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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

POLITICAL DUPLICITY

by *Stephen C. Perks*..... 2

FEATURES

SELF-MADE RELIGION

by *Derek Carlsen* 3

GOD, MAN AND THE WORLD: REFLECTIONS ON ECOLOGY

by *Bertrand Rickenbacher*..... 5

BAAL WORSHIP ANCIENT AND MODERN

by *Stephen C. Perks*..... 12

BOOK REVIEWS

Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital:*

Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else

Reviewed by Ruben Alvarado..... 21

Paul S. Mills and John R. Presley, *Islamic Finance: Theory and Practice*

Reviewed by Matthew Wright..... 24

Letters to the Editor..... 26

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EDITORIAL

POLITICAL DUPLICITY

by Stephen C. Perks

WHEN recently asked his opinion on abortion and whether he would support measures to reduce the number of abortions performed in Britain each year, which currently stands at nearly 200,000, Ken Clarke, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer and contender for the leadership of the Tory Party replied: “Abortion is one of the UK’s unspoken tragedies, but we should not underestimate the vast cultural upheaval that would need to take place to produce a significant change of public attitude. Whilst I would always support alternatives to abortion, thus reducing recourse to it, I cannot foresee Parliament supporting radical change in abortion law without stronger signs for change from society itself.”¹

This is a most interesting statement. It implies that politicians are not able, or at least are unwise, to implement changes in the law that will create cultural conditions that are not supported strongly by society generally. In other words, changes in the law that create vast cultural upheaval against the wishes of the general public are not practical political objectives. Yet many of our politicians, not least among them Ken Clarke himself, have resolutely pursued policies that will create precisely such a cultural upheaval against the wishes of the majority of people in society and in Clarke’s case in direct opposition to his own party. I refer of course to the whole project of monetary union in Europe and the greater political assimilation with Europe that this will inevitably involve. What Clarke is saying, in effect, in the quotation above about abortion, is that although he does not personally like abortion he is a realistic and pragmatic politician and recognises that Parliament must take account of public opinion when passing legislation that will create cultural upheaval. Yet he can find the commitment and political nerve to stand up for a cause in which he believes against the overwhelming tide of public opinion when it suits him to do so, namely monetary union and closer involvement with the European Union. Why is this same commitment and political nerve not in evidence on the issue of abortion, which he says is an unspoken tragedy?

The answer politicians like Clarke would have us believe, judging from the quotation above, is that it is the public’s fault not theirs, that they cannot do anything about it while public opinion is against their desire to be rid of abortion, despite the fact that they can find the energy and commitment to do something about other issues that require very stiff opposition to public opinion. The continual move towards closer and closer involvement with the European Union has from the beginning been led by politicians who have attempted to create precisely the very change in public opinion that such union requires.

For example, monetary union within Europe and the political union that this is clearly aimed at achieving would involve a vast cultural upheaval for Britain. Not only would

our economic life be affected, but the political union that it would inevitably involve would have far reaching effects on our way of life as a nation. For example, it would further vitiate our ability to act independently of the government of the European Union, and this would inevitably have repercussions for the whole of our legal system. Indeed, it would mean eventually the abolition of English common law and its replacement with European style law that is based on presuppositions fundamentally alien to England’s legal heritage and the Christian faith, upon which that legal heritage was largely based.² (It is true that the destruction of our legal system is in some respects already well-advanced, but this again is the result of the political vandalism that our politicians engage in almost daily now in Westminster, much of which is driven by directives from the European Union.)

Nevertheless, pro-EU politicians continue to push relentlessly for further European assimilation, despite the public’s antipathy to the cultural upheaval that this will involve and their disgruntlement at the upheaval that has already been caused. When a referendum on monetary union is declared these politicians, Clarke included, will use all their influence and energy to persuade the public to support union, even though public opinion is on the whole now against it—in other words they will attempt to *change* public opinion.

Yet we are now to believe that it would be unwise and difficult for politicians to support a change in abortion law, which would involve much less cultural upheaval, and would be far less destructive of our current way of life than further participation in the European Union. Why cannot the same commitment and effort be made to support a change in abortion law if politicians such as Ken Clarke really do believe that abortion is an unspoken tragedy? Do our politicians really expect people to take them seriously, to accord them the respect and admiration that they so obviously crave, and trust them with the power that they so desperately want to exercise over other people’s lives, while they argue in such a duplicitous way, claiming to be against an obscene practice that they cannot be bothered to spend any political effort on? Clarke’s answer to the question put to him on abortion is a crude piece of immoral and duplicitous sophistry. That anyone should find it convincing, indeed that he should think anyone would find it convincing, is testimony to the deplorably low state of political debate that currently exists in our society. Is there any wonder that politicians are held in such low esteem by the electorate today? Is this sort of thing all they have to offer?

Abortion is the single most hideous blot on the national landscape, and the Christian Scriptures make it quite clear that a nation cannot escape with impunity the shedding of innocent blood: “So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it” (Num. 35:33). *C&S*

1. “Who should lead the Conservative Party,” a questionnaire put to Kenneth Clarke and Ian Duncan Smith in *Conservatism: advancing the Christian worldview*, Summer 2001 (published by the Conservative Christian Fellowship), p. 7. For the record, Ian Duncan Smith’s answer was: “Yes, I am opposed to abortion but recognise the current situation and would support such constructive proposals although this would remain a matter of conscience, subject to a free vote in Parliament.”

2. See Stephen C. Perks, *Christianity and Law: An Enquiry into the Influence of Christianity of the Development of English Common Law* (Avant Books, 1993).

SELF-MADE RELIGION[†]

by Derek Carlsen*

THE primary cause of our nation's [Zimbabwe's] disintegration in the political and economic realms is our own moral and spiritual decline. The latest statistics show that almost 72 per cent of Zimbabweans claim to be Christians and yet we are a people controlled and manipulated by murderers, thieves, liars and thugs. How can this be?

Many times Scripture shows the Israelites (while continuing with all their religious ceremonies and thinking of themselves as honourable and upright), being delivered by God into economic and political hardships because of the rampant injustice and unrighteousness in their midst. God has not changed! (Mal. 3:6). The difficult circumstances that fall upon a nation cannot be separated from that nation's moral condition.

Having wrong views about God affects every aspect of our thinking and wrong views are a result of our suppressing or rejecting God's revelation. Now, when our thinking is wrong about mankind, our understanding about the political and economic realms will also be untrue. Not only will our policies in these areas be defective, but our attempts to rectify the growing defects will lead to greater problems. Short-term "solutions" might appear to offer or bring relief; however, in time, their failures will also become obvious. Such "solutions" only give hope to those who are incapable of seeing further than the short term and the reason they don't want to see further than this is a moral issue—they are in wilful rebellion against God's eternal truth and so trust in man's wisdom.

Our present circumstances are a consequence of our ideas and the ideas that shape a nation have their roots in the prevailing faith of that nation. To prove what faith and ideas are guiding *our* nation, we must look at the fruit in our society—is there justice, liberty, freedom, peace and relief for the oppressed? No there is not! No matter what we might wish for, the fruit shows that the ideas and the faith that are guiding our nation do not have their roots in Christianity, but in something that is anti-Christian. When a nation, whose population is 72 per cent Christian, finds itself full of injustice, fear, increasing poverty, lawlessness and oppression and the Christians think they are faithfully worshipping

and serving the true God, they are deceiving themselves. Their religion and faith is being defined by themselves, not God, and is therefore apostate.

All man-made religions replace God's Lordship and word with man's lordship and word (Mt. 15:6–9), while proclaiming their devotion to God. Our nation is reaping the fruit of our self-defined religion, whereby we have exalted the commandments, traditions and doctrines of men above Christ (Col. 2:8, 18, 22, 23). The fruit we see around us is proof of this. The crucial issue facing the 72 per cent is: "Do we repent of our rebellion or do we self-righteously deny any relation between the condition of our nation and our religious devotion?"

Man-made religions all have one thing in common—they are fleeing from their responsibility to the true God. Some do this by denying the existence of God while others replace God's revealed will with their own ideas. Either way, they are trying to escape from their God-ordained responsibilities.

Eli, Israel's high priest and judge before Samuel, saw himself as a devout man who honoured the Lord; however, by ignoring his responsibilities, he was dishonouring God. Eli's grown sons were living in extreme perversion. They held positions of authority in the nation under their father's authority. Eli failed repeatedly to deal with his sons' perversions, but the primary authority he refused to exercise was not his parental authority (his sons were fully grown), but that of judge and priest. Eli not only failed in his responsibility to his family, but more significantly, in his God-given responsibilities towards society. To deny our responsibility to labour for a godly society is to do what Eli did—he reduced his faith to merely a personal devotion and deceived himself into believing that this was the emphasis and extent of God's Kingdom rule. Scripture shows, however, that Eli's "faith," rather than honouring God, was despising him, because he esteemed God's will and purposes very lightly (1 Sam. 2:30) and so easily replaced them with his own purposes and will.

If it were possible to divide Eli's life into isolated segments (which cannot be done), we might be tempted to say he was a personally devout man. God, however, does not allow such a dualistic approach to life. All of life is religious and is to be governed by his law-word. To re-define (and therefore limit) what God expects from us, is nothing but will-worship, that is, exalting our own wills above God's will, which is rebellion. The consequence of national rebellion is national crisis—exactly where we find ourselves today. God's response to such rebellion is usually to hand rebels over to tyranny and political oppression.

The corruption and rotteness of the political leaders

[†] The essay was originally published as *Muse Time Paper 35* by Reason of Hope Ministries in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

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that are controlling our nation is plain for everyone to see. No one needs a coroner or some other expert to tell them when a corpse is rotting—everyone can smell the stench. It is only the corpse that appears to be comfortable with its own rottenness, but such comfort is proof of death. Only the dead are unconcerned about the stench and putrefaction of death—the living separate themselves from it.

What would Christ say today to a nation as disintegrated as ours, that has 72 per cent of the population professing to be Christians? Remember, a nation's leaders merely reflect the predominant ideas and faith of that nation. What does that say about the faith of our 72 per cent Christian majority?

The kind of people who are being allowed to hang on to political power, together with the socio-economic condition of our nation, are proof that the Christians in Zimbabwe are living in apostasy. The decay surrounding us is proof that the church in our nation does not want to live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth, though they want the benefits that come only from obedience. Every apostate church has behaved in the same way throughout the ages (wanting God's blessing, while denying their responsibility to him) and God's judgement has been the same—political oppression and national destruction. The Scriptures confirm this time and again. Even Christ's own generation wanted political freedom and deliverance from Roman oppression while they continued in their rebellion against God and his truth.

Only true repentance can deliver a nation when God's judgement is resting upon it. However, a people who are living in rebellion against God (especially a people full of religious zeal), are also greatly deceived and think that their self-defined religious activities are proof that they are blessed of God. Any problems and difficulties in society, they say, are because others are living in sin, not them. However, what Christ said to the church in Sardis, he will say to us, "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead" (Rev. 3:1)—the proof is in the fruit and our fruit is a stench. A minority cannot control a 72 per cent majority unless the majority's beliefs, in practice, are no different from the minority's. Christ went on to say to the church in Sardis, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, *that are ready to die*, for I have not found your works perfect before God." Christ's counsel to us is, "Repent, or else!" for he is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29) and he won't long tolerate rebellion (1 Sam. 15:23).

If we, who call upon the name of the Lord, esteem his justice lightly; if we despise his law and scoff at what he has said our responsibilities are, then we will be lightly esteemed by him, which is another way of saying we will be living under his displeasure.

Remember, the predominant religious beliefs in Christ's day were not new, but had had a long history of acceptance and respectability, yet they were perverse and opposed to God's word. Christ was eventually murdered because he "rocked the boat" by pointing out the perversity of his generation's cherished and respected religious activities. The only way to evaluate the cherished beliefs and traditions of our own day, is by bringing them to the light of Scripture (Is. 8:20).

If we want a modern example of religiously tolerating national perversion (though there are many others), then we need only look at Hitler's Germany where the vast majority of Christians remained either passive towards or proclaimed their support for the tyrant. The German church, for the

most part, despised and rejected Dietrich Bonhoeffer for pointing to the injustice and perversion of Hitler's policies. How could a nation that professed to have a majority of Christians, allow the rise and then the continuance of a leader like Hitler? The exact same question must be asked of the Zimbabwean people and church. We can rightly say that for the most part, the faith of the German church during Hitler's reign was perverse, but then we must also acknowledge that the faith of the Zimbabwean church for the most part is perverse (i.e. unbiblical). We have a "faith" that desires the praises of corrupt politicians more than the praises of God. It is a faith that is more afraid of those who can kill the body than of him who can cast body and soul into hell (Mt. 10:28).

There is only one hope for our nation and that is for God to bring his people to a place of real, heart-felt repentance, whereby we will forsake all our humanistic ideas about him, his Kingdom and what he expects from us and seek to live by every word that proceeds from his mouth (Mt. 4:4). The choice is between will-worship and true worship. The fruits of these two positions are as obvious as they are opposite. There is a possibility that we will stubbornly insist that our will-worship is actually true worship, but the only way to do that is to deny the relevance of and our relationship to the social realm and withdraw more and more into our own personal, self-made, religious irrelevance.

The Lord is gracious and merciful and my prayer is that we will repent and strengthen the things which remain, that are about to die. If, however, we refuse to honour the Lord in this way, then it makes no difference whether those who profess faith in him make up 72 per cent or 100 per cent of the population, he will be against us. True faith is inseparable from works—and the works God expects from his people are that they *do* justice, love mercy and walk humbly with him (Micah 6:8). God alone can define justice and mercy and thus we cannot rely upon man's twisted ideas about these things. To pursue anything in a way other than in the way God has revealed, is to promote injustice and oppression, no matter how loudly we might shout that we are merciful and just. To walk humbly with God, is to rely upon his revelation for all we need to know about all things. The greatest manifestation of pride is trying to live independently of God and his comprehensive word—pride goes before a fall (Gen. 3:1–7; Pr. 16:18; 18:12; 29:23). Think about these things! C&S

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GOD, MAN AND THE WORLD: REFLECTIONS ON ECOLOGY

by *Bertrand Rickenbacher*

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the industrial revolutions of the last two centuries the western world has experienced an exceptional economic development. The emergence of new machines and the discovery of new sources of energy have in fact made it possible for society to increase production almost without limit and thereby to increase wealth. And though these sparkling developments with their economic, social and philosophical consequences were analysed early on, both for their good points and bad, a reflection on the ecological consequences of this phenomenon had to await the arrival of the twentieth century.

Currently, ecological thought and action are very much at the forefront of the political scene, driven by the persistent militancy of ecological parties and various brands of spirituality emanating from the *New Age* movement. The aim of this article is to present a number of philosophical and theological problems related to the question of ecology. If we begin with the principle that the Christian faith does not just relate to what is commonly called the *spiritual domain*, but must throw light on the whole of created reality, it must be our task to develop a reflection which takes current discussions into account so as to present a coherent alternative to the problems raised by past and present ideologies.

To do this we shall begin by touching on a school of ecological thought and action that continues to gain power: *deep ecology*. We will then draw on the critiques of this movement by the French philosopher Luc Ferry.¹ Finally we will present a Christian view of ecology and demonstrate the gulf that exists between this position and those of deep ecology and of Luc Ferry.

DEEP ECOLOGY

The notion of deep ecology has its origin in the American universities where in the sixties various theorists felt the need to make a fundamental distinction within the ecological movement. From that time on ecology was no longer referred to in general terms but was distinguished as either *deep* or *superficial* ecology. In what way do the new deep ecologists reproach the so-called superficial ecological thought? Principally, in not going far enough in their analysis of the

ecological problems of our time, and consequently in offering only inadequate solutions. To understand the extent of the disagreement it will be helpful to outline briefly these two ways of understanding ecology.

Superficial ecology sins in the eyes of the deep ecologists in that it remains attached to an “anthropocentric” vision of the world. The word anthropocentrism comes from the Greek (*anthropos*—man) and defines a way of thinking “in which man is at the centre of the world. It thus considers humanity to be the ultimate end of all things.”² In ecology anthropocentrism manifests itself as follows: “Right across nature it is first and foremost man who must be protected, even from himself when he plays *sorcerer’s apprentice*. The environment is not endowed with intrinsic value. Quite simply, conscience has made it clear that in destroying his surroundings, man gravely endangers his own existence and in every possible way deprives himself of a good life on earth” (Luc Ferry, *op. cit.*, p. 26f).

In this type of ecological thinking, nature is considered as the environment of human beings. If there is any interest in it, it is not primarily for itself, but simply because human survival depends upon it. Man remains at the centre of such a system of thought, and that is why superficial ecology is anthropocentric.

What then of deep ecology? It is a type of ecological thought that attempts to go beyond the anthropocentric vision of reality in order to adopt a more cosmocentric perspective. Man is no longer placed at the centre. This place is now taken by the world taken as a whole, the cosmos. Ferry presents deep ecology as follows: “The old ‘social contract’ of political thinkers is supposed to give way to a ‘natural contract’ on the level of which the whole universe would become the subject of rights: it is no longer man as the centre of the world who must be protected from himself, but rather the cosmos as such which must be protected from man. The ecosystem—the biosphere—is then invested with an intrinsic value far superior to that of the single species known as mankind” (*ibid.*, p. 28).

In this perspective nature takes complete precedence over mankind; man is nothing more than one element among others in the cosmos, and without any special dignity or superior rights beyond those of animals or trees. It is important to recognise the magnitude of this fundamental

1. Luc Ferry, *Le nouvel ordre écologique* (Paris: Grasset, 1992)

2. “Anthropocentrique” in Andre Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Paris: P.U.F., 1926)

distinction between superficial and deep ecology, and to understand the extent to which deep ecology represents a significant break with the modern way of viewing the relationship between man and the world. And it is all the more important as deep ecology gains power in the Western world, especially in its shift towards the effective lobbying of international organisations. That is why we are going to consider this deep ecology movement from three different angles: the philosophical, the theological and the political.

From the philosophical point of view, deep ecology is a classical form of monism. Monism³ “is the distinguishing feature of every philosophical system which holds that the totality of things is reducible to unity.” In this case, unity resides in the world: all its elements—men, animals, vegetation, minerals—have no value in themselves. They only have value to the extent that they belong to the fundamental unity, the cosmos.

A very vocal example will help us understand this philosophical position. On several occasions the theorists of deep ecology attack what they call “specism.” This word was formed along the lines of the same logic that produced words like “racism” and “sexism” and denotes a prejudice or biased attitude that favours the interests of members of its own type. The argument against racism or sexism is resurrected and applied to the defence of the various species making up our world against all forms of human exploitation. This is how Ferry presents the argument of the American deep ecologists: “After the emancipation of blacks, women, children and animals, would come the turn of trees and rocks. The non-anthropocentric relationship to nature found itself in the general movement of permanent liberation that characterises the history of the United States” (*ibid.*, p. 119).

Such an argument reveals that in the deep ecology system there are no longer fundamental differences in the realms of nature (mineral, vegetable, animal and human): only the cosmos, the world taken as an undifferentiated whole, counts.

From a theological viewpoint, deep ecology’s monism leads naturally to a type of cult to which human nature is inclined: pantheism. Pantheism is the doctrine in which everything is God, and in which God and the world are one.⁴ Luc Ferry’s statement on this subject is very illuminating: “I have often been struck in the course of my reading by the frequency with which religious expressions—‘sacred values,’ ‘sanctity of life,’ etc., are penned by deep ecologists *when referring to life in general*. It must be conceded that this is fully explicable in the light of the holistic nature of this thought, namely, in its desire to surpass the limits of humanism. It has come to consider the biosphere as an almost divine entity, infinitely beyond all individual reality, human or otherwise. Apart from and superior to human beings, this biosphere can be viewed in the long run as their true and principal creator—one of the classical figures of the divinity” (*ibid.*, p. 132).

