

Christianity & Society

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to Contemporary Society*

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You cannot help it, Mr Sarsi, that it was granted to me alone to discover all the new phenomena in the sky and nothing to anybody else. This is the truth which neither malice nor envy can suppress.

—Galileo Galilei, *Il Saggiatore*

Contrary to statements in even recent outlines of science, Galileo did not invent the telescope; nor the microscope; nor the thermometer, nor the pendulum clock. He did not discover the law of inertia; nor the parallelogram of forces or motions; nor the sun spots. He made no contribution to theoretical astronomy; he did not throw down weights from the leaning tower of Pisa, and did not prove the truth of the Copernican system. He was not tortured by the Inquisition, did not languish in its dungeons, did not say “eppur si muove”; and he was not a martyr of science. What he did was to found the modern science of dynamics, which makes him rank among the men who shaped human destiny.

—Arthur Koestler,
The Sleepwalkers

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COVER PICTURE:

GALILEO GALILEI (1564–1642), arguably the founder of modern secular science. He believed that the Bible was written in such a way as to be understood by the “common herd” and not by elevated scientists. He insisted that science had the truth, particularly in the Copernican cosmology, and demanded that all statements of Scripture on other than purely “spiritual” matters should not be believed until tested at the bar of science. In effect, he drove a wedge between the “merely stated” opinions of the Bible and the “soundly demonstrated” assertions of science, a view that universally persists to this day.

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EDITORIAL

CHALLENGING GOLIATH

by Stephen C. Perks

THERE are many things that the individual Christian and the Christian family can do in their lives to bear witness to the faith by the way they live, showing thereby the nature of the antithesis that exists between the life of faith in Christ and the way the world lives. In our personal conduct, in our conversation, in the ethical principles to which we bear witness in our dealings with others, in the way we behave as single and married people in contrast to the pervasive immorality of the secular world, in the way we raise *and* educate our children—in all these areas and more the individual and the Christian family should set an example to non-believers that challenges the received “wisdom” of the world. But there are limits to what the witness of the individual believer and isolated Christian families committed to the practice of the Christian way of life can achieve. If the world is truly to be turned upside down by the Christian faith, that is to say, if our culture as a whole is to be changed for the better and conformed to the will of Christ as set down in his revealed world, the Bible, and if our nation is once again to imbibe a Christian world-view that will replace the secular humanist world-view that now dominates our society, the *Church*, as the body of Christ, must start living as a community of faith that impacts on the whole of life and society, and not only by challenging the dominant secular culture, but also by offering, through its corporate life of faith, a realistic alternative to secular humanism’s culture of death, namely, a comprehensive culture of life in Christ.

Although individual Christians and families can certainly achieve much by working out their faith practically in their lives, the nation as a whole will not be disciplined to Christ again until the Church, i.e. that body of Christ as a whole, starts taking her cultural mission seriously again.

I am not speaking here about the institutional Church alone, much less about denominations. Rather, I am speaking about the Church as an *organism*, a living community of those who believe in Christ and the power of his Spirit, working through his word, to transform not only individual lives but whole cultures. Such transformation requires Christians to act *together* in bringing the gospel to bear upon our lives and society.

For example, some GP medical practices now offer counselling to patients as part of their care. They have begun to recognise that human beings are more than a complex of biological processes, and that their psychological and spiritual condition affects their physical health. The answer to many ailments therefore may not be merely a drug, but treatment of their thought life and behaviour also. The problem is that the philosophical basis from which this counselling is offered is not Christian. It assumes a non-Christian model of the human being. But what if Christian GP practices were to offer medical services on the basis of a Christian model of man as a being made in the image of God and who therefore can only be restored to full health, spiritual and psychological as well as physical, when he is restored to fellowship with God in Christ? What if, instead of secular

humanist counselling, people went to Christian GP practices and were offered Christian counselling? Would not this be a very effective means of applying the gospel practically?

This is not a novel idea by any means. In fact it is the abandonment of such an idea that is novel. The Church throughout her history has seen the provision of medical care as one of her primary mission fields. But she no longer does, except in terms of overseas mission to Third World nations. But the Church has not seen this important area of mission in such narrow terms historically. Our hospitals and medical services had their origins in the mission of the Church, and the development of these institutions was the achievement of a Christian culture in which believers recognised this areas of work as an important part of their broader cultural mission. Now that the secular State has hijacked so many of these institutions the Church has largely abandoned medical provision as a legitimate mission field. At the very least, given the radically secular and neo-pagan nature of modern society, the whole area of medical and health services should be seen as an important mission field. Part of the Church’s calling is to show people that they must look to God for their healing, for their welfare, because in truth he is the author of it. Instead the message of the Church, in effect, has been, “Get your hell fire insurance from the Church, but your health care and welfare comes from the godless secular State, and should be funded by taxes. It is not our mission any longer.” Whether Christians have meant this or even wanted it is irrelevant. It is the message that the world has heard as a result of the social theory that the Church on the whole adopted and promoted in the twentieth century. It is time the Church was cured of this myopia. She is called by God to lead to world to salvation, not follow the latest fads of the world.

Of course, it would be very difficult, probably impossible, in the present circumstances to establish such medical practices within the NHS.¹ This makes the job much more difficult, but not impossible. It would probably be impossible, however, for one or two, or even a small group of medical doctors to do this on their own without the backing and backup of at least the local Church. And it would probably necessitate a more regional initiative and backing from the Churches to be effective from a legal/political point of view because the modern political establishment is not sympathetic to such initiatives. Pressure would need to be applied at the national and local levels to the bureaucracy that increasingly runs our lives. But this is not all that would be needed. Such an initiative would require Christians to get involved and Churches to back up the practice at the patient side of the programme. Without such a programme being in the NHS this would involve a great deal of financial sacrifice as well.

But it may be asked, why should the Church pay out money (i.e. why should Christians use their tithe) for such initiatives when we already have a tax-funded health service? Because in the present situation our society is as much a mission field, with a population as much in the grip of idolatry, as many of the Third World nations where such services are considered a legitimate use of Church funds. The Church has always committed herself to such programmes in past centuries. And the results of such missions were effective and far reaching. The NHS is not a Christian institution and we desperately need a Christian alternative to the philosophy and practice of health care in our society if this area is to be redeemed, conquered for Christ. We need to provide an

1. The NHS is the British National Health Service, i.e. the nationalised health care side of the British Welfare State.

alternative that will eventually grow and supplant the godless NHS system that we are currently dependent upon. We are called as a Church, a Christian community, to transform our nation (Mt. 28:18–20), and this is one important part of that calling.

Without the Church as a whole being involved in such initiatives very little can be accomplished because the system we are up against is massive and well-organised. The Church—i.e. Christians, including but not limited to the institutional church—needs to act together in order to provide the financial, organisational, moral and social momentum necessary to get such projects started and keep them running.

It is the failure of the Western Church as a whole, not only to act in this way, but even to think in these broad terms, that has hamstrung her witness to the world and continues to make her irrelevant to the lives of most people in modern society. People do not look to God for the necessities of life, they look to secular humanism's chief idol, the secular State. And the Church is no longer a prophetic voice to the nation, no longer rebukes the nation for its idolatry, no longer teaches the people to look to God for these things, indeed the Church on the whole condones this idolatry.

But it was not always this way. In fact, it has not usually been this way. It is the modern attitudes and practices of the Church, or rather her lack of practices, that are unorthodox, not those of the Church of previous centuries, against which the modern Church appears as such an antithesis and in such sympathy with the “wisdom” of this world. Most hospitals in Britain were not set up by secular humanists, not even by the NHS when it came into existence, but were established by Churches and Christian charities that saw these institutions as the necessary fruit of a Christian way of life. They were the product of a Christian world-view, and Christian value system. The same is largely true of the education system. Both were created by a Christian society, by Christians and Churches working out their faith in a socially relevant and meaningful way. This was how the faith of the Church affected the nation. As soon as the State took over these institutions the process of secularisation began—i.e. these Christian institutions were slowly but systematically stripped of the Christian principles upon which they were established and that guided their work for so long. This process of secularisation is now almost complete.

As David Estrada's review of Herbert Schlossberg's *The Silent Revolution & the Making of Victorian England* shows (see pp. 15–28), the ability of the Church, of Christians acting corporately, to transform the society of which they are a part is not a matter of mere theorising. It actually happened. It created a Christian nation—not a perfect nation by any means, but a Christian nation nonetheless. This shows that what we face is not an impossible task. Society can be changed. It has been done before by Christians taking their cultural mission seriously. And it can be done again, but only if the body of Christ, the Church as an organism (not excluding the institutional Church) acts with vision, conviction and determination, and is prepared to make the sacrifices that such a mission necessitates. God will bless all such efforts in ways beyond our imagination. But the Church must first overcome the deadening apathy that presently afflicts her and prepare herself for the sacrifices that such a transformation of our society will require.

God does not call us to an impossible task. He calls us to overcome the world by our faith (1 Jn 5:4). This is not mystical or purely “spiritual” victory. It is a practical triumph over evil. God calls us to work for this victory over the world now across

the whole spectrum of life, and he calls us not only as individuals and families, but as his body on earth, the Church, a community of faith that lives as a community of faith, and by so doing will transform society. The Church of previous ages did this with remarkable success. Today the situation has been reversed. The world has overcome the Church and our courage to resist seems to have all but evaporated. The Church is a conquered and occupied nation—occupied quite literally in many of our Churches, which are governed by clergymen who have no sympathy for the faith once received and have cast away all pretence of faithfulness to God's word, the Bible, which is treated with indifference, even contempt by so many of our bishops, denominational leaders and pastors.

It is time the Church cast out these hirelings and did her previous works. Christ has called us to call all men and nations to repentance and he has commissioned us to disciple the nations. This can only be achieved by the Church, the body of Christ, working together as an alternative society that will eventually transform the whole nation, replacing the secular humanist culture that presently dominates our lives with a truly Christian culture. For this to happen we must *do* those things that will practically realise the kingdom of God in our society. Prayer is not enough. God calls us to action. Prayer without action is merely an excuse for laziness. God will not listen to such prayer. He requires us to *do* his will. We are not to be hearers of the word only, but doers of the word. Those who are hearers of the word only, the Bible tells us, are deluded (James 1:22). Prayer without action is useless to the world, and moreover disobedience to God. Do not be deluded. God will not listen to such prayer. He will turn his face away from us. Is not this just what has happened in Britain? Oh yes, people are converted. God will always save his elect. But the nation will go to dogs, as indeed it is doing, and this will continue until the Church once again starts fulfilling her calling to transform the nation by doing the works to which God has called her (Eph. 2:8–10).

In order for this transformation to take place the Church must act as a community of faith, i.e. Christians must act together in every way that they can to create a great momentum that will, by God's grace, overcome the world once again. This will mean that Church leaders and clergymen will have to set aside their petty rivalries and power politics and start thinking and acting in terms of the kingdom of God instead of being absorbed with their own little ecclesiastical empires. It will mean that they will have to start teaching the meaning of the kingdom of God not as their own sect, called to retreat from the world, but as the work of God in redeeming the world, a cause to which they are called to dedicate their lives. It will mean that members of Churches must start taking up their cross and making the sacrifices that this work requires rather than insisting that they be pandered to with entertainment worship and self-indulgent “ministry.” There is much that the individual and the family can do, and must do, of course. But until the Church as a whole starts living in a new way, in a way that demonstrates the power of the kingdom of God to the world around her, as a community of faith poised to transform society in all its aspects and institutions, her decline will continue and she will have nothing but another forty years in the wilderness to look forward to. There is an alternative to this depressing scenario, but the Church must cast out her idols and act with vision and determination in terms of the word of God. The Church must stop running away from Goliath and start picking her stones carefully (1 Sam. 17:40). C&S

THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE

by Colin Wright

If everything depends on faith, then the same division between a believer and an unbeliever in the realm of faith must be extended to all other areas of human life. For instance, there would have to be, in principle at least, a Christian science and a non-Christian science.

Arvin Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin and Contemporary Protestant Thought*, p. 151

INTRODUCTION

THE quotation from Vos's book that I have put above this introduction serves to draw attention rather well to the crux of the matter: are there realms of thought and action where it makes no difference what our religious perspectives are? Are there aspects of life that all men can pursue together on the basis of a commonly held set of ideas or presuppositions that are independent of all and any individual's beliefs? In particular, can and should Christians engage in a scientific enterprise from a common starting point with unbelievers, or should they, *must they*, take an entirely different tack by planting firmly at the base of their science their deeply-held religious convictions?

In this essay I want to take issue head-on with Vos's syllogism. For it is by this means—using a hidden but very real instance of *reductio ad absurdum*¹—that he meant to demonstrate the absurdity of the minor premise from the conclusion. That is, he meant to demonstrate that everything does *not* depend on faith. For him the logical consequence of it doing so would be horrifying: it would mean that the Christian would have to engage in science differently—significantly differently—from non-Christians. The simple statement of this conclusion is meant to shock us. Vos regards it as so absurd that the mere statement of it is sufficient to demonstrate its absurdity.

In the remainder of his paragraph Vos does make what can only be regarded as a feeble attempt to support his claim. Feeble, because it is not really an argument at all, merely another assertion; the assertion that what is obvious to him

ought to be obvious to all and is, *ergo*, the truth. To be fair to Vos we will quote his argument in full:

It would seem most obvious to respond to this thesis by pointing to the facts of experience—the same facts that Aquinas and Calvin noted in their time. It is simply not true that believers and non-believers are divided in this way. If it were true, Aquinas could not have benefited from Aristotle, Calvin could not have benefited from Plato and Cicero, and contemporary Christians from their non-Christian counterparts.

To begin with, it simply will not do to pitch the supposedly 'obvious' into the debate as if that would settle it. Vos has argued in his book that there has been among Protestants a persistent and at times perverse misinterpretation of Aquinas (whose view he is generally defending here) that has stretched for centuries. He expects us to believe that this 'tradition' (his term) has consistently and persistently turned its back upon the obvious facts of experience. It will takes more than mere assertions of moral turpitude on such a grand scale to convince us of his thesis.

Again, we need to note that his arguments are loaded, that is, they rest on a whole raft of presuppositions that he does not care to state. "If this were true," he claims, "Aquinas could not have benefited from Aristotle." But this is just the point at issue, namely, did Aquinas benefit from Aristotle? Vos has evidently lost the plot. Has his argument not been that Protestantism has persistently maintained the very opposite as the obvious fact of experience: that Aquinas' love affair with Aristotle has been *disastrous* for Christian thought? What value then can be placed on his "obvious facts of experience?"

