need some protection in an economic system from the sinful effects of human interaction.

Since the Bible teaches about the effects of sinful behavior on the world, we should be concerned about any system that would concentrate economic power and thereby unleash the ravages of sinful behavior on the society. Christians, therefore, should reject state-controlled or centrally controlled economies, which would concentrate power in the hands of a few sinful individuals. Instead, we should support an economic system that would disperse that power and protect us from greed and exploitation.

Finally, we should also recognize that not only is human nature fallen, but the world is fallen. The world has become a place of decay and scarcity. In a fallen world, we have to be good managers of the limited resources that can be made available in a market economy. God has given us dominion over His creation, and we must be good stewards of the resources at our disposal.

The free enterprise system has provided the greatest amount of freedom and the most effective economic gains of any economic system ever devised. Nevertheless, Christians often wonder if they can support capitalism. So the rest of this article, we are going to take a closer look at the free enterprise system.

Capitalism: Foundations

Capitalism had its beginning with the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*, written by Adam Smith in 1776. He argued that the mercantile economic system working at that time in Great Britain was not the best economic foundation. Instead, he argued that the wealth of nations could be increased by allowing the individual to seek his own self-interest and by

removing governmental control over the economy.

His theory rested on three major premises. First, his system was based upon the observation that people are motivated by self-interest. He said, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." Smith went on to say that "neither intends to promote the public interest," yet each is "led by an invisible hand to promote an end that was not part of [his] intention."

A second premise of Adam Smith was the acceptance of private property. Property was not to be held in common but owned and freely traded in a market system. Profits generated from the use and exchange of private property rights provided incentive and became the mechanism that drives the capitalist system.

From a Christian perspective we can see that the basis of private property rests in our being created in God's image. We can make choices over property that we can exchange in a market system. The need for private property grows out of our sinfulness. Our sinful nature produces laziness, neglect, and slothfulness. Economic justice can best be achieved if each person is accountable for his own productivity.

A third premise of Adam Smith's theory was the minimization of the role of government. Borrowing a phrase from the French physiocrats, he called this *laissez-faire*. Smith argued that we should decrease the role of government and increase the role of a free market.

Historically, capitalism has had a number of advantages. It has liberated economic potential. It has also provided the foundation for a great deal of political and economic freedom. When government is not controlling markets, then there is economic freedom to be involved in a whole array of entrepreneurial activities.

Capitalism has also led to a great deal of political freedom,

because once you limit the role of government in economics, you limit the scope of government in other areas. It is no accident that most of the countries with the greatest political freedom usually have a great deal of economic freedom.

At the outset, let me say that Christians cannot and should not endorse every aspect of capitalism. For example, many proponents of capitalism hold a view known as utilitarianism, which is opposed to the notion of biblical absolutes. Certainly we must reject this philosophy. But here I would like to provide an economic critique.

Capitalism: Economic Criticisms

The first economic criticism is that capitalism leads to monopolies. These develop for two reasons: too little government and too much government. Monopolies have occurred in the past because government has not been willing to exercise its God-given authority. Government finally stepped in and broke up the big trusts that were not allowing the free enterprise system to function correctly.

But in recent decades, the reason for monopolies has often been too much government. Many of the largest monopolies today are government sanctioned or sponsored monopolies that prevent true competition from taking place. The solution is for government to allow a freer market where competition can take place.

Let me add that many people often call markets with limited competition monopolies when the term is not appropriate. For example, the three major U.S. car companies may seem like a monopoly or oligopoly until you realize that in the market of consumer durables the true market is the entire western world.

The second criticism of capitalism is that it leads to pollution. In a capitalistic system, pollutants are considered

externalities. The producer will incur costs that are external to the firm so often there is no incentive to clean up the pollution. Instead, it is dumped into areas held in common such as the air or water.

The solution in this case is governmental intervention. But I don't believe that this should be a justification for building a massive bureaucracy. We need to find creative ways to direct self-interest so that people work towards the common good.

For example, most communities use the water supply from a river and dump treated waste back into the water to flow downstream. Often there is a tendency to cut corners and leave the waste treatment problem for those downstream. But if you required that the water intake pipe be downstream and the waste pipe be upstream you could insure less pollution problems. It is now in the self-interest of the community to clean the wastewater being pumped back into the river. So while there is a need for governmental action, much less might be needed if we think of creative ways to constrain self-interest and make it work for the common good.

We can acknowledge that although there are some valid economic criticisms of capitalism, these can be controlled by limited governmental control. And when capitalism is wisely controlled, it generates significant economic prosperity and economic freedom for its citizens. Next, let us discuss some of the moral problems of capitalism.

Capitalism: Moral Critiques

One of the first moral arguments against capitalism involves the issue of greed. And this is why many Christians feel ambivalent towards the free enterprise system. After all, some critics of capitalism contend that this economic system makes people greedy.

To answer this question we need to resolve the following

question. Does capitalism make people greedy or do we already have greedy people who use the economic freedom of the capitalistic system to achieve their ends? In light of the biblical description of human nature, the latter seems more likely.

Because people are sinful and selfish, some are going to use the capitalist system to feed their greed. But that is not so much a criticism of capitalism as it is a realization of the human condition. The goal of capitalism is not to change people but to protect us from human sinfulness.

Capitalism is a system in which bad people can do the least harm, and good people have the freedom to do good works. Capitalism works well if you have completely moral individuals. But it also functions adequately when you have selfish and greedy people.

Important to this discussion is the realization that there is a difference between self-interest and selfishness. All people have self-interest and that can operate in ways that are not selfish. For example, it is in my self-interest to get a job and earn an income so that I can support my family. I can do that in ways that are not selfish.

Adam Smith recognized that every one of us have self-interest and rather than trying to change that, he made self-interest the motor of the capitalist system. And before you react to that, consider the fact that even the gospel appeals to our self-interest. It is in our self-interest to accept Jesus Christ as our savior so that our eternal destiny will be assured.