Notwithstanding some very cautious expressions—and the constraints of a non-religious approach—Ferry analyses the situation extremely well. He demonstrates by the examples he gives that man is a religious creature who cannot refrain from some form of adoration.

It is interesting to reflect at this point on the fact that the monism and pantheism which deep ecology harbours find

very strong allies in the New Age movement. In fact, this nebulous spirituality sloughs off into many similar ideas, and it ends up forming very strong intellectual and militant alliances, all geared against a Christian conception of reality.

The third angle from which deep ecology has to be analysed is the political, for philosophical and theological thought never fail to impact on public life. It is useful here to return to the distinction presented earlier between superficial and deep ecology. From a political perspective the superficial ecology has reforming objectives. It is not concerned with overturning the foundations of modern society but with carrying through a number of reforms that allow conciliation of the demands of the economy and industry with ecological constraints. On the other hand, deep ecology has revolutionary political aims. “Deep ecology—as opposed to environmentalism of a reforming kind (i.e. superficial ecology)—is not simply a pragmatic social movement geared towards the short term, with the objective of stopping nuclear energy or purifying water sources. Its primary objective is to reflect on conventional ways of thinking in the West and to propose an alternative” (*ibid.*, p. 120). The message is clear: the philosophical and theological perspectives of deep ecology must find an outlet in a fundamental questioning of Western culture. On a political level, liberal democracy, which characterises many Western countries, risks bearing the cost of the rise of deep ecology.⁵ Ferry concurs with this when he quotes an extract from the magazine of the ecology organisation Greenpeace: “The systems of human values should be replaced by supra-human values that place all vegetable and animal life in the sphere of having legal and moral consideration. Whether this pleases anyone or not, the case must be put forcefully so as to fight against those who continue to destroy the environment” (*ibid.*, p. 126f.). Others, also quoted by Ferry, even go so far as to dream of a world government that could force people to reduce all forms of pollution and also change their behavioural aspirations with psychological manipulation (*ibid.*, p. 127.)

The revolutionary nature of deep ecology is easily perceived here. As in Marxist thinking, the classless society cannot come about until the proletariat has exercised a dictatorship (with a view to negating all the structures of bourgeois society), and the system of deep ecology advocates a form of green dictatorship practised by different international organisations with a view to breaking the fashions of everyday life.

At this stage, there is a strong inclination to regard this as merely a peripheral phenomenon, blown out of all proportion by an attention-seeking philosopher. For those with such an inclination a reading of Pascal Bernadin’s *L’empire écologique*⁶ is recommended. Bernadin presents an impressive, sometimes nauseating, number of documents from numerous international organisations which all take the line of the extracts mentioned above. Without necessarily going along with him in all points, it is difficult to avoid being struck by such a large number of sources that combine to lead us to

5. What Ferry does not say is that social democracies (like France, for example) will have less difficulty adopting the measures advocated by deep ecology. In fact, the idea that the State can legitimately intervene in every aspect of social life is already taken for granted in the framework of social democracy.

6. Pascal Bernadin, *L’Empire écologique, ou la subversion de l’écologie par le mondialisme* (Drap, Notre-Dame des Graces, 1998). See the review by Jean-Marc Fellay in *Resister et Construire*, No. 45–46, pp. 62–63.

3. “Monism” in *ibid.*

4. “Pantheism” in *ibid.*

believe that deep ecology has been and still is deeply rooted in the high echelons of various international organisations, and that coercive programmes are already being undertaken.

Deep ecology therefore is a coherent system of philosophical and religious thought that gives rise to clearly defined and ever-expanding political action. Before moving to a Christian critique of this movement, it will be of interest to pay attention somewhat to what Ferry voices in his work. The object of this article is not only to present a Christian vision of ecology but also to look at the trends of modern thinking and to highlight their strengths and weaknesses. It is only at the price of such a detour that a coherent and apt Christian thought can be formulated in the context of everyday reality. It will then be possible to see that a reply based on the presuppositions of modern philosophy is incapable of effectively standing up to deep ecology. This brings to light the weaknesses of all Western thinking that has sought to develop itself outside of Christian revelation.

RETURN TO HUMANISM

Deep ecology is developing an arsenal against philosophical modernism.⁷ The philosophical heritage of Rene Descartes and of Emmanuel Kant has been assailed by this movement, and Luc Ferry has become the ardent defender of a tradition which is the pride of many French people. To understand the stakes in this debate it is important to return briefly to certain elements in the thinking of Descartes and Kant.⁸

Two important aspects in the thinking of Descartes are his dualism and his anthropocentrism. Without developing the question of anthropocentrism⁹ let us remember that dualism is opposed to monism and can be defined as “the doctrine which allows two primary irreducible principles of things.”¹⁰ According to Descartes the two primary principles are extension and thought. The notion of extension defines all that relates to the reality of the body, to the material world. The notion of thought defines everything that doesn’t relate to material reality but to spiritual things (spirit, soul, reason). The realm of extension is regulated by a mechanistic type of determinism: this realm is closed in on itself and can be described exhaustively by the laws of physics, chemistry and biology. The realm of thought is characterised for him by freedom. In contrast to extension, there is no room here for determinism.

We find ourselves confronted by a dualism, extension/thought, physical world/spiritual world, determinism/freedom. Minerals, vegetables and animals only belong to the first realm. Man composed of body and soul belongs to both;

7. The term “philosophical modernism” designates roughly the period between the seventeenth century and the Second World War. We shall be referring to it again and again.

8. It should be obvious that the context of the present article does not allow us to develop these two subjects which in themselves would constitute a separate article. We will content ourselves with a presentation of the general outlines of this thought. Francis Schaeffer has attempted to reflect on the subject in his *Escape from Reason* (London: IVF, 1968).

9. This question would take us too far out of our way. In a few words, Descartes’ anthropocentrism resides chiefly in the fact that he made the *I think therefore I am* (rather than what God thinks or ordains) the indisputable foundation of all knowledge.

10. “Dualism” in Andre Lalande, *op. cit.*

the angels and God are revealed as belonging only to the second realm. Kant, and with him many eighteenth century thinkers, reordered this Cartesian duality by developing instead the notions of nature and freedom. What comes from nature does not have any freedom; what comes from freedom is not in any way conditioned by nature.

This rather abstract thinking took form under the pen of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who wonderfully captures the spirit of his age: “I see in every animal only an ingenious machine to which nature has given senses to sustain itself and to shield it to some extent from all that tends to destroy or disturb it. I see exactly the same things in the human machine, with this difference, that nature alone does everything in the operations of the creature, but in the case of man he conducts his own affairs as a free agent. The one chooses and rejects by instinct and the other by an act of liberty. This means that the creature cannot escape the rule that is prescribed to it even if it is advantageous to do so, and that man often escapes it to his loss” (quoted by Ferry, *op. cit.* p. 39).

And Ferry comments on this passage in a way that can be taken as faithful to the dualism of nature/freedom: “(The humanity of man) resides in his freedom, in the fact that he has no definition, that his nature is to not have a nature but to possess the capacity to cast off every rule that would attempt to imprison him. Or again, his essence is to not have any essence” (*ibid.*, p. 40).

Freedom is thus construed as that which surpasses every form of conceptualisation or definition because only nature can be defined. For Kant, as for Luc Ferry, man is the only free being. No other being has the possibility of extricating itself from its own nature, from its instinct to accede to the world of freedom. To illustrate what has already been presented, modern philosophy has spoken of the transcendence of man. It has to be understood that the essence of man can never truly be grasped because it is beyond all possible experience. In fact, since man is free he can always escape any determination just by exercising his will.

We touch here a central element in Ferry’s argument against deep ecology. In this philosopher’s eyes the deep ecologists are committing a grave error by forgetting the transcendent character of man. Man alone is truly free, a fact which confers on him a place apart in nature. The monism of the deep ecologists prevents them from grasping the duality of nature and freedom, and it forces them to put everything on the same plane.

The absence of a spirit of distinction that characterises deep ecologists potentially contains some alarming spin-offs. Thus it is with some trepidation that Ferry sees a totalitarian drift wherein human beings, reduced to their purely natural dimension, would be completely subordinated to the superior balance of nature. Questions such as euthanasia and the global control of population could in this context take a dramatic turn since man, deprived of his transcendent character, would no longer have that peculiar dignity which would guarantee him the right to an existence superior to plants or animals. His existence could then be subject to the ultimate good as represented by the equilibrium of the biosphere.

To give yet more weight to his argument, in the second part of his work Ferry studies the ecological laws promoted by the Nazi regime of the thirties. It is striking to behold that some ecological theses closely related to those promoted by deep ecology rub shoulders, in a similar thought system, with

a scorn for human life and dignity on which it would be pointless to dwell. Having deprived man of all his transcendent nature, Nazi thinkers felt free to behave towards him in whatever way seemed fitting to them to achieve a higher ideal.

In both cases, the changeover from a nature/freedom dualism to a monist system of thought is to the detriment of freedom: everything is reduced to a natural dimension. Man loses what fundamentally distinguishes him from the rest of nature and thus becomes the author and the prey of the worst extortions.¹¹

The philosophical critique put forward by Ferry rejects the monist vision of reality and attempts to give back to man his special place. He runs up against an obstacle however: the philosophical tradition which he inherits is undoubtedly at the origin of many of the ecological problems of our day. The Cartesian duality has in effect allowed a scorn of nature to develop, because it is considered an automaton.

Feeling no more at ease with this facet of his philosophical inheritance than with deep ecology, Ferry attempts to develop “a theory of duties towards nature.” He has this to say about it: “Not of course in the sense in which it (nature) would be the subject and partner of a natural agreement—which scarcely makes sense—but because the equivocity of certain beings would not leave indifferent those who hold to ideas which they give us the pleasure of incarnating. Equivocity is indeed the term which suits best: *mixed beings, raw material and cultivated ideas*, they are as much a part of naturalism as humanity. It would be necessary to make a phenomenology of signs of humanity in nature to accede to clear thinking on what can and should be in itself valued” (*ibid.*, p. 211f.).

Without going into the details of this project, we shall merely point out that it tends towards the re-establishment of a place for some form of anthropocentrism. As the last sentence in the last quotation shows, this return to anthropocentrism is accompanied by the wish to value nature. This return can no longer legitimise our attitude to nature. Rather, it has to serve as a foundation for renewed reflection on nature.

GOD, MAN, AND THE WORLD

Now that we have looked at the question of deep ecology and studied the critique put forward by Ferry on this subject, we shall introduce a more specifically Christian concept of ecology. This will be done principally in two ways: the first will consist in outlining broadly biblical perceptions of ecology. The second will reflect on the positions taken by deep ecology and Ferry and confront them with the biblical model.

To develop a Christian conception of ecology, it is of paramount importance to grasp precisely the way in which the Bible expresses the relationship between God, man and the world.

The first point to address is that between God and the world, his creation. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1). It is possible to extract from this initial verse in the Bible some important elements:

—Before the world was created, God is. God alone is eternal, and everything which is contained in the world—earthly and heavenly things—had a beginning. The Genesis text therefore refutes the widespread idea of our times that energy and matter are eternal. Creation is *ex nihilo* (from nothing).

—God and the world are radically separated. The world is not an extension, an emanation (in an ontological sense) of the divine principle. In theology we speak of God’s transcendence.

—The created world nevertheless reflects God’s character. Every work of art reflects the profound nature of the artist without being an emanation from him. Just so, created reality manifests the glory of the creator. “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Ps. 19:1)

The second point to consider concerns the relationship between God and man. The following quotation from Genesis throws light on this question. “And God said, Let us make man in our own image after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth over the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over all the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” Gen 1:26–28. This passage enables us to deduce the following elements:

—Every person, like all else in the world, is created by God. There is thus a sort of partnership between man and the rest of the created world. Man is not an extra-terrestrial, artificially planted in a world unconnected to his nature.

—Nevertheless there is an important difference, since man alone is created in the image of God. Without going into detail, we can say that man is the image of God in that like his creator he is a personal being (by his intelligence and the fact that he has a soul) and a moral being (capable of good or evil). Nature is a reflection of the glory of its creator but it is never said of it that it is made in the image of God: this difference is essential.

—God has given man a unique mandate: that of dominating and managing creation. Man is thus established as manager of the world in which he is placed; manager and not proprietor, for the world belongs to God.

The final point that needs addressing concerns the relationship between man and the world. Without repeating what has already been said this can be characterised in terms of proximity and distance. Proximity, because man is an integral part of creation and is therefore deeply rooted in nature. Distance, in that he is not an element as the others are. Created in the image of God, he has a superior dignity, a mandate to manage creation. He has a legitimate power and authority over the latter.

These three relationships, which underpin the Christian concept of ecology, are theocentric (having God at their centre), not anthropocentric or cosmocentric, and this has been expounded very well by J. Douma: “The world is God’s creation and not man’s, neither does it belong to man. Creation is not under the lordship of man but under the lordship of God. Man is only master in a creation that belongs to God, and he has been loaned it to rule according

11. The works of Sade could be analysed in terms of this problem; something Ferry didn’t do. The same conclusion would be reached.

to the norms of divine justice and not those that he himself forges in his desire for power. Man and his own power are not at the centre of things. True, he occupies a central place in creation but he is not the 'crown.' God created the world for His own glory and the crown of creation is the 'sabbath' of God. With all the earthly and heavenly creatures man brings praise to God and rejoices in the Sabbath of God. Even without man the heavens celebrate the honour of God."¹²

The fact that the seventh day of creation is consecrated to rest and to the adoration of God is not without significance: in this is manifested the fact that it is no more nature than man which is the end of all things but God. It is important, following on from what has just been proposed, to see that it is nonsense to regard the spread of the Christian faith as a cause of man's excessive exploitation of nature. This point of view is routinely promoted in the works of the deep ecologists, New Age advocates, and philosophies engendered by Martin Heidegger.¹³ The primary cause of the exaggerated expressions relating to the exploitation of nature—for exaggerated they are—is much more closely related to Cartesian duality, which is the philosophical basis of modern mechanical science and the technology that springs from it.

In making this remark we come to the second half of this last section: the Christian vision of ecology having been presented, it is necessary to confront it with the theses of deep ecology as well as those of Ferry. We have seen how deep ecology is characterised from a philosophical perspective by monism and from a theological perspective by pantheism. A critique of this movement must consist of a critique of these two positions. The political dimension of the project so pertinently criticised by Ferry will be addressed in the second part.

A Christian refutation of monism arises from reflection on the relationship between God and man and more particularly on the way in which the world reflects the being of God. Before getting to the crux of the matter we need to show that the development that follows rests on a series of theological presuppositions which cannot be gainsaid. We have to acknowledge our great indebtedness to Cornelius van Til and Rousas John Rushdoony for the following paragraphs.¹⁴

To understand properly the relationship between God and man, it is necessary to come back to the question of the being of God and more particularly to the fact that God is a Trinitarian being. The following is an extract from the Christian church on this subject (it is taken from the Athanasian creed). "This is what the catholic faith pro-

claims: Worship God alone in the trinity and the trinity in its unity without confusing the persons and without dividing the substance."¹⁵

This short passage allows us to establish the fact that unity and plurality are ultimate in God: the unity of God—the fact that he is one—does not supersede his plurality—the fact that he is composed of three distinct persons. Thus the *One* and the *Many* are equal constituents of the being of God. If we start with the fact that creation is distinct from the creator but that it nevertheless reflects his character, the question of the unity and plurality of God will have direct consequences for our understanding of the cosmos. In this way the *One* and the *Many* can be established as equal constituents of created reality. The earth is neither an indivisible whole nor a shower of irreducible elements of reality. The Athanasian creed insists that in the Godhead the persons must not be confounded nor the substance divided; analogously, this formula must be applied to the world. We have to discern plurality in the creational orders whilst not forgetting that we live in a reality which is one (a universe).

This statement directly contradicts the monism of the deep ecologists. In their insistence that we must reduce everything to unity, the monists make unity the ultimate principle of reality. In doing this they neglect the equally constitutive character of the *Many*. Such a philosophical position deprives them of categories of thought which would allow them to envisage fundamental differences on the level of the cosmos. They thus fall into a deep intellectual imbalance that prevents them establishing the specific place which man occupies in the world—a reality, however, that is evident to anyone who takes the trouble to observe things.

As regards the pantheism of deep ecologists, this is due to a combination of at least two factors. The first resides in their monism: in only seeing the fundamental unity of the world, the temptation to absolutise and deify it is considerable. The cosmos thus becomes a great Whole that gives life and takes it away from the different elements of which it is composed.

The second factor contributing to the development of pantheism is the neglect of the transcendent character of God. God is radically separated from his creation and this separation forbids every form of deification of created reality, such as was found in the fertility cults of the Caananites. This fact is at the root of the worship instituted by God in the Old Testament and taken up by Christ in the writings of the New Testament.

The confusion of spirits engendered by monism on thinking about created reality is extended to the spiritual domain through the expedient of pantheism. The deep ecologists are not content with confusing the multiple orders of created reality; they have dissolved the separation between the Creator and his creation by making an indistinct whole from these two poles.

When we turn to the political aspect of the deep ecologist project, it is helpful to introduce a point that complements Ferry's critique. By reducing all reality (God included) to an indivisible whole the ecologists are preparing the ground for the emergence of a centralised and unified power: an un-

12. J. Douma, *Bible et ecologie* (Aix-en-Provence: Kerygma, 1991), p. 20.

13. For a sample of this see Douglas Groothuis' excellent book, *Le Nouvel âge sans masque* (Geneva: La Maison de la Bible, 1991): The criticisms of Rozsak, de Capra and others have firmly convinced some spirits of Christianity's responsibility for the current ecological crisis. They think that a God who is distinct and separate from nature can hardly retain his holy character. Only the overriding unity of all things—god, man, and nature—can guarantee a balanced global vision of the natural environment. The modern mentality—Christian and non-Christian—which regards things natural solely on an objective demystified level, needs to be cast aside before we precipitate an insoluble ecological disaster. In this thinking, Mother Earth has replaced Father God (p. 60).

14. In this regard Rousas John Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* (Fairfax: Thoburn Press, 1978) is of particular interest

15. Prologue to the Athanasian Creed in *Confession de la Rochelle* (Aix-en-Provence: Kerygma, 1988), p. 72. The term "catholic" as used here is to be taken in the sense understood by Pierre Courthial, *Le jour des péchés recommencements* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1996) p. 133.

differentiated reality calls in effect for an absolute government. At the beginning of our era the Christian faith made possible the emergence of fundamental freedoms by distinguishing the temporal and spiritual domains (forbidding the deification of political power and the merging of all the spheres of human activity, as well as forbidding the imposition of faith by force by the spiritual authorities). This heritage is at risk of disappearing under the repeated blows of the monism and pantheism of deep ecologists and the advocates of New Age spirituality.

Finally in a general way Ferry's critique of deep ecology passes over in silence a very important aspect of the problem; the spiritual stakes bound to this type of thinking. We have seen how he raises the religious dimension of this ecology movement but does not develop it. In respect of this we need to remember that the Bible, here in the judgement of the apostle Paul, condemns pantheism as it does any other form of idolatry:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them for God has shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are clearly made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four footed beasts and creeping things Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator who is blessed forever. Amen." Rom. 1:18–25.