Further, on page 113 of his book, Vos had argued that, "We can now see why Thomas held that there was no conflict between natural and revealed theology." But this is precisely what Protestants have been saying all along about Aquinas. Sure, the two should not conflict if Christianity is true. The problem is, as Thomas at times agreed if only implicitly, the correctness of natural-theological conclusions depends on starting from the Christian revealed truths. These must be presupposed as true. In which case, of course,

1. I.e., start with some proposition and draw some conclusion from it. If the conclusion is absurd then the initial proposition must have been absurd too. Most people would agree with this. Mathematics uses it quite a lot. Modern physics however takes the opposite point of view. Start with the proposition, "All matter is made up of fundamental particles like electrons." The conclusion turns out to be that electrons can be in two places at once and that they can get from one place to another without going anywhere in between. Physicists regard this as a great discovery and *proof* rather than a *refutation* of atomic theory. Why?

natural theology will not come into conflict with revealed theology.

The historical problem has been, as Dooyeweerd rightly pointed out, that when the Church lost its political power it lost the ability to control the natural-theological (and natural scientific) thinking. It failed at every stage of the struggle to recognise that, once the primacy, that is the presupposition of, the truth of Christianity is given up, natural sciences end up with non-Christian conclusions. And this happens because there can be no neutrality with respect to the starting point: either begin with Christian presuppositions or begin with non-Christian presuppositions. If Aquinas was inconsistent about some of the issues, he was nevertheless very clear about the autonomy of theoretical thought with respect to Christianity, as is clear from the following quotation (in Vos, p. 114):

Knowledge that is of faith pertains especially to the intellect. We do not, indeed, receive it as a result of investigation by our reason, but we assent to it by the simple submission of our intellect in accepting it. We are said not to understand these objects of faith, since the intellect has no full knowledge of them; but this is promised to us by way of reward.

He refuses to accord the status of “knowledge” to what God tells us. *Only that is knowledge, and only that is understood, which we reason out independently of our Christian convictions.*

For Aquinas this was a problem, however, for he did not wish to split knowledge from a Christian base. He thought he could cement the two together by insisting that the conclusions of natural science would not, if correctly and logically deduced, conflict with revealed truth. Ockham saw this problem clearly; his solution was to bifurcate thought even further than Aquinas, by making natural science totally independent of faith.

Thus what is clear for Vos as a *self-evident fact* that all of us ought to see is just not so. Frankly I do not see it as self-evident; for me, it is patently *not a fact at all*, let alone a self-evident one. As we have said, Protestantism, especially Reformed Protestantism, has vigorously maintained and sought to prove that Aristotle’s effect on Aquinas was *disastrous*, though no doubt at points he has been wrongly misunderstood and interpreted in the light of a later Thomism. And as for the influence of Cicero and Plato on Calvin, or the influence of modern culture on contemporary Christians (like Vos), we can only retort that in this Vos is hoist on his own petard. That influence is the very thing we object to as counter to genuine Christian theology, philosophy and science.

Christians should have had their eye on their own tradition and not on beginning afresh with Aristotle and Plato. In effect the Christian Church abandoned its heritage of opposition to the Earthly City and took the thinking of that City as its new starting point. John Philoponus of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo have established a firm base upon which that struggle could be fought from a genuinely Christian perspective. Thomism and, later, Protestantism, abandoned that foundation. Philoponus had fought gallantly against the overwhelming odds of an almost totally hostile intellectual culture to defend Christianity against Aristotle, in particular defending the Christian conception of Creation against Aristotle’s idea of an eternal and uncreated universe. Augustine had brilliantly developed a Christian philosophy of history against the background of the fatalistic and cyclical

nightmare of Greek thought. Both had argued from the presuppositions of the truth of Christianity to the falsity of Greek thinking, a point that is unfortunately lost on too many latter day neo-Dooyeweerdians.²

No doubt, already some have raised to themselves the objection that my viewpoint would have a significant negative “logical” conclusion: having a separate and distinct Christian science would imply, so the logic goes, that such a science would withdraw the Christian from any significant or meaningful contact with the science or culture of our time. A Christian who practised such a science would draw nothing from nor contribute anything towards his culture or its science.

I disagree with this conclusion for two reasons. Firstly, I do not believe that in fact this would happen. Of course certain things would happen. For one thing, Christians would be shown the door at most institutions of learning. Perhaps that is what people like Vos fear. Sure, we would have to tread a quite different path in many walks of life, but this does not logically imply that Christian influence would be weakened.

Secondly, I do not believe it is a valid logical deduction anyway. It begins from a false premiss. It begins from the premiss that man is what Vos says he is, namely, a creature that can live independently of the truth of Christianity. Indeed, it is not only false, it begs the question. That is, it assumes what it wants to prove.

THE ONE TRUE SCIENCE?

In any case, the view that there can be *only one* science is itself open to question. Granted, today this view is dogmatically accepted without reserve in most quarters, Christian and non-Christian alike. But it assumes a number of things that are surely questionable.

For instance, it assumes that science tells us the truth about things—and moreover that this truth is singular and not manifold. From this standpoint, the scientific enterprise is a search for the truth—indeed the *absolute* truth—about the universe in which we find ourselves. It provides an insight into the reality behind a world of shifting and uncertain appearance. This view has been with us since the earliest days of scientific endeavour, clearly evident in the debates over *form, matter* and *substance* in early Greek thinking. Today it still surfaces in atomic theories. As a lecturer put it to his class recently, the chair upon which he was sitting did not really exist. What his students saw was merely an appearance. The reality lay in the conglomeration of atoms that they could not see. And the atoms themselves are bundles of even smaller particles with empty space occupying the overwhelming majority of each atom’s space. The scientific theory (of atoms) tells the *truth* about the chair; all our senses give us is an *illusion*.³

Furthermore, this view of science assumes as a matter of course that there can only be one genuine theory. This

2. Many followers of Dooyeweerd’s Cosmonomic Philosophy are attempting an almost Ockhamist bifurcation between the Bible and the sciences.

3. Just as most of the time a cinema-goer is watching a black screen in between the picture frames, so the chair watcher is viewing a region of mainly empty space. In both instances, the senses only experience an illusion.

assumption however is largely based upon the former. For if science tells us the truth about anything, clearly there can only be one theory that is true. But what if scientific theory is *not* concerned with the truth or reality of those things concerning which our senses so effectively seem to deceive us?

In fact scientists and philosophers of science are quite two-faced about the nature of their theories. While presenting an overtly realist view before the general public with regard to such matters as the existence of fundamental particles (that is, claiming they really exist), among themselves they are more likely to concede that, at best, if they are real, they are radically unlike any reality we can conceive. Generally, they adopt the view that they are mathematical fictions. But it is always difficult to pin them down. It is no secret either that Quantum Theory and Relativity Theory are irreconcilable, though they are both proclaimed publicly as the truth about what is there.

But I want to investigate these issues in more depth at a later stage. For the present it is sufficient to draw the reader's attention to the fact that modern scientific theories do not in any case form an integral whole. Some spend their lives studying and developing Quantum Theory; others spend their lives studying and developing Relativity Theory.

THE NATURE OF MODERN SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION

At this time I am not concerned with the various views as to the nature of scientific theories. I want to direct attention rather to what scientists actually do when they set out to create a theory about the supposed "facts" they believe that they are examining.

One important aspect of their task is seen to be that of explaining what happens in a particular situation. What really happens of course is not what the casual observer sees and experiences. What really happens cannot be explained this way, but only through an understanding of supposed processes that occur behind the visible sensory illusion. Here the scientist believes he can find a structured world governed by impersonal and unrelenting law.

Now, in modern science, this law is seen as purely mathematical. Natural science (to which most people, including most sciences, expect all genuine science to conform) is the understanding of nature purely and simply in terms of its mathematical functionality and relations. No one put it better than the founder of modern science, Galileo Galilei:

Philosophy is written in this grand book, the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the letters in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles and other geometric figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth.⁴

Staffeu, the Dooyeweerdian physicist, maintains that "Galileo's mentioning a 'language' is merely a metaphor."⁵

4. Galileo Galilei, *Il Saggiatore* (New York, Modern Library, 2001) p. 237f. See Burt, p. 64.

5. Marinus Dirk Staffeu, *Theories at Work* (Lanham, University Press of America, 1987) p. 161.

But the general consensus has always held that Galileo meant more than this and I believe that consensus to be correct. The following passage from his famous work is highly significant, and cannot be dismissed lightly:

But taking man's understanding intensively, in so far as this term denotes understanding some propositions perfectly, I say that the human intellect does understand some of them perfectly, and thus in these it has as much absolute certainty as Nature itself. Of such are the mathematical sciences alone; that is, geometry and arithmetic, in which the Divine intellect indeed knows infinitely more propositions, since it knows all. But with regard to those few which the human intellect does understand, I believe that its knowledge equals the Divine in objective certainty.⁶

To which Galileo has the Aristotelian in the discussion respond: "This speech strikes me as very bold and daring." This was not included merely for dramatic effect. Galileo fully understood the nature and extent of the claim he was making. It was no less than a claim to know and understand the universe with a penetration of mind equalling that of God. Of course, God being infinite, he was able to grasp all within his understanding; man being finite could not contain all that knowledge. But such knowledge as he had was equal to, indeed the same as, God's knowledge. What man understood through his knowledge of mathematics was perfect and absolute knowledge. Man understands creation as perfectly as God.

The startling nature of this bold claim did not go unnoticed even in Galileo's day. It broke with the long tradition of a much more humble approach to nature. The older view could be equally rigorous and scientific. Indeed, its mathematical conquests, though seemingly trivial by later developments, were quite breathtaking in their boldness and innovation. In many respects the work of Galileo and his fellow-despisers of the old order was wholly dependent on the new ground that it had broken. But above all, that order had deliberately turned away from the pursuit of such absolute knowledge. It was fully aware, as a result of its Christian presuppositions, that not only man's finitude but also his creatureliness made it constitutionally impossible for him to have absolute knowledge. No clearer example can be given of this than the First Book of Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*.⁷

The crux of this whole debate should be clear: Galileo and his followers believe that mathematical knowledge, and only mathematical knowledge, is genuine knowledge. Furthermore, mathematical knowledge is ultimate or perfect knowledge.

The significance of this should not be lost upon us. Firstly, this viewpoint insists that genuine knowledge does not depend upon God but simply upon mathematical relations. Once one has said what is mathematical about creation, one has said all that can ultimately be said about it. Whatever the vicissitudes of the history of post-Galilean science, this principle still lies at the heart of all that science. Indeed, its hubris reaches its zenith precisely in the modern era. For whilst Galileo was bold enough to claim the substan-

6. Galileo Galilei, *Dialogue concerning the two chief world systems* (New York, Modern Library, 2001) p. 118.

7. That Aquinas' argument is couched in the terms of an Aristotelian metaphysics that cannot be accepted from a Christian perspective should not detract from the validity of his conclusions, even if it does from the strength of his arguments.

tial equality of God's knowledge of creation and man's knowledge of creation, Stephen Hawking has had the audacity to claim that his mathematical physics will one day even penetrate to know the mind of God and bring it under its scrutiny. Mark well what Hawking is saying: God is fully understandable and explainable in terms of mathematical principles; he can be reduced to mathematics.

Secondly, by explaining everything in terms of mathematics this viewpoint explains everything in terms of one aspect of creation itself. There is no meaning beyond what is inherent in creation itself. But modern science has not been able to account for this. Indeed it has hardly ever been aware of the problem. Furthermore, any attempt to account for it would be self-defeating. For mathematics is the fundamental answer; there is nothing beyond mathematics. The buck stops here when it comes to explanation. Thus any attempt to justify this would suppose that something else was even more fundamental than mathematics, which is contradictory. Where moderns have recognised the problem of making mathematics the ultimate explanation of everything, they have unfortunately merely shifted the problem by making something else in creation the ultimate source of meaning. But in each case, a single aspect of creation itself is given the elevated status of the ultimate source of meaning. In no case has it ever been possible to adequately account for the choice of one aspect over another. Thus modern science does not really explain the universe, it merely reduces it to one aspect. In the process all other aspects become unreal, even illusions. In particular, virtually all modern science totally excises any normative aspects from creation. That is, it regards as no more than human illusion any reference to will, love, hate, beauty, justice, goodness or evil. As a leading philosopher clearly expressed it:

What we are interested in is the possibility of reducing the whole sphere of ethical terms to non-ethical terms. We are enquiring whether statements of ethical value can be translated into statements of empirical fact.⁸

For A. J. Ayer, who made the above pronouncement, statements of ethical value are decidedly not, and can never be translated into, statements of empirical fact. Ethics does not deal with facts but only values; and values are not factual. Odd indeed, because Ayer's defence of his logical positivist viewpoint requires a vigorous use of value judgements to support its opposition to the factual reality of right and wrong, good and bad, true and false!

Thirdly, we might add the highly significant fact that this viewpoint also denies any analogical view of human knowledge. It denies that meaning or explanation is a question of reference to an origin, and insists upon absolute insight into the structure of reality. This is implied in its claim to know as God knows.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION

As we have seen above, modern science and philosophy of science does not begin from an unprejudiced⁹ standpoint. Modern science begins with two dogmas: *firstly*, the require-

8. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (Harmondsworth, Pelican, 1983[1936]) p. 140.

9. I use the word 'prejudice' here in its more technical non-

ment and necessity of genuine knowledge as independent of whatever God may say about it and, *secondly*, the requirement and necessity that all genuine knowledge about the universe be ultimately understood in terms of a single immanent¹⁰ principle, generally mathematics. As Herman Dooyeweerd has ably demonstrated,¹¹ this dogmatic claim amounts to a *religious* starting point for modern science of a distinct kind.

Where, then, should a distinctively Christian science begin? In answering this question we hope thereby also to answer an even more fundamental mystery for the majority of latter-day Christians, namely, Can there indeed be such a thing as a distinctively Christian approach to science?

To begin with, we have to admit that all genuine human knowledge requires some kind of fundamental or ultimate principle, some kind of leverage point, to use a mechanical analogy. Modern science, however, does not recognise such a leverage point, even in its reductionism. What it claims is that it has, in mathematics especially as we have seen, not so much an interpretive principle as *ultimate, direct knowledge of reality*. From our perspective it is clear however that this reduction of everything to mathematics is in fact an interpretive principle.