By contrast, other economic systems like socialism ignore the biblical definitions of human nature. Thus, they allow economic power to be centralized and concentrate power in the hands of a few greedy people. Those who complain of the influence major corporations have on our lives should consider

the socialist alternative of how a few governmental bureaucrats control every aspect of their lives.

Greed certainly occurs in the capitalist system. But it does not surface just in this economic system. It is part of our sinfulness. The solution is not to change the economic system, but to change human nature with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, we may readily acknowledge that capitalism has its flaws as an economic system, but it can be controlled to give us a great deal of economic prosperity and economic freedom.

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Philosophical Taoism: A Christian Appraisal

The Chinese translation of John 1:1 reads, "In the beginning was the Tao..." Are Taoism and Christianity compatible? Dr. Michael Gleghorn says that even though there are some similarities, Christianity's uniqueness remains separate from all philosophies, including Taoism.



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

Taoism and the Tao

The philosophy of Taoism is traditionally held to have originated in China with a man named Lao-tzu. Although most scholars doubt that he was an actual historical figure, tradition dates his life from 604-517 B.C. The story goes that Lao-tzu, "saddened by his people's disinclination to cultivate

the natural goodness he advocated,"[{1}](#) decided to head west and abandon civilization. As he was leaving, the gatekeeper asked if he would write down his teachings for the benefit of society. Lao-tzu consented, retired for a few days, and returned with a brief work called *Tao-Te Ching*, "The Classic of the Way and Its Power."[{2}](#) It "contains 81 short chapters describing the meaning of Tao and how one should live according to the Tao."[{3}](#) The term *Tao* is typically translated into English as "way", but it can also be translated as "path," "road" or "course."

The chief object of philosophical Taoism "is to live in a way that conserves life's vitality by not expending it in useless, draining ways, the chief of which are friction and conflict."[{4}](#) One does this by living in harmony with the Tao, or Way, of all things: the way of nature, of society, and of oneself. Taoist philosophers have a particular concept that characterizes action in harmony with the Tao. They call it *wu-wei*. Literally this means "non-action," but practically speaking it means taking no action that is contrary to nature. Thus, "action in the mode of *wu-wei* is action in which friction – in interpersonal relationships, in intra-psychic conflict, and in relation to nature – is reduced to the minimum."[{5}](#)

But if we are to live in harmony with the Tao, we must first get some idea of what it is. And this presents something of a difficulty, for *Tao-Te Ching* begins by asserting that words are not adequate for explaining the Tao: "The Tao . . . that can be told of is not the eternal Tao."[{6}](#) But if words cannot fully explain the Tao, they can at least suggest it. In chapter 25 we read:

There was something undifferentiated and yet complete,
Which existed before heaven and earth.
Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing and does not
change. It operates everywhere and is free from danger.
It may be considered the mother of the universe.

I do not know its name; I call it Tao.[{7}](#)

This passage says a lot about the Tao. For instance, it is prior to the physical universe.[{8}](#) It is independent and does not change. It operates everywhere. And it apparently gave birth to the universe. If this is so, you may be thinking that the Tao sounds awfully similar to the Christian God. However, some of these similarities are more apparent than real – and there are also major differences.

God and the Tao

In philosophical Taoism, “Tao” is the term used to signify ultimate reality. “Tao is that reality . . . that existed prior to and gave rise to all other things, including Heaven and Earth and everything upon or within them.”[{9}](#) For this reason one might initially think that what a Taoist means by the Tao is virtually synonymous with what the Christian means by God. But is this really so?

After Lao-tzu, the most important representative of philosophical Taoism was a man named Chuang-tzu, believed to have lived sometime between 399-295 B.C. He is the author of a text called the *Chuang Tzu*. While the thought of these two men is certainly different, there are also important similarities. One of these concerns the relationship of the Tao to the physical universe. In words reminiscent of *Tao-Te Ching*, the *Chuang Tzu* declares, “Before heaven and earth came into being, Tao existed by itself from all time. . . . It created heaven and earth.”[{10}](#)

The most interesting part of this statement is the assertion that the Tao created heaven and earth. How are we to understand this? Does Chuang-tzu view the Tao as Creator in the same sense in which Christians would apply this term to God? Probably not. In addressing such questions one commentator has written: “Any personal God . . . is clearly out of harmony with Chuang Tzu’s philosophy.”[{11}](#) Properly

speaking, Taoists view the Tao more as a *principle* than a *person*. Indeed, some scholars speak of the Tao as “an impersonal force of existence that is beyond differentiation.”[\[12\]](#) So how does the concept of the Tao compare with the Christian view of God in the Bible?

Both the Tao and God are similarly credited with creating heaven and earth. This similarity may offer an initial point of contact between Christians and Taoists, a way to begin a meaningful dialogue about the nature of ultimate reality. As Christians we should always acknowledge any common ground that we might share with those from other religious perspectives. In Acts 17 Paul does this very thing when he speaks at the Areopagus in Athens. In verse 28 he quotes with approval from two pagan poets to help illustrate something of the nature of God.

But Paul also made distinctions between the Christian doctrine of God and the views of the Athenians. In the same way, we also need to notice how the Tao differs from a biblical view of God. The greatest difference is that the Tao is impersonal whereas God is personal. The Tao is like a force, principle or energy; the Christian God is a personal being. It's crucial to realize that ultimate reality cannot be both personal and impersonal at the same time and in the same sense. Let's look at the reasons to believe that ultimate reality is personal.

Morality and the Tao

Philosophical Taoism teaches that the Tao, or ultimate reality, is impersonal. If this is so, then what becomes of morality? Can an impersonal force be the source of objective moral values that apply to all men, at all times, in all places? Is an impersonal force capable of distinguishing between good and evil? Or can such distinctions only be made by personal beings? And what of that haunting sense of obligation we all feel to do what is good and avoid what is evil? Can we be morally obligated to obey an impersonal force?

Or does our nagging sense of moral obligation seem to presuppose a Moral Lawgiver to whom we are morally accountable?