Man is by nature a religious creature and if he does not worship the only true God, his worship will be directed to other gods. *Deep ecology*, with its pantheistic dimension, makes possible the satisfaction of religious aspirations for many people; but unfortunately this worship is badly directed and leads to idolatry. Now the Bible teaches that there is no spiritual peace possible between true faith and the various forms of idolatry. The manifestation of this state of war brought about by the pantheism of deep ecology is well documented by Pascal Bernardin, though not without a certain pessimism about the outcome of the combat: "It [*deep ecology*] aims to provoke a *change of paradigm* (identical to that preached by the New Age), a modification without untold consequences in the conceptions of God, man and the world. In this way the Christian conception of man as created by God and placed at the centre of the world is shattered and replaced with a holistic perspective that wants us to be merely the (evil) product of evolution, the summit of the evolutionary chain. In this perspective only totality is of consequence, only the universe must be considered. Creation is without reference to the creator. Ecology—respect of creation as the work of God—is subverted and becomes the vehicle of a pagan and revolutionary conception of nature."¹⁶

16. *Op. cit.* p. 10f.

The way in which one views ecology is therefore not spiritually neutral.

Following the compliments given to criticisms of deep ecology made by Ferry, it would be useful to analyse the position of this French philosopher in the light of a Christian vision of the world. Despite all the interest that we have in Ferry's project we have to raise two big problems posed by his thought: anthropocentrism and dualism. These are important questions because they concern the two branches along which philosophical modernism has developed. The criticisms proposed have a general application and reach beyond the framework of ecology.

Luc Ferry's argument against deep ecologists as we have seen is underpinned by an anthropocentric view of reality. That is at least what emerges from his *ecological programme*: "So we have to erect a phenomenology of the marks of humanity in nature in order to have a clear understanding of what should be valued in it." This system is anthropocentric to the extent to which it is man who determines what can and should be valued in nature; his thinking is therefore normative and qualifies reality.

Such a view of things is contrary to the biblical view of reality as theocentric. The power to establish the order of reality, to put value on various aspects of it, to distinguish good from evil, belongs to God alone. Any attempt to reverse this order amounts to a revolt against the authority and sovereignty of the Eternal. This emerges from the first chapters of the book of Genesis: "And the Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" Gen. 2:15–17. Exegetes¹⁷ have shown that this knowledge of good and evil is above all a symbol of divine authority and sovereignty. In promulgating this prohibition, God manifests his inviolable sovereignty over the whole of creation. Although invested with great responsibilities, man is not king of the creation and may only exercise his mandate in submission to his creator. God alone possesses the power to determine reality, and man if he wants to live happily, must develop within the framework given by his Creator. Denial of this framework, demonstrated by the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, will result in God's immediate judgement. And so it is with every attempt to define reality anthropocentrically.¹⁸

Our second reservation regarding Ferry's thinking—on his anthropocentric character—is that it substitutes for the monism of the deep ecologists a dualism that is in our opinion equally erroneous. The two components of dualism are—we recall—*nature* and *freedom*, nature being the domain of complete mechanistic determination whereas freedom is

17. See especially Cornelius Van der Waal, *The Covenantal Gospel* (Alberta: Inheritance Publications, 1990), pp. 48–52.

18. It is moreover interesting to note that in the Old Testament the question of the evaluation of various elements of nature discussed by Ferry is not entrusted to man but is reserved to God himself. So, certain plants (olive trees, fig trees, vines, etc.) and certain animals (lambs, oxen, etc.) are valued while others are symbols of a fallen creation (thorns, nettles, etc., as well as the unclean or carrion animals). Although lacking exhaustive taxonomic value, the Bible nevertheless draws out principles which could supply a theocentric dimension to Ferry's proposal.

held to be an absolute, a reality that transcends every form of conceptualisation or determination. The two terms are diametrically opposed and represent opposite poles of this thinking.

However, dualism is not only characterised by its bipolar nature but also by its inability to establish anything but conflict between these poles. Thus, to come back to our subject, every form of determination amounts to a restriction of freedom and conversely, freedom amounts to an absence of—or a going beyond—determination. The idea that various determinations could constitute a framework in which freedom unfolds—a system of thought leading to a harmonisation rather than a conflict between these two elements—is inconceivable for a dualist. And if he could bring himself to conceive of such a non-conflicting relationship between *nature* and *freedom*, he would to some extent have become unfaithful to his dualism.¹⁹

There is a twofold problem with this type of thinking. It refuses to take account of the effects of a straightforward look at reality, or an understanding of the biblical conception of reality. It is in fact evident to anyone who takes the trouble to observe the world, that freedom as it is defined by Rousseau and Ferry is a philosophical fiction. Absolute freedom does not exist, and man can never escape the determining factors of nature (the cosmic, chemical, physiological and ecological) or society (education, family conditions, professional, political, etc.). In this respect Ferry's remark that "the essence of man is in not having any essence" is inexplicable. Such a freedom could never be genuine freedom, and in fact it destroys an important aspect of Ferry's case against the deep ecologists. In effect it maintains that man is distinguished from the rest of reality by the fact that he alone can act in a truly free way. Indeed, this dualism fails to counter effectively the monism of deep ecology simply because it does not rest on an adequate observation of reality.

What's more, the Nature-Freedom dualism is opposed to the biblical definition of freedom. For the latter, it is never a matter of absolute choice but rather the ability to adhere to what is just and to practise it well. Now, as the notion of good is itself determined by God's law it has to be repeated that freedom can only flourish in a given framework (God's general and special revelation)

CONCLUSION

To sum up: we have established that the cosmocentricism of deep ecology and modern anthropocentricism, as defended by Ferry, consists of two symmetrical errors: both fail to place the Creator God at the centre of things. And although anthropocentricism has had its day, deep ecology is gaining ground; it represents a real danger that must be confronted.

The problem is that the modern world with its intellectual heritage seems incapable of confronting it. In fact the

19. We arrive here at a relatively complex philosophic question. For those who want to delve into this area we recommend two works. The first is Andre de Muralt, *L'enjeu de la philosophie medievale* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), which assumes a solid philosophical base. The second is Jean-Marc Berthoud, "The different forms of causality in Biblical thought" in *L'ecole et la famille contre l'utopie* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1997), and is perhaps more readily accessible. This has also been published in English in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. VII, Nos. 1 & 2.

majority of ecological evils that stem from the radical reaction of the deep ecologists arise directly out of the philosophical errors of modernism. Anthropocentricism has given man the illusion that he is God and has pushed him to behave as such, though without God's wisdom. The scientific and technological outcome soon brought about a slavish conception of nature, and in addition a demiurgic desire to exploit all its resources has come to light. Modern dualism has just as surely contributed to the construing of the world as a huge unfeeling machine.²⁰

Despite its fundamentally anti-Christian and dangerous character deep ecology is an understandable reaction to the imbalance engendered by modern thought. So we cannot effectively counter it, as Ferry tries to do, by reaffirming the erroneous principles of modern thought. Interesting as the criticisms levelled by Ferry are, their weight is insufficient for the task. They have been developed within a framework of thinking that is itself burdened with numerous problems.

Philosophical modernism was created in more or less explicit opposition to a Christian view of reality and it has been wrong. It has opened the door to serious imbalances that have engulfed Western societies. It has just as surely prepared the way for the swinging back of the pendulum towards deep ecology.

A reaffirmation of the Christian view of God, man and the world is vital in our opinion if we are to rediscover intellectual, political and social equilibrium. This programme must not be understood as a desire to bring back some distant Golden Age. It is rather a question of rethinking in a Christian way the intellectual foundations of our world in order to direct our action in today's reality. For the Christian this step is doubly necessary because it emerges as much from the creational mandate taken in a broad sense (cultivate and look after the earth) as from the evangelistic mandate (to make disciples of all men). *C&S*

20. It is appropriate at this point, in order to return to the introductory theme of the industrial revolution, to bring up the question of the philosophical foundations of the latter and to demonstrate that it rests squarely on Cartesian dualism.

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BAAL WORSHIP ANCIENT AND MODERN[†]

by Stephen C. Perks

WHEN we read through the history of the Kings of Judah in the First and Second Books of Kings we frequently meet with a particular statement, a repeated form of words, which characterises a certain aspect of the rule of certain kings that are described as good kings. This particular formula, however, describes an aspect of their reigns that falls short of the general description of these kings as good kings who “did right in the sight of the Lord.” This formula runs something like the following: after giving the name of the king, his mother’s name and recounting that he did right in the sight of the Lord, we are told “But the high places were not removed: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.”

For example, we read of Asa, “And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father. And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his father had made. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol and burnt it in the brook Kidron. *But the high places were not removed*: nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the LORD all his days” (1 Kings 15:9–14). Likewise, we read of Jehoshaphat “And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: *nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places*” (1 Kings 22:41–43).

This same formula is met with in the description of the reign of Jehoash (Joash): “But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places” (2 Kings 12:1–3), and again in the descriptions of the reigns of Amaziah (2 Kings 14:1–4), Azariah (Uzziah) (2

Kings 15:1–4), and Jotham (2 Kings 15:32–35). And then we have Ahaz, who failed to do what was right in the sight of the Lord completely, following the kings of Israel and making his son “to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel” (2 Kings 16:3). Ahaz was then followed by the reforming king Hezekiah, who, we are told, not only “did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did” but also “removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made” because the people had started burning incense to it (2 Kings 18:1–5). And there follows a glowing report of his zeal for the Lord.

What was happening here? Six good kings of Judah who served the Lord but failed to remove the high places, followed by a king who turned away from God completely! How can it be that kings who are described as good, who did what was right in the sight of the Lord, could fail to condemn false worship and remove the high places at which this worship was practised? How could such kings condone or at least turn a blind eye to rituals and sacrifices that were contrary to the true religion revealed to the people of Israel?

The answer is that there was at this time a form of syncretistic religion practised in Judah and Israel, a hybrid Yahweh-Baal cult in which the people believed that by worshiping at the high places, by making these sacrifices and performing these cultic activities, they were correctly worshipping the true God of Israel. They were unaware that their worship was corrupt. They were practising a form of worship that was an abomination to the Lord, believing it to be worship that was acceptable to the God of Israel. They were involved in a very severe form of religious syncretism in which the ancient fertility cults of Canaan were being fused with the worship of Yahweh.

Although the children of Israel had turned to the worship of the gods of the Canaanites not long after their conquest of Canaan in the time of the Judges, the problem we meet with in First and Second Kings seems to have had its immediate origins in the apostasy of Solomon (1 Kings 11:1ff.), who went after the Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians and Milcom, an abominable idol of the Ammonites (v. 5), and who also built a high place on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem

[†] The substance of this essay was a talk given in Chichester on 26th May 2001.

for Chemosh, the detestable idol of the Moabites and for Molech, an idol of the Ammonites (v. 7), which was not destroyed until the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22:13f.). Ashtoreth, the leading female deity of the Canaanites, was a goddess of fertility and death/war associated with Baal (Judges 2:13; 3:7; 6:28), the main male deity of the Canaanites,² though the plural term *Baalim* was a general term for false gods.³ Chemosh was the god of the Moabites (Num. 21:29; Judges 11:24) whose rite probably included human sacrifice (2 Kings 2:27).⁴ The high places were the sites of the pagan religious rites of the Canaanites. They were built on hills near green trees and consisted of altars on raised platforms for sacrifices, incense, etc., either in the open air or inside buildings.⁵

After Solomon's death his son, Rehoboam, reigned in Judah and Jeroboam reigned over Israel. Both were bad kings. Jeroboam set up idols, golden calves, in Bethel and Dan, in an attempt to replace the Temple in Jerusalem with more local centres of worship for the ten tribes (1 Kings 12:28–29). But under Rehoboam the people of Judah also turned away from God and followed the path set by Solomon in his idolatry: "And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah . . . And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel" (1 Kings 14:21–24).

The example set by Solomon became well-entrenched in Judah during the reign of his son Rehoboam. The result was that the religion of Yahweh became confused, or rather fused, with the religion of the Canaanites practised at the high places, and this syncretistic religion became dominant, to such an extent that even when later kings turned to Yahweh and sought to serve him faithfully they were unable to recognise that the worship at the high places was a corruption—or at least, if they did understand this, it had got such a hold over the people that they were unable to extirpate it from the land.⁶

1. The term *Asheroth*, translated "groves" in the A.V. at Judges 3:7 is probably equivalent to *Ashtaroth*, plural of *Ashtoreth*. See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Book of Judges*, pp. 268f. and 292f.

2. See the articles "Asherah," "Ashtaroth," and "Ashtoreth" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, and "Asherah" in Hastings' *A Dictionary of the Bible*.

3. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Book of Judges*, p. 268.

4. See "Chemosh" in Hastings' *A Dictionary of the Bible*.

5. See "High Places" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 602ff.

6. The references to the high places not being removed by those kings who showed their allegiance to Yahweh has been explained by positing that they were not high places dedicated to heathen idols at which the old Canaanite religion was practised, but rather unlawful sites for the worship of Yahweh. See for example Keil and Delitzsch on 1 Kings 15:9–24 (*Commentary on First Kings*, p. 218), I find this unconvincing. I do not doubt that the Israelites imagined themselves to be worshipping Yahweh,—this is just my point—but they had fused his worship with the heathen worship that took place at the high places. Even if it were the case that a distinction could be made between the unlawful worship of Yahweh and that of the Baals, it would in the end come to the same thing anyway. W. C. Allen, who accepts the legitimacy of the worship of Yahweh at the high places prior to the building of the Temple, comments that "in the worship of the high places itself there lurked a danger that eventually brought about their overthrow . . . Many of the important high places had been the sites of Can[aanite] shrines (Dt. 12:2, 30; Num. 33:52). With the place of

The term *Baal* means *owner* or *lord*.⁷ In the climate created by Solomon's apostasy and that of his son Rehoboam, it seems that the people fell back again into identifying Yahweh, their God, as their Baal and confused his worship with the worship of the Canaanites' Baal, as they had done in the time of the Judges. A clear distinction between Yahweh and Baal was unlikely to be understood in the climate of the folk religion that dominated their lives. The worship of Baal was the worship of Yahweh and vice versa to these people. A syncretistic form of religion had become dominant.

The prophets rebuked the people for this idolatry. For example, Hosea, after denouncing the people for their idolatry with the Baals, proclaims the salvation of the Lord and says: "And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi [i.e. "my husband"]; and shalt call me no more Baali [i.e. "my lord"]. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name" (Hosea 2:16–17).

Now it may seem truly astonishing to us that the people of Israel should fail to recognise their idolatry, that they should fall into a state in which they genuinely believed themselves to be worshipping God by practising the Canaanite cultus at the high places, and that good kings who sought to do right in the sight of Yahweh should be unable to do something about this, perhaps even themselves fail to recognise the problem fully. It seems so obvious to us that such idolatry is contrary to the true worship of God. Well, it may seem obvious to us, but it did not to most of the people of Israel at this time. And we must stop and think before we point the finger, and ask ourselves whether we are, in our own way, in

worship the Isr[aelites] had also taken over the symbols of worship, the *Mazzébahs* and the *Ashérahs*. What was more likely than that the lascivious tendencies which had characterized the old forms of worship should lie hidden beneath these external symbols, and, defying expulsion, should burst forth from time to time into fresh vigour? Or, again, what was more probable than that J[ehovah] should seem to be brought down to the level of the Can[aanite] gods of whose shrines He had taken possession, and whose name He sometimes assumed, and so became confounded with them alike in outward worship and in moral characteristics? ("High Places" in James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible* [Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1899], Vol. II, p. 382a). M. H. Pope hits the mark when he writes: "The Israelites absorbed the Canaanite ways and learned to identify their god with Baal, whose rains brought fertility to the land. A characteristic feature of the fertility cult was sacral sexual intercourse by priests and priestesses and other specially consecrated persons, sacred prostitutes of both sexes, intended to emulate and stimulate deities who bestowed fertility. The agricultural cult stressed the sacrifice or common meal in which the gods, priests and people partook. Wine was consumed in great quantity in thanksgiving to Baal for the fertility of the vineyards. The wine also helped to induce ecstatic frenzy, and was climaxed by self-laceration, and sometimes by self-emasculation. Child-sacrifice was also a feature of the rites" ("Fertility Cult" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962], Vol. 2, p. 265a). The Bible provides abundant evidence that it was just these practices into which the children of Israel frequently fell, thereby bringing upon themselves the wrath of Yahweh. A clear distinction between the illegitimate worship of Yahweh untainted by corruption with the cults of Baal and Ashtoreth would have been quite meaningless for the people who worshipped at the high places.

7. From the verb *ba'al*, meaning *to have dominion over*. The word can be used of men to signify ownership, e.g. of a house, land or cattle. The verb also means *to take a wife* and thus *Baal* also means *husband*. When used of a god it also means *owner*. Baal was the owner, the possessor of the land, the god of the land. The word was also applied to the place that was possessed and so was used in place names, e.g. Baal-hazor ("Baal of Hazor"). (Gesenius's *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. cxxxiff.)

our own day, guilty of compromises just as serious as these; indeed whether, with the greater revelation that we have, our own compromises are not in fact graver sins. The fact is that we recognise the idols and sins of past ages and other cultures more readily than we do those of our own age and culture. This is why syncretism is so dangerous. We fail to recognise it for what it is. And we do so because we are so unwittingly committed to the world-view that characterises our society and that produces such an idolatrous religion. This is as true for us as it was for the ancient Israelites. But it is facile to congratulate ourselves on attacking and abominating the idols past of ages and other cultures, especially if we fail to recognise and challenge the idols of our own age and culture. Attacking past idols will not help us now in our Christian lives. We need to deal with those compromises that affect ourselves.

And this is the point of our study of this period of the history of Judah. The Scriptures are given us that we might learn from them. Do not think that syncretism just as serious as that shown up in the history of the kings of Israel is beyond the Church today. It is not. Syncretism with false religion is as much a problem for Christians in Britain today as it was for the Israelites then. For example, Roman Catholicism is a syncretistic religion, a fusion of Christian and pagan ideas. Those who adhere to it genuinely believe that they are worshipping and serving God faithfully by following this religion, e.g. by praying to Mary and the saints etc. They have bought into the world-view that validates these practices—usually quite unwittingly as a result of their imbibing it from early childhood. And so whenever they meet with arguments against these practices they are able to explain and justify their beliefs and actions to themselves in terms of their world-view. They can justify their beliefs and practices because their world-view is more important, more foundational, more vital to their lives, whether they know it or not, than any particular argument against the Roman Catholic faith or any of its particular doctrines; it validates their whole understanding of the meaning of life; it is what provides the ground of all argument and therefore forms a complex of assumptions or presuppositions that are the basis of all rational and non-rational thought. Of course, they may be quite unaware of the foundational role that their world-view plays in the way they think about the faith and life generally, unaware even of the very concept of a world-view. But this does not matter. Their lack of awareness of this will only mean that the world-view they live by will be more effective in screening out any kind of challenge to their understanding of the Christian faith.

Now I am not a Roman Catholic and I do not intend to deal with Roman Catholicism here. Rather I want to deal with the prevalent form of Protestant idolatry. I mention the Roman Catholic religion simply because it is an illustration of syncretism that Protestants are likely to understand. Most Protestants, at least Reformed and evangelical people, will agree that the Roman Catholic religion combines elements of both Christianity and paganism.