Since the dazzling researches of the Dutch Christian philosophers Herman Dooyeweerd and his brother-in-law Dirk Vollenhoven brought to light the need of such an interpretive principle in all forms of science, it has generally been conceded that they were more or less the discoverers of the idea. However what they promoted in a new and very explicit manner had already long since been acknowledged in Christian circles. But ideas take time, even centuries, to mature into full self-consciousness. It should come as no surprise then that as early as the second century we should find Clement of Alexandria (circa 150–220 A.D.) defending a distinctively Christian foundation for human knowledge in the divine authoritative word of Holy Scripture:

We have the Lord himself for the principle or beginning of doctrine . . . And certainly we use it as a rule of judging the invention of things. But whatever is judged is not credible, or not to be believed, until it is judged; and that is no principle which stands in need to be judged . . . Wherefore, it is meet that, embracing by faith the most sufficient, indemonstrable principle, and taking the demonstration of the principle from the principle itself, we are instructed by the voice of the Lord himself unto the acknowledgement of the truth . . . For we would not attend or give credit simply to the definitions of men, seeing we have right also to define in contradiction unto them. And seeing it is not sufficient merely to say or assert what appears to be the truth, but to beget a belief also of what is spoken, we expect not the testimony of men, but confirm that which is inquired about with the voice of the Lord; which is more full and firm than any demonstration, yea, which rather is the only demonstration. Thus we, taking our demonstrations of the Scripture out of the Scripture, are assured by faith as by demonstration.¹²

derogatory sense, which merely implies that one comes to an appraisal of something with certain judgements about it having already been (rightly or wrongly) made.

10. That is, a principle that is built into the universe itself.

11. See esp. his *New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, volume I, "The Necessary Presuppositions of Philosophy." An excellent introduction to Dooyeweerd on this matter is Roy Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

12. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* [Miscellanies], VII, chap. 16. Quoted in John Owen, *The Reason of Faith in The Works of John Owen*, Vol.

This is not the easiest passage to understand but I believe what Clement is saying is this. We cannot accept anything without some sort of validation of its accuracy or truthfulness. Therefore some principle of validation is required in order to do this. But that principle cannot itself be subject to a process of validation. To try and validate it would be to admit it was not the ultimate test of truth in the first place. This principle, says Clement, is totally self-sufficient and not provable (indemonstrable) by anything else. It is accepted by faith, that is, on its own evidence; it is *self-authenticating* or *self-attesting*. For the Christian, Clement insists, this ultimate principle is the voice of the Lord in Scripture. In effect, this is to deny the fundamental principle of modern science, namely, that logical consistency is the ultimate test of the validity of our knowledge.

A Christian view of the sciences, indeed of *anything*, must begin with *what God says*. He is the final authority, and the source of all meaning. Even the statement $2+2=4$ is a lie if it is ripped out of the context of a universe that was created by God in God's way. It has no standing as truth other than as a statement of fact about God's handiwork. It is simply not true in and of itself. This is why we have always insisted that the biblical doctrine of creation is so important and why we defend it vigorously even against fellow-Christians who seem to have an attachment to modern science. The sincerity of their mistake does not one whit diminish the calamitous nature of their delusion. The Genesis story is not included in the Bible merely to satisfy our curiosity. It tells us, and tells us *authoritatively*, important facts about both the nature of the Creator and creation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the great Dutch theologian, philosopher and statesman, Abraham Kuyper, drew Calvinism's attention once again to the significance of this passage for Christian science. In particular he emphasised—against the prevailing interest in evolution—the creational and unchangeable structures implied in the statement that all creatures reproduced *after their own kind*. But Kuyper missed what is surely of much more significance for science and philosophy, namely, the fact that all things are created by God's *spoken word*. God did not create by the work of his hands but by the word of his power. In each and every creative act, creatures are brought into existence as a result of a *defining* word. When, for example, God commands (Gen. 1:3): "Let light come to be," the emphasis is on *light* and not on *come to be*. In calling them into being, God defines them. Thus, as Cornelius van Til so aptly put it, creation is what it is by virtue of what it is in the mind of God:

To say that Scripture testifies to itself and therefore identifies itself is to imply that it also identifies every fact in the world. That is to say the God of which the Scriptures speak is the God who makes the facts to be what they are. There can be no fact which is ultimately out of accord with the system of truth set forth in Scripture. Every fact in the universe is what it is just because of the place that it has in this system.¹³

And this is why Augustine also, sixteen centuries earlier, seeing creation in the same light, insisted on the fact that all

IV (London, Banner of Truth Trust), p. 111f. Owen's work is perhaps the best and clearest example of seventeenth century Christian presuppositionalism and, despite the difficulty of its language for modern readers, still well worth the effort of the serious student.

13. Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969) p. 35.

things are what they are in consequence of their being created in line with ideas in the mind of God:

What person, devout and trained in true religion, although he could not yet contemplate these ideas, would, nonetheless, dare to deny—nay, would not even acknowledge—that all things which are, i.e., that whatever things are fixed in their own order by a certain particular nature so as to exist, are produced by God as their cause? And that by that cause all things which live do live? And that the universal soundness of things and the very order whereby those things which change do repeat with a certain regularity their journeys through time are fixed and governed by the laws of the most high God? This having been established and conceded, who would dare to say that God has created all things without a rational plan? But if one cannot rightly say or believe this, it remains that all things are created on a rational plan, and man not by the same rational plan as horse, for it is absurd to think this. Therefore individual things are created in accord with the reasons unique to them.¹⁴

If this be true, then is revealed the fallacy of an abstract reality existing above and beyond God, to which he must, forsooth, be subject. This was Ockham's precise point, for all our misgivings with him. All that is, apart from God, is what it is by God's definition. This applies in the normative aspects as well as the mathematical aspects of creation. In the words of one of Ockham's most famous interpreters:

A human act is good or moral, not because it is in conformity with an eternal law which exists of itself and even governs the will of God, but simply because it is ordained and commanded by the will of God. Hence what God wills is good, what he forbids is not. It is, by definition, an impossibility that God can ever order or command a bad thing. It follows that God's will is the ethical norm and must be obeyed by every creature.¹⁵

Unfortunately, Ockham at one point chose to express this as "God could have commanded that a person should hate Him," but this has been taken in an absolute literal sense and Ockham demonised as a result. I doubt he intended any more than Paul intended when he spoke of God's foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:25). Ockham was surely too great a logician to have not recognised what is regarded as the only antinomy in whole of his thought. In every aspect of creation Ockham was seeking, however falteringly, to apply a Christian principle drawn from the Genesis account, which Boehner, his interpreter, puts in these words: "Everything that is real, and different from God, is contingent to the core of its being."¹⁶

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

Why, then, do so many Christians today reject outright the idea that they ought to view all of life, including science, from a perspective that is diametrically opposed to the perspective

14. Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David L. Mosher (Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 1977) Question 46.

15. Philotheus Boehner, Introduction to *Ockham: Philosophical Writings* (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing, 1990) pp. xlvi–xlix. There is, of course, an "eternal law which exists of itself," but that law is *God's will*. The problem with those who want an impersonal law back of and independent of God is that their "God" is too small. They suppose that his willing something is equivalent to our creaturely willing. For them God is only a superman, or perhaps a super-superman, but he is definitely not *ultimate* in any true sense of the word.

16. *Ibid.* p. xxii.

of non-Christians? There are many reasons, but we shall concentrate on two here, both of which have an element of plausibility about them at first glance. The first goes as follows: The Bible is not believed by all and thus any genuine knowledge of the world that relied upon the authoritative statements of the Bible would not be accessible to non-believers. This is true to this degree: unbelievers would not accept such statements. But so what? Is that not *their* loss and *their* problem? Christianity began well by attacking pagan thought head-on. It refused to waver in the fight against an impersonal, eternal world that simply went round in circles, starting nowhere and ending up nowhere. It refused to accept the divinity of the heavens and insisted on the creaturely, temporal and corruptible nature of the whole universe, against the pagan idea of the stars as gods. It rode the storms of vilification, slander, ostracism and even death to maintain Christian truth against what the pagans regarded as the accepted and obvious facts of experience.

In the second place, some argue that the Bible cannot be regarded as the starting point of knowledge because we must begin with what we can prove or demonstrate. Yet on the truthfulness of many facts even these Christians accept that the Bible must be believed against all the world can throw at us: creation not evolution, the Atonement on Calvary's Cross, the Final Judgement. Why some biblical facts and not

all? Or do we have the impertinence and effrontery to face God with a refusal to believe him until the empirical investigations undertaken by sinful, fallible human beings with a definite stake in proving the Bible false arrive at a general consensus of God's truthfulness? This was Galileo's great heresy. It supposes that man, and not God, must be the final arbiter of what is true and what is false. It supposes that the Bible deals with *opinion*, whilst science (i.e., mathematical science) deals with the *facts*. From a genuinely Christian perspective this is wholly unacceptable. It is the result of a prejudice and not a so-called scientific enquiry that would establish such as the fact. When non-Christian scientists, and "Christian" scientists of the Vos ilk approach their science they begin by excising certain facts from their purview as if they were not-facts. Above all, they ignore the very fact of Scripture itself as the first and most important of all facts: the voice of the Lord speaking to mankind, a voice that is answerable to no man and no thing in all creation. This voice is its own warrant and the absolute guarantee of its own truthfulness, for it is the voice of Truth itself that speaks. At the end of the day, the standpoint of such is that of a man who, in reading Scripture, has not heard God speak. And as Scripture clearly insists at every turn, that not-hearing is the result of a stopping of the ears and a closing of the eyes, and not of a lack of any clarity in the Voice itself. *C&S*

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THE CHURCH AS A COMMUNITY OF FAITH[†]

by Stephen C. Perks

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom ye may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1–6)

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be unto this wicked generation. (Mt. 12:43–45 cf. Lk 11:24–26)

THERE is in Britain today a discernible decline of the Christian faith. This problem is not new. It goes back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century and probably the root causes go back as far as the Enlightenment. But it is only now that we are beginning to see where the abandonment of Christianity as the prevailing world-view of society will take us. There is a settled, almost institutionalised, antipathy to the Christian faith in Britain today. One can see this at many levels: politically, in the type of legislation that is being passed and the social engineering that is increasingly taking place; in family life, where the Christian family is now not only considered old-fashioned but actually in a minority (childless marriages and one parent families are now more numerous than are heterosexual two-parent families); in the kind of education that is provided in the State schooling system and indeed for the most part in the private schooling system; and in the media, which in many ways has been in the vanguard of promoting the permissive society and the overthrow of Christian morality. And along with this there is a tolerance for almost everything that sets itself up in opposition to the Christian faith. Political correctness has created an ethos in which people no longer feel that they have the liberty to speak freely about many issues that are of grave concern for the future of the British nation. A good example of this last point was the attempt by the British government at the end

of 2001 to introduce a “religious hate law” that would have effectively outlawed Christian evangelism, which already suffers badly at the hands of the authorities. The fascist State now looms large on the British landscape. To put this another way, we could say that the British nation is now well-advanced on the road to re-paganisation.

I suspect that this phenomenon is more widespread than Britain however. I think it is a Western problem, and may very well be a world-wide problem. It seems that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there is a world-wide decline of the Christian faith. And the Churches on the whole have been unable to do anything realistic about this situation. After two official “decades of evangelism” the Church in Britain is still in decline. Furthermore, the Church has been hijacked and stripped of her role in society by the secular humanist State, though it has to be admitted that the Church did not really put up much of a struggle against this and has even condoned it by promoting socialist ideology as a “Christian” model for social organisation. Why people should take the Church or her message seriously given the fact that she has abdicated her responsibilities so willingly to the secular humanist State seems not to have crossed the minds of our Church leaders. Add to this the fact that the Church is virtually destitute of any prophetic message to the nation any more and it is not really surprising that the Church is so irrelevant to the lives of most people. The salt has thoroughly lost its saltiness.

Finding the correct answer to this dilemma is the most pressing problem facing the Church in Britain today, though

[†]This essay is substantially the text of a talk given at His People Christian Church in Johannesburg, South Africa on Sunday 2 June 2002.

for the most part the real nature of the problem is not even recognised by Christians. How to get more people into church on Sundays and bolster the already ineffective and irrelevant institutional Church seems to be the main consideration of Christians, not how to change the *nation*. How to disciple the *nation* to Christ is not on the Church's agenda at all today. The nearest that Christians get to this usually is snatching brands from the fire, saved souls, who are then left to waste their lives as if they had never turned to Christ. Yet Christ's Great Commission to his Church was the command to disciple the *nations*, not snatch brands from the fire. I dare say that the Great Commission has never been so neglected by the Church in Britain as it is today and probably in the West generally. Given this fact we must surely see the Church's decline as the inevitable consequence of her own short-sightedness.

If the Church is to recover from this decline she must identify the cause and rectify the defect. What I have to say here is an attempt to identify this problem and propose the biblical solution to it.

The Bible gives us a picture of the Christian Church as a community of faith—a community with all the problems that beset human society in a fallen world. The picture of the Church given us in the New Testament is not a cosy ideal, an unrealistic pretend community. That is often what the Church tries to create by refusing to face the real issues that confront her. But the Church as presented in the pages of Scripture is a real community, functioning redemptively in a fallen world. This is why I chose the reading from Acts 6:1–6. What we have here is a real community dealing with real issues in a biblical manner. The Church of the New Testament was not perfect by any means. Just look at them, arguing and complaining about who gets the most food. The issue was *welfare*. Oh yes, that thorny old issue that the modern Church has now neatly sidestepped by handing it all over to the State!

But what did the apostles do about this? Well, they recognised first of all that it was a responsibility of the Church. They did not say, "Hum! This is not a spiritual issue, we must give ourselves to preaching the word and prayer, tell them to go and get some State handouts." They said "We must give ourselves to the word and prayer, so we shall appoint some appropriate people in the Church to deal with the problem" (v. 2). They dealt with the problem as a community of faith. They recognised it was a problem for the *Church* to deal with as a community.

Second, they did not relegate the issue to the "non-spiritual" issues box. They recognised that this was a spiritual issue needing to be dealt with by people who were full of the Spirit and wise (v. 3), i.e. by people who were able to deal with the situation in terms of biblical wisdom—in other words in terms of a Christian world-view. There was no dualistic split in their thinking. Indeed, such a dualism was not part of biblical culture and would not have been part of the culture of the Jews at this time. Manual labour was not viewed by the Jews in the same way it was viewed by the Greeks, who considered it demeaning. For the Jews of the first century manual labour was considered God-honouring work every bit as much as intellectual labour such as teaching. So there was no spiritual/secular split in the apostles' thinking as there is in much of the Western world today. They recognised that the Church lives in the real world and has to deal with the problems of the real world, and has to minister to the

real needs of the body of Christ. Spirituality was not seen as a preoccupation with some other-worldly dimension, unrelated to the everyday concerns of this world, but rather as the proper attitude to this everyday world, an obedient attitude that dedicates this everyday world to Christ and seeks to live for his glory and honour in it.