Such questions are important because each of us, if we're honest, recognizes that there is an objective distinction between moral good and evil. Such distinctions are not ultimately dependent on our preferences or feelings; they are essential to the very nature of reality. But the Tao is neither capable of making such distinctions, nor of serving as the source of such objective moral values. Only a personal agent can fill such roles. "The ultimate form of the *Tao* is beyond moral distinctions."[{13}](#)

The doctrine of moral relativism is explicitly taught in the writings of Chuang-tzu. He writes, "In their own way things are all right . . . generosity, strangeness, deceit, and abnormality. The Tao identifies them all as one."[{14}](#) This statement helps clarify why the notion of a personal God is inconsistent with Taoist philosophy. Persons make moral distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil. But according to Chuang-tzu, the impersonal Tao identifies them all as one.

This has serious implications for philosophical Taoists. If the goal of the Taoist sage is to live in harmony with the Tao, then shouldn't moral distinctions be abandoned? If the Tao makes no such distinctions, why should its followers do so? Indeed, Chuang-tzu belittles those who embrace such distinctions declaring that they "must be either stupid or wrong."[{15}](#)

Biblical Christianity, however, teaches that there are such things as objective moral values. The source of such values is the eternal, transcendent, holy God of the Bible. Unlike the Tao, the Christian God is not beyond moral distinctions. On the contrary, John tells us, "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5) And Moses describes Him as "A

God of faithfulness and without injustice.” (Deut. 32:4) And while Taoism proclaims an *impersonal* principle which judges no one, the Apostle Paul describes a *personal* God to whom we are morally accountable and who will one day judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31; Rom. 1:18-2:6). In summary, a personal Moral Lawgiver provides a better explanation of objective moral values than does an impersonal principle.

Persons and the Tao

We’ve seen that philosophical Taoism and biblical Christianity differ on the nature of ultimate reality. Taoists view ultimate reality (i.e. the Tao) as an impersonal force that brought the universe into being. Christians view ultimate reality (i.e. God) as the personal Creator of the universe. The law of non-contradiction says it’s impossible for ultimate reality to be both personal and impersonal at the same time and in the same sense. Thus, if one of these views is true, the other certainly must be false.

I argued that if objective moral values are real (and we all live as if they are), then it is more reasonable to believe that the source of such values is personal, rather than impersonal. Now I want to continue this line of thought by arguing that the existence of human persons is best explained by appealing to a personal Creator rather than to an impersonal principle like the Tao. To help us see why this is so, let’s briefly consider some of the differences between a personal being and an impersonal principle.

First, personal beings (like men and women) possess such attributes as intellect, emotion, and will. That is, they have the ability to think, feel, and take considered action. An impersonal principle can do none of these things. In addition, a personal being has the ability to form and maintain relationships with other persons. But again, this is something that an impersonal force simply cannot do. If a cause must always be greater than the effect it produces, then does it

make more sense to believe that the ultimate cause of human persons is personal or impersonal?

The Bible says that men and women are created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26-27) God is described as possessing all the attributes of a personal being. He thinks, knows and understands. (Ps.139) He experiences emotions such as sorrow (Gen. 6:6) and joy. (Matt. 25:21; Jn. 15:11) He is described as working "all things after the counsel of His will." (Eph. 1:11) Finally, He is able to form and maintain relationships with other persons. (Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15) Indeed, this was true even before God created anything, for from all eternity the three distinct persons of the Godhead – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – have enjoyed intimate communion and fellowship with one another. (Jn. 14-17)

It's crucial to realize that the impersonal Tao possesses none of these personal attributes. But if that which is personal is superior to that which is impersonal, then it seems more reasonable to believe that the ultimate cause of human persons must likewise be personal. And thus the personal God of the Bible provides a better explanation for the existence of human persons than does the impersonal Tao.

Evangelism and the Tao

I've emphasized that one of the crucial differences between philosophical Taoism and biblical Christianity is the nature of ultimate reality. Taoists hold that the Tao is impersonal; Christians hold that God is personal. I've argued that it is more reasonable to believe that both objective moral values and human persons come from a source that is ultimately personal rather than impersonal. I wish to conclude by providing one more line of evidence for this position.[{16}](#)

At the end of chapter 67 of the *Tao Te Ching* we read this statement: "When Heaven is to save a person, Heaven will protect him through deep love."[{17}](#) What does such a statement

mean? Although it may be argued that it was simply intended as a figure of speech, it's interesting that the author should apparently feel led to ascribe personal attributes to what is supposed to be an impersonal Heaven.

For instance the phrase, "When Heaven is to save a person," seems to imply a considered action on Heaven's part. But only persons can take considered action; an impersonal force cannot do so. In addition, the second half of the sentence speaks of Heaven's protecting a person through "deep love." But an impersonal force is incapable of love. Such love seems once again to require a personal agent.

Another interesting statement from the *Tao Te Ching* occurs at the end of chapter 62:

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Why did the ancients so treasure this DAO? Is it not because it has been said of it: "Whosoever asks will receive; whosoever has sinned will be forgiven"? Therefore is DAO the most exquisite thing on earth.[{18}](#)

This passage also ascribes personal attributes to the impersonal Tao. Specifically, the Tao is said to forgive sinners. This raises two difficulties. First, "forgiveness" means that a moral standard has been broken. But the *Tao* is beyond such moral distinctions!"[{19}](#) Second, only persons can exercise forgiveness. An impersonal force is incapable of such a thing.

Such statements may open the door for Christians to tell their Taoist friends about the deep love and forgiveness of God revealed in the Bible. Jesus spoke of God's deep love when He said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) And the Apostle John spoke of God's continued willingness to forgive His children when he wrote, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous

to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) Since only persons are capable of love and forgiveness, it seems more reasonable to believe that the personal God of the Bible, rather than the impersonal Tao of Taoism, is the ultimate source of such precious gifts.