But we need to realise that just the same kind of problem exists for Protestants, and for Reformed and evangelical Christians today in Britain, because just like the ancient Israelite and the Roman Catholic, we have most likely imbibed from our early childhood a world-view that is fundamentally and in principle contrary to the Christian faith. As a result we interpret the faith in such a way that we

mould it into conformity with this world-view, distorting it in the process. The same process of rationalisation occurs, and it does so because in the main we are oblivious to the way in which our world-view affects our understanding of the faith. The less aware we are of the importance that our world-view plays in our understanding of the faith and of life generally, the more effective we shall be at legitimising or rationalising our idolatry, at syncretising the faith with beliefs and practices that are contrary to the gospel. Thus we shall fail to confront our own idols. And idols do exist in the evangelical and Reformed world, and just the same process of rationalisation takes place when evangelicals are confronted with their idols as when Roman Catholics are confronted with theirs, or even when the ancient Israelites were confronted with their idolatry. There is no difference in the process of accommodation, the process of syncretisation; only the idols differ. In just the same way, therefore, that it does not seem obvious to the Roman Catholic that Roman Catholic dogma is syncretistic or that he is engaged in a corruption of the true faith and of the true worship of God in his life, and in just the same way that it did not seem obvious to the ancient Israelite that he was involved in a corruption of the true worship of Yahweh, so also it does not seem obvious to the evangelical when he is involved in idolatry. Thus modern evangelicals in Britain today are often as unwilling to confront their own idolatry as the ancient Israelites were and the Roman Catholic is—and I believe that modern evangelicalism is drinking deep at the trough of syncretistic idolatry in Britain today.

The modern evangelical Christian may well be scandalised at the suggestion that his evangelicalism is a corruption of the faith, a syncretistic religion in which he thinks he is serving the true God while at the same time he is deeply involved in a life of idolatry. But this is precisely my contention, and the pagan religion of which I speak is secular humanism. Now I suspect that on hearing this some are likely to think “Oh, secular humanism, is that all he’s talking about?” Christians have become extremely blasé about secular humanism, and take it no more seriously than the idea of a devil with horns and a pitchfork, indeed perhaps less seriously. But this is precisely my point. Secular humanism is not thought of as a pagan religion. But it *is* a religion, and it is the religion that governs most of our lives, and evangelicals are usually as committed to most of its basic premisses as non-believers are because they understand the Christian religion in terms of secular humanism’s definition of it, i.e. as a belief that is relevant only to a fairly narrow area of their life. In fact the evangelical compromise with secular humanism is in its own way every bit as bad as the Roman Catholic compromise with paganism and the ancient Israelites’ compromise with the fertility cults of Canaan, and this form of syncretism is every bit as subtle, perhaps more subtle and subliminal than the others, and therefore so much more insidious. Evangelicals, and I include the Reformed in the use of the term, are so convinced that they alone have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, that only they know and understand the gospel. They are so thoroughly converted to their own sect. But the hardest people to convert are those who are thoroughly convinced that they are already converted.

To be fair, let me say that in some areas evangelicalism does have a fairly good grasp of the gospel—and I am not by any means claiming that evangelicals are not Christians

because they are evangelicals and evangelicalism is a corrupt form of the faith any more than I would claim that a Roman Catholic is not a Christian merely because he is a Roman Catholic and Roman Catholicism is a corrupt form of the faith. But the evangelical understanding of the faith is limited to a fairly narrow area revolving around certain aspects of soteriology in the main. And this is the problem. Modern evangelicalism has a grasp of *some* elements of the Christian faith. But it fails to recognise the necessity of a changed life, except in a few circumstances. Virtually the whole of evangelicalism revolves around one's devotional life (one's "quiet time") and church life. When someone is converted this is where the change happens. He can carry on with the rest of his life pretty much as he did before he became a Christian, unless perhaps he made his living as a pornographer or a drugs dealer. Evangelicalism is very dualistic in its understanding of the faith. One can be a perfectly good evangelical and at the same time a staunch supporter of secular humanist ideals in most things—sometimes even in its most vicious manifestations (e.g. socialism, evolution, even abortion—yes even that!)—without realising that there is a fundamental contradiction between the Christian faith and secular humanism. One can be a committed, practising evangelical and a good practising secular humanist at the same time. And the problem is seldom understood, let alone addressed, in evangelical churches or literature.

As examples for illustrating this point I want to mention three areas of life in which secular humanism impinges very significantly on the evangelical understanding of the Christian faith. Indeed, one could say that probably most evangelicals in Britain today follow the religion of secular humanism throughout most of their lives; Christianity is merely a cult for them, their personal worship hobby.⁸ In terms of their understanding of life beyond the four walls of the church and issues that particularly relate to the ministry of the church—i.e. "spiritual" issue—secular humanism is the religion that dominates their lives. It is the religion of secular humanism in terms of which they live and move and have their being.

(1) The first area I want to discuss is science, and in particular *evolution*. I know that the evangelical world is split over the issue of evolution, that although many evangelicals are evolutionists a great many are not, and that there has been a concerted effort by many evangelicals to combat the effects of evolutionary theory. I commend and support such efforts. However, there are two points that need to be made about this, and what I have to say goes beyond the specific theory of evolution.

First, it is not true that all evangelicals, not even all conservative evangelicals, reject the theory of evolution. Many evangelicals find the lack of intellectual respectability that rejection of evolution brings with it among secular humanists unacceptable. They believe that they can be faithful to the Scriptures and at the same time accept the findings of "science"—or rather what secular humanists claim are the findings of science (evolution of course is not a scientific theory; it is a religion defined and defended by faith not fact, though it is generally accepted by non-believers and by many evangelicals that it is a scientific theory). As a result "theistic evolution"—a hybrid religion if ever there was one—is now very common among evangelicals.

For example, in one evangelical church I heard it said that "This church is far too educated to believe in any flat-earth nonsense like six-day creation." This comment was made by a post-graduate in physics who genuinely believes that there is a complete fossil record with intermediary forms proving the theory of evolution. In the same church in the context of a discussion of the question of homosexual ordination someone else, a biology teacher and a member of the Church of England National Synod, claimed that the homosexual orientation cannot be natural. I commend his position. But his reason for holding it was astonishing and not in the least Christian. The reason he gave was not that homosexuality is condemned in the Christian Scriptures. No. The reason he rejected homosexual practices was that homosexuals would have automatically selected out in the evolutionary process. Now, it is doubtful that a non-Christian evolutionist would find this argument convincing. It is an argument that seems to have little merit from an evolutionary perspective. There is no evidence that homosexuality is a genetic problem. But what is revealing about this statement is that a convinced evangelical should need to back up his conscience with what is at best an ill-considered evolutionary argument rather than the Christian Scriptures, especially in view of the fact that homosexuality is a moral issue not a scientific issue. It seems that even moral questions are to be settled by an appeal to secular humanist "science" among some evangelicals.

Of course, this is merely anecdotal evidence (though these are not isolated examples). But this church is one of the premier evangelical churches in its area and *the* premier evangelical Church of England congregation in the area. If as a newcomer to the area one goes to the Christian bookshop and asked for a list of evangelical churches in the area this church will be at the top of the list. The vicar has a sound reputation for being evangelical and committed to the Bible as God's inspired word. This only shows the truncated and highly syncretistic nature of modern evangelicalism. The gospel of evangelicalism is so narrow that evolution is an acceptable, even respectable, position on what is biblically a foundational doctrine: creation. Many evangelicals will not make this an issue that deserves consideration by the Church. Yet evolution is one of the more vulgar and intellectually indefensible concessions to the world-view of secular humanism.

Second, however, there is more to this than meets the eye initially because the presuppositions that underpin this compromise with secular humanism are very often accepted even by those evangelicals who reject the specific theory of evolution. Even seasoned creationists often accept the assumptions and presuppositions upon which evolution rests, and this means, unfortunately, that they are fighting evolutionists on their own terms. The secular humanist conception of what constitutes "science" sets the terms of engagement and the rules of the debate, and creationists unwittingly follow. But this is a battle that creationists will never win while this is the case. What do I mean?

The assumption underpinning most creationist literature and debate is the neutrality of the scientific method as conceived and articulated by the secular humanist scientific establishment. In other words, the assumption underpinning the creationist argument is the same as that underpinning the evolutionist argument, namely, the neutrality of the facts, the idea that facts speak for themselves and that when

8. See my article "Christianity as a Cult" in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (October, 1999), pp. 2–5.

all the facts are made available, reasonable men will accept the evidence presented by the facts. All we have to do to prove the case against evolution is amass enough evidence of the creationist position and people will have to accept it as the truth. Why? Because “science”—i.e. knowledge collected by means of the scientific process—explains everything correctly. In other words, autonomous human reason divorced from the presupposition that everything in the cosmos finds its meaning in terms of the creative act of the God of the Christian Scriptures can explain the whole of existence. I am not speaking here about the beliefs of creationists regarding the creation but about their acceptance of the secular humanist concept of the neutrality of the scientific *method*. In accepting this creationists are trying to beat secular humanists at their own game, i.e. autonomous (i.e. religiously neutral) science.

But this is naïve. Science does not explain everything. In fact, it explains nothing independently of a set of religious presuppositions that give context and meaning to the scientist’s understanding of the facts. The debate between evolution and creation is not a debate between fact and faith; it is a debate between two contradictory faiths about how the facts are interpreted.⁹ But this is not obvious from the evolution/creation debate. Indeed, I believe there are now “scientific creationists” who do not claim to base their approach to this issue on the witness of Scripture at all but explicitly claim to deal with the issue on the merits of the “scientific” case by itself. This is futile, because in reality what is involved in such an approach is not an attempt to settle the debate in terms of hard scientific fact but rather a capitulation to the religious presuppositions of secular humanism. This acceptance of secular humanist presuppositions in much of the creationist approach is itself contributing to the problem of how we understand human origins, not solving the problem.

The facts do *not* speak for themselves. They are always interpreted, spoken about by humans beings with theories about the nature and meaning of life that are necessarily religious, and this is so for the secular humanist no less than the Christian. And as far as our witness to the non-believer concerning the creation goes, the Bible does *not* tell us that we know the world was created because the evidence shows this to be the case, it does *not* tell us that the “scientific” method as conceived by secular humanism proves the creation *ex nihilo* by God. Rather, it tell us that by *faith* we know that the worlds were created (Heb. 11:3). In other words, *faith* is the foundation of true knowledge, and therefore no matter how much evidence we put before the non-believer he will not accept the creationist position. He will always find a reason to reject it. His faith—i.e. his denial of the existence of the God of the Bible and his commitment to interpreting all things in terms of this denial—means that he cannot accept the “facts” that the creationist puts before him without first converting to the Christian faith. While he remains in his sin

he will always interpret the facts in a different way. This is how original sin affects the way that he reasons about the world.

So much of the creationist approach assumes the validity of secular humanist presuppositions about what constitutes proper scientific method, namely, that we can ascertain the truth by examining the facts in terms of neutral (i.e. autonomous) rational principles without reference to the God who created the cosmos and whose definitive interpretation of the facts is absolutely essential to a correct understanding of it. Yet secular humanism is a *religion*. This means that we fail to understand the importance of our faith for the scientific enterprise. The secular humanist conception of the scientific method assumes that the facts, interpreted without reference to God, i.e. knowledge as conceived by autonomous human reasoning, is the foundation of faith, e.g. belief in creation *ex nihilo* by the God of the Bible. The Bible puts it exactly the other way round. It tells us that *faith* is the foundation of knowledge (Heb. 11:3): “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Pr. 1:7). The secular humanist theory of science is the very essence of original sin—namely, the idea that man will determine for himself what constitutes truth without reference to God and his word. It is folly for Christians to follow this method.

Now, my purpose here is not to criticise creationism as such. But I am critical of the method it often uses, because in principle this method concedes the whole argument to the secular humanist before any “facts” have been discussed. This is a point about how we know what we know, the theory of knowledge, and while Christians are misled about what the correct, the Christian, theory of knowledge is they will remain the underdog in the debate about evolution/creation, and in that debate fail, unwittingly, to give all the glory to God.

But the problem does not stop with the evolution/creation debate. While this incorrect secular humanist theory of knowledge is accepted by Christians, as it generally is, it will continue to have an effect on all other areas of knowledge, areas that are less obviously related to issues of Christian belief, yet which are no less important for the practice of the Christian life. And this brings me to my second point of illustration of evangelical compromise with secular humanism:

(2) *Education*. The evangelical compromise with secular humanist education is perhaps the most serious of all. There are three reasons for this:

First, secular education operates in terms of the same religious assumptions that underpin the theory of evolution and all other secular humanist science, namely, that the world exists and can be understood without reference to God and his creative act as the source of all meaning. This religious presupposition is in principle a denial of the God of the Bible and an assertion of human autonomy from God. It is the assumption of original sin, that man can determine for himself what constitutes truth without reference to God’s word. This presupposition underpins secular humanism in all areas. Secular humanism is a religion therefore that directly and in principle contradicts the Christian faith. And secular education in all subjects proceeds on this assumption.

Of course, the secular humanist will accept the validity of the question “Does God exist?” It may seem therefore that secular humanism is not in principle contrary to the Christian faith, that it is prepared to give Christianity a fair hearing.

9. “Not faith and science therefore, but *two scientific systems* or if you choose, two scientific elaborations, are opposed to each other, *each having its own faith*. Nor may it be said that it is here *science* which opposes *theology*, for we have to do with two absolute forms of science, *both* of which claim the whole domain of human knowledge, and both of which have a suggestion about the supreme Being of their own as the point of departure for their world-view” (Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1931], p. 133, emphasis in original).

But this question itself in principle denies the existence of the Christian God. Any god that is the object of such a question cannot be the God of the Bible, but only a god of man's own making. The god posited by this question is not the God of the Christian faith because the God of the Christian faith is the God who cannot possibly not exist. This may seem a subtle point but it is an essential distinction. Secular humanists may accept a god after their own making—a god made in the image of man—but any such god is an idol, not the God of Scripture. To ask the question “Does God exist?” is in principle to deny the God of the Bible at the outset. God is the source of all possibility, not the product of it. God stands behind all that is possible. It is not *possible* that the God of the Bible exists; it is *necessarily* the case that he exists. Nothing else would be possible without the God of the Bible. This point is essential to our understanding of reality, and therefore it must be an absolute presupposition of the Christian theory of knowledge and of all true science, all knowledge.

But this is the very antithesis of the secular humanist theory of knowledge. The differences between the secular humanist and Christian theories of knowledge are not minor matters, disagreements about the meaning of a few things, different interpretations of matters that we do not have enough evidence about to make better judgements on. It is not merely that we disagree over “spiritual” matters. The difference between secular humanism and Christianity is a difference that exists at the most profound level and colours the whole of human knowledge and life. The two systems are diametrically opposed in principle.¹⁰ It is folly therefore for Christian to imagine that they can subject their children to a secular humanist education without it having the most profound effect on their understanding of the faith.

Secondly, the secular (State) schooling system is responsible—i.e. claims to be responsible and requires its teachers to be responsible—for the intellectual, physical, psychological and *spiritual* development of the child; and this development takes place in terms of the secular humanist presupposition that the world exists and can be understood without reference to God or his word. In other words, what the child gets in school is a complete world-view, a complete indoctrination in terms of a religion that denies the God of the Bible in principle. The child does not merely get lessons in specific subjects from a religiously neutral point of view. Secular humanism claims to be neutral; but such neutrality is impossible. The education the child gets at school takes place in terms of the religion of secular humanism, a religion that in principle and practice denies the God of the Bible. This is an education in terms of a complete world-view. And the socialisation of Christian children in the secular humanist society of the school makes it very difficult for Christian parents to break the intellectual and spiritual mould that Christian children are cast into by secular schooling. The

school provides the whole ethos of life for these children. The State claims these children and in the school it moulds them into its own image, an image that denies that man was created in God's image.

This does not mean that teachers in State schools are constantly denying outright that the Christian God exists or constantly contradicting the truth of the Christian faith directly. That would not work nearly as well in any case. It is not that teachers deliberately deny the faith (though of course some do). The problem exists at a more foundational level than this, the level of assumption and presupposition about the nature and meaning of the world and life, and because these assumptions are subliminal they do not need to be articulated in an explicit way in order to be effective in shaping one's understanding. In fact, a world-view works more effectively at the level of presupposition, subliminally. Most teachers would probably not think of articulating their religious assumptions directly in the course of teaching maths or science for instance. But when teaching these subjects their understanding of them will still be guided by their religious assumptions (e.g. secular humanist assumptions), which operate below the level of critical thought most of the time. It is because the denial of God exists at this subliminal, pre-critical level, at least most of the time, that it is so effective. If we deny the faith outright to a believer he will disregard the argument we put up against God or find fault with it. But if we get the believer to accept unwittingly a set of assumptions or presuppositions that deny the faith and teach him to think about most areas of life in terms of these assumptions, the result will be that in his thought life and in his actions he will, without realising it, deny the God of the Christian faith in all those areas where he is not aware of the conflict. And given the narrow understanding of the gospel among evangelicals, the areas where these assumptions will operate will be far-reaching. He will be a practising humanist despite his profession of faith in Christ as saviour of his soul. In fact he may well be a convinced and consistent humanist throughout most of his life, the exception being in areas he regards as “spiritual.” This will only confirm his understanding of the faith as confined to a limited sphere defined not by God's word but by the philosophy, the world-view, of secular humanism, which will be the religion by which he lives his life most of the time.

And this is just what has happened. This is why evangelicals are usually dualists in their faith. They split reality up into the “spiritual” and the “secular.” God is relevant to the former but not the latter. And the Scriptures are read in terms of this assumption, this false dichotomy. Even Christian school teachers, therefore, are often not immune from the secular humanist assumptions about life and in their own teaching they unwittingly espouse the secular humanist world-view.

This situation is insidious. One cannot subject one's children to such an education and at the same time protect them from the influence of these secular humanist presuppositions. Their world-view will be influenced by the religion of secular humanism that they imbibe at school. If they become Christians they will still hold to a hybrid form of religion, a form of Christianity heavily compromised with secular humanism. One may get one's children into a Church of England school or even a private school where there is a nominal commitment to the Christian faith; but this will most likely operate in terms of a dualistic under-

10. “[T]hese two . . . systems . . . are not relative opponents, walking together half way, and, further on, peaceably suffering one another to choose different paths, but they are both in earnest, disputing with one another *the whole domain of life*, and they cannot desist from the constant endeavor to pull down to the ground *the entire edifice* of their respective controverted assertions, all the supports included, upon which their assertions rest. If they did not try this, they would thereby show on both sides that they did not honestly believe in their point of departure, that they were no serious combatants, and that they did not understand the primordial demand of science, which of course claims *unity of conception*” (A. Kuyper, *op. cit.*, p. 133, emphasis in original).

standing of the faith, and thus in terms of world-view and understanding of life generally their education will be a secular humanist education. Don't imagine that that you will have solved this problem merely if you get your children into a Church of England school. Indeed, some people think that these schools are worse, not better than ordinary State schools, because of the extremely liberal and politically correct tendencies within the Church of England generally.

The education system in Britain, in the private as well as the State sector, is for the most part intimately tied up with the religion of secular humanism. Our education system is a secular humanist system.¹¹

Third, the compromise with secular humanism in the education of their children on the part of Christians has a long-term effect that seriously weakens the influence of the Christian faith in society. While Christians remain tied to the secular education system they leave a legacy of syncretism for future generations. Because Christian children imbibe subliminally the world-view of secular humanism at school, reinforced through the media (TV etc.) and through socialisation in the secular humanist peer group, their spiritual immune system, so to speak, is seriously damaged. Outside of specifically "spiritual" matters that might get discussed at home or in church they cannot distinguish between Christianity and secular humanism and they cannot discern what it means to be a Christian and how this differs from being a secular humanist in most things any more than the ancient Israelite could distinguish between the worship of Yahweh and the worship of Baal, because the world-view they have imbibed moulds their understanding of the Christian faith in terms of its basic presuppositions about the nature and meaning of life. They are incapable of making the necessary distinctions. They are held captive by a form of hybrid religion. If they ever realise there is a problem they will find it hard work to sort the problem out, to rid themselves of their humanistic world-view. But the probability is that they will never become conscious of the problem. This is why the Baal worship went on for so long in Ancient Israel. It got ingrained in the nation's way of thinking at the folk level. Reforms in Jerusalem among the priests and kings barely touched how the people lived at the local level.