So we see here that the Christian Church in the New Testament inhabited the real world, and dealt practically with the real issues of everyday life that faced the Christian community. And the New Testament Church was prepared to provide help and guidance to people so that they could live out their faith in this world. The Church was a community of people living *as* a community, with all the everyday concerns that a community faces. The life of faith in Christ is not a form of escape from the real world in any sense, but rather the proper dedication of this mundane life, in all its details and practicalities, to Christ. What makes our actions spiritual is our attitude, not the nature of the job we are doing.

Now the problem is that the Church does not often function this way in Western society, at least in modern times. The Church is seen largely as an institution, the main purpose of which is to provide for cultic activity, e.g. worship services, baptisms, funerals etc. By the term "cultic" here I am not referring to some form of weird sect or religion. The word is incorrectly used of such groups. The term "cultus" or "cult" refers to the system of ritual worship that takes place in church services and meetings. The Church in the Western world is defined largely in terms of the public Christian cultus, i.e. the system of ritual worship used in church services. The cultus is the paradigm that gives meaning to the Church for most people in the Western world, most Christians included.

The New Testament, however, does not give us this kind of paradigm for understanding the Christian Church and her function in the kingdom of God. It gives us no liturgies, no formulas for cultic activity, nor does it in any other way specify what the public Christian cultus should be like. Yes, it does give us principles for how we are to behave towards each other when we meet together. It tells us that we are to worship and pray together, and the institutional Church has the duty to provide for the teaching, edification and equipment of the saints for the work of the Kingdom. But this is a far cry from the highly cultic formulas of the modern Church. Where then did the Church get this cultic paradigm from?

The answer to this question is that the Church got the cultic paradigm of Church activity from the ritual worship of the Temple cultus of the Old Testament. Now, I want to make myself clear at this point. I am not saying that the Church has merely imitated the sacrificial rituals of the Old Testament Temple. This is clearly not the case. There are no blood sacrifices in the ritual worship of the Christian Church. What I am saying is that the kind of paradigm that underpinned the Temple worship, ritual cultic activity, has been used as the paradigm for understanding and structuring Church activity. And many of the features of this type of worship have been incorporated into the Church, including the Old Testament concept of priesthood, altars, special clothing etc. Nor is this something that is only relevant to Episcopal Churches. In varying degrees it also structures Protestant Free Church activity.

But is this the correct paradigm for understanding the

Church and her role in the kingdom of God? I do not believe it is. The New Testament talks of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11) as offices in the Church. However, these offices were *not* part of the Old Testament Temple cultus. The Temple cultus terminated in Christ, to whom it pointed. In fact, the central features of the ministry of the offices of the institutional Church in the New Testament are the word of God and prayer (Acts 6:4). Proclaiming the word of God and teaching the faith is central to the work of the institutional Church. This does not come from the Temple. The Priests were not primarily ministers and teachers of the word. The Old Testament model for ministry of the word is the prophet, not the priest. It is the prophet who calls the nation to God's word as the principle around which society should structure its life.

Now, I am not denying the fact that there is an institutional aspect to the Church's life, nor am I saying that there is no place for ritual at all or that there should be no public Christian cultus. There must always be an expression of corporate public worship in the Church's life and this will inevitably constitute some form of cultus. I am not denying the validity of the public Christian cultus therefore. But I am saying that this should not provide the paradigm for our understanding of the function of the Church, nor should it define the Church. But because it often does define the Church, I am saying that the balance is wrong, that the cultus has been elevated, at the expense of other priorities, to a status that is not validated by the New Testament. The New Testament presents the Church as a community of faith acting in the whole of life, one aspect of which is corporate worship, the public cultus. The focus of the New Testament is not on the cultic activity of the Church, but on the kingdom of God, which functions across the whole spectrum of human life and society. I am not denying the validity of the Christian cultus therefore, but I am saying that it has been misunderstood and incorrectly modelled on the paradigm of the Temple cultus and that the Church has been incorrectly defined by such cultic activity rather than as a community of people sharing the same faith and structuring their lives and community around God's word. As a result we have much ritual (much that is not necessary) but little real community, which I think characterised the New Testament Church far more than it does modern Western Churches. There is much conformity in the ritualised modern Churches of the West. But this conformity exists alongside a serious lack of community. This model is seriously astray.

In previous centuries, when close community life was more a feature of society generally, this defect was not so obvious. Indeed, there may not have been the same defect because the Christian world-view was dominant and Western societies were largely made up of Christian communities. This is no longer the case today. The communities that make up our society are not Christian, and the prevailing world view is not Christian. On top of this community generally is breaking down—certainly *Christian* community has largely gone.

But the Church has not recognised the problem. She has carried on as if the world has not changed. As a result the Church and her message have become increasingly irrelevant to the real world and its problems. When society and community were generally Christian, the Church's infatuation with ritual perhaps did not seem so irrelevant. Today this is no longer the case. The Church, on the whole, at least

in Britain, does not address the real world with a decisive message for the world. It merely peddles hell fire insurance.

For example, in most of the Churches to which I have belonged the membership has come from a wide catchment area around the Church, but few members have actually lived in the community in which the Church meets (where the building is). Even Churches planted with the specific intention of being a mission to the community in which the building is located seldom have had memberships that are drawn mostly from the community that the Church supposedly serves. There are two problems with this: first, the Church is not really part of the community it claims to be serving and so does not have a real presence there, only a few meetings each week that mean nothing very much to the local community anyway. The Church's mission is thus something of a pretence. Second, the members of the Church, who come to the meetings from far and wide, do not themselves constitute a real community of faith, which is the leaven needed to affect the dough, i.e. the mission community, because they cannot. They live too far apart to constitute or function as a community.

What happens in this kind of situation is that the Church becomes a mere cult, and the faith becomes merely a personal worship hobby for those who attend the meetings. But this situation cannot facilitate the true mission of the Church. At best the message proclaimed will be some form of hell fire insurance, i.e. the faith will be restricted to the question "What happens at death?" Christ is held out as a means of escaping hell fire. But this is a truncated view of salvation, and because of this an unbiblical one.

If the Church is to be an alternative community that will act as leaven in society, she must function as a true *community of faith*. This, I suggest, is the true paradigm for the Christian Church given us in Bible. The ritual cultus is not a biblical model for the life of the Church. The Temple has gone. The ritual paradigm is the wrong paradigm for understanding the Christian Church. I am not saying there is no institutional Church nor that there should be no public Christian cultus, nor that there is no place whatsoever for ritual in the worship meetings of the Church. But I am saying that this should not define the Church, that the Church is primarily a community of faith, and that although teaching of the word and prayer etc. are vital to the life and growth of the Church in the faith, unless the Church is a *community of faith* she ceases to be a Church. Great preaching halls and great preachers do not constitute the Church on their own; a Church is a community of believers living out the faith *as* a community of faith.

Well, this is all well and good, but what should a Church be like on the model that I am suggesting? What difference would it make practically? The whole point is that the congregation, the people of God, should function as a *community* bound together by God's word not only when they are worshipping corporately in church meetings held specifically for praise, prayer, teaching etc., but also in all the other aspects of community life. Here are a few examples. They are not meant to be exhaustive, but they do attempt to identify some of the more important areas that are presently neglected on the whole.

First, the New Testament gives us an important model in Acts 6:1–6. As we have seen, this passage shows how the Church responded to a very specific and practical need. Servants were appointed to provide for those in need. This

was how the Church dealt with a *welfare* issue. Welfare is a function of the Church. Not that the Church is the primary agency for welfare. The Bible teaches that the family is the primary agency of welfare. But because the Church also is a family, the family of God, she has a duty to those who are needy and without help from their families (1 Tim 5:1–16). The Church functions as an extended family. She must act as a true community. There is also an important welfare function for the Church as part of her mission to the non-believing world.

Second, another aspect of community life is work, our vocations and businesses. The Jews have often shown us a good example here. They have often functioned as a community of faith far better than Christians have, especially in an unsympathetic environment, but even where the environment has not been unsympathetic. They look after their own, especially in terms of business and work life. They have often shown a better understanding of what it means to belong to a community of faith. Of course, this may often have been the result of persecution, and they do not seem to have the same commitment to evangelism that Christianity has, and this has a tendency to produce a ghetto mentality, which is not something we should imitate at all. Nevertheless, I think a case can be made for the creation of a Christian work environment and business environment that is open and outward looking, providing an example to the world of how the faith should affect our work and business life. This is especially relevant now because it seems to me that business ethics are virtually at a point of collapse in Britain. Christian ethics and a Christian understanding of one's calling played an important part in the development of the economies of the Western world. The prevalence of the Christian world-view and its code of ethics was important in providing society with a stable foundation for the development of the free market order in particular and a free society generally. Christian ethics have now been cast aside and both society generally and economic and business activity in particular is reverting to forms of economic activity that are often little better than fancy forms of piracy. Business ethics seems to have all but collapsed.

Now of course, the Bible does not say that we may only trade with other Christians or use the services of other Christians, and I am definitely not arguing for this in any way. In fact, as things stand often Christian business activity is no different from non-Christian business activity; indeed, Christians in Britain have a poor reputation as businessmen and employers on the whole, which does a very great disservice to the gospel. But it ought not to be this way. It ought to be the case that Christians provide leadership to the non-believing world here as elsewhere. Christian businesses and employers ought to provide both a good witness to the gospel and form part of the Christian community. There is no reason why the wider Christian community should not generate its own economy in many ways. This does not mean that Christians would refuse to deal or trade with non-believers or that Christians would never use business services provided by non-believers. But the consensus created by a significant part of the business and economic community's following the Christian ethic in the way it operates and co-operates as part of the Christian community, and the way it ministers to both the Christian community and the non-believing community would be a very significant witness to the faith and help to create, maintain and promote the

growth of the Christian community of faith, which is the leaven that should affect the whole of society. This also is part of our calling to disciple the *nation*.

Furthermore, we must recognise also that the Bible does tell us that we are not to be unequally yoked (2 Cor. 6:14), and this applies to the sphere of business as much as it does to any other area of human life.

Third, the education of children is a vitally important aspect of the Christian life. How does the Church expect to maintain her influence upon society when she is sending her children to be educated by secular humanists *as* secular humanists? This is truly one of the most scandalous of all the failures of the modern Church. The schooling system in Britain had its origins in the private Christian schools and charity schools that were created by a Christian society in the discharge of its Christian responsibilities. This system was largely hijacked by the State, which, when it had taken control of it, proceeded to secularise it so that now virtually all traces of the Christian faith have been expunged from the system. And it seems that Christians on the whole are happy to send their children to these secular schools.

This seems to me to be standing the gospel on its head. In all missionary situations Christians accept that the children of Christian missionaries should be educated as Christians and that the children of those to whom the missionaries are ministering should also be educated as Christians. The idea of permitting a pagan community to educate the children of missionaries who are ministering the gospel to that community, so that their children learn to live a non-Christian way of life, is absurd and would be condemned by any Christian Church. And so the establishing of Christian schools in the mission field is seen as quite necessary, even essential, to the success of the mission. And yet, when one turns to the home mission, in a society that is now thoroughly secularised and almost as pagan in its own way as any foreign mission field, precisely the opposite happens: the children of Christians are sent to be educated by secular humanists and atheists.

Rather than secular humanists educating Christian children, Christians should be establishing schools for educating the children of non-believers. The situation faced by the Churches in the Western nations today is a *mission* situation. The provision of Christian education for Christian children is vital and essential for the progress of the gospel in the Western nations. The Church cannot hope to survive without this, and it is an abdication of responsibility for Christians to send their children to secular schools. But beyond this, the Church also has an opportunity to provide Christian education for non-believers. The nations of the West are *mission fields*. How has the Church failed to see this? It is vital that this should be remedied. I would go so far as to say that this is the most important issue facing the Church today in terms of her responsibility to her own children and her wider mission to the world.

Fourth, in a similar way the provision of Christian hospitals and medical services is an essential aspect of the Church's mission, and has always been seen as such in previous centuries. Christ commanded us, emphatically, to preach the gospel *and* heal the sick (Mt. 10:7–8; Lk 9:2; 10:9). Wherever the gospel has been preached throughout the world the healing of the sick and the establishing of hospitals has gone along hand in hand with it. And the hospital system in Britain was a result of this process. The secular State did

not set up a health service, nor did it initiate a hospital building programme in order to create the National Health Service. Rather, it hijacked, took over, the existing health care system, which was the product of a Christian society. The whole concept of hospitals in Britain had its origin in the mission of the Church to heal the sick. Now that the State has taken over this area of life the Christian values that once built the hospitals and guided their work is being systematically stripped from the National Health Service, just as the Christian values that once underpinned education have been stripped from the education system.

The Church must see her mission in this broader context of life as the ministry of the whole word of God to the whole person in the whole community, rather than as confined primarily to ritual worship, the cultus. Just think of the influence that the gospel would have if people in our communities were to look to the Church for help for the problems of life instead of to the secular State. What if the Church rather than the State dispensed welfare to the needy according to Christian work ethics in our society? What if, instead of children being sent to secular humanist school to be taught that the world and all things in it are autonomous and have no relation to God or his word, and that at best the Christian faith is a private matter, people sent their children to be educated at Christians schools, to be taught how to structure their lives and society around God's word? What if people worked for Christian companies pursuing Christian ethics, and did business with Christian businesses that operated on the basis of Christian ethics, instead of secular business ethics, which increasingly resembles piracy in all but name? What if, instead of looking to the secular State, the sick in our society were to look to the Church for healing and were to go to Christian hospitals and medical practices when they were ill? What if, when people became Christians and joined the Church they became part of a real community that lived as a community of faith in all areas of life? Would not all this be a much more real and meaningful expression of the Christian message of salvation in our communities? Do you think that the Church and the Christian faith would be as it is today, without influence and relevance in society? Of course not. God's name would be honoured in our nation, hallowed, just as we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And the kings of the earth would kiss the Son (Ps. 2).

The Church will not fulfil the Great Commission until she sees her mission in these broad terms. If Christians were to act in a concerted way in society as a community of faith with a mission in these four areas—welfare, education, medical services and business—it would have a transformational effect upon the nation. It would be a relevant, practical witness to the faith and a demonstration of the Church's commitment to building the kingdom of God in society.