Notes

1. Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 197.
2. Ibid.
3. Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions and the Occult* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 57.
4. Smith, 200.
5. Ibid.
6. *Tao-Te Ching*, trans. Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 139.
7. Ibid., 152.
8. However, in chap. 7 of Chan's translation we read, "Heaven is eternal and earth everlasting." There are some apparent inconsistencies in Tao Te Ching.
9. Robert Henricks, *Confucius, the Tao, the Ancestors, and the Buddha: The Religions of China*, in *Great World Religions: Beliefs, Practices and Histories, Part IV* (n.p.: The Teaching Company Limited Partnership, 1998), 14.
10. Chuang Tzu, trans. Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 194.
11. Ibid., 181.
12. Dean C. Halverson and Kent Kedl, "Taoism," in *The Compact Guide to World Religions*, ed. Dean C. Halverson (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), 224.
13. Ibid.
14. Chuang Tzu, trans. Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 184.

15. Ibid., 206.

16. In this section I have relied heavily on the observations and insights of

Halverson and Kedl in *The Compact Guide to World Religions*, 227-230.

17. Tao-Te Ching, trans. Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 171.

18. Richard Wilhelm (trans. into German). *Tao Te Ching*. H.G. Oswald (trans.

into English) (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 55, cited in Halverson, ed., *The Compact Guide to World Religions*, 229.

19. Halverson, ed., *The Compact Guide to World Religions*, 229.

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Four Pillars of a Man's Heart – A Biblical View of True Manhood

Lou Whitworth summarizes the key points of Stu Weber's book on this subject. He explains that biblical masculinity is lived out in four aspects of a man's life, king, warrior, mentor, and friend. Understanding these aspects can aid us in living a Christian life that fully emulates the life of Christ sharing Him with the world around us.



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

Stu Weber, in his book, *Four Pillars of a Man's Heart: Bringing Strength into Balance*,⁽¹⁾ states that biblical masculinity rests on four pillars. The four pillars represent

the four major facets of a man's life; these aspects of masculinity are: king, warrior, mentor, and friend. Weber believes that when all four "pillars" are balanced, peace and tranquility will prevail in our marriages, our families, our churches, and in the community and the nation. These institutions rest on the balanced pillars of biblical manhood, and they all collapse when the pillars lean out of balance. The major problems our society faces, for example, are the result of many men having one or more of their personal pillars out of balance—leaning one way or the other. For some men, the pillars have fallen down.

As we look at our society, it is clear that we are in trouble. Some of the pillars are leaning, and others have fallen down. It takes four sturdy, balanced pillars to hold up a building. "It takes four pillars to make a man. . . . who will bear the weight, stand against the elements, and hold one small civilization [a home] intact in a world that would like nothing better than to tear it down."(2)

Why is our civilization falling down around us? Because there is a war going on. The war of political correctness is part of it; sexual politics is part of it too, but it is larger than these. It is a war against the image of God. Listen as Weber draws a bead on the issue:

Gender is primarily an issue of theology. And theology is the most foundational of all the sciences. Gender is at the heart of creation. Gender is tied to the image of God. Gender is central to the glory of God. And that is precisely why the armies of hell are throwing themselves into this particular battle with such concentrated frenzy.(3)

Remember that God created mankind as male and female to be His image in the world. Thus, there is no better way to attack God and His creation or to destroy His relationship with mankind than to deface the image of God.(4) "Satan's effectiveness in destroying God's image through male-female alienation, by

whatever means, has been incalculably costly to the human race.”(5) This is where the current battle rages.

The first pillars started to wobble a long time ago. In the Garden of Eden, Adam began as a four-pillared man. But he disobeyed God and blamed Eve. Then the first pillar fell, and the remaining ones were weakened or compromised. For the first time enmity and tension came into his relationship with Eve. Since then there has always been the potential of strife between the sexes. In recent years there has been a concerted effort to blur gender distinctives. But blurring gender differences results in disintegration, disorientation, destruction, and death. No society that persists at it will survive. The answer is to return to the instruction book, the Bible.

The purpose of Weber’s book is to point the way for men to become all they should be biblically so that they and their wives and children can flourish in an often hostile world. Weber writes:

What kind of man builds a civilization, a small civilization that outlives him? What kind of man has shoulders broad enough to build upon? A four-pillared man:

A man of vision and character . . . a King.

A man of strength and power . . . a Warrior.

A man of faith and wisdom . . . a Mentor.

A man of heart and love . . . a Friend.(6)

Man as Shepherd-King

In Stu Weber’s new book, *Four Pillars of a Man’s Heart*, the “first pillar” represents the kingly aspect of man’s nature.

The king, as pictured by Weber, is a Shepherd-king. This figure is modeled after Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings, who sometimes spoke of himself as the Good Shepherd. The first pillar in Weber’s book, therefore, is the

pillar of the Shepherd-King who combines the position of a king with the heart of a shepherd.

Weber's key thought about the king or shepherd-king is that he is a provider, though it is a very broad conception of provision. If we say, "He is a good provider," we mean, "He makes a good living," or meets the *physical* needs of the family. The meaning here, however, is that the shepherd-king looks out for *all* the needs of his flock—emotional, physical, social, spiritual. The kingly man is looking ahead and planning for ways to meet tomorrow's needs as well as today's. His has a *vision to provide* the resources for the needs of his family.

Among the minimum requirements of the Shepherd-king is work to do that provides for the family. He works hard at whatever it is and stays with it. The work may not be exciting or glamorous, but he shoulders the load and provides for the little flock God has entrusted to him. His wife may work for paycheck; she may even make more than he does, but no matter what she does, the *obligation and the burden of provision* is his, to see that it is done.

Another major duty of the shepherd-king is to provide direction for the family. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (7) A shepherd-king points the way for his flock, followers, and his family. To lead or set the pace, one doesn't need to be a master of every skill or field of knowledge. For example, Lee Iacocca doesn't need to be a great mechanic; he can hire the best. What he does best is set the policies, give the company direction, and make sure the infrastructure is in place to make the automobiles. In the same way, the man with a king's heart doesn't have to know everything, but he is expected to set the tone, the boundaries, and point the way for the flock.

The king in a man cares deeply about every aspect of his family. He models by actions and words biblical standards of

behavior. He is gracious and just. He shows justice, mercy, and honor to everyone he meets.

A shepherd-king never abandons his flock. To do so is to violate the most basic ingredient of his calling to-protect. To abandon one's flock is cowardice, the equivalent of desertion in time of war.