And so it is with evangelicals today. Their children get no further than their parents. But secular humanist culture does not stand still. It moves on, pushes forward, relentlessly overturning the residue of the Christian virtues in society and narrowing even further the Christian's understanding of the scope of his Christian faith. Because the Christian accepts the basic presuppositions of secular humanism he fails to resist this inroad that secular humanism makes on the way he thinks and the life he lives. As a result the influence of the Christian religion declines further and the repaganisation of our society continues without restraint. The relation between the growth of secular humanism and the decline of Christianity in our society is now becoming exponential, and this can be seen not only in the "world" but in the Church as well.

The ascendancy of this secular humanist world-view dominates far more than the scientific establishment and the education system however. And this brings me to me final point of illustration.

11. On the issue of education see further Stephen C. Perks, *The Christian Philosophy of Education Explained* (Whitby: Avant Books, 1992).

(3) *Totalitarianism* or *Statism*. The modern reliance on State education is just one example of a more widespread problem, namely, the dependence of society upon an ever growing State. This manifests itself in many ways, but perhaps the two most obvious sacred cows of this religion are the education system and the National Health Service.¹²

We live in a society today in which the State is growing exponentially in size. It has come to dominate our society. This is so in most areas of life. For example, the modern State spends going on for 50 per cent of the GNP (gross national product).¹³ Not only in politics but in education, health, the economy, the family (e.g. State welfare), entertainment and the media (licenses etc.), even in the leisure and sporting world (e.g. the attempt to ban fox hunting), the State exercises a dominating influence by direct control and regulation and also through the indirect influence it has over society, e.g. through the spending power it can exert and its ability to curtail activities it considers undesirable through taxation and licensing. The State is now virtually all-controlling. In fact, in principle it claims complete control, whether or not it chooses always to exercise that control. There is no area of life where the State is not perceived to be competent to act and regulate for the life of the individual and society. This bloated and overweening State is not a benign influence in our society. The State has achieved this position of dominance in society by restricting individual freedom and responsibility and by the overthrow of much of our traditional common law understanding on how society should be governed—i.e. by the rule of law.¹⁴ This abolition of freedom and responsibility is morally deleterious. In relieving people of their freedom and their individual, family and social responsibilities the State also makes virtue obsolete. Indeed, the title of a book published in 1995 is very interesting in this respect: *Saturn's Children: How the State Devours Liberty, Prosperity and Virtue*.¹⁵ This title says much in my opinion about how we are ruled today. The State has become so big and its influence so pervasive that there are virtually no areas of life now where its influence is not determinative of the way we live in some measure. But in relieving us of our liberty it relieves us also of our duty, and this leaves us with a social ethic that lacks any real virtue. After all, if I am no longer responsible to help my neighbour because the State does it for me I no longer have the opportunity to practise the Christian virtues—and that means that I no longer have the opportunity to practise the Christian faith in its fullness. For example, if I am taxed so heavily by the State in order to support its own secular humanist welfare programmes that I barely have enough money left to take care of my own

12. On the NHS and a Christian perspective on healing see my editorial, "Preach the Gospel and Heal the Sick" in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. X, No. 4 (October, 2000), pp. 2–6.

13. This figure fluctuates from year to year. In 1982 it was as high as 46 per cent. By 1988 it has fallen to 37 per cent. The last year for which I have calculated the figures was 1993 when it was 43 per cent. See Stephen C. Perks, *The Political Economy of A Christian Society* (Taunton: The Kuyper Foundation, 2001), p. 140 and *passim*.

14. On the deterioration of the common law under modern legislation see Stephen C. Perks, *Christianity and Law: An Enquiry into the Influence of Christianity on the Development of English Common Law* (Whitby: Avant Books, 1993), pp. 54–59.

15. Alan Duncan and Dominic Hobson, *Saturn's Children: How the State Devours Liberty, Prosperity and Virtue* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995). For a review of this book see *Christianity & Society*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (April, 1997), p. 30.

family without becoming dependent on the State I lack the means necessary to help those less fortunate than myself even if I have the desire to do so.

This has a very practical bearing on the Christian life and on the life of our society. The kind of society produced by an ethic of individual freedom linked with a strong sense of family and social responsibility, such as the social ethic of the Christian faith, is very different from that produced by the ethic of socialism with its insistence on everyone's right to equality based on anonymous State welfare programmes. This can only be achieved by the overthrow of the Eighth Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," by the State, which takes upon itself the right to play Robin Hood, a role the Bible never gives to the State. Even in church ministries the deleterious influence of the State can be seen. For example, in one town where there is a small but growing down-and-out/homeless problem I approached the leaders of a town center church to discuss the possibility of providing a some kind of Christian ministry to these people based on Christian work ethics (e.g. 2 Thess. 3:10). I was told that there was already a programme run by another church that provided cheap meals for people (not in fact what I was proposing in any case). When I asked if it was a Christian programme (i.e. run according to Christian principles) I was informed that it was not possible to be overtly evangelistic (which again was not what I was asking about, though such ministries ought to be evangelistic) because the local council provides most of the funding and the ministry is not permitted to be evangelistic.

This is absurd. Even church ministries are now being funded by the State. As the institution that funds these ministries the State demands that they refrain from being overtly Christian or evangelistic. And Christians seem to think that they are fulfilling their responsibilities as individuals and churches by supporting this sort of State-funded programme. What does this say about the Church today? It says we are compromised by our syncretism with the prevailing religion of the age, secular humanism, and by our infatuation with its chief idol, the modern State.

Today our society, including Christians, for the most part looks to the State for most of those things that in a Christian society one should look to God for, including security, health, prosperity, peace etc. These things, the Bible tells us, are God's blessings upon an obedient people. But we do not look to God for these things any more; we look to the almighty State, and we see the modern State as blessing us with its bounty in these things. In our nation the State is seen as being there to provide society with all those blessings that we should look to God for. If this is not idolatry I don't know what is. We have turned the State into a religion, into an idol, and this is particularly a problem for Christians among whom socialism as an ideology and a way of life is very strong.

It is true of course that the State (i.e. the civil government) does have a legitimate sphere of operation. I am far from advocating any kind of social anarchy. The State is a God-ordained institution.¹⁶ But it has not been ordained by God to obliterate and usurp the functions of every other God-ordained institution, nor to relieve us of our liberty; rather,

it should exist to preserve our liberty under God and protect these other God-ordained institutions—e.g. the family and the church—so that they can serve God obediently according to his will. But this is not what the modern State does. Instead of doing this it has virtually obliterated or usurped the legitimate functions of these other God-ordained institutions by its overweening control of society and the individual. As a result its proper function, that of maintaining law and order according to the Christian understanding of justice, has been severely compromised. The modern State increasingly no longer delivers justice, is no longer a terror to those who do evil (Rom. 13:4), but often indulges and supports their evil deeds (abortion is the most obscene and vicious example, but there are many others, including the indulgent treatment of criminals and persecution of the innocent who fall foul of government corruption and ideology as incarnated in excessive modern regulations, and this problem exists on just about every level of society from building regulations to the right to protect oneself from assault by a criminal). Instead of delivering justice the modern State sees its role as delivering religiously neutral education, religiously neutral health care, religiously neutral welfare. But such religious neutrality is impossible; what we get is secular humanist education, secular humanist health care, secular humanist welfare; and the religious values of this secular humanist State are increasingly being shown to contradict the values of the Christian faith. Instead of the freedom to live our lives under God in his service, practising the Christian virtues, we have the all-controlling, the almighty secular humanist State running our lives for us according to its own religious ideology. But this State conspicuously fails to deliver justice as understood in terms of the Christian world-view. In short, the modern secular State has become as much a god, an idol, to which people look—even for fertility in the immoral NHS fertility clinics—as any idol of the ancient world. And our modern abortion and fertility clinics place as little value on human life as did the fertility cults of the ancient world. Human sacrifice is practised in both ancient *and* modern types of idolatry.

How has this situation arisen? The answer to this question takes us to the heart of the human condition. We have arrived here because we have as a society refused to acknowledge the attributes to deity and have refused to acknowledge that these attributes belong to the God of the Christian Scriptures, and to him alone. We have, to use Paul's words, "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Rom. 1:25)—and we should observe the judgement that Paul says is the lot of a society that does this, namely the plague of homosexuality, which Paul makes plain in this passage is not the cause of God's wrath upon society but a manifestation of it; in other words the increasingly homosexualised culture we have to live with is part of God's judgement upon the nation for its idolatry.

This spiritual apostasy has been subtle in the way it has progressed. But it started in the Church (and remember also that the homosexual problem has been as much a clergy/church problem from the beginning as it has been a problem in any other walk of life—God has answered the apostasy of the church; and he has answered an effeminate leadership with an increasingly homosexual clergy). The state of our society today is the consequence of the Church's apostasy and we face as a Church and a nation God's judgement upon that apostasy: "For the time has come that judgement must

16. On the Christian doctrine of the State and its proper role under God's law see Stephen C. Perks, *A Defence of the Christian State: The Case Against Principled Pluralism and the Christian Alternative* (Taunton: The Kuyper Foundation, 1998).

begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God" (1 Pet. 4:17).

In order to explain this we need to take a look at one of the most important doctrinal issues of the Christian faith, a doctrine that has very important and far reaching social consequences, but which is seldom these days understood as having any social consequences at all, namely the doctrine of God's sovereignty, *predestination*.

Man is a worshipping creature. He will worship someone or something because he was created to do so. He can no more deny the reality of this than he can deny himself the air that he breathes. He can deny it in mere words to be sure; but he cannot deny the reality of this in his actions. It is *never* the case that man chooses not to worship. And by worship I do not mean merely words and symbols. Worship is far more than that. Worship is the dedication of one's life in service to the object worshipped. And such worship is inescapable for mankind. All human action is worship. There is no action known to man that is not an act of worship or that does not find its context in the attitude of worship. Man worships with every breath that he takes. The question is, "Whom or what does he worship?" We can pervert the meaning of the worship we offer by offering it incorrectly or by giving it to the wrong object. In fact, this is man's whole condition outside of Christ. The non-believer worships his gods daily no less than the believer, but the gods he worships are false gods, idols. He does not give the God of Scripture the worship that rightfully belongs to him and to him alone. Instead he worships some other object or objects and ascribes all the attributes of deity to these objects, which are merely creatures, i.e. aspects of the created order, whether a block of wood or stone, a demon, or an ideology of his own making, his own autonomous human reason.

But what happens in an age like ours where God is deemed to be dead, where people say they no longer believe in God? What happens in a *secular* age to the attributes of deity? It is quite simple really. They are secularised. And this is what has happened in our society today. The attributes of deity have been secularised, stripped of their association with deity, and ascribed to something or someone other than the God of the Bible. The particular attribute in question here is that of God's sovereignty, because it is this attribute of deity that most defines our society's understanding of and attitude to the secular State. And this false worship of the State, this illegitimate ascription of an attribute of deity to the modern secular State, is a form of idolatry with which the modern Church is intimately involved.

Sovereignty is an attribute of God. Predestination is an inescapable concept. If we deny that God is a predestinating God, this does not mean the concept of predestination will go away. It will not. It is an inescapable fact of life for man. Reality would be meaningless without it. Rather, when predestination is denied as an attribute of God it is merely transferred to someone or something else. In a secular age like ours it is secularised. In our society this secularised version of God's sovereignty, God's predestination, is an attribute of the State, and because the State bears this attribute people believe that the State has the right and the duty to control and regulate our lives and our society. Of course, the State in our society bears this attribute in a secularised form. It does not claim to be divine as did ancient Roman Emperors, or claim to be the link between God and

man as did ancient Pharaohs and the like. But this is where the difference ends. The difference exists only in the secularised form in which this idol is worshipped in our age. The aspiration to control and dominate, to play God, is the same.

The growth of the State and of "soft totalitarianism" in Britain in the twentieth century, which was enormous, the State's increasing control over the whole of our lives and over society is, I believe, a result of the nation's denial of the Christian God and the attribution of a secularised concept of God's sovereignty to the State. The State today is our sovereign—and it no longer acknowledges a higher law above man's law, which was the old Christian concept of the rule of law. The growth of this excessively controlling influence of the State and the loss of liberty and virtue that has necessarily accompanied it, is a consequence of the nation's spiritual apostasy, of our abandonment of the biblical view of God as the Almighty predestinating God for a secularised idol. In this secularised doctrine of predestination we see what happens when God is denied. If God is not Lord, someone or something else will be. If God does not govern our lives and our social order by his law, someone else will by means of another law. God's sovereignty will be attributed to an idol. And unlike the God of the Christian Scriptures, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light (Mt. 11:30), idols are always tyrants whose burdens crush men and enslave them. For example, we now pay to the modern idolatrous State more than four times in taxes what the God of all creation requires in tithes; and we lose our freedom in the process, whereas Christ tells us, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jn 8:36). And do Christians learn the lesson? Of course not. They argue instead that we do not need to tithe to God now because the modern State performs many of the functions of the ancient tithe. Indeed it does—to our shame!—for this is not a Christian State; it is an idol and a tyrant. We are slaves to a tyrant and we fail to realise it.

The State now claims the right to control, to predestine society according to its own apostate ideology, its own idea of the meaning of society and of human life. We live in a predestinating State, a State that usurps the role of God in the life of the individual, the family, society at large and the nation as a whole. And just as God tired of the Israelites who continually committed idolatry with the Baals of Canaan, so I believe that God has now tired of the idolatry of this nation; and just as they were delivered up to a judgement in Babylon to punish them for their unfaithfulness to God, so I believe that we are now being delivered up to our own Babylon: the European Union. And I have ceased any longer to regret this and come to see it as God's will, God's righteous judgement upon our nation. I severely doubt whether there is anything left worth saving in this country any longer anyway. But I doubt we should be able to do anything about it if there were. European assimilation is a process that I think our people and politicians are unable to do anything about. It has taken on a life of its own almost. And if it is God's judgement upon the nation it will be futile to resist.

There is one very interesting fact about the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites however. It decisively brought the Baal worship problem to an end in Israel. After the restoration we do not hear of this problem of a syncretistic Yahweh-Baal cult among the Jews any more. We can only hope and pray that our own captivity to the State of the European Union,

which I think has yet to be revealed in all its vainglory and tyranny, will finally rid the Church in this land of its infatuation with secular humanism and its most cherished modern idol, the secular State.

It is for this reason that I think our condition is not totally hopeless, though it does appear to be considerably depressing in the short term. We can learn from this debacle. But it is beginning to look like we shall have to learn the hard way, just as ancient Israel did. Perhaps there is time to do something even in the short term. Either way we can learn from the situation we have brought upon ourselves so that the future can be different. Here's the problem though. Not only has the Church failed to challenge this idolatry. She has been in the vanguard promoting it. Just as Aaron, after Moses went up the mountain, made a golden calf and said to the people "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 32:4), so in our age the Church has said "Here is your god" and pointed to the modern State and the ideology of socialism, claiming it to be "Christian." The result, as with all idols, is the enslavement of the nation. The Church has even condoned the use of theft by the State to fund its usurpation of God's prerogatives and the functions of other God-ordained institutions by promoting the ideology of State-welfare redistribution programmes.

In short, the Church today in Britain is as compromised

in its idolatry as was ancient Israel in the time of the kings when the high places were used to worship God falsely and to worship false gods by practising the fertility cults of ancient Canaan. Our high places are intellectual and ideological—but the result is the same, the denial of God's will for our lives and the worshipping of an idol rather than the true God. We send our children to be sacrificed at the altars of secular humanist education, believing that the secular humanist conception of "science" explains everything; we call upon the State to heal us from our infirmities; we require our neighbours, through the payment of taxes (State legalised theft), to help those less fortunate than ourselves instead of being good neighbours ourselves; we ascribe to the secular State the attribute of God's sovereignty and call on it to control our lives and our society according to the gospel of secular humanism instead of looking to God. And while complimenting ourselves on trying to create a "caring society" by means of such idolatry we fail to see that in all these areas of life—e.g. education, health, welfare—the Christian virtues have become obsolete. This is not a Christian society, nor is the Church that follows such idolatry a Christian Church. God requires something else. He requires us to do something about this. He calls us to destroy our idols, the ideological high places that have led us to this situation. Until we do, we may have saved souls, but we shall have wasted our lives. C&S

Book Reviews

THE MYSTERY OF CAPITAL: WHY CAPITALISM TRIUMPHS IN THE WEST AND FAILS EVERYWHERE ELSE

BY HERNANDO DE SOTO

New York: Basic Books, 2000, 276 pages

REVIEWED BY RUBEN ALVARADO

At long last, Hernando de Soto has provided us with a sequel to his unparalleled tour-de-force *The Other Path*, which in merciless detail and with cool analysis described the appalling situation facing the poor in the Third World, who in fact have to fight an uphill battle against their own governments, with the only help they get from the West being trickle-down handouts. For, De Soto revealed, it was not the lack of energy or entrepreneurial capacity nor an invincible popular stupidity that produced the poverty in the Third World but governments, both national and foreign, that refused to recognise in their own citizens the spirit of entrepreneurship, their efforts to better themselves, their savings, their accumulated property, but rather wrote them off as shantytown riff-raff whose only hope was birth control. De Soto tore the

lid off of this world and forever changed how we look at the poor there. And now he has published the further development of that book, purporting to provide a philosophical foundation for the phenomenon of capital, telling us again why it is the poor's last best hope, on the material plane, for the future.

The great merit of this book is De Soto's philosophical elaboration of the way fixed, established, secure property rights pave the way for the development of capital proper, that is, property as the means of obtaining credit in order to generate further investment.¹ Property thus generates a multiplier effect that produces compound economic growth. This function of property was recognised most thoroughly by Marx, De Soto argues, and provided the basis for the Marxist critique of capitalism. But, De Soto says, Marx had it exactly backwards: it is precisely this function, succinctly captured in the term *capitalism*, that has proved the salvation

1. De Soto lists other benefits provided by fixed property rights, such as the way they create responsible, committed citizens, the way they, in the case of real property, provide the basis for the provision of public utilities (utilities providers now have the secure knowledge that the property is in fact in existence, is owned, etc., and thus can be billed). But the element of investment-spurred growth seems to me the most important in his argument.

of the lower classes of society. For when they too are able to have their property recognised before the law, they too can enter into the capitalist equation and benefit from material prosperity. This is a lesson that was learned in the West during the Industrial Revolution, and a lesson that must be learned in the Third World today. For the same kind of revolution is occurring there that occurred in the West a century ago.

But there is more. De Soto claims to teach us a great lesson in this book, above and beyond what he presented in *The Other Path*; and that is that extralegality, the informal sector of unrecognised property and its accompanying do-it-yourself judicial institutions, is a *universal phenomenon* which was only overcome in the West in the nineteenth century. As he puts it (p. 52): “. . . The reason capitalism has triumphed in the West and sputtered in the rest of the world is because most of the assets in Western nations have been integrated into one formal representational system.”