Political lobbying will not achieve this. Stopping good laws from been abolished and bad laws from being passed will not accomplish anything anywhere near as effective as this kind of activity will. We cannot expect politicians to do what we are not prepared to do as Churches. Of course, I am not saying we should not try to stop goods laws from being abolished or bad laws from being passed. But unless lobbying and political action takes place in the wider context of the Church's mission in all these areas of life it will achieve nothing of permanent value. Unless Christians are prepared

to make the sacrifices for the faith that this wider mission will involve, they will not conquer the world. Christianity is useless to the world as a mere cult, a personal devotion hobby. The purpose of the Christian faith is to glorify God by changing the world and bringing all nations under the discipline of Jesus Christ. Nothing less than this is commanded in the Great Commission.

A word of warning here. Jesus told us that when an unclean spirit leaves a man and finds no place to rest, it returns to the house from which it came, and finding it cleaned and swept, takes seven other devils with it, so that the latter state of the man is worse than the former. This is very pertinent to the Christian community and the attempt by Christians to get the evils they perceive in society remedied by government programmes. Many Christians are lazy. They are prepared to support lobbying organisations that will try to coerce the government to do for them what they should be doing for themselves. This is an abdication of responsibility. It is not that lobbying of government is wrong as such, i.e. when it is done for the right reasons. But often Christians will lobby for State education to be cleaned up and made Christian. Why? So that they do not have to fulfil their own responsibilities to provide a Christian education for their children. The same goes for welfare and health care and other spheres of life. So what will happen if the Church is successful in her lobbying? What if she manages to keep a good law on the statute books or prevent a bad law from being enacted? The Church may have cast out the devil and swept the house, i.e. society, only to find that the devil returns with seven more worse devils, so that the latter condition of society is worse than the former.

This is no idle speculation. It is what is happening all the time in Britain. The lobbying of government is quite popular, and often *initially* successful, but the clean house always gets re-occupied by seven more deadly devils, so that more lobbying is then required, and more funds to finance the lobbying. But the real work of providing alternative Christian education, Christian hospitals and medical services, Christian welfare, a Christian presence in the spheres of business and economics etc., gets neglected for the most part. The house, that is to say the nation, does not get re-occupied by the Christian Spirit. So the devils come back. Lobbying and political action, without the ongoing work of Christian mission across the whole of life and society, disciplining the nation in other words, will achieve nothing in the long term, and the latter condition will be worse than the former. We cannot use government to do those things that we should be doing ourselves. The aim of reform of government should be to get it doing those things it should be doing, not giving lazy Christians an easy time. And if we succeed in cleaning up the house by political means but fail to replace the devil with a Christian presence, the vacuum will be filled by seven worse devils, who will use the political system to their own advantage. Wherever the Church leaves a vacuum in this way, thinking that such areas are religiously neutral, this is what happens, because there are no areas of religious neutrality. Christ is Lord of all and claims ownership of all. As Abraham Kuyper said, "There is not a single inch of the whole terrain of our human existence over which Christ . . . does not proclaim 'Mine!'"

The Church needs to understand this broad mission to the world. Without engaging in these areas the decline of the Christian faith will not be halted. These are things that the

Church has always done as part of her mission in times past anyway. This is nothing new. I am not asking anyone to consider doing anything that the Church has not always in previous centuries seen as part of her mission to the unbelieving world. The creation of a Christian society, Christians schools, Christians hospitals, the pursuit of Christian work ethics etc. has always in the past been seen as essential to the Church's mission. It is the Great Commission, after all. Why has the Church stopped believing these things and pursuing this agenda?

The greatest part of the Christian life of faith is not spent in church engaging in ritual worship; rather it is spent in the world, in the mission field. Unless we seek to make this world a Christian world, a world that structures its life around

God's word, our worship services will amount little more than personal worship hobbies, cults practised in a ghetto. We are not called to be a ghetto, but to disciple the *nations*. If we are to do this we must start living as a real *community* of faith that will act like leaven in society, transforming the nation into a Christian society. This will mean for most of us a great deal of upheaval both in our attitudes and thinking, and in our practical lives. But there is no alternative that does not amount to neglect of the Great Commission, in other words *disobedience*. How long do you think God is going to put up with a disobedient Church? Time is running out for Britain, perhaps for the West generally. Does not judgement begin at the house of God? (1 Pet. 4:17). "How lucky do you feel?" C&S

ENGLAND'S SILENT REVOLUTION

A Review of Herbert Schlossberg's *The Silent Revolution & the Making of Victorian England* (Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 2000, 406 pages)

by David Estrada

AMONG the most interesting books I have recently read is *The Silent Revolution & the Making of Victorian England* by Herbert Schlossberg. According to this American scholar, the generation born in England around 1790 was the most important in the modern history not only of its own country but also of the whole Christian World. In contrast with the violent revolutions that took place in France and other European countries, this generation brought about a "Silent Revolution" in all orders of life in Victorian England. Schlossberg's thesis is that the cause of this "Silent Revolution" is to be found in the religious revival that took hold of England in the first part of the nineteenth century.

Schlossberg begins with the setting against which these changes took place: the spiritual conditions of England in the eighteenth-century. He then goes on to describe the renewal: the eighteenth-century beginnings; the three main renewal movements in the Church of England: (1) the Evangelical, (2) the Tractarian—or High Church—and the movement that began with Thomas Arnold at Rugby School, (3) the spread of Evangelicalism to the Dissenting—non Anglican—religious groups. He then deals with the relationship between the religious revival and aspects of the society that are often thought to be of little relevance to religion: the role Coleridge and Carlyle played; the rapidly changing social and economic situation brought about by the Industrial Revolution and associated factors; the puzzling extent of agreement between the two opposing contenders for intellectual domination in the period—Evangelicalism and utilitarianism; the changes that took place in the sphere of general morality and institutions. In the last chapter Schloss-

berg summarises the arguments and shows how England discarded the skepticism, immorality, and frivolity of the Enlightenment, during which people had been content to enslave others and had been largely unmoved in the face of widespread poverty and misery, to become a more humane, generous, and livable society.

Schlossberg gives relevant examples of English life before the religious revival in order to show the great significance of the Silent Revolution. The country was full of soothsayers, quacks and highway robbers. Blood sports were not confined to hunting and stalking, but involved the contemplation of animals and human beings inflicting suffering on each other. It is hard to find an account of life in eighteenth-century England that does not speak of the disaster alcohol caused to million of lives. The savagery of the legal system may be judged by the fact that more than 150 offenses were capital crimes—including pick-pocketing, shoplifting, animal stealing, breaking a young tree, snatching a piece of fruit, poaching, and appearing on a high road in blackface. Religion was at a very low ebb both among Anglicans and Dissenters. The famous jurist Sir William Blackstone told of visiting the churches of note in London early in the reign of George III and hearing not a single sermon he would identify as Christian; James Boswell once confided to Wilberforce that Dr. Johnson had never known a single clergyman he would consider religious.¹ In the

1. In his *Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets*, Thomas De Quincey writes of a certain Dr. Watson, of the Lake District, who systematically neglected all his public, all his professional duties. "He was lord in

economic realm, industrialisation had engendered social unrest, threatened England with revolt and political insurrection.

The antidote was embodied in the Methodist movement which had so changed the attitudes of labouring classes as to improve their lives and abate their dissatisfaction. In the political sphere the impact of the Evangelicals was indeed notorious. To speak of the political influence of the Evangelicals in the first third of the nineteenth century, writes Schlossberg, is to speak of William Wilberforce. And to speak of Wilberforce is to speak of the Evangelical community that lived at Clapham. Wilberforce was a member of the House of Commons for several decades. The key to understanding his political activities is to recognise that his view of everything in life, including statecraft, was related to his understanding of the will of God, for himself, for Great Britain, and for all humanity.

The Evangelical

According to Schlossberg, *Conversionism* and *Activism* were decisive factors in the Silent Revolution of the Evangelicals. *Conversionism* meant the belief that people can be changed fundamentally through repentance and faith in Christ; whereas *Activism* implied the readiness of the converted person to vigorously pursue courses of action in keeping with the mandates of Christian faith. The Evangelicals of the Silent Revolution were extremely active in implanting the practical demands of the gospel on the social structures of their time. For them there were no grounds for quietism in any aspect of the Christian life: the believer and the world of the believer ought to be simultaneously transformed by the biblical message of renewal of all things in Christ. The English middle class was extremely influential in many of the social, political and educational reforms of the Silent Revolution. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Dissenters had become largely middle-class.

In the origins of the Silent Revolution, Schlossberg makes reference to some significant religious trends that appeared in eighteenth-century England, conceding especial relevance to the Methodist movement. As a matter of fact, the references to Methodism permeate much of the book. In contrast with the Puritans of the seventeenth century, who stressed the intellectual importance of the Christian faith, the Methodist emphasised the emotional element in the believer's experience. Schlossberg quotes Richard Brantley in his affirmation that the Lockean emphasis on experience, as the source of knowledge, was a major component of Wesley's theology and subsequently of the Romantic revolution in sensibility.²

Parliament, and for many a year he never attended in his place: he was a bishop, and he scarcely knew any part of his diocese by sight, living three hundred miles away from it: he was a professor of divinity, holding the richest professorship in Europe . . . and for thirty years he never read a lecture, or performed a public exercise. He talked openly, at his table, as a Socinian, and ridiculed the miracles of the New Testament . . ."

2. I personally believe that Wesley had a rather superficial knowledge of Locke's theory of knowledge. Philosophy was not an asset in his thought. Nevertheless he made much of the emotional element implicit in the Lockean presupposition of experience as the source of knowledge. This colored his theology with a note of sentiment, or mental feeling, already prevalent in the Romantic trends of the time. Methodism has much in common with Romanticism.

According to Schlossberg, the leaders of Methodism were aware of the dangers of uncontrolled feeling. By resorting to strict codes of discipline and organisation they believed that disordered sentiments would be ruled out. Organisation was not the only check on emotions in the Methodist system. The leadership stressed the importance of reason.³

In the Silent Revolution the moral implications of the Christian message were taken most seriously; Methodist preaching exercised a powerful influence on the lives of people. According to Schlossberg, from the start the sermons of both the Wesleys and Whitefield revealed the moral reformation of society as one of their highest priorities. The practical results of the Evangelical involvement in ethical and charitable programs were indeed many and of considerable importance. For example, in 1780, Robert Raikes, an Anglican layman, founded the first Sunday school; the efforts of the Clapham Evangelicals to end the slave trade bore fruit in 1807, after two decades of hard work.⁴ The community of publicly minded Evangelicals widened considerably beyond Clapham after 1802 when a group of friends founded the *Christian Observer*, a monthly publication devoted to a religious understanding of British culture, in the broadest sense of the term.

In the transformation of local culture the labours of Hannah More were indeed remarkable. This gifted literary young woman, a friend to Dr. Johnson, David Garrick, Horace Walpole, and John Newton—the former slave captain and curate of Olney in the days of William Cowper—engaged in a most successful activity in starting schools for the children of labourers. Her example was imitated by other Evangelicals convinced that they could band together into societies of special interest and make analogous contributions to the nation. After the turn of the century, several Christian organizations began operating in important realms of society: the Bible Society, the Lord's Day Observation Society, the CMS, etc. At first the Establishment reacted rather negatively against these societies founded by laymen. Schlossberg mentions the case of a certain Evangelical by the

3. Were the leaders of Methodism really successful in keeping a proper balance between sentiment and reason in their theology? With the exception of George Whitefield and other Calvinistic members of the movement, the balance became a mere wish: feeling gained always the preeminence over reason. Although George Whitefield was Wesley's most famous colleague on the Methodist circuit of the original Holy Club of Oxford, their differences were notorious. When Wesley preached Whitefield's funeral sermon at the Tottenham Court Road Chapel in November 1770—writes Schlossberg—he alluded to their differences as mere opinions and affirmed that on the essential doctrines of faith he and Whitefield were one. I am of the opinion that their differences on doctrine were far from minor. For one thing, Whitefield never did agree with the drastic Arminian corrections Wesley undertook of the Westminster Confession of Faith. As Schlossberg comments, at first Henry Venn had been an Arminian, but, largely in contemplating his own unworthiness, he became convinced that only the grace of God could rescue him, and he became a Calvinist. Venn and Charles Simeon believed that Wesley had failed to take sin seriously enough and so had made too much of the human capacity to repent and reform. Let us observe in this connection, that in Romantic anthropology there was a general tendency to vindicate a state of natural goodness in man—to the detriment of the Christian doctrine of the fall and sinfulness of the human race. The Wesleyan concept of "sinless perfection" could be regarded as a religious version of the Romantic idea of natural human goodness.

4. Finally, within days of Wilberforce's death in 1833, slavery was banned everywhere in the British Empire.

name of Granville Sharp for whom the vicar of Fulham would not permit a funeral sermon to be preached in the church because of Sharp's connections with the Bible Society.

The Silent Revolution comprised an amalgam of religious groups and tendencies, as well as secular and somewhat antireligious groups of a marked utilitarian nature. Sometimes the "revolution" lost its "silent" voice. This was the case with the so called Tractarian Movement initiated in the University of Oxford in the third decade of the eighteenth-century by John Keble, E. B. Pusey, John Henry Newman (later Cardinal Newman), and other leading theologians of the Church of England. Emphasising the doctrinal authority of the early and undivided Catholic Church, the Tractarians encouraged the study of the Church Fathers. Their central attention focused on the Sacraments and the apostolic succession. Pusey, for instance, defended the "Real Presence" in the Eucharist; in 1845 he helped found in London the first Anglican sisterhood, which revived monastic life in the Anglican Church.

The revitalised Anglican Church, as a result of the Tractarian movement, elicited, however, strong opposition from other independent religious organisations. An example of this was the active group that formed around Edward Miall, an energetic Congregational minister from Leicester, who after resigning his pastorate moved to London to found a paper advocating the end of the Established Church. "Called the British Anti-State Church Association, this group borrowed strength from Miall's character, which was compounded of fearless devotion and personal winsomeness and warmth. He had a powerful intellect, adept at both abstract speculation and practical skills. He was also a skillful orator, and as an editor he made the *Nonconformist* one of the most readable papers of the day."

The Evangelical movement was powered by two engines: the motivation supplied by conversion and the drive to bring about social improvement through active participation in both politics and voluntary activities. As the individual experienced new life, so the society must also be transformed.