The shepherd-king figure could also be called the servant-king. This is based on Christ's service to his disciples.

If the king pillar is not in balance, it leans to one extreme or another. He becomes either a tyrant who uses his strength to force people to do his bidding, or an abdicator who is weak, passive, or absent (whether in fact or in effect). Such a man's kingdom is filled with disorder, chaos, family dysfunction, or oppression. When the king pillar is in balance in a man's life, harmony and tranquility are possible in the home and the community.

Next, we will discuss the second pillar which represents the warrior aspect of man's makeup.

Man as Warrior

The primary duty of the warrior is to defend and guard his flock. Though he is primarily a protector of his family, he is also the protector of his church, the wider community or nation, and the weak and powerless.

The author's models for the warrior are Christ and David. Weber reminds us of the passage in Revelation 19 in which Christ, as a knight riding a white horse, leads the armies of heaven into battle. David was a bold and courageous fighter, but was also a man after God's own heart.

The warrior in a godly man doesn't love war. But, because he is a man of high moral standards and principles, he is willing to *live by* those principles and moral standards, spend himself

for them, and, if necessary, *die for* them.

The warrior is not a popular figure in today's society. This attitude is understandable, particularly from those who have experienced life around men whose warrior pillar has leaned toward the brute. Women and children need to be protected from such men by faithful warriors whose lives are in balance.

Though the concern many have about the strong side of man's nature (king, warrior) is understandable to a degree, it can't be wished away. Someone once remarked that when most men are soft, a few hard men will rule. The reality is that the warrior is here to stay. So, the answer is not to deny the fact, but to channel the warrior energy to constructive ends.

The warrior in a man can be a great asset, but if the pillar of the warrior is out of balance, the situation can become disastrous. Consequently, the warrior must be under the authority of God because his energy needs to be focused, and the Holy Spirit must be allowed full control over his mind, soul, and body.

There is no such thing as a soldier or warrior without a line of authority. Even if no specific orders are in effect, every soldier is under the authority of what is called "general orders," such as: "walk your post," "be alert," "remain on station until relieved," etc. In a similar manner all Christian men are under general orders from the Lord of Hosts. We are "to spend time with the Lord," "to love our wives at all costs," "to bring up our children to know and honor God," and "to be involved in the local church." God's warrior is not a mercenary; he is under God's authority. God's warrior remains on call. Oh, sure, he takes some needed rest and recreation, but at the first sign of need or danger, he reports for duty. He never becomes passive or careless during on his watch. On or off duty, he is alert for any threat to his flock.

A warrior's life is full of sacrifice; he is called to sacrifice himself for his wife, his children, his church, the spiritually lost, and the weak and helpless. He sometimes finds it necessary to sacrifice his popularity by saying and doing the hard things that others won't say. On the other hand, the godly warrior has a heart of mercy for the weak and the helpless. The price of being a warrior is high, but the rewards are great.

The third pillar represents the mentoring role inherent in a balanced man's nature.

Man as Mentor

The primary function of the mentor is to teach. Weber's key concept is that the mentor has something valuable (i.e., life wisdom) that is important to pass on to others. That process can be as formal and conscious as a Bible scholar instructing a seminary class of eager young men. Or, it can be as informal and unconscious as the ongoing presence of an older, more experienced man working beside a boy or a younger man. Said another way, mentoring can take the form of modeling over time (even a lifetime), instinctive coaching (at appropriate times), or systematic teaching (at scheduled times). Jesus, for example, used all three methods of mentoring.

The mentor's core characteristic is the fact that he communicates transparently with the person he is mentoring. He imparts himself and his knowledge without undue self-consciousness. In other words, he is transparent enough to share his successes, and even his failures, if these experiences will edify his students. If a mentor fails to pass on the baton of knowledge or wisdom, then he has not succeeded in his role.

Weber emphatically believes that there is a mentor in every man's heart; that is, the potential for mentoring is inherent within us. Many men, however, are nervous about this and feel

unqualified. But, in reality, we are all involved in mentoring already in one way or another, whether we realize it or not.

Mentoring is basically passing on the secrets of life: lessons from our life experiences. The purpose of mentoring is straightforward: mentoring builds men who understand life and pass their knowledge on to others. The attitude and posture of a good mentor is quite transferable to others because mentoring has its own built in process of duplication. In other words, when it is done well it is very duplicatable because it has already been modeled by the mentor. The expression, "It's easier caught than taught," can apply here. The goal of mentoring is to advance an ever increasing network of mentored mentors who will keep passing on their life wisdom to others. It helps us understand why Jesus spent so much time with 12 men, doesn't it? He apparently thought that mentoring a group of men was the most productive way of leaving a lasting and ongoing legacy. The fact that His message has spread to most areas of the globe and has persisted for 2000 years illustrates that He was correct.

It should be an encouragement to comprehend that God can use both the good and the bad experiences from our lives to help others. And, we all have a measure of wisdom and experience to share. However, just because we are capable of mentoring at some level just as we are, we should not conclude that we can't or shouldn't try to improve as mentors. One of the primary ways for us to improve as mentors is to grow in our knowledge of the Bible. When our life experiences are filtered through a deep knowledge of the Bible and a life lived for Christ, then our mentoring potential is greatly enhanced. The consequence of vast networks of men mentoring others who will in turn mentor others can change the world.

Finally, we will look at man's role as friend to other men. This is the fourth pillar.

Man as Friend

The primary function of a friend is “to connect,” that is, to link hearts. Someone is a true friend if that person loves to connect, or to link one heart, with another. A true friend is one who, in spite of his own needs at the time, connects deliberately with another who has a need or a burden. He doesn’t just connect when it’s convenient and he feels like it. If a man is unable or unwilling to connect, he has failed in his primary duty as a friend.