This integration did not happen casually. Over decades in the nineteenth century, politicians, legislators, and judges pulled together the scattered facts and rules that govern property throughout cities, villages, buildings, and farms and integrated them into one system. This “pulling together” of property representations, a revolutionary moment in the history of developed nations, deposited all the information and rules governing the accumulated wealth of their citizens into one knowledge base. Before that moment, information about assets was far less accessible. Every farm or settlement recorded its assets and the rules governing them in rudimentary ledgers, symbols, or oral testimony. But the information was atomised, dispersed, and not available to any one agent at any given moment. As we know too well today, an abundance of facts is not necessarily an abundance of knowledge. For knowledge to be functional, advanced nations have to integrate into one comprehensive system all their loose and isolated data about property. Developing and former communist nations have not done this.

It was this “revolutionary” development in the nineteenth century that sparked the Industrial Revolution and the economic progress that is the hallmark of Western society.

So De Soto argues that it was the customary-law orientation of pre-modern European society that lay at the heart of the problem of extralegality, and that overcoming this customary-law approach, as was accomplished in the nineteenth century in continental Europe through the codification of the private law, is the key to solving the problem of extralegality in the Third World today, and thus unleashing there a capitalist revolution that will sustain economic growth and bring Third World economies into line with the West.

But is De Soto fair in blaming customary law for extralegality and informality? Watch as his argument develops (page 53): “It may surprise the Western reader that most of the world’s nations have yet to integrate extralegal property agreements into one formal legal system. For Westerners, there supposedly is only one law—the official one. Yet the West’s reliance on integrated property systems is a phenomenon of at most the last two hundred years. In most Western countries, integrated property systems appeared only about one hundred years ago; Japan’s integration happened little more than fifty years ago. As we shall see in detail later, diverse informal property arrangements were

once the norm in every nation. Legal pluralism was the standard in continental Europe until Roman law was rediscovered in the fourteenth century and governments assembled all currents of law into one co-ordinated system.”

De Soto’s argument thus hinges on equating the integration of property systems with the establishment of unified law codes. These two are, however, far from being identical. In fact, the one—an integrated property system—can exist quite independently of the other—a unified, centrally administered legal system. The one provides information about property that can be accessed centrally. The other provides protection of property. Information and protection are not the same, although protection—security—of property does provide the basis for valid information about property. Without security of property, there can be no accurate information about property, because ownership, the source of information about property, is not established.

But what does this have to do with extralegality? Security of property is not the discovery of the last hundred or two hundred years; yet it is this, or the lack thereof, that has created the situation of extralegality in the Third World. Owners cannot get recognition of their property before the law and before the courts of their own country: this is the problem. The problem is not that owners cannot get their properties properly advertised, or that they cannot adequately publish information about their property to potential buyers. But it is precisely these two categories that De Soto runs together in his argument.

Thus, the “extralegality” De Soto criticises in the Western past is not the extralegality currently being experienced in the Third World. In fact it is not extralegality at all. It is another form of legality, that of customary law rather than centralised legislation. But De Soto never makes that distinction. He simply argues that because there was no centralised legislation and codified law, then there was extralegality. But that is a far cry from systems of law in which property rights are made into high hurdles that only the well-heeled and well-placed can take advantage of; in which great swathes of the population are excluded from the legal system altogether. That is the kind of exclusionary legal order that typifies the Third World, that makes extralegality a necessity for survival, and it is the product not of custom *but of legislation and codification and law codes*.

To make his point stick, De Soto goes to the history books. But he only refers to one specific set of examples, from the colonial and nineteenth-century United States. Here he describes the situation in which settlers could not obtain clear title to their land because those lands had previously been granted to large landowners by decree, by colonial assemblies or by governors etc. De Soto claims that the common law did not “provide guidance for how courts should handle cases involving people who had bought or inherited land of dubious title,” and that, “more importantly, the English common law of property was often ill-suited to deal with the problems that confronted the colonists.”² But the fact that there were no precedents to help deal with the new situation does not mean that the common law provided no solutions to the situation. It is precisely in such situations that the common-law approach proves its worth, for it provides a mechanism for dealing with the situations as they arise on the ground. Through the develop-

2. p. III.

ment of precedent, these new situations work their way into law, rather than having to wait for the legislature to write a law to deal with those specific situations. De Soto actually answers his own question, by quoting Konig: “the courts often turned to local town customs and transformed them into a new body of law that would stabilize land dealings.”³ This is precisely the point.

Certainly there have been cases in European and American history of the kind of extralegality that now characterises the Third World. But De Soto does a much better job of describing and analysing this extralegality in his previous book, *The Other Path*. There he showed that it was the mercantilist approach, and prior to that, the guild mentality, that led to the rise of informal, extralegal industry and business, that pushed otherwise law-abiding people, especially those on the lower rungs of society, outside of the formal, legal sector. This mentality believes that progress must be co-ordinated from above, and that legislation is the tool to achieve that goal. For the mercantilist mind, customary law is a hindrance to be overcome.

But in *The Mystery of Capital*, De Soto has abandoned the mercantilist paradigm as the key to understanding what is behind extralegality. Instead he has embraced the idea of codification as the solution. But in doing so he is embracing one of the major tools used by the mercantilists; because codification is the means by which legislation has superseded customary law in modern times. For, as De Soto showed so masterfully in his previous book, it was mercantilist legislation that produced extralegality then, and it is neo-mercantilist legislation that is producing it now. Extralegality is not customary law per se, although it evolves into it: where customary law is not recognised it will make its spontaneous appearance willy-nilly.

This book therefore is extremely puzzling to read, at least to readers familiar with *The Other Path*. What De Soto has apparently decided to do is to bring the common-law tradition in for a measure of the blame for extralegality, and champion the pride and joy of the civil-law tradition, codification, as the solution to extralegality.⁴ This in spite of the fact that De Soto cites various proponents of the customary law/common law approach, such as Hayek, Leoni and Benson. Hayek and Leoni in particular (I plead ignorance respecting Benson, not having read him) argue forcefully that legislation has only a limited role in the sphere of private law, and that the common-law approach is the appropriate approach for a property-rights regime. De Soto himself argued for an approach along common-law lines in his *The Other Path*. Whence the change in philosophy?

I think the answer can be read between the lines of *The Mystery of Capital*. De Soto sounds like a disillusioned free marketer, disillusioned by the experience of watching former communist countries become ever more corrupt and ever more hopeless at just the time the West moved in to help these countries build free market economies. He appears to

believe that the problem lay in the free market ideology itself, which he seems to suggest are one and the same with the policy prescriptions of the IMF and the World Bank. This in itself is mind-boggling. Proponents of the free market have always argued that macroeconomic solutions are no solutions at all, and that solutions must be found precisely in the micro-area of establishing the rule of law, property rights, rights of contract, and the like. But, having convinced himself that traditional free-market proponents never understood the importance of these things, he turns to a rather outdated solution, the solution of codification. Just as legions of legal philosophers argued against codification from the time the idea was broached to the time it was put into practice, contemporary legal historians such as Manlio Bellomo now recognise the bankruptcy of codification and are arguing for a new start.⁵

Apparently, therefore, De Soto has cast his lot with the civil-law approach. He wants legislation to solve the problems legislation has produced. He wants politicians to solve the problems politicians have produced. What he needs to understand is that it is precisely legislation and politics that themselves are the problem. Legislation and politics have only a limited role to play in the development of private law. Legislation and politics are pre-eminently public law institutions. As I have written elsewhere: “Private law, being expressive of commutative justice, has its own inner logic, its own structure which must be respected in lawmaking of any shape. Currently, legislation is the primary source of law, both public and private. The problem with this is that legislation is primarily directed by considerations of distributive and not commutative justice. This is because the legislature is oriented towards public law, it historically has been shaped by public law, and it sees its mission in terms of public law. Add to this the modern social-democratic bias in favour of public law as an all encompassing ‘social’ law, and one begins to see the danger of legislation to the regime of private law.”⁶

The primary role of legislation in the area of private law has been to introduce “social” law, geared towards undermining the otherwise entirely just, albeit politically incorrect or undesirable, outcomes which of necessity follow when free persons are left to arrange their own affairs on their own account. This social legislation nicely fits into the neo-mercantilist category De Soto used in *The Other Path*. It is this kind of regulation which distorts the private-law regime and creates the anomalies which in turn spawn informal activity, e.g. the black market.

There is another book I wish De Soto had written; it has to do with another parallel between the nineteenth century and the Third World of today: the phenomenon of shanty towns, of burgeoning city growth, uncontrolled, off the “radar screen” of officialdom, the object of pity and outrage, exhibit A in the trial of “unbridled capitalism,” the enemy of the common man, who was only saved by the rise of the glorious welfare state. I wish De Soto had taken the lead provided by Hayek, first in his *Capitalism and the Historians* and

3. David Thomas Konig, “Community Custom and the Common Law: Social Change and the Development of Land Law in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts,” in *Land Law and Real Property in American History: Major Historical Interpretations*, ed. Kermit Hall (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), p. 339. Quoted on page 112.

4. On the common-law/civil-law opposition as the paradigm for understanding the development of Western civilization, see my *A Common Law: The Law of Nations and Western Civilization* (Aalten, the Netherlands: Pietas Press, 1999).

5. See Manlio Bellomo, *The Common Legal Past of Europe 1000–1800*, transl. Lydia G. Cochrane (Washington DC: the Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

6. Ruben Alvarado, *An Outline of the Common Law: I. The Private-Law Nature of the Common Law* (Christian Cultural Studies Page, WordBridge Publishing: <<http://www.wordbridge.net/ccsp/common%20law%20outline.htm>>, 2000).

later in his *The Fatal Attraction*, that the phenomenon of shanty towns, far from being a sign of grinding poverty, are in fact a harbinger of economic growth and prosperity for the masses that, tied to the land and grinding existence of subsistence farming, never had been able to participate in the progress of the city. The shanty towns, De Soto now tells us, in fact conceal wealth of enormous magnitude that only has to be tapped, and the means to tapping this is none other than the rule of law, the availability of cheap yet reliable justice, the availability of notaries and courts through which the assets of the poor become visible to the larger market, the buyer and the seller, the investor. To achieve this, governments need to forget about their plans to provide for their people and rather enable their people to provide for themselves by providing the only thing governments are good at providing, civil justice. And it is precisely this seemingly simple, ever-so-straightforward task that so completely evades both Third World governments and their benefactors in the West, so eager to champion the plight of the poor but so unwilling to do anything fundamental about it. *C&S*

ISLAMIC FINANCE: THEORY AND PRACTICE

BY PAUL S. MILLS AND JOHN R. PRESLEY

London: Macmillan Press, 1999, hardback, 171 pages,
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REVIEWED BY MATTHEW WRIGHT

THE great tragedy of the modern era has been the systematic withdrawal of Christians from the historical sphere of culture. There has been a general retreat from what Christians call “secular society,” and when they now use this term, they mean that society and culture are *by nature* secular. History has become the carnal world from which all Christians are to hide themselves within the maternal embrace of the institutional church. With this retreat has followed the abdication by Christians of their duty to seize control of the cultural seats of power. “We fight not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). Ironically, this withdrawal from the battlefield has not saved Christians from the influence of humanism. It has, rather, allowed humanism to strengthen its hold by removing the lines of defence. This has been particularly noticeable in the development of the academic community. The Renaissance successfully inserted a wedge between science¹ and religion, and the passing of the centuries has seen it hammered deeper and deeper into the divide. Today, any suggestion that religion, in particular Christianity, could have anything to do with science is often met with puzzlement.

The result has been that humanism has been allowed to gain a stranglehold over what is today a great cultural power. We are now in desperate need of Christian scholars in positions of power to wrest control of the academic sphere

1. I use the term “science” in the wider sense of the word, covering not only the natural sciences such as biology and physics, but academic investigation in general.

away from the humanist spirit. And furthermore, it is the *duty* of Christians who find themselves in such positions to do so.

Paul Mills, the primary author of *Islamic Finance*, is a Christian who finds himself in such a position. He is manager of the government’s Debt Management Office (DMO) and holds a Ph.D. from Cambridge University. His thesis forms the major part of this book.

At a time when it is difficult enough to get Christians interested in a rigorous application of the Christian worldview, you might think that a contribution to economics from the Christian manager of the DMO (Debt Management Office) would be a welcome sight. You probably wouldn’t expect it to be called *Islamic Finance*.

Islamic Finance, which is largely drawn from Paul Mills’ Ph.D. thesis at Cambridge, purports to present a case against the charging of interest on monetary loans, a problem Christians have been arguing over from the time of the early church. It seems strange that with such a wealth of Christian literature on both sides of the argument, Paul Mills has chosen to focus his attention on Islamic principles. This is not to say that the study of the application of the Islamic faith to economics and politics is not valuable to the Christian, or even that there is nothing to be learned from such a study. However, to make it the driving force behind a Christian argument for the prohibition of interest is dangerous to say the least. In fact, in reading this book, one wonders whether Paul Mills has made *any* attempt to formulate a rigorously Christ-centered critique of interest. The impression one gets is that he has hashed together different arguments garnered from all sorts of sources and hoped that their cumulative effect will be to sway the reader to his side of the argument.

I should point out that the sections in Mills’ book which deal with the economic modelling of a proposed interest-free system are certainly valuable from a theoretical perspective. However, his critique of interest rate theory, and his arguments against the justification for an interest rate are seriously flawed, and, at times, bewildering. In fact, some of Mills’ statements, put forward with all the appearance of academic integrity, are enough to bring a blush to the cheeks of anyone with even a limited knowledge of economics. I will use the rest of this review to discuss some of the more startling arguments.

Amongst the cases for interest which Mills rejects is the theory of time preference. This theory has been predominant in Austrian and closely related economic thought, especially in the writings of Böhm-Bawerk, Fisher, Hayek, and Mises. Mills’ critique involves no survey of the voluminous literature on the subject, no quotations from any advocates of time preference theory, and, it has to be said, a complete lack of knowledge of the principles involved: “. . . there can be no automatic assumption . . . that positive time preference predominates in all circumstances so as to necessitate a positive rate of interest.” This is a misleading statement. Although the existence of positive time preference does tend to bring about a positive rate of *originary* interest, it does not necessitate a positive rate of interest on monetary loans, which is, after all, what this book is concerned with. In fact, a positive rate of time preference is perfectly consistent with a zero or negative rate of market interest.

Mills thinks he can build a strong case against the charging of interest through an analysis of the loan market from a legal perspective. In the course of his analysis, he comes out with an amazing argument which is all the more

astonishing for the lack of any thorough explanation. The simple statement is thrown into a paragraph as though it were a truism:

In a way, the usurer provides nothing of service to the borrower, since ownership passes to the borrower in a loan. Hence, interest rewards nothing and constitutes pure exploitation of the borrower's labour . . . In a rental or partnership contract, ownership rights, risks and responsibilities for the transferred asset are retained by the original owner. Yet in a loan, these are transferred to the borrower, who is then under a legal obligation to return the original asset, or its equivalent, at the specified time. Hence, if the ownership of property is relinquished by the lender, why should interest reward the absentee owner? (p. 111).

Mills likes to scatter about “hences” as though they prove a point. In fact, this question of the transfer of ownership in a loan is far more complex than Mills admits, and has historically involved published debate considerably more lengthy than his short paragraph. Furthermore, even this short paragraph is horribly confused in its reasoning. It is true that, in a restricted sense, the ownership of an asset is transferred to the borrower in a loan contract. Depending on the nature of the contract, he may well be given full power of disposal over the asset. But this in no way implies that the lender provides nothing of service to the borrower. Even in the case where a free gift is given to someone, without expectation of repayment, we do not say that the benefactor has provided nothing of service. If the intervention of an individual allows you access to an asset you would have previously been unable to obtain, no matter in what manner he achieves this, it is sheer folly to believe he has been of no service whatsoever. Furthermore, neither the payment of interest nor the repayment of the principal has anything to do with the question of whether ownership of the asset passes to the borrower or not. For the sake of example, let us assume that ownership of the asset really does pass to the borrower. Even then, the question does not centre about *ownership* of the asset as such, but about what the lender may *justifiably expect in exchange* for the ownership of the asset. All Mills manages to do with his argument is to assert without justification that the lender is only entitled to the equivalent of the principal because he provides nothing of service.

This idea of the “equivalent” in an exchange, which recurs throughout *Islamic Finance*, seems to have caused Mills more confusion than it warrants. It gets him involved in all sorts of bizarre arguments. For example: “The exchange of money for money is legal only when no increase (*riba*) occurs since the equivalent of one monetary sum is exactly the same sum” (p. 9). And: “Charging interest on a loan is . . . equivalent to selling a loaf of bread for its exchange value and adding a surcharge for its use” (p. 10).

The first statement is deeply misleading. In refutation, it is enough to point to the example of identical monetary sums in periods of different prices. As economists are always happy to point out, the nominal value of money is not the same as its real value. The equivalent value of a given sum of money is not always the same sum of money, *in nominal terms*.

But what about the case in which there is no difference in prices? What if we assume that the whole structure of prices, in terms both of their nominal level and their relation to each other, is constant? Perhaps in this instance, Mills has a point?

Well, not really. Suppose someone has £100 in cash.

We'll call him person A. Person A has all sorts of options open to him regarding the disposal of this money. He can spend it on consumption goods, for example, or invest it in a business enterprise. He can also add it to his cash balance. Now suppose another person—let's call him person B—would like to have this £100, whether to spend it on consumption goods or, as is more often the case, to invest it. When he asks A for this money, he is effectively asking him to forego any of the many uses to which it may have been put otherwise. But what does he offer in exchange? Whatever it is that he does offer, it must be something which he values less than the £100 he wishes to receive in return. This is a basic principle of exchange. It was to the credit of the Austrian school of economics that they emphasized that the £100 in question was £100 in the *present time period*. It is characteristic of the terms of a loan that the borrower's obligation to the lender is paid at a later date. If the borrower were to offer £100 *at a later date* in exchange for £100 *immediately*, such an action would effectively mean that the borrower prefers the immediate use of £100 to the later use. Thus there is no reason why he would not be perfectly willing to offer, say, £110 (the principal plus 10% interest) at a later date in exchange for £100 immediately. The rate of interest the borrower would be willing to pay depends on the urgency of his present need. In what sense then does the lender exploit him by charging interest? The borrower is not going to borrow, for example, if the lender charges such a high rate of interest that he prefers to keep his future money. He will only borrow if the lender offers a rate of interest such that the borrower prefers £100 immediately to £100 plus interest in the future. To put it simply, interest is nothing but the outcome of a free and fair exchange; the argument about the equivalency of identical sums of money is irrelevant.

I do not, in presenting this argument, deny the ethical aspect of a loan agreement. In saying that interest is the outcome of a fair exchange, I am referring to a definite business-type transaction. I am *not* referring to charitable lending. I agree that it is not ethical to exploit the desperate need of the poor for immediate money by charging interest, and this seems to be the sense in which the Bible discusses the issue (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35–37). There is also a prohibition against charging interest to fellow Israelites (Dt. 23:19–20). Mills and Presley unfortunately make no distinction between these different situations. My aim here has been only to show the poverty and, at times, naïvety of the arguments in this book.

Neither do I ignore Mills and Presley's “critique” of time preference theory. I must admit that I do find it surprising, however, that someone who believes that “essentially, the whole usury debate turns on our attitude towards time,” (p. 110) does not seem to be able to write more than a hundred words on page 13 and one or two hundred on page 110 against time preference. Almost every critique of time preference theory I have read (and I have a very open mind on the subject) has completely misunderstood what it stands for. It does *not* say that “since the mere passage of time . . . alters the value of assets, money and satisfaction *automatically* [my italics], their forfeiture over time (through a loan) *automatically* justifies interest as compensation” (p. 110) On the whole, advocates of time preference theory do not see the process in such mechanistic terms at all. Neither do they deny the objective possibility of negative time preference (p. 13), i.e. the preference for future goods over present goods. They

simply realize that negative time preference implies *the desire to pay someone to borrow your money*. When this becomes a general feature of economic life, Mills and Presley can rest easy.