The Evangelicals were not the only ones with this perspective. Thomas Arnold, the headmaster at Rugby during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, held a similar vision for societal improvement and he influenced numerous pupils to pursue similar ends. Arnold is remembered chiefly for two accomplishments: reforming the English public schools and fathering the poet and literary critic Matthew Arnold. Although Arnold's name was never associated with the Evangelicals, the latter did not regard him as an enemy, the way they did the Tractarians, "even though they were sometimes at loggerheads with the schoolmaster." Arnold has been credited with setting the example that led to the virtual reinvention of the English public schools. At that time the schools had become centers of brutality, rebellion, and sexual vice. Religion was virtually a dead letter at these schools, despite the fact that most of the teachers were clergymen. Arnold's judgement that religion should be central to public school education was a natural result of his view of religion as central to life. The intellect came third among his priorities, after religious and moral training, and the inculcation of gentlemanly conduct. Arnold put his own stamp even on the teaching of the classics, which

was the staple of all English education. He thought Churchmen should take public stands to bring about social renovation in English society. For him, the whole purpose of a national Church is to "Christianise the nation" and bring about justice in its laws. He was totally opposed to any dualism that would separate spiritual from material concerns. Many of Arnold's pupils went to Oxford, predominantly to Balliol College. There they combined with a group of brilliant Scottish disciples of Carlyle to make Balliol the preeminent academic center of the University.

The recovery of belief and the rejection of Establishment

Although the Dissenters suffered legal discrimination until well into the nineteenth century, after the toleration Act of 1689 they were able to live and worship more or less as they pleased. The Dissent revival was not uniform, the Presbyterians being the least affected by Evangelicalism. In the half century following 1772, Congregationalists and Baptists experienced a substantial increase in the number of congregations. Much of the Congregationalist growth came from Calvinistic Methodists coming over from the Whitefield-Lady Huntigdon chapels and from Orthodox Presbyterian congregations reacting against the growth of Unitarianism in that denomination. The Quakers, with their long history of quietism and spiritual contemplation, were eventually overtaken by the Evangelical flood and came to have much more in common with the Evangelicals. They began to take an active interest in such matters as prison reform, an avenue of service in which they became leaders. If we find it surprising that the Protestant quietists should have been swept by the Evangelical tide, it will seem astounding—writes Schlossberg—that even the Unitarians were not entirely immune.

The evident successes of the Dissenting bodies threw the Establishment on the defensive. Thomas Arnold took the growth of Dissent as an indication of the failures of the Church of England and called urgently for Church reform. Implicit—sometimes explicit—in such criticism was the notion that if only the Church had done what was right during the years of her quasi-monopoly, there would have been no need for dissent. By the 1830s the Wesleyan Methodists were split between those who considered themselves enemies of the Establishment—mainly laymen—and a leadership that was more conciliatory. Even at this late date many Methodists still considered themselves loyal members of the Church of England. The more moderate Dissenters in all denominations believed that their complaints stood a better chance of being addressed if there were no attempt to muddy the waters with debates about disestablishment. In 1833 they formed a committee to present a slate of five grievances for which they demanded relief, namely, the restrictions placed on non-Churchmen with respect to baptism, marriage, burial, payment of church fees, and the granting of university degrees—the most pressing being church fees, a charge imposed on all parishioners to maintain the local parish. Each vestry voted the rates annually and assessed the parishioners, whether or not they were believing members of the Church of England. Church fees were especially burdensome to the Dissenters because their own communions were flourishing and the costs of building and maintaining the chapels fell squarely on them.

The Prophets, Coleridge and Carlyle, and the secular influence of religion

The significance and relevance Schlossberg concedes to S. T. Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle in the Silent Revolution constitutes an important feature of his study. In fact, he dedicates a whole chapter just to them. According to our author, one reason the revival penetrated so deeply into the English consciousness was that it had a profound influence on intellectuals whose writings in turn were widely embraced by people “who did not listen to (or read) sermons, disdained tracts, and did not attend worship services.” Both Coleridge and Carlyle belonged to these influential intellectuals. Schlossberg calls them prophets. “To use the term *prophet* when speaking about people like Coleridge and Carlyle is not to employ it in its loose, colloquial sense. In their day it signified something very close to the biblical meaning. In both periods prophets arose who saw that things were not right in the society and who sought to convince people that serious moral reformation was required to restore it to health.” The prophetic writers spoke of duty, of responsibility to society, of the recovery of the moral standards that the preceding generations had been wont to ridicule. (p. 143).

Schlossberg regards Coleridge and Carlyle as men of faith and largely free from the Romantic trends of the time. “The early nineteenth century is often considered to be the heyday of Romanticism but our prophets were opponents of one of the main features of the Romantic impulse—that is, what they considered to be the wild and untrammelled individualism of such poets as Byron and Shelley.” In order to substantiate his positive evaluation of Coleridge, Schlossberg quotes an array of outstanding critics. Thus, according to F. D. Maurice, thanks to Coleridge, “Hume’s critique of religion, which had preoccupied so many religious people for the previous century, held no terror for theology . . . The idea of the society as an organism rather than an agglomeration of individual desires was Coleridgean in origin.” According to another scholar, “without Coleridge there would not have been a philosophical conservatism in the early nineteenth century. The Broad Church movement was heavily indebted to him.” Coleridge’s ideas on Church and State have even been influential in the thinking of men such as T. S. Eliot and William Temple.

With regards to Carlyle, Schlossberg writes that “although religious faith seemed to dominate much of what he wrote, it is not easy to say with confidence just what it was; sometimes he seemed to write as an orthodox Christian, other times as a pantheist or as a believer in the life force. . . . And although he threw off the strict Calvinist Evangelicalism of his parents (and indeed the Christianity of which it was an expression), he kept much of what flowed from it.” Schlossberg concludes by saying that “Carlyle’s influence was less in his ideas than in his personality, in the vigor with which he held his convictions, and in the fiery nature of his writings.”

A Transformed Society

A transformed society—the subject of Schlossberg’s book—implies changing economic conditions and relationships. People have always suffered privation, and English society had always made provision for it in one way or another, but in the early nineteenth century economic

hardship was regarded as a serious national matter that could not be allowed to persist. The growing religious consciousness changed the general perception of society concerning privation and brought it to the forefront of public discussion. By 1800, society in general—workers as well as farmers—was sharing in the prosperity initiated by the Industrial Revolution, and there was a good deal of optimism. Nevertheless, general improved conditions coexisted with considerable hardship for many others. Evangelicals could not ignore the reality of the poor. Accordingly, the social and economic demands of the gospel had to meet the plight and suffering of the destitute.

The English relief system was based on the Anglican parish, which had the authority to levy a tax called the poor rate. Along with the parish system of relief, private charity was an important source of help for the destitute. And especially after the eighteenth century, individual charity was supplemented by a growing network of charitable societies, many Evangelical in origin. The problematic of the poor raised important and pressing questions: how far involved must the government get in alleviating the suffering? How close was the relation between economics and morals? What bearing was Malthus’ theory on population to have on the issue of poverty? In his *Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith held the view that economics and morals were related, if not causally at least in so far that the free market makes for both good economics and good morals. It makes for good economics because it brings efficiency to the process of investing capital and also because it makes possible the division of labor, which increases productivity. The market makes for good morals by disciplining the propensity humans have for doing evil. Thus, commerce, far from being heartless and destructive, tends toward the taming of the wayward spirit; it encourages the virtues, if only the minor ones such as self-control, decency, sobriety and frugality.

In his *Essay on Population*, Thomas Malthus, stressing the fact of scarcity, puts a damper on the rising optimism of English thinking by purporting to demonstrate empirically that food production inevitably would lag behind population growth. Thus misery would be multiplied along with people. Many Evangelicals followed Malthus ideas, largely because they seemed scientific. According to Malthus’s teaching, the poor laws harm the poor by encouraging them to look for sustenance outside themselves. If it was futile to help the poor by rearranging society, it was nevertheless incumbent upon Christians to obey the biblical command to help the poor. The Church bore the main responsibility for this. Much of the Evangelical leadership, including the influential Scottish minister Thomas Chalmers, came to agree with Malthus on this point, and their early efforts to reform the poor laws petered out in favor of direct relief. So pervasive was the influence of Malthus, not only among Evangelicals, but also among other Churchmen, including Noetics like Copleston and Whately, that a modern scholar—writes Schlossberg—has called Malthusian thinking “Christian political economy.”

Thomas Chalmers, who was also a noted writer on economics, tied his Malthusian views to the general thesis of the centrality of morality. In view of the fact that natural resources are limited, the moral and religious education of the people had to be the first object of national policy. For him pauperism was nothing other than “moral leprosy.” There was a strong reaction against the position of those—

especially Tory views—who considered poverty a normal state as part of the God-given order, and that remedy to social and economic misery was closely linked with moral changes on the part of the destitute.

It was generally believed that one of the main moral failings that led to poverty was drink. Schlossberg observes that at times the call for moral renewal seemed to mean simply that the poor were immoral and others were not, but that was far from being the whole story. Carlyle and others considered the problems of poverty to be spiritual, not primarily *material*. In general the various religious groups resisted charitable actions that were isolated from moral and spiritual concerns. This was especially true, writes Schlossberg, of the main stream of Evangelicals, who avoided the unidimensional approach of the spiritualist and the materialist. They regarded people as both matter and spirit and believed that their ministry was to be to both dimensions. This emphasis goes back at least to Wesley, whose calling was not only to preach to the poor but also to alleviate their sufferings. The Methodist chapels mitigated the ordinary indiscipline of the working class since they were concerned with the gospel implications of every area of life. The Methodists taught the seriousness of life and frowned on a frivolous spirit, which set their people apart from many of their neighbors. This trait, combined with good work habits and abstemious living made them both good employees and eventually good businessmen. According to Schlossberg, so pronounced were Wesleyan efforts in this regard that modern socialists have looked back to the founder, if not for inspiration at least for justification for modern socialist ideology. Sunday schools were another non-Church agency that provided a few of the same services as the Methodist chapel. They produced literacy in people who otherwise would have never learned to read, and they provided an outlet for service and leadership training in the lower classes. Given the connection between religion and behavior, it was not fanciful for people to attribute social malfunction to the absence of religion.

Since the seventeenth century—writes Schlossberg—the Church accomplished much of its work through societies rather than through canonical structures. The heyday of societies, mainly Evangelical, came after R. Raikes had done his work with the Sunday schools. The Evangelicals also published a vast quantity of literature on the conditions of the poor, so that the connection between religion and the relief of suffering spread almost everywhere. As a result of Wilberforce's efforts, and with a view to mitigate the poverty that increased after the war with France, the Society for Bettering the Conditions and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (the "Bettering Society") was formed. As in the case of antislavery efforts, this work was accomplished with a great deal of research. In keeping with many contemporary relief efforts, they attempted to help the poor while avoiding pauperism. The Bettering Society did not limit its work to charity in the narrow sense but attacked the exploitation of chimney sweeps, the conditions of miners, and tried with Wilberforce's leadership to pass the first Factory Act.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), which mainly focused on literature, also set up charity schools. In 1844 a group of young London Evangelicals founded the YMCA, mainly with the aim of spreading the gospel. In addition to prayer meetings, it offered libraries, debating societies, and lectures, thus illustrating the charac-

teristic Evangelical coupling of the spiritual and the practical. The army of *individuals* that engaged their efforts to alleviate the conditions of the destitute was numerous. For example, Richard Oastler, later a reformer in the House of Commons, joined another Evangelical parliamentary activist, Michael Sadler, in ministering to the sick in the typhus epidemic of Leeds. In 1846 Oastler traveled to Scotland to gain support for the Ten Hours Bill, which would limit the workday for factory labourers—mainly children and women. The More sisters taught the women of Mendip how to budget, cook, and use cooperative efforts to buy cheap food. In Clapham, John Venn and his wife founded the Hereford Society, which helped the poor get their corn ground and provided cheap rents and coal. Many more could be mentioned.

Christ and Belial: Christians and Atheists Together

One of the most interesting subjects Schlossberg approaches in his book has to do with the affinities between the social programs advocated by the Evangelicals and utilitarians alike. Despite the obvious differences, a kind of symbiotic relationship mutually reinforced these differences, and the complex relationship did much to change the society. Nineteenth-century utilitarianism was in large measure a development of the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, who in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), argued that the two great springs of human action were the contrary principles of pleasure and pain; human motivation consists in doing what one can to enhance the first and avoid the second. A society that conducted its affairs wisely would farther the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people by increasing pleasure to the maximum and decreasing pain to the minimum. Bentham's naturalism meant that for him religion was at best irrelevant and at worst harmful, being directed at ends that have no basis in reality. Edwin Chadwick, probably the most influential of his disciples, remained in the Church, but one of his biographers wryly noted that for him "the best things in Scripture had been said by Jeremy Bentham." The Benthamites' empirical bias toward the factual, their materialistic outlook and the wholly practical remedies for society's maladies, drew upon them the strong opposition of those who recognised and valued the spiritual side of life. Since the world was full of unhappiness, there was abundant scope for improvement; hence the utilitarians tended to be activists, engaged in such projects as public health, education, and prison reform.

John Stuart Mill argued that utilitarians of all sorts on the one hand, and conservatives on the other were wrong to believe themselves enemies; they were in reality allies, being opposite poles of one great force of social progress. They both react against the "contemptible" conditions that preceded them, each striving in their own way to improve them. In some ways Wilberforce shared this philosophy of a "common point of contact," and in the House of Commons he did not confine his cooperative efforts to his fellow Evangelicals, but worked together with all who would support the measures he favored, including radicals. Lord Ashley considered Dickens, who shared his dismay at conditions in the factories and whose novels persuaded many on the point, as God's special creation, raised up for that specific purpose. He thought of Dickens as a modern version of Naaman, the general of ancient Syria whom God had

delivered from leprosy through the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5). Newman regarded the utilitarian philosophy in much the same way, because it was based on the realities of the creation. According to him, “there was truth in Benthamism. . . Legislation and political economy were new sciences; they involved *facts*; Christianity might claim and rule them, but it could not annihilate them.”

Bentham’s thinking on prison reform was similar in some respect to that of the great reformer of a previous generation, the Evangelical dissenter John Howard. Although the Christian and materialist psychologies were antithetical, both men believed that moral behaviour could be altered by external stimuli and that prison regimens therefore could be efficacious in reforming prisoners. Similarly, Evangelicals and utilitarians worked in tandem in reforming the treatment of lunatics, denouncing the old methods that relied on the whip and the straitjacket, and demanding a more humane practice. Lord Ashley teamed up with such utilitarians as Edwin Chadwick and Southwood Smith to bring about relief from terrible conditions in factories and mines, especially for children.