To truly connect in deep friendship or to minister to hurting people, we must not be afraid of a rich variety of emotions—whether they be the emotions of others or our own. It is just here that many men have difficulty. We can usually express anger, but other emotions are tougher. Weber believes that *allowing* (notice the word) himself to weep (in appropriate situations) was a milestone in his life. He suggests that many men need to be able to weep and to express other emotions as well. In fact, it appears that for many men, allowing themselves to weep breaks up the emotional logjam in their lives and gives them a new sense of freedom. Follow the author’s thoughts as he explains how he felt after witnessing the birth of his youngest son:

For the first time in my memory, I wept uncontrollably. . . . Me? Crying in front of people? Stu Weber, the football captain. The Airborne Ranger. The Green Beret trooper. The man. Bawling like a kid? Oh, I had cried before somewhere along the line. . . . But this was different. New. There was no shame, and there was lots of connection.(8)

He goes on to add:

And I have to admit something else. . . . Emotions are such a great gift from God. And after a lifetime of stuffing them for athletic, military, and “manly” purposes, I love them.(9)

He sides against what he calls *emotionalism*, but calls for men to learn to express and enjoy real emotions. As an older soldier, with nothing left to prove, he could finally face his humanity and embrace the honest, clean emotions that earlier he had always stifled. If we do so, our ability to connect as a true friend will be greatly enhanced.

Man's Best Friend

Men need friends, but many American men have only acquaintances and no close friends. Thankfully, there is already a Friend out there looking for us, the Ultimate Friend, Jesus Christ. No discussion of friendship, then, would be complete without referring to Him. Our Ultimate Friend has been trying to connect with us, because He wants a relationship with us. Even the best human friend will disappoint us and let us down, but once connected with us, the Lord will never leave us or forsake us.

If our relationship with the Lord were dependent on our own steadfastness, then we'd have a reason to fear. Fortunately, the Lord who sought us can keep us safe because nothing can steal us from the Lord's hand (John 10:29).

There is, my friend, somewhere down inside you, the power to connect. There is in every man's chest a friend, and emotionally connecting friend. Find yours. Unchain him. And find life on a richer level than you'd ever dreamed possible.(10)

Notes

1. Stu Weber, *Four Pillars of A Man's Heart: Bringing Strength into Balance* (Sisters, Ore.:Multnomah, 1997), 13.
2. Ibid., 13.
3. Ibid., 39.
4. Ibid., (Halverson, cited in *Four Pillars*, p. 39)
5. Ibid, Halverson, 40.

6. Weber, 13.
7. Joshua 24:15
8. Weber, 229.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 237.

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Ten Lies of Feminism: A Christian Perspective

Sue Bohlin examines how this prevalent view of women measures up from a biblical perspective.

This essay examines the ten lies of feminism that Dr. Toni Grant suggests in her book *Being a Woman*.[{1}](#)

At its inception, the feminist movement, accompanied by the sexual revolution, made a series of enticing, exciting promises to women. These promises sounded good, so good that many women deserted their men and their children or rejected the entire notion of marriage and family, in pursuit of “themselves” and a career. These pursuits, which emphasized self-sufficiency and individualism, were supposed to enhance a woman’s quality of life and improve her options, as well as her relations with men. Now, a decade or so later, women have had to face the fact that, in many ways, feminism and liberation made promises that could not be delivered.[{2}](#)

Lie #1: Women Can Have It All

The first lie is that women can have it all. We were fed an illusion that women, being the superior sex, have an

inexhaustible supply of physical and emotional energy that enable us to juggle a career, family, friendships and volunteer service. Proponents of feminism declared that not only *can* women do what men do, but we *ought* to do what men do. Since men can't do what women can do—have babies—this put a double burden on women. It wasn't enough that women were already exhausted from the never-ending tasks of child-rearing and homemaking; we were told that women needed to be in the work force as well, contributing to the family financially.

Scripture presents a different picture for men and women. The Bible appears to make a distinction between each gender's primary energies. The commands to women are generally in the realm of our relationships, which is consistent with the way God made women to be primarily relational, being naturally sensitive to others and usually valuing people above things. Scripture never forbids women to be gainfully employed; in fact, the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is engaged in several part-time business ventures, in real estate and manufacturing. Nonetheless, it is the excellent care of her husband, her children, her home and her community that inspires the praise she is due. Titus 2 instructs older women to mentor younger women, and teach them to care for their husbands and children and homemaking responsibilities. The God-given strengths of a woman were given to bring glory to God through her womanly differences

Lie #2: Men and Women are Fundamentally the Same

Apart from some minor biological differences, feminism strongly suggested that males and females are fundamentally the same. Culture, it announced, was responsible for turning human blank slates into truck-wielding boys and doll-toting girls. This lie has been very effective at changing the culture. My husband Ray and I offer a seminar at Probe's *Mind Games* conferences called "Guys Are From Mars, Girls Are From

Venus,” where we go over the major differences between the sexes. Men, for instance, tend to be more goal-oriented and competitive, where women are more relational and cooperative. Men are active; women are verbal. This is intuitively obvious to the adults in our audience, but it is often new news to high school and college students. We find adults nodding with smiles of recognition, some of them nudging each other in the ribs. In the younger members of the audience, though, we see “the lights come on” in their eyes as they are exposed to something that is obvious and they probably already knew was true, but feminism’s worldview had been feeding them a lie. They have been so immersed in this cultural myth that they had accepted it without question. One young man came up to me after a session and said he totally disagreed with me, that there are no real differences between males and females. I asked him if he treated his guy friends the same way he treated his girl friends, and he said, “Of course!” I asked, “And this doesn’t cause you any problems?” He said no. With a smile, I suggested he come talk to me in ten years after he’d had a chance to experience real life!

The truth is that God created significant differences between males and females. We can see evidence of this in the fact that Scripture gives different commands for husbands and wives, which are rooted in the differing needs and divinely-appointed roles of men and women.

Lie #3: Desirability is Enhanced by Achievement

The third lie of feminism is that the more a woman achieves, the more attractive and desirable she becomes to men. The importance of achievement to a man’s sense of self—an element of masculinity that is, we believe, God-given—was projected onto women. Feminism declared that achieving something, making a mark in the world, was the only measure of success that merited the respect of others. Women who believed this myth

found themselves competing with men. Now, competition is appropriate in the business and professional world, but it's disastrous in relationships.