Such unsophisticated arguments appear throughout the book. For example, in attempting to refute the argument that the interest rate is justified by the risk undertaken by the lender, Mills says: “. . . interest cannot be justified by the risk of lending, since both parties to the contract face risks. Why should the lender’s risk-bearing be compensated and not the borrower’s, especially when the loan is secured and/or repayable on demand?” (p. 108).

This argument demonstrates significant ignorance of the theory of exchange. It is absolutely *not* true that the borrower’s perception of risk is not accounted for. This perception, in fact, will exert a downward pressure on the risk premium contained in the interest rate just as the lender’s perception of risk exerts an upward pressure. The interest rate settled on, if any, fully takes account of both parties’ behaviour regarding uncertainty. If the loan is secured or repayable on demand, then this will only affect the borrower’s attitude to perceived risk, and will introduce a further factor to be taken into consideration in the loan transaction.

I could go on. And on, and on, and on. I have hardly brushed the surface of irrelevancy, bad argument, and misunderstanding in *Islamic Finance*. I haven’t even touched the issue of an interest-free economy. It is particularly irritating that Mills and Presley use a sort of academic backdoor to escape criticism. In Charlotte Yonge’s *The Heir of Redclyffe*, Phillip de Morville praises the virtues of his cousin Guy in such a way as to discredit his good character. Mills and Presley present some of the essential faults of their argument as though they gave it greater strength:

Whilst this accumulation of evidence against interest might seem compelling to some, unfortunately the case for the prosecution has one [!] major flaw. Most of its arguments are predicated upon initial premises—be they religious, ethical, or legal—that are not universally held. If usury could easily be equated with an obviously immoral act, such as theft, then the case for prohibition would be clear. But this is not the case. In most instances, interest-bearing loans are contracted voluntarily. Borrowers are not forced to incur such liabilities, they frequently enjoy the advantages of competition amongst lenders and receive obvious benefits from loans. The borrower and lender simply agree to exchange the principal now for the promise of its return at a premium in the future. The anticipated value of the services rendered to the borrower must equal or exceed the interest paid or the exchange would not occur. Hence, it has not been automatically apparent to societies uncommitted to monotheistic revelation that there is anything sufficiently immoral about interest to warrant its outright prohibition. (p. 112)

That Mills’ and Presley’s arguments are founded on initial premises is not a flaw *as such*, for my opposing arguments are also based on religious presuppositions. The only question is, which are the *correct* presuppositions?² In fact, Western

2. It is very interesting that the authors of *Islamic Finance* give theft as an example of an “obviously immoral act” which presumably is not meant to be based on “initial premises.” Theft, however, is not obviously immoral (in this sense) at all. The British banking system has been plundering the public for centuries through the manipulation of credit and the money supply, yet this is accepted by many as legitimate banking practice.

Society, which has been until recently thoroughly committed to “monotheistic revelation,” has sanctioned interest since the time of the Reformation. It was the Aristotelian influence on early Christianity that led to a blanket prohibition of interest. The discussion of Christian opposition to interest in *Islamic Finance* hardly touches upon the Reformational and post-Reformational periods at all.

On the whole, it has to be said that *Islamic Finance* is a very weak attempt to reintroduce some very old arguments against interest on monetary loans. While the discussion of Islamic financial institutions and the modelling of an interest-free economy is interesting, I cannot help feeling that the book is simply not as thorough or well-thought out as it ought to be, especially so, since it is aimed at a predominantly academic market. It is also a shame that Mills has made very little attempt to think the issue through from a thoroughly Christian perspective. Taking into account the size and content of the book, £45 is a lot to pay unless you are *very* interested in these issues. Even then, there are better books on the market, on either side of the debate. *C&S*

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Having read Jean-Marc Berthoud’s review of my *Calvinus* (*C&S*, October 2000), I believe he offers no substantial challenge to my basic thesis. In the interests of honest debate, may I submit the following response? I consider that the author’s failure to get to grips with the Calvin evidence at the heart of my argument means that his critique amounts to little more than circumstantial sniping. The following detailed comments deal with these nonetheless important peripheral issues.

1. *Amyraut and Particular Redemption*. Consistent with the repeated misrepresentation of Amyraldian Calvinism, the author states that “for Dr Clifford the central test of his orthodox tradition is nothing else but the explicit rejection of the doctrine of particular redemption as it can be found in the formulations of Dort, of Westminster and of the Helvetic Consensus which all affirm this specific point of doctrine.” This statement fails to acknowledge the significant differences between the Canons of Dort and the other confessions. The former clearly teach a particular efficacious redemption within the context of a universal sufficiency (see *Calvinus*, p. 27). The latter aspect is missing in the other confessions. Whereas the high orthodoxy of the post-Dort era became ambivalent about the atonement’s universal sufficiency, Amyraut interpreted Dort’s position from Calvin’s perspective (see *Calvinus*, p. 28). In short, the atonement was designed to be sufficient for all but efficacious for the elect. Amyraut only rejected the scholastic doctrine of limited atonement.

2. *Calvin, the Bible and Scholasticism*. Whether or not Beza and others were “aware of being party to such a betrayal,” no one can deny significant differences between Calvin and his successors over the extent of the atonement and the systematic prominence given to predestination. The simple fact is that in their continuing controversy with Rome, the latter employed a more scholastic and less biblical method. Instead of using Scripture only, the scholastic Calvinists used Rome’s philosophical weapons to advance the Reformed cause.

3. *Authentic French Calvinism*. Doubtless I could have cited more authors from the “modern French Calvinist tradition.” However, nothing of significance would have been gained from this.

Indeed, M. Berthoud is a sufficiently competent representative! To quote Pierre Courthial's view that the Saumur Academy was a source of crypto-Arminian influences is indefensible. What proof is advanced for this view? Indeed, it is tedious to witness the repeated characterisation of Amyraldian Calvinism as a compromise with Arminianism. The simple fact is that Amyraut and his colleagues reaffirmed the "authentic Calvinism" of John Calvin. Amyraut's *Defense de la doctrine de Calvin* (1644)—actually written against the Arminians—proves this conclusively. The idea of a "radical breach" is therefore absurd. On the contrary, their opponents were guilty of distorting Calvin's legacy under the influence of Aristotelian scholasticism. But if Amyraut was wrong then so was Calvin, a conclusion doubtless too embarrassing for those who claim Calvin for themselves. In view of M. Berthoud's failure to refute the detailed Calvin evidence I provide, it is evident that the advocates of the so-called "modern French Calvinist tradition" are as mistaken as their Anglo-Saxon colleagues.

4. *Amyraut and Liberalism.* Reaffirming the authentic Calvinist orthodoxy of Amyraut has nothing to do with nineteenth century German liberalism and far less with Kantianism and Barthianism. I have no sympathy with these schools of thought. As a pastor concerned with the pursuit and proclamation of biblical truth—albeit with some academic training, I simply see a closer affinity between Calvin, Amyraut and the Bible than in the case of the so-called orthodox theologians of the scholastic variety.

5. *Amyraut and the Judgement of God.* M. Berthoud's insistence on linking Amyraldianism with the late seventeenth-century demise of French Protestantism is ridiculous in the extreme. One may as well blame it on the failure of the high-orthodox pastors and churches to reach out with more compassionate zeal to French Roman Catholics. Such a scenario surely makes more sense of the judgement of God. To what, one may also ask, do we attribute the English tragedy of 1662? The presence of Richard Baxter and his "moderate Calvinists" or the embryonic hypercalvinism of the so-called orthodox Puritans? To be less speculative, the truth is surely elsewhere. In both cases, the intolerant policies of Charles II and Louis XIV made them impatient with their respective Puritan and Huguenot "nonconformists." Both monarchs were little concerned with theological niceties. As for the mysterious providence of the Eternal, does M. Berthoud pretend to know the Lord's secret judgements in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685)—besides what may be understood from his revealed will of 2 Tim. 3:12? As I have shown, such events are open to alternative explanations. If M. Berthoud wishes to maintain his highly doubtful if not discredited thesis then he must supply a detailed refutation of my *Calvinus* rebuttal (p. 16).

6. *Amyraut and Cartesian Rationalism.* M. Berthoud's attempt to blame Amyraut's theological method on the influence of the rationalist philosopher Descartes is as futile as it is flawed. There is simply no evidence that Amyraut imbibed the ideas of Descartes (see B. G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, p. 75). Following in a tradition stretching back to Melancthon, Amyraut discussed the benefit of "method" in his Six Sermons of 1636; these appeared a year before Descartes' *Discourse on Method* was published in Leiden! (see F. P. Van Stam, *The Controversy over the Theology of Saumur*, p. 427). M. Berthoud's overall thesis appears even less likely in view of Amyraut's intended use of "method": he was discussing the edification arising from the study of the doctrine of election—an obviously Arminian procedure! There is therefore no need to rescue Amyraut from such bad company as Charles Darwin or any others whose theories of reality leave much to be desired.

7. *Amyraut and Orthodoxy.* The charge that Amyraut "for-

gets that the Word of God is an organic whole, to be interpreted according to its inherent fundamental confessional structure . . . [as] expressed in the faithful Confessions of the Church" is absurd and begs many questions. To assume that "the inner structure and coherence of Calvin's thought" is as scholastic as M. Berthoud perceives it to be begs a further question. Regarding the main charge, Amyraut affirmed the Confession of La Rochelle (1559/71) and the Canons of Dort (1619). Compared with the scholastic approach of his high-orthodox opponents, he argued that his "method"—never to go beyond the specific textual data of Holy Scripture—actually honoured the confessional structure of the Bible more. Amyraut also claimed to reflect the thought-patterns of Calvin's biblical understanding. As Amyraut's "latter-day disciple"—in whose company I am happy to be, I no more isolate my discussion of the atonement than Amyraut did. Its place in the whole is seen in my *Calvinus* introduction (p. 11). M. Berthoud's further mistake is to assume that what he regards as "the Calvinistic system of divine truth" is identical with his own high-orthodox, scholastic theory. The truth is that Amyraut subscribed to Calvin's original and more biblical "system," viz. a view of Scripture which recognises paradox and the "dualistic unity" of the divine will, a methodological mind-set which always infuriates high-Calvinist rationalists like M. Berthoud.

8. *Amyraut, Scholasticism and Rome.* Regarding my scholarship, I admit that my language expertise is insufficient to investigate the work of F. Laplanche and L. Rimbault. However, since my obviously competent secondary-source authors Brian G. Armstrong and F. P. Van Stam take account of these French scholars, I didn't consider it was necessary to reproduce all their observations. Besides, none of this affects my main thesis, that Amyraut appealed to the kind of evidence I cite from Calvin, the like of which M. Berthoud fails to engage with in any significant way. An incidental detail made me smile: whereas Amyraut is penalised for reaching out to Roman Catholics—which he never did at the expense of the Reformed Faith (see *Calvinus*, p. 17), M. Berthoud seems quite happy to cite as "the great expert on Amyraut" the Roman Catholic Laplanche! It seems some of us are allowed to be selective when it suits us.

9. *Amyraut, Du Moulin and the Gospel.* M. Berthoud is obviously discomforted by the proto-Amyraldian quotation from Du Moulin's *Anatomy of Arminianism* (1619). To blame me for not mentioning Du Moulin's *Eclaircissements des doctrines Saumuriennes* (1648) is to ignore my statement regarding Du Moulin's "specifically anti-Amyraldian treatises" (*Calvinus*, p. 21). Of course I was aware of this work. By all accounts it merely reflects the author's questionable scholastic theological perspective, a position which had developed since the publication of his earlier work. For the most part, Calvin is as guilty as Amyraut, judging by several of Du Moulin's complaints. However, the solidarity between Amyraut and Calvin is a major issue but this has been studiously avoided by high-orthodox theologians. Indeed, this has been the case for three centuries! Instead, Amyraut is generally misrepresented and Calvin's relevance conveniently ignored.

If M. Berthoud is so anxious for the publication of a modern English edition of Du Moulin's 1648 treatise, one of Amyraut's books should be similarly made available if a just assessment of the issues is to take place. Readers would then be able to judge that, contrary to Du Moulin's charge, the "novelties" originated not from Amyraut—as Jean Daillé pointed out—but from the distortions of the high-orthodox school. Amyraut argued incessantly that the seeds of his ideas and expressions were, for the most part, found in Calvin. If Amyraldianism is Arminianism in disguise then Calvin's reputation must be reviewed! True, a few of Amyraut's expressions

were not derived from Calvin, which he candidly admitted. However, his critics have often ignored the fact that, at the Synod of Alençon (1637), to avoid needless offence, Amyraut agreed to suspend the use of expressions like “conditional predestination”—even though he explained why he had resorted to them. Amyraut’s opponents—following Du Moulin—continue to criticise him as if no such retraction was ever made. It should not be forgotten that Amyraut’s concessions and carefully worded defence were accepted by the National Synod. What is more important, correctly exegeted Scripture may be cited to support the leading features of Amyraut’s case, despite Du Moulin’s Arminiphobia.

It cannot be denied that Du Moulin represented a scholastic stance which flew in the face of the language of accommodation found in the Bible, highlighted frequently by Calvin and endorsed by Amyraut. Du Moulin’s orthodoxy had replaced accommodation and paradox by scholastic reason and terminological inflexibility. For him, all theology was reduced to a rationalistic obsession with the absolute divine decree. In pastoral terms, God became more abstract and sermons more frigid. The tender anthropomorphisms of Scripture gave way to an Aristotelian deity. The conditionality of the revealed will of God with all its ramifications was virtually ignored. The plain texts setting forth the gospel offer of a universally available atonement were explained away. In short, on the points at issue, Amyraut followed the Bible and Calvin; Du Moulin did neither.

10. *Amyraut Vindicated!* Any candid reader will admit that the writings of Calvin do confirm Amyraut’s case. One doubts whether M. Berthoud has given them the attention they deserve. His difficulties are obvious. Governed by an invalid a priori scheme, scholastic Calvinists are unable to accommodate Calvin’s ubiquitous universal atonement statements. So they generally ignore them or explain them away. They are guilty, unlike the Amyraldians, of imposing their scheme on the Bible to the detriment of the evidence. However, within the properly perceived context of Calvin’s theology, the disputed statements on the atonement sit as comfortably as John 3:16 does within the Bible. Far from the Amyraldians resorting to some Cartesian hermeneutic, they were authentically Calvinist. The justice of their case is not aided by the misrepresentation they have always suffered.

For instance, M. Berthoud quotes Du Moulin’s false accusation that Amyraut ignored Calvin’s treatise on predestination (1552), a work which Amyraut knew well, quoting from it in at least three of his books (see Armstrong, p. 190). M. Berthoud covers his inability to explain Calvin’s universal statements by accusing me of “abusing” Calvin’s treatise! To make his charge stick, he will have to offer tenable alternative accounts of the Calvin quotations. This he totally fails to do in his review. Insisting on driving a wedge between Calvin and Amyraut without any trace of documentary proof, M. Berthoud attempts to blacken Amyraut with semi-Pelagianism and Thomism. As Amyraut’s seventeenth-century English biographer John Quick made clear, the charge of semi-Pelagianism is nonsense. Had M. Berthoud read *Calvinus* more carefully, he would have seen that, despite glaring differences between Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin on other matters, the latter saw no reason to contest the former’s view of the atonement. Rome is not wrong on everything just as the scholastic Reformed are not right on everything!

Furthermore, Calvin’s statements are thoroughly proto-Amyraldian! (see *Calvinus*, #88 and pp. 35, 72–3). M. Berthoud’s last gasp appeal to Calvin’s *Commentary on Romans* is as futile as it is fallacious. As *Calvinus* makes perfectly clear, this commentary provides at least three statements on the atonement which Amyraut was happy to endorse as specimens of authentic

Calvinism. Because he refused to evaluate this evidence, M. Berthoud’s assault on Amyraldianism must rate as a failure.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Alan C. Clifford

A MODEST ANSWER TO DR CLIFFORD:

The extent of my theological, historical, and even rational, differences with Dr Alan Clifford is such as apparently to make any discussion between us a mere exercise in futility. Dr Clifford’s polemic nevertheless leads me to make a number of remarks which, it is to be hoped, will close this whole debate in the columns of *Christianity and Society!*

—It is indeed very unfortunate that Dr Clifford’s zeal for the history of the French Reformation and the immediate post-Reformational developments in French theology is so strangely frustrated by his self-confessed inability to read the very texts on which he pretends to exercise his expertise. Indeed, as far as I know, very little of the material Dr Clifford refers to exists in English translation. Amyraut’s numerous works were for the most part written in French and not in Latin. Thus Dr Clifford’s own source material seems to be to him a *terra incognita*. His whole argument is thus essentially based on hearsay!

—It is indeed even more unfortunate that Dr Clifford should have harnessed his considerable talents to the very peculiar thesis of the late Dr Kendall, well known as the Charismatic reformer of the Calvinistic spirituality of Westminster Chapel. To foist later debates on past historical figures (as Dr Kendall does to Calvin) is the sign of a decided bent for anachronistic history. For in certain respects the issues which our Fathers of Dort had to face had not been raised with any similar acuity at the time when Calvin, Viret and Farel laboured so faithfully at a truly biblical (and dogmatic) description (and definition) of the different aspects of Christ’s saving work. On this question Jonathan H. Rainbow’s thesis, *The Will of God and the Cross* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1990) is obligatory reading.

—It is indeed unfortunate to focus the whole of one’s theological analysis on a single issue, as Dr Clifford seems to do. Reformational and post-Reformational theology knows a wide variety of theological topics. Such obsessional imbalance can only lead, if pursued to its logical conclusion, to a skewed view of the whole of the classic Reformed tradition.

—It is indeed unfortunate that Dr Clifford seems to ignore the major historical (and theological) breakthrough brought about by the pioneering achievements of Professor Richard Muller and his fellow historical labourers (in particular David Steinmetz and Susan Schreiner, as well as many others). The Liberal-Barthian falsification of the history of the Reformed tradition which created an imaginary breach between the Reformation of the sixteenth century and the Reformed scholastic thought of the seventeenth, has at long last been definitively debunked.

—Finally (but not least) Dr Clifford seems quite unaware of the battle that was being waged in the seventeenth century between the orthodox Reformed faith, that of the classical Reformed confessions: La Rochelle, Belgica, Second Helvetic, etc., as well as Dort, Westminster and the Swiss Consensus on the one hand and the new humanistic rationalism (immediate ancestor of the Enlightenment taking its roots in the new science of Galileo and Bacon, in the new philosophy of Descartes and Spinoza and in the new politics of Hobbes and Locke) on the other. All three rejected outright any pretence that divine Scripture should exercise the slightest authority on the realities of this world. In this spectacular spiritual, intellectual and political shift in civilisation (nothing less than our modern apostasy) it was the misfortune of the French Reformed tradi-

tion (a misfortune from which it has still not recovered) that the very able Academy of Saumur sided unanimously in favour of the beginnings of that secularised modernity which has so effectively destroyed not only our Christian civilisation but, all too often also in so many churches, the very theological and spiritual foundations of the faith. Against this fundamentally heretical (and innately atheistic) tradition men like Ghisbertus Voetius in the Netherlands, John Owen in Great Britain, Pierre Dumoulin, François Turretini and, last but not least, Benedict Pictet in the French speaking world, stood firm. In our regions, Moise Amyrault (together with men like the younger Turretini and Osterwald), pretending, as have done so many heretics in the past, to found themselves on “Scripture alone” against the “rationalism” of the confessional standards, took, in a variety of ways, a decided stand in favour of the new ideas. It is indeed extremely unfortunate that men who have done such untold damage to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ should, in these latter days, find amongst those who consider themselves the doctors of the Church such zealous (and ignorant) defenders.