Despite the congruency of many of their activities, it was too much to expect people of such divergent views to be more than allies of convenience. Education, for instance, was bound to be a point of conflict because it cannot function except within the domain of one worldview or another, and the Christian and utilitarian worldviews could not easily coexist. The British and Foreign School Society was founded mainly by wealthy Quakers, but gradually succumbed to utilitarian trends of thought. The first significant change was to drop the requirement that all reading instruction be given only from the Bible, followed by the abrogation of the rule that all the children must be taken to a place of worship on Sunday. Gradually many of the features that had motivated the original founding of these schools disappeared. The spread of utilitarian thinking, comments Schlossberg, is puzzling in a way. It appealed to the general respect for science and reason, despite its willingness to accept unexamined assumptions about them, but it did not speak to the soul of the human being in the way that the contemporary movements, or the Lake Poets, or popular novelists did.

The Conversion of English Culture

According to Schlossberg, the test of whether a true revolution had taken place is the extent to which the culture, the morality, and the institutions had changed. The England of 1850 was so different from that of a century earlier that it is no exaggeration to say that the country had undergone a real revolution. Schlossberg devotes three lengthy and well documented chapters to each of these realms of the revolution and uses the term *conversion* to indicate the radical importance of the change. In “the conversion of the English culture” the Sunday schools played a decisive role. In addition to moral and religious instruction, the Sunday schools taught reading, manners, sanitation, order, punctuality—in short, the virtues that made it possible for people to live decent and respectful lives. Teaching was greatly improved thanks to the initiative of James Kay-Shuttleworth, who established the Battersea Training School with the purpose of raising the techniques and methods of teachers. He regarded the teaching of children as a drudgery that could not be done well except by raising up a corps of

dedicated people who would accomplish the task with a sense of calling and by combining intellectual and religious training.

The rise of the cultural level of the population in eighteenth century England was closely linked with the widespread programmes of alphabetisation. A survey taken of a lower-class London neighborhood in 1848 revealed that the average family possessed eleven books, which did not include serial literature such as Dickens’ novels. Autobiographical writings from the period suggest that after the Bible the two books having the most formative effect on Englishmen were *Pilgrim’s Progress* and *Paradise Lost*. Evangelical tracts were widely read; they were usually simple fictional stories intended to illustrate religious principles and enjoin people to come to faith in Christ. Hannah More’s *Cheap Repository Tracts* took the country by storm with enormous press runs. One of the most influential pieces of literature during the whole of the century was a grammar textbook written by the devout Evangelical Lindley Murray. His *English Grammar* (1795) incorporated a heavy dose of religious teaching that was already influencing England from so many other sources. The didactic material for children from the eighteenth century began to be invested with religious meaning and with mystery, principally through the work of the Scot George MacDonald, who began his adult life as a Dissenting minister.⁵ Some Evangelical publications were far from being strictly religious organs. From the start, the *Christian Observer* dealt with matters beyond the theological and ecclesiastical. Schlossberg mentions the issue of February 1802, which included items on natural philosophy, medicine and surgery, history, poetry, veterinary medicine, landscape gardening, exploration, geography, anatomy, zoology, chemistry, astronomy, archaeology, agriculture, and palaeontology. The *Observer* claimed a theological basis for its interest in cultural matters. It reviewed Lord Byron’s *Child Harold* more favorably than many would expect, favorably enough in fact to elicit Byron’s letter of appreciation. Meanwhile reprints of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Puritan literature acquainted nineteenth-century readers with the Calvinistic theology of the past.

Much of the richness of nineteenth-century English literature came from the fact that so many people understood the biblical metaphors. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the ordinary language of the English increasingly took on a biblical sound. This was a natural result of their familiarity with the Book of Common Prayer and the popularity of sermons, Bible reading, hymn singing, Sunday schools, religious publications, and every other manifestation of the religious revival. Many writers, who were not part of the Evangelical movement, nevertheless contributed to the religiosity that gradually came to prevail, even in ways that could not easily be distinguished from those of the Evangelicals. Jane Austen’s attitude toward the Evangelicals was ambivalent but gradually seemed to swing in their favour as she became more identified with the Church. The Brontë sisters were the product of an Evangelical vicarage. Nineteenth-century novels were to some extent morality tales, many of them showing the Evangelical influence, whatever the convictions of their authors. Sir Walter Scott’s influence on the century’s sentiments is undis-

5. C. S. Lewis acknowledged his indebtedness to George MacDonald as a source of inspiration for his children’s stories.

puted. Scott's novels depicted a medieval Europe, struggling to create a Christian civilisation. Charles Dickens, writes Schlossberg, never had an Evangelical past from which to withdraw. He was a sort of natural Pelagian: the notion of grace was foreign to him, yet his novels are full of the virtues that people had long called Christian virtues. He was a great humanitarian in an age that found intolerable the level of hardship that formerly had been accepted as one of the givens of life. Like many Evangelicals, Dickens hated blood sports and preached against gambling, drunkenness, and public executions. To some, Dickens was essentially a preacher and in some astonishing way, his novels came to be regarded as a sort of sub-Scripture.

Under the subtitle "Art Transformed," Schlossberg deals with the impact of religion on painting, music, and the theatre. In our estimation Schlossberg's treatment of the subject is too schematic and leaves the subject in a rather ambiguous frame. We must admit that this is not an easy subject: Evangelical views on art quite often have been questionable and evasive. Most painting since the Renaissance, writes Schlossberg, had been secular in orientation, but in an age that welcomed the gothic in architecture some noticeable changes had to be expected, also, in the plastic arts. Apart from style, there was a certain didactic quality in painting that was apparently closely related to Evangelical thinking. Painters alarmed by the spurning of respectability and the dissolution of the family depicted the sad result of the mania for gambling, promiscuity, drunkenness and other vices. John Ruskin, raised in a profound Evangelical family, became the aesthetic leader of the Pre-Raphaelite School and of other tendencies in painting and architecture. Although late in life Ruskin seems to have made ship-wreck in his faith, his religious background clearly stands in all his writings. Among the artists that experienced the profound influence of Ruskin, Schlossberg mentions the painter William Holman Hunt, who in his paintings evidenced his deep religious convictions. According to Hunt, without religious faith, art reflects a materialistic view of reality that must render it lifeless.

Schlossberg's fondness for Hunt can be seen in the fact that in the cover illustration of his book appears a photograph of Hunt's masterpiece *The Awakening Conscience*. In this painting, a kept woman arises from the lap of her lover, her face contorted with shame and guilt at the sudden realisation of the meaning of her status. The distress in her expression contrasts with that of the man, who does not yet realize what is going through her mind. According to Hunt, the painting was intended "to show how the still small voice speaks to a human soul in the turmoil of life." Such details as the hymnbook on the piano and the bird escaping from the cat portray the possibility of redemption, a road on which the woman has just begun to embark. The painting can be taken as symbolic of the course run by English society in the previous half-century. Schlossberg refers also to the painter John Everett Millais, and commenting on his work *Christ in the Carpenter's Shop*, says that it shows a family with all the verisimilitude we would expect of someone who believed the Gospels really spoke of flesh-and-blood people.

England did not have the classical musical heritage of some of the Continental countries. But the Wesleys, especially Charles, were poets and musicians. They disagreed with the common Calvinist conviction that only the Psalms should be sung, and the religious revival was filled with the

sound of hymns. From the Methodists, vigorous congregational singing spread to the Evangelicals and thence elsewhere. For Churchmen, hymn singing was a mark of both Dissent and "enthusiasm," neither of which was reputable in the age. Samuel Johnson once remarked that he put a coin in the hand of a little girl "though I saw Hart's hymns in her hand." This close friend of the Wesley brothers did his little act of charity in spite of the impediment of the hymnbook's presence. But it did not take long before Evangelical hymns became popular even in High Church parishes. Tractarian poetry, the Dissenting hymns of Watts and the Wesleys, and Cowper's poetry were all incorporated into the general singing of the congregations. The religious revival also stimulated the taste for classical music based on biblical sources. Mendelssohn's genius found a very warm welcome in England. He made ten trips to the island, and his influence there was second only to that of Handel two generations earlier. His great triumph was the performance of his oratorio *Elijah* at Birmingham in 1846, one of the few oratorios of the period that is still performed.

Schlossberg observes that the Evangelical cultural shift carried with it a countercurrent that centered in the issue of "separation from the world." The term "Puritan" is often used to describe those Evangelicals who distrusted open-minded speculation and sensuous pleasure. This description is incomplete: what Evangelicals opposed was a frivolous approach to life. It was all right to enjoy literature, but its purpose had to be not enjoyment but profit through instruction. There was too much important work to be done to allow diversions or fripperies to tug at the imagination and waste the precious hours. For that reason, dances, theatre, and races were without distinction all considered "scenes of dissipation." Music also fell under the ban. Even religious music was not spared when unbelievers were encouraged to sing it, as in the case of a performance of *The Messiah* at Exeter Hall. The affair for the Recordites was an "astounding impiety," largely because it was conducted as an "amusement." Fiction was also an example of the frivolity that the Evangelicals found objectionable, and it was not until the 1830s that the Religious Tract Society would incorporate the genre into their publications. The theatre rated even lower than the novel. Enamoured of it before his conversion, as a preacher Whitefield did his best to close the playhouses down wherever he preached. One of the reasons for this was the hostility theatres showed toward religion. It should be considered, adds Schlossberg, that in the first half of the nineteenth century the theatre was going through a very bad period. The educated people had largely abandoned it, and in order to draw crowds, the impresarios broadened and debased the performances.

The Conversion of English Morality and Mode of Life

The moral condition of both upper and lower classes in eighteenth century England was bad enough to alarm many thoughtful observers. In 1804, the Society for the Suppression of Vice reported the widespread distribution of pornographic materials. Drunkenness and gambling had turned a marginal into an absolute penury, but also in this the religious revival had had positive results. The religious revival in the Church of England, and to a large extent in Dissent, was primarily a middle-class event. Many of the main features of the Victorian social scene were products of

middle-class religious practices. It was Evangelical family life, with its family devotions, its father at home and its well-behaved children, its attendance at Sunday worship, its sense of responsibility for its own members and its neighbours, its participation in the societies intended to do good, that became middle-class Victorian family life. The upper classes were not immune from the religious revival. Whitefield had worked with the Countess of Huntingdon for the conversion of her noble friends, and so did Hannah More with the “Great” of society she came in contact with. There seemed to be few Englishmen who believed that the health of the society could be preserved in the absence of personal moral rectitude by the bulk of the population. Schlossberg observes that the moral advance of the individual was perhaps most strongly encouraged among the Methodists because of the Wesleyan doctrine of *perfectionism*. According to John Morley—a freethinker—the religious revival had so permeated the core of English thinking that those from differing parts of it, and even those completely outside its sphere, had adopted its social ethics. H. Taine, who visited England several times, believed that the dominating characteristic of the English was “the primacy of the moral being,” by which he meant that they thought of everything in the light of moral implications.

The Evangelical family in the nineteenth century had a bad press, partly because many of the children who had found it disagreeable while growing up later wrote books describing how miserable they had been. Recent studies suggest that the stereotype of the bored middle-class Victorian family, where children were saddled with a dreadful Sunday on which there was nothing interesting to do, was a concoction of a later period. Many of these houses were full of music and singing, as well as domestic arts like embroidery, and charitable visiting took up a good deal of time for many families. Many evenings were taken up by family readings, often of novels. . . . In fact, some critics believe that many Victorian novels have features that can be understood only on the presumption that the novels were written to be read aloud.

The alcoholic temperance movement, which turned into an abstinence movement, was another Evangelical effort to improve the society. One result of this was the replacement of many public houses with coffeehouses featuring serious reading material and discussion as well as refreshments. By the 1840s, there were almost two thousand coffeehouses in London alone. One of the most successful subscribed to fifty-six newspapers (London, country, and foreign), twenty-four monthly magazines, four quarterlies, and eleven weeklies. The sort of influence the Evangelicals exercised may be seen in the practice of Sunday observance, which some foreigners took to be emblematic of the difference between English and continental Christianity.

The Conversion of English Institutions

The Evangelicals associated the material and political health of the nation with its moral and spiritual condition. For Coleridge, the “Statesman’s Manual” was the Bible, whose morality was not only for individuals but for communities as well. Some of the Evangelical politicians believed that to give full consideration to the moral aspects of policy it was necessary to assign less importance to party considerations. The Clapham Evangelicals in Parliament, numbering

about thirty and derisively called “the Saints” by their detractors, did not find the choice ambiguous. “I am decidedly convinced—Wilberforce wrote in a letter—that PARTY is one of the chief evils which in politics we now have reason to regret.” Apart from the issue of slavery, their most consistent legislative activity was directed at economic and administrative issues. They were invariably proponents of reforms that would make the government more honest and efficient, and they and their allies made significant contributions in reforming the navy, chancery laws, the East India Company, and abuses such as bribery and purchase of governmental offices. They found offensive the corruption that was endemic in the government and had long been tolerated, and they did what they could to bring the problem to the forefront of debate. It was an age when democracy and policies relating to it came to the fore and, like almost all serious matters, were debated in the religious context. Schlossberg gives examples of these debates and of the resolutions reached in Parliament under the Evangelical initiative.

In matters of education, except for the Benthamites and other radicals, almost all educational thinking was bound up with religious issues. Even before the Evangelical revival, Dissent had been more effectively engaged in educational enterprises than the Establishment. During Wesley’s lifetime the Methodists were not numbered among the Dissenters, yet their educational enterprises were not typically Anglican. Poor people were encouraged to learn to read and then to read at a level far in advance of their peers. The Dissenters also made great contributions to higher education. The English universities were in deplorable condition in the eighteenth century, having become more like finishing schools than places of serious scholarship.⁶ Barred from them, the Dissenters educated their youth in academies, some of which attained high standards of learning. Perhaps because of their religious ties abroad, they remained in closer touch with intellectual life on the continent than did Cambridge and specially Oxford. Still, for most of these academies, the preparation of ministers was foremost, so the study of religion occupied a central position in the curriculum.

Mention has already been made of James Kay-Shuttleworth, the secretary of the Committee of Council on Education. He was a member of the Church of England, although “there were many indications that he was at heart an Evangelical.” With the founding of the normal school at Battersea—using some of the Swiss schools as his model, he exercised a decisive influence in the training of teachers for several decades. Kay-Shuttleworth agreed with the prevailing opinion that religious teaching should be the foundation for all education, but he departed from many of his contemporaries in his insistence that this could be accomplished within the framework of a publicly funded system of schools.