Men do respect and admire accomplished women, just as they do men, but personal relationships operate under a different set of standards. Men most appreciate a woman's unique feminine attributes: love, sensitivity, her abilities to relate. Women have been shocked to discover that their hard-won accomplishments haven't resulted in great relationships with men. Sometimes, being overeducated hampers a woman's ability to relate to men. Men's egos are notoriously fragile, and they are by nature competitive. It's threatening to many men when a woman achieves more, or accomplishes more, or knows more than they do. Feminism didn't warn women of the double standard in relationships: that achievement can and does reap benefits in our careers, but be a stumbling block in our relationships.

The question naturally arises, then, Is it bad for a woman to have a higher degree of education than the man in a relationship? Is it troublesome when a woman is smarter than the man? Should a woman "dumb down" in order to get or keep her man? In the words of the apostle Paul, "May it never be!" A woman living up to the potential of her God-given gifts brings glory to God; it would be an insult to our gracious God to pretend those gifts aren't there. The answer is for women to understand that many men feel threatened and insecure about this area of potential competition, and maintain an attitude of humility and sensitivity about one's strengths; as Romans exhorts us, "Honor[ing] one another above yourselves" (12:10).

Not surprisingly, God already knew about the disparity between the sexes on the issue of achievement. Throughout the Bible, men are called to trust God as they achieve whatever God has called them to do. It's important for men to experience personal significance by making a mark on the world. But God calls women to trust Him in a different area: in our relationships. A woman's value is usually not in providing

history-changing leadership and making great, bold moves, but in loving and supporting those around us, changing the world by touching hearts. Once in a while, a woman does make her mark on a national or global scale: consider the biblical judge Deborah, Golda Meir, Margaret Thatcher, and Indira Gandhi. But women like these are the exception, not the rule. And we don't have to feel guilty for not being "exceptional."

Lie #4: The Myth of One's "Unrealized Potential"

Lie number four says that all of us—but especially women—have tremendous potential that simply *must* be realized. To feminism's way of thinking, just being average isn't acceptable: you must be *great*.

This causes two problems. First, women are deceived into thinking they are one of the elite, the few, the special. Reality, though, is that most women are ordinary, one of the many. All of us are uniquely gifted by God, but few women are given visible, high-profile leadership roles, which tend to be the only ones that feminism deems valuable. We run into trouble when we're operating under a set of beliefs that don't coincide with reality!

Consequently, many women are operating under unrealistically high expectations of themselves. When life doesn't deliver on their hopes, whether they be making class valedictorian, beauty pageant winner, company president, or neurosurgeon, women are set up for major disappointment. Just being a cog in the wheel of your own small world isn't enough.

This brings us to the second problem. A lot of women beat themselves up for not accomplishing greatness. Instead of investing their life's energies in doing well those things they *can* do, they grieve what and who they are *not*. Just being good, or being good at what they do, isn't enough if they're not the *best*.

Romans 12:3 tells us, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought." Rather than worrying about our unrealized potential for some sort of nebulous greatness, we ought to be concerned about being faithful and obedient in the things God has given us to do, trusting Him for the ultimate results. And we ought to not worry about being ordinary as if there were some stigma to it. Scripture says that God is pleased to use ordinary people, because that's how He gets the most glory. (See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.) There is honor in being an ordinary person in the hand of an extraordinary God.

Lie #5: Sexual Sameness

The fifth lie of feminism is that men and women are the same sexually. This lie comes to us courtesy of the same evil source that brought us the lies of the sexual revolution.

The truth is that women can't separate sex from love as easily as men can. For women, sex needs to be an expression of love and commitment. Without these qualities, sex is demeaning, nothing more than hormones going crazy.

The cost of sex is far greater for women than for men. Sex outside of a committed, loving relationship—I'm talking about marriage here—often results in unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and profound heartbreak. Every time a woman gives her body away to a man, she gives a part of her heart as well. Sexual "freedom" has brought new degrees of heartache to millions of women. The lie of sexual equality has produced widespread promiscuity and epidemic disease. No wonder so many women are struggling with self-esteem!

God's commands concerning sex take into account the fact that men and women are not the same sexually or any other way. He tells us to exercise self-control before marriage, saving all sexual expression for the constraints of a marriage relationship, and then to keep the marriage bed pure once we are married. When we follow these guidelines, we discover that

God's laws provide protection for women: the security of a committed relationship, freedom from sexual health worries, and a stable environment for any children produced in the union. This high standard also protects men by providing a safe channel for their sexual energies. Both chaste single men, and faithful husbands, are kept safe from sexual diseases, unwanted pregnancies with women other than their wives, and the guilt of sexual sin.

Lie #6: The Denial of Maternity

Many women postponed marriage and childbearing to pursue their own personal development and career goals. This perspective denies the reality of a woman's reproductive system and the limitations of time. Childbearing is easier in a woman's 20s and 30s than in her 40s. Plus, there is a physical cost; science has borne out the liabilities that older women incur for themselves and their babies. Midlife women are more prone to have problems getting pregnant, staying pregnant, and then experiencing difficult deliveries. The risk of conceiving a child with Down's Syndrome is considerably higher in older mothers.^{3} Fertility treatment doesn't work as well for women over 40.^{4}

There is also a spiritual dimension to denying maternity. When women refuse their God-ordained roles and responsibilities, they open themselves to spiritual deception and temptations. 1 Timothy 2:15 is an intriguing verse: "But women will be saved through childbearing." One compelling translation for this verse is, "Women will be *kept safe* through childbearing," where Paul uses the word for *childbearing* as a sort of shorthand for the woman's involvement in the domestic sphere—having her "focus on the family," so to speak.⁽⁵⁾ When a married woman's priorities are marriage, family and the home, she is kept safe—protected—from the consequences of delaying motherhood and the temptations that beleaguer a woman trying to fill a man's role. For example, I know one married

woman who chose to pursue a full-time career in commercial real estate, to the detriment of her family. She confessed that she found herself constantly battling the temptation to lust on two fronts: sexual lust for the men in her office and her clients, and lust for the recognition and material things that marked success in that field. Another friend chose her career over having any children at all, and discovered that like the men in her field, she could not separate her sense of self from her job, and it ultimately cost her her marriage and her life as she knew it. The problem isn't having a career: the problem is when a woman gets her priorities out of balance.