It is with the Dumoulin, the Turretini and the Pictets of our heroic Reformed heritage, with these stalwart defenders of our confessional standards (and through them of the Scriptures themselves), that we today in turn take our stand,—this against similar heresies which, in such enfeebled times, raise up with the most unfortunate impunity their heads anew in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jean-Marc Berthoud

Dear Sir,

Unusually, I disagree with a point you made in your recent “Up Yours!” editorial [*C&S*, Vol. XI, No. 3, July 2001]. You reported the Christian Institute’s revelations about the state of sexual indoctrination in certain schools. In recent years child molesters have been made the scapegoats that grant indulgence to other sinners to pursue their favourite vices endlessly. Arguably, we now see the civil government trying to monopolise the market in child abuse for its own employees in teaching and social services. You advocated home-schooling as the answer and gave two reasons why Christians do not school their own children—ignorance and mammonism.

Other reasons are particularly demanding children, lack of family support, and lack of confidence, particularly for parents without academic qualifications, but this is not the main point I wish to make. You criticised the idolatry of seeking educational qualifications. Indeed, many people are guilty of this, but like money, qualifications are not unnecessary. Also, you made no mention of the increasing stranglehold various guilds have on an individual’s ability to earn an income. I want this letter to make the reality clear to readers who are not affected by it, and home-schoolers should take note if they do not plan to take the traditional examinations. Unfortunately it is not the gift of every man to be a successful entrepreneur. For many people their gifts are not towards business, and the well-being of their families may be best pursued working for someone else. Each entrepreneur requires employees in proportion to his own success.

It is now evident that the British school examinations system has been lowering the marks required for each grade for many years. Expansion of the universities has also inflated the value of the degrees they offer. Once graduates were unusual and highly prized; now they are commonplace and the value of most is low. The funding of university departments is broadly proportional to the number of students they teach. A successful

university career is generally measured by how much income one brings to the department. The individuals most successful at winning grants or enticing students are sometimes not the best workers. Often such people are mediocre at their specialism but good at presentation. Frequently this simply involves lying, or “spin” as it is known in today’s Orwellian Britain.

Qualifications are not an end in themselves: they serve only to give their possessor an obvious competitive advantage over others. Grades are early markers for discrimination. Discrimination by ability is inevitable; the inflation of qualifications by schools and universities merely delays this. Ten years ago many people undertook higher degrees because they could not find work. Recent graduates have less trouble finding well-paid employment, and obtaining students who are willing and able to do higher degrees is increasingly difficult for lecturers. The universities are entering a period of crisis. Why listen to a lecturer in your own town when you can hear from a world authority on CD-ROM or the Internet? Why spoil towns with the gowns? Why tie up so much capital in university estates? All universities will follow the lead of the Open University if they are to survive. Perhaps you meant the pride of qualifications from specific universities? Of course Oxbridge degrees count for more than other degrees, but with other universities it is graduating that counts. With Oxford and Cambridge it is being selected for entry that should be the mark of distinction. Having a larger pool of potential students to choose from ensures a higher standard of graduate, just as big countries will be more successful in the Olympics than small countries. I understand from a Cambridge graduate that the tutorial system that distinguished these universities is suffering from larger groups of students and that aspects of former excellence are being diluted by changes in the educational framework.

Each new line of work develops its own professional bodies that restrict a person’s ability to do that work, as guilds have since ancient times. They aspire to be “professions,” but few sufficiently restrict the supply of university-accredited labour to achieve the power that a few traditionally have. The pride and snobbery of qualifications is seen perhaps more strongly in the restrictive powers of modern guilds than in academic qualifications themselves.

To be in the top layer/inner ring of most institutions you need to have a law/medical/veterinary/accountancy/PhD degree. Then you need to have passed the expensive exams of an august professional body or something that would like to be one. No longer can a man move easily between varied fields of work. You must have the correct degree, which is often very specialised, and you must then do further years of study to pass the guild’s exams. In my experience some universities are so greedy for the money that follows students that they teach degrees which are not recognised by the guild and graduates are forced to do an extra year’s training at low pay before they can be registered.

An example is the obscure but topical and complex field of pathology. I give an example from the NHS because it is more highly specialised than most people would be aware of. For the present government’s vision see <http://www.nhs.uk/nationalplan/>, and take it with a pinch of salt. I could equally choose other fields such as management, teaching, academia, or computing where, interestingly, Microsoft qualifications are seen as more important than university degrees.

A Medical Laboratory Assistant (MLA) has minimal qualifications and poor pay. Originally this post performed repetitive manual tasks. Increasingly they perform work requiring more skill that was done by Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers (MLSOs). Any that are particularly good are prevented from progressing to higher pay until they obtain a degree. They may then possibly be regarded eligible to apply for a job as a Medical

Technical Officer or a MLSO that performs highly skilled technical work, and in the higher grades, managerial functions.

A graduate must have a degree in an approved course such as Biomedical Sciences to be a trainee Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer in, say, Microbiology. This degree may have a small component of microbiology, yet a graduate with a Microbiology degree will be required to do a postgraduate qualification because of the restrictions imposed by the professional bodies (www.ibms.org <<http://www.ibms.org>>, www.cpsm.org.uk <<http://www.cpsm.org.uk>>). Trainees must work for 1–2 years for £12,000 while studying for a diploma or Masters degree. Students are fed academic material that is of little relevance to the work they will do. Many jobs would be better served by less academic and more technical training, as they once were. Lecturers are correspondingly busy rehashing courses into new degrees. They may be academically good, but often they have no experience of their students' jobs. Training at a polytechnic was once sufficient for such posts. Excluding graduates without the approved degree increased pay in the short term but limited promotion prospects in the long term. Most who come to jobs with degrees find they have to do higher qualifications to get on, and masters degrees are now common in certain jobs.

Clinical Scientists are graduates in a wider range of more specific subjects, and a small number are MLSOs who have done PhDs. Clinical Scientists perform research, management and provide expert advice to doctors. Their numbers are small. The top grade is officially equivalent to a medical Consultant in responsibility, but not pay, and they may be Clinical Directors. Qualifications are usually a PhD (around 3 years) plus Membership of the Royal College of Pathologists (around 8 years). (www.doh.gov.uk/makingthechange/http://www.doh.gov.uk/makingthechange/>) They must now pay a subscription to the Council of Professions Supplementary to Medicine (www.cpsm.org.uk <<http://www.cpsm.org.uk>>) to be on the list of registered practitioners. If they are not, they can't use the title "Clinical Scientist," although they may possibly continue to be employed. An act of parliament says so. The profession (voluntary subscription to the union, e.g. www.acb.org.uk <<http://www.acb.org.uk>>, www.acb.org.uk/federation/fcshome.htm <<http://www.acb.org.uk/federation/fcshome.htm>>) lobbied for the act; the civil government did not force this regulation. Strangely, this will neither increase pay nor reduce competition. There is a problem attracting graduates to postgraduate medical training which no longer offers similar rewards. It is supposedly to protect the public from people who pretend to be Clinical Scientists, and from bad real ones. Many doctors have never heard of Clinical Scientists, there are none on "Casualty"—so who is going to impersonate one? There are more glamorous professions in medicine.

Some registered practitioners of professions allied to medicine have been disciplined for drunk driving which may be irrelevant to their role in patient care. Many of the offences that the public are to be protected from they are already protected from by the criminal law. The head of the CPSM's job was advertised recently at £80,000, which is not inappropriate considering the number of individuals it oversees. Certain people are canny enough to build little empires for themselves with guilds that actually offer little protection to the public. This is mirrored in the country at large. The ethnically diverse peoples of the United Kingdom were united two hundred years ago by a common love of the Bible and their hatred of Rome. These have gone, and in the Babel that is emerging, those who at best would have been unknown politicians at Westminster can be big fish raising taxes in the regional assemblies.

Why have Clinical Scientists pushed for this unnecessary

obligation and expense? I think it is to be like other paramedical groups in imitating the medical guilds that have been successful in ensuring the right mouths continue to be stuffed with gold, while increasingly socialising what was once in many ways a conservative profession. Rudolph Virchow, an eminent 19th century doctor, politician and advocate of public health measures said of the focus on potentially-ill populations rather than sick patients, "medicine is a social science, politics by other means, and politics nothing but medicine on a grand scale." The relationship between the one and the many in public health is difficult. Nevertheless, Virchow was opposed to socialism. "I oppose the centralization of life in the hands of the supreme state with all my might." <http://www.pathguy.com/lectures/virchow.htm>. We now see everywhere messianic social engineering without informed consent.

Medical Pathologists are doctors who are Members of the Royal College of Pathologists (www.rcpath.org <<http://www.rcpath.org>>). They provide management, advise doctors responsible for patients, and some may fulfil their contracts by also doing research. In other countries laboratories are often headed by the equivalent of clinical scientists. Medical Pathologists are sometimes viewed by other doctors as having an easier time because they do not have the same responsibility for individual patients. They are under a degree of threat from doctors who are also qualified as physicians and have more interaction with patients. Young doctors who aspire to be pathologists may be advised to gain membership of two Royal Colleges. Higher degrees don't go amiss either: <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/323/7312/S2-7312>. MScs, MDs, MBAs, PhDs, DScs are all useful.

Not content with entry qualifications, the guilds require Continuing Professional Development which consists of collecting points from approved activities such as attending conferences and publishing papers. This introduces further pressures for everyone while only eliminating the most lazy and incompetent practitioners. In response to public suspicion over the failure of medical self-regulation, the medical guilds expect to introduce Revalidation i.e. Outcome Based Education. Doctors will be required effectively to requalify every few years. This will be onerous, stressful, and will waste time that could be spent with patients, but do not expect many failures—too many would look bad while no failures at all would raise suspicions that not enough doctors are being given remedial education. Like gun control, these measures may reduce malpractice, but provide no reliable guarantee against the dedicated nutters who are the source of almost all the problems.

The medical and paramedical guilds provide for disciplinary procedures. The procedures are important but no-one should think that they provide more certain justice than the courts. A nice chap will have to have done something very publicly wrong to be seriously disciplined. A troublesome complainer can be easily exiled by the collegiality of his superiors. In this medicine is no different from other industries (www.successunlimited.co.uk <<http://www.successunlimited.co.uk>>). "External" assessors are seldom truly external in what is a small community nationwide. For example, research fraud often is not investigated or disciplined by the institutions involved (www.publicationethics.org.uk/ <<http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/>>). In response to the failure of self-regulation the Government is considering setting up a body to oversee the General Medical Council.

Similar patterns of inflationary qualifications have been followed in teaching, nursing and most other jobs. Those outside the professions may have little idea of the details involved. It would be wrong to suggest that the guilds have not contributed much to raising standards of practice—indeed

their work is usually of greater relevance than the universities', but if it is of such value, do they need to be so protectionist? Probably because in a multi-disciplinary system—even if it were not socialist—patients do not choose their practitioner with the freedom that they choose their grocer, and no truly free market can exist. The Thatcher government's attempts to introduce aspects of a free market into the NHS served only to manufacture another layer of bureaucracy that will never go away. Certification probably has restricted the most incompetent members of professions, but the overall value is debatable. Cases emerge periodically of individuals impersonating nurses and doctors for several years, sometimes without incident! Impersonators who performed the remarkable feat of remaining undiscovered for so long would probably have been able to gain accreditation by the normal route. Although this is not the whole purpose behind accreditation, a greater number of accredited practitioners is usually in trouble than unqualified impersonators.

Laboratories themselves must be accredited by organisations such as the CPA and UKAS (www.ukas.org <<http://www.ukas.org>>). This involves writing thousands of pages of manuals and standardising procedures within a quality system. This may cost an individual lab in excess of £100,000 per year. Much time is spent filling in forms to assure "quality." This may improve the worst of labs, but I think it makes little difference to the majority that were competent already. All measurements must be traceable to international reference standards. This might be worthwhile for high precision engineering, but a national reference centre distributed certified reference materials that were 50% in error! National assessment schemes find that the standard of work often goes down once labs are accredited because staff are too busy doing paperwork to do their jobs properly. As with individuals, accreditation probably drives the worst out of business, but does little for the majority whose work was already acceptable. This keeping up appearances is a con and nobody dares speak out.

Who would not have preferred to have letters when they were rare? Now they are almost compulsory for many workers. They are devalued and offer little reason for pride. The doors they open are now more limited, and they are just a baseline to earn a living in many fields. Still, a successful entrepreneur can make more money without qualifications, and choose a different reason for his sinful pride.

So why is this happening? I don't fully know. I think that until 10–15 years ago most professions had reached a position where, through technology and improved practices, they could fulfil their roles comfortably. After this, a compulsion to make their own lives more difficult took over. There seems to be a delusion that one's worth is in proportion to one's busyness. Perhaps as technology ameliorated the Curse, sinners felt the need to atone more for their vices and invented unnecessary work. Greed and pride are certainly important factors, but increasingly I think we are seeing God's curse of wealth being put in a bag of holes. A society in rebellion against God must work harder for less wealth and less peace.

This leads to a further point regarding home schooling: in many parts of the country it is simply impossible for younger people to own a house without two salaries. For some families it may just require driving an older car and doing without cable TV. Fair enough, but for others the lower standard of living may be surprisingly low by modern (though not historical) standards. And must Christians really pay off their mortgages in seven years?

A generation ago two incomes would certainly have been indulgent for all but the poorest workers, but now two average incomes may provide less wealth, despite the lifestyle appear-

ances. Successive governments' policies of turning mothers into taxpayers, along with highly-available credit, has bid up the price of housing so that even a good single salary may not provide for anything more than basic housing in unpleasant areas. Social Security is supposed to ensure that nobody has less than the equivalent of half the average income. Few individuals will ever earn more than double the average income. The differential between the poor and the normal well-off is quite narrow. The mothers-into-taxpayers policy has been much more acceptable and sustainable than doubling the general level of taxation, which, even in Britain, might tempt a reaction as extreme as a general election. The perception of debt as wealth becomes true to an extent if enough people in the market believe it and attribute this value to it. In this regard it is like certain Multi-Level Marketing schemes that are sustainable as long as enough new believers are evangelised. Housing debt as wealth is a myth except for those moving to cheaper homes. There has been no day of reckoning, as there has with share speculation, because people are less free to be fickle regarding their home than with tipped shares. A sudden rise in interest rates would leave many people homeless, and no government would survive that. Some false prophets earn a living by repeatedly warning of impending cataclysms of judgement. This is a form of gnosticism—the desire for "secret" knowledge that will save their wealth if not their life, and certain people will pay them well for this information. At the present time, it seems that we have been judged instead with an acceptable degree of socialism that is sustainable indefinitely. God is not judging modern rebels with his traditional plagues. In the western world AIDS has been a damp squib, BSE/TSEs less extensive than they might have been, Foot and Mouth Disease is having limited effect outside the farming industry that lived by the Common Agricultural Policy and may now die by it. God is able to take their country from them equally surely without war, famine or disease. Only his grace can provide escape from what humans desire.

Sincerely,
(Name withheld)

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

For the record, let me say that I did not criticise educational qualifications *per se*, nor did I say that seeking them was idolatry *per se*. What I criticised as idolatry was the putting of secular qualifications before the provision of a *Christian* education, and the absurdity of this when such qualifications are virtually not worth the paper they are written on. While educational qualifications *per se* are not wrong, neither are parents commanded to ensure that their children get them, though doubtless a case could reasonably be made that parents ought to provide their children with an education that will lead to qualifications as part of a Christian education where such qualifications are necessary for them to be able to make a legitimate living. But home schooling does not preclude this by any means. In fact most Christian home schoolers I know of *are* providing an education that involves such qualifications, and I never suggested, nor would I suggest, that this should not be the case. Nevertheless, the Bible *does* command that the children of Christian parents be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and it is not reasonable to exclude their academic education from this because it features, especially in our society, as such an important part of their overall education, and indeed of their upbringing. A child that is educated in the secular system from four or five years of age until he is eighteen cannot reasonably be said to have had a Christian education; and education, i.e. the time spent at school, in our society is now

probably the most significant part of a child's *upbringing* for most children (teachers are now told that their remit is the intellectual, physical, *moral* and *spiritual* development of the pupil). Those who choose to ignore this fact or talk their way round it are playing with words. A secular education is simply not compatible with a Christian upbringing.

True, the children of many Christians are brought up by the State schooling system, or the secular private system, from a very early age, yet go home to Christian parents in the evening and attend Sunday school at church, without there being much conflict between these two parts of their lives, but this is only because the homes and family lives of so many Christians, and what goes on in most churches, are just as much governed by secular humanism as what goes on in school. In cases where this is not so, there is usually a considerably disruptive conflict between the school lives of children and their Christian home lives. That this conflict does not exist for so many Christian families is mere testimony to the fact that their home lives are as dominated by the religion of secular humanism as their children's school lives are, a sad situation that is usually reinforced by the dominating influence that secular humanism has on so much of church life. These children seldom come into contact with biblical Christianity (i.e. covenant faith); they merely get instead a cleaned up version of secular humanism in the home, which then functions as their morality, and Christianity practised as a mere cult in church (see my Editorials on these problems in *C&S* Vol. IX, No. 4, and XI, No. 1).

It is time Christians stopped pretending that they can provide a Christian upbringing for their children while sending them to secular schools. A Christian upbringing and a secular education are simply not compatible. One will have to be compromised. It is usually Christianity—though it is encouraging that a small but increasing number of Christians are now beginning to pull their children out of the secular system. The secular schooling system is a religious schooling system. It functions in terms of a secular humanist worldview that is in principle and practice hostile to the Christian faith. I do not make light of the sacrifices that have to be made if one is to provide home schooling for one's children. But where does the Bible tell us that following Christ will be easy? Does it not rather say the opposite, that in this world we shall have tribulation? True, Evangelicalism has preached an easy gospel and this has mislead people about what being a Christian involves. But the answer to this is not now to excuse this compromise of the faith with arguments about the difficulties of following Christ, and how these make it impossible for us not to subject our children to a godless education. Christians must decide which religion they want to follow, Christianity or secular humanism; but whichever it is, they need to stop pretending that they can serve both masters. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Josh. 24:15)

Neither I do not think that the purpose of a Christian home-education is or should be directed only to creating entrepreneurs. Some of the traditional examinations you mention are, with good reason, a laughing-stock among many secular humanist employers now (indeed they are among some students). True, they may be taken seriously by government employers, but outside this sphere, which has a vested interest in claiming that such qualifications are worth more than in fact they are worth, far fewer people have had the wool pulled over their eyes. But this is not merely my opinion. A recent issue of *The Sunday Times* (August 26, 2001) is ample proof of this. Following an article on this problem published the previous week by John Humphreys ("There goes another A-level sheep to the slaughter"), the "Letters to the Editor" columns were flooded with people bemoaning the utter uselessness of these and other higher qualifications. These letters came from people

in all sorts of walks of life, including *employers*. Apart from these few points your letter makes quite eloquently the very point I was arguing in my Editorial about qualifications.

One final comment: I heard recently of someone who had gone to do research for a PhD at a particular university. When questioned about the appropriateness of his doing the research at that particular university for the subject he wanted to study, he responded that he had applied to the university in question because the department of the university in which we would be studying was weak in the area he wished to study and so he would be subject to much less stringent scrutiny and would be able to get his PhD more easily there. What value a PhD when this is happening? While this sort of thing continues the only fit place to hang a PhD certificate is the toilet, though doubtless it will be of as little use there, even at the most desperate of times!—SCP.

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