Lie #7: To Be Feminine Is To Be Weak

In the attempt to blur gender distinctions, feminists declared war on the concept of gender-related characteristics. The qualities that marked feminine women—softness, sweetness, kindness, the ability to relate well—were judged as silly, stupid and weak. Only what characterized men—characteristics like firmness, aggressiveness, competitiveness—were deemed valuable.

But when women try to take on male qualities, the end result is a distortion that is neither feminine nor masculine. A woman is perceived as shrill, not spirited. What is expected and acceptable aggression in a man is perceived as unwelcome brashness in a woman. When women try to be tough, it is often taken as unpleasantness. Unfortunately, there really is a strong stereotype about “what women should be like” that merits being torn down. A lot of men are threatened by strong women with opinions and agendas of their own, and treat them with undeserved disrespect. But it is not true that traditionally masculine characteristics are the only ones that count.

There really is a double standard operating, because the characteristics that constitute masculinity and femininity are

separate and different, and they are not interchangeable. To be feminine is a special kind of strength. It's a different, appealing kind of power that allows a woman to influence her world in a way quite distinct from the way a man influences the world. It pleased the Lord to create woman to complement man, not to compete with him or be a more rounded copy of him. 1 Corinthians 11:7 says that man is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. Femininity isn't weakness; it's the glorious, splendid crown on humanity.

Lie #8: Doing is Better Than Being

In his book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*[\[6\]](#), John Gray pointed out that men get their sense of self from achievement, and women get their sense of self from relationships. Feminism declared that the male orientation of *what you do* was the only one that mattered; *who you are*, and how important you are to the people in your world, didn't count for as much.

This lie said that active is good, passive is bad. Traditional feminine behaviors of being passive and receptive were denounced as demeaning to women and ineffective in the world. Only being the initiator counted, not being the responder. "To listen, to be there, to receive the other with an open heart and mind—this has always been one of the most vital roles of woman. Most women do this quite naturally, but many have come to feel uneasy in this role. Instead, they work frantically on assertiveness, aggression, personal expression, and power, madly suppressing their feminine instincts of love and relatedness."[\[7\]](#)

Women's roles in the family, the church, and the world are a combination of being a responder and an initiator. As a responder, a wife honors her husband through loving submission, and a woman serves the church through the exercise of her spiritual gifts. As an initiator and leader, a woman teaches her children and uses her abilities in the world, such

as the woman of Proverbs 31. God's plan is for us to live a balanced life—sometimes active, sometimes passive; sometimes the initiator, sometimes the responder; at all times, submitting both who we are and what we do to the Lordship of Christ.

Lie #9: The Myth of Self-Sufficiency

The ninth lie is the myth of self-sufficiency. Remember the famous feminist slogan that appeared on everything from bumper stickers to t-shirts to notepads? “A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.” The message was clear: women don't need men, who are inferior anyway. The world would be a better place if women ran it: no wars, no greed, no power plays, just glorious cooperation and peace.

The next step after “women don't need men” was logical: women don't need anybody. We can take care of ourselves. Helen Reddy's hit song “I Am Woman” became feminism's theme song, with the memorable chorus, “If I have to, I can do anything / I am strong / I am invincible / I am woman!”

Of course, if women don't need anybody except themselves, they certainly don't need God. Particularly a masculine, patriarchal God who makes rules they don't like and insists that He alone is God. But the need to worship is deeply ingrained in us, so feminist thought gave rise to goddess worship. The goddess was just a female image to focus on; in actuality, goddess worship is worship of oneself. [\[8\]](#)

The lie of self-sufficiency is the same lie that Satan has been deceiving us with since the Garden of Eden: What do you need God for? We grieve the Lord's heart when we believe this lie. Jeremiah 2:13 says, “My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.” God made us for Himself; believing the lie of self-sufficiency isn't only futile, it's a slap in God's face.

Lie #10: Women Would Enjoy the Feminization of Men

The tenth lie of feminism is that women would enjoy the feminization of men. Feminists believed that the only way to achieve equality of the sexes was to do away with *role* distinctions. Then they decided that that wasn't enough: society had to do away with *gender* distinctions, or at the very least blur the lines. Women embraced more masculine values, and men were encouraged to embrace more feminine characteristics. That was supposed to fix the problem. It didn't.

As men tried to be "good guys" and accommodate feminists' demands, the culture saw a new type of man emerge: sensitive, nurturing, warmly compassionate, yielding. The only problem was that this "soft man" wasn't what women wanted. Women pushed men to be like women, and when they complied, nobody respected them. Women, it turns out, want to be the soft ones—and we want men to be strong and firm and courageous; we want a manly man. When men start taking on feminine characteristics, they're just wimpy and unmasculine, not pleasing themselves or the women who demanded the change. There is a good reason that books and movies with strong, masculine heroes continue to appeal to such a large audience. Both men and women respond to men who fulfill God's design for male leadership, protection, and strength.

Underlying the women's liberation movement is an angry, unsubmitive attitude that is fueled by the lies of deception. It's good to know what the lies are, but it's also important to know what God's word says, so we can combat the lies with the power of His truth.

Notes

1. Toni Grant, *Being a Woman: Fulfilling Your Femininity and Finding Love*. New York: Random House, 1988.

2. Ibid, 3.

3. March of Dimes, "Pregnancy After 35," www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332_1155.asp.

4. Jodi Panayotov, "IVF & Older Women – How Successful is IVF After 40?" ezinearticles.com/?IVF-and-Older-Women-How-Successful-is-IVF-After-40?&id=636335.

5. Andreas Kostenberger, "Saved Through Childbearing?" (*CBMW [The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood] News*, Sept. 1997), p. 3.

6. John Gray, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

7. Grant, 9.

8. Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1992), p. 159.

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