6. The universities, formally Anglican, were in a state of advanced decrepitude, such that a modern *defence* of Oxford and Cambridge in the eighteenth century acknowledges that degree requirements were “farcical . . . a joke event to contemporaries,” with the graduates for the most part remaining ignorant. One candidate for a Cambridge doctorate was caught off guard at being asked whether it was the sun that turned around the earth or the reverse. Unsure of the answer, he assumed a confident air and replied: “Sometimes the one, sometimes the other.” Struck by the hilarity of the moment, the examiners made him a doctor on the spot.

He advocated the necessity of combining State control with religious education and the preservation of civil rights that did not injure the conscience. His educational programme convinced neither the Dissenters nor the clergy of the Church of England. Among Churchmen, the Tractarians were most adamantly opposed to State funding of education if the control were to be placed anywhere but in the hands of the Anglican clergy. The Educational Act of 1870—writes Schlossberg—would provide a fig leaf to cover the state involvement and allow for the protection of the conscience of Dissenters. Rejecting both denominationalism and secularism, it contributed State funding toward what amounted to a generic Protestantism. But the compromise could not have satisfied Kay-Shuttleworth's desire for the content of deeply religious education such as he sought to instill at Battersea.

By the mid third of the nineteenth century, the English universities had come a long way. But there were still serious deficiencies. Many clergy of the Church of England prepared for the ministry at Oxford and Cambridge, but there was no professional-level training for them or for many other professions. The universities were located in rural areas that were not convenient for much of the population of the country. And the fact that Dissenters could not graduate from either one, or even matriculate at Oxford, raised serious political difficulties. The possibility of founding new universities to solve these problems became a matter of consideration. Two of Bentham's followers, Henry Brougham and Joseph Hume, were active in the drive to start the University of London. Dissenters joined the radicals in establishing the institution—even though the influence of unbelievers was strong there and theological study was not part of the curriculum. The university opened its doors in 1828, and the instruction included engineering, medicine, law, and economics, as well as the traditional subjects. Stung by the innovation, the Anglicans opened King's College in 1831 with a similar course of studies. Five years later the University of London—now University College—became a unified body, awarding degrees at both colleges.

Penal Reform was also an important issue in the Evangelical agenda. The origin of this initiative was due to the efforts of John Howard, a Congregationalist who after his conversion devoted his energies to Penal Reform. His appointment to the post of high sheriff in Bedfordshire in 1773 brought him in contact with local jails and acquainted him with the appalling conditions under which prisoners were kept. Urging legislative remedies, his basic message was that prisoners should be treated as human beings. In his reform programme Howard received strong support from the Quakers and from John Wesley. Howard's penal reform was carried on by other Evangelicals—and even by some of secular convictions. Samuel Romilly led the struggle against the death penalty for a wide spectrum of offenses. Wilberforce railed against “the barbarous system of hanging” and joined efforts with Thomas Fowell Buxton in the penal reforms of the Select Committee on Criminal Laws and the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and for the Reforming of Juvenile Offenders. Buxton's interest was probably sparked by his long association with the Quakers. His mother and wife were both Quakers, as well as his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Fry. Mrs Fry began to visit Newgate prison in 1812, her purpose apparently being the usual Evangelical effort to teach prisoners the gospel. William Allen, a wealthy

Quaker, had first introduced Mrs Fry to Newgate. Having been very active in the antislavery crusade and various Evangelical charities, especially the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, he was the editor of the *Philanthropist*, the leading charity journal. In 1817, to support her work, he founded the Prison Discipline society, which became the main lobby for prison reform. Also active in this society were Buxton and another of Mrs Fry's brothers-in-law, Samuel Hoare. The society publicised conditions in the prisons, causing great scandal with the public. This provoked several parliamentary actions in the 1820s and 1830s that instituted reforms: justices were required to submit plans for prison reform and to inspect the prison regularly; jailers were to receive salaries, rather than living by extorting fees from prisoners; there were to be regular visits by surgeons and chaplains; prisoners were to be instructed in basic literacy and in religion; and women prisoners were to be in the charge of warders of the same sex.

Industrial Reform was also a matter in which the Evangelicals exercised an important role in changing the unjust conditions of the working class. As early as 1794, Wilberforce's friend Thomas Gisborne called for legislation providing relief for children working in factories. At the turn of the century, the Bettering Society demanded that Parliament act on the matter—a demand that received the powerful support of Sir Robert Peel. With the strong backing of the Evangelicals, Peel successfully introduced a bill in 1802 that was the first legislative interference with the factory system on the grounds of compassion. Oastler had led the campaign for the Ten Hours Bill of 1846. His tour through Yorkshire and into Scotland to promote the bill was a series of triumphs. The Scottish Presbyterians were as enthusiastic as the English Evangelicals. It was on this trip that Oastler accepted Chalmers's invitation to breakfast, after which Oastler convinced the Malthusian clergyman that his profession of Christ was incompatible with his opposition to the Ten Hours Bill, and Chalmers switched sides.

Schlossberg points out some of the ambiguities of social reform that arose in the context of political economy. Because the organic view of society made the classes mutually dependent, Oastler and many like him opposed the New Poor Law of 1834. Most of them were not insensible to the evils of the Speenhamland system of poor relief, but to loosen traditional societal bonds was to them akin to sacrilege, and they predicted dire consequences to its enforcement. The Tories more or less adopted Oastler's views on the matter. In 1835, Peel had advanced his Tamworth Manifesto, in which he not only accepted the Reform Act of 1832, but also promised to redress the grievances of the working class. Even Disraeli, who generally opposed Peel on these issues, manifested that conditions of the working class was his main interest. The party followed Ashley's lead in enacting reform acts with regards to lunatics and the employment of women and children in the mines. Schlossberg observes that an organic view of society, with the responsibility of the upper classes for the lower, inevitably carried with it a paternalistic connotation. “This paternalism the Evangelical practitioners of social help avowed unashamedly.” During the 1827 debate on the conditions of workers in the silk trade, Michael Sadler called for government intervention “to exhibit itself in the attitude of a kind parent who, while exulting in the strength and vigour of his elder born, still extended his fostering care to the young and helpless branches of his

family.” Even so strong a reformer as Charles Dickens hated this attitude and published articles in the press denouncing the ragged schools because they treated people like children, condemning them to perpetual dependency with their patronising. The philanthropists were even accused of fostering helplessness by their catering to it. The contradictions between free markets and the organic nature of society requiring mutual care were only apparent contradictions, according to some contemporaries. That is why Wilberforce could call himself a political economist and yet expend vast sums in helping the poor. It also explains why Thomas Chalmers could be a follower of Malthus and yet teach what his modern biographer calls “a communal social idea, based upon a shared Christian purpose.” When the individual submitted to a compassionate God, he voluntarily subordinated his interests to those of the larger community. In this way the “godly commonwealth” would come into being. But how was the natural selfishness of men to be overcome so as to bring this about? Chalmers’ answer came in his treatise on political economy: even if a society cared nothing about morality and everything about procuring wealth, still “moral and religious education is the first and greatest object of national policy,” because in the absence of a general public morality governmental measures can avail nothing. It made no sense to Chalmers that some advocated measures to increase prosperity or to overcome the effects of poverty without considering the moral state of those who were to be helped. In this—observes Schlossberg—he was at one with the English Evangelicals, and increasingly with much of English society.

The changes and reforms that took place in the Church of England are also dealt with. The Establishment exercised important functions. It established policy for the local church, set church taxes, and administered the poor law. Clergymen were increasingly taken into service as local magistrates. Some accounts have it that by early in the nineteenth century more than half the magistrates were in holy orders. This political dominance at all levels was challenged not only by Dissenters but also by radicals who portrayed the Church as part of the mingled institutional oppression of the lower classes. One reason the Church was able to survive the onslaught of dissenters, radicals, and friendly but disgusted critics was that it provided a service that was not easy to duplicate. Nevertheless the position of the Church was far from being strong. There were various reasons for the declining importance of the Church in an age that was undergoing a religious revival. It had not completely purged itself of the abuses committed in the eighteenth century, and which centered on its great wealth and bad organisations. There was great disparity from one diocese to another in the income that bishops received, leading bishops to regard an appointment as a stepping-stone to a more lucrative post. More serious for the Church’s ministry than the pay of the ordinands was their quality. The new parsons lacked specialised training for their work. It was not until 1854 that Parliament passed an act that led to the creation of special training colleges. Clergymen were disliked because of a general perception that they were standing in the way of reforming the Church. But in reality the Church had little power of independent action. As the Parliament became the de facto pope of the Church of England,—writes Schlossberg—the Church’s authority was being eaten away at the bottom. It was against this background discussed at

length by our author, that people like Gladstone saw the Tractarian movement as the salvation of the Church of England, something to complement the Evangelical revival and correct its weaknesses.

The major institutional change of the Church during that period came under Peel’s short ministry. He established a commission composed of laymen chosen by himself and clergymen chosen by the archbishop of Canterbury. In a series of measures between 1836 and 1840, Parliament enacted the recommendations of the Ecclesiastical Commission into law: livings could no longer be held at the same time as sees; the disparities between bishops’ incomes were reduced; the power of the bishops over the parishes was strengthened, and the administration of cathedrals was reformed.

A New Nation for a New Queen

Under this title Schlossberg ends his book and establishes some general considerations and evaluations of the preceding material. As a result of the revival, attendance at worship greatly increased. The census of 1851 showed that 61 percent of the population in England and Wales attended worship services. If we consider absences due to emergencies, the difficulty of canvassing little chapels in isolated hamlets, and the people whose piety did not take institutional form, it is probable that a substantial majority of the population had a measure of commitment to some form of Christianity. But numbers mean little unless they reflected the way people lived. All evidence points to the fact that real changes were nowhere more evident than in the characters of the people who led the renewal. The influence the leaders of the religious revival had on others was as much due to their character as to the force of their intellect. There is also a strong cultural force in *repentance* as a theologically sanctioned and socially accepted requirement because it permits the turning away from destructive behavior to a new beginning. When individual acts are multiplied by the millions, it cannot help but bring about large-scale change. From a Christian understanding of human nature that led to self-discipline, combined with the sense of calling introduced by the revived Protestant ethic, came the channeling of energies into socially beneficial activities. Drunkards became sober family men, working through the day, studying in the evening, and sending their children to school. Those children grew up, saved their money, built businesses that employed their neighbours, and sent their children to the universities and to the House of Commons. The tradition of English Dissent made the movement toward democracy possible by legitimising opposition to the official positions taken by the State. The German social theorist Ernst Troeltsch argued that the multiplicity of churches made political liberalism possible, especially in the English-speaking countries.

One of the tragedies of the period was the hostility between persons and parties whose basic worldview and concerns about the societies were similar. Schlossberg discusses this topic at length and concludes that we cannot know what might have happened if these hostilities had been subsumed under an overriding unity of purpose and if the energies devoted to religious polemics had been given more productive outlet. “The ending of the hostility between Calvinists and Arminians and the fruitful cooperation be-

tween the adherents (or former adherents) of both in the innumerable projects and societies in which the Evangelicals engaged themselves suggest that much might have been accomplished.” In a judgment that recalls Gladstone’s view, the Cambridge historian Owen Chadwick believes that Evangelicalism considered as a spirit rather than a party suffused nearly the whole of English Christianity, with a “left wing” in primitive Methodism and a “right wing” in Tractarianism and even the Ultramontaniam of the Roman Catholic. The Evangelical revival was a mighty movement of religious spirit that was contained by no party in his view. Sometimes contemporaries described the unity behind the religious reform movements as a spirit that somehow was in the air, even if they had a hard time specifying just what it was. Pusey said that he affirmed everything the Evangelicals affirmed, departing from them only when they began denying. Newman never abjured his Evangelical conversion . . . The inheritors of the Tractarian mantle, the Ritualists, have been described as ‘Evangelical Anglo-Catholics,’ partly because of their indebtedness to Methodist thinking.” With all the hostilities between Arnold and Newman and their respective followers, there was an undercurrent of respect.

Experience, sentiment, and sentimentality

Schlossberg also deals with the issue of feeling in connection with the revival movement. The subject is worthy of consideration in order to establish the identity of its nature, but also if we take into account the fact that the revival coincided with the outburst of the romantic tendencies of the period. We may very well ask whether the Evangelical revival didn’t share romantic traits in its views of the religious experience of the individual. Critics, observes Schlossberg, have been especially hard on the roots of sentimentality in Evangelicalism. Newman warned about this problem in his “Lectures on Justification” during his Tractarian phase. “They rather aim at experience within, than at Him that is without. They are led to enlarge on the signs of conversion, the variations of their feelings.” Newman was not alone in this, which was often expressed by the gibe “justification by feeling.” For the same reason, Carlyle was scornful of the Methodism of his century, which he thought was a sorry sight compared with when the Wesley brothers were alive. He called it “Methodism with its eye forever turned on its own navel.” Emphasising inner contemplation and the high regard for feeling to which it leads was a temptation to which the whole culture was subject. A twentieth-century scholar writes of the most eminent of the Victorian novelists, “Again and again one feels that Dickens and his readers enjoy their tears.”

At its worst, this sentimentality approached the *grotesque* as Evangelicals, concerned to understand the tragedies of life as well as the joys through the eyes of faith, “sweetened the hard places overmuch.” When Henry Venn the elder broke the news of his wife’s death in a letter, he began in this way: “I have some of the best news to impart.” His reason was that his wife was now in Heaven, and the pious phrases in his report were meant to suggest that it was unseemly for people of faith to mourn. So offensive to many ears was the Evangelical terminology that numerous Evangelicals became disgusted with it. As early as 1805, the Dissenting Evangelical John Foster wrote a book entitled *On some of the causes by which Evangelical Religion has been rendered unacceptable to persons of*

cultivate taste in which he contended that more care must be taken in expressing the gospel. Refined persons are repelled by special terminology that does not comport with standard English as it is spoke in ordinary life.

The Dualistic Conundrum

The Evangelical reformers of the age, as well as Arnold and his followers, assumed that their religious convictions had to issue forth in good works; hence the societies without number, the endless visiting and provisioning of the poor, and the legislative remedies for hard conditions in factories and mines that we saw earlier. But as time went on it became harder to maintain that understanding, and a certain dualism gradually developed—the loss of the conviction of the interpenetration of the spirit and the world and a consequent withdrawal into the Church (or chapel) and family. An unconscious division took place between matters of religion and matters of this world. This division made it increasingly difficult to see how the life of faith could possibly influence something of such a radically different order as the society. According to a modern scholar, “the tragedy of Evangelicalism,” one that dogged it through the century, was “that it rightly stressed the importance of applying faith to the whole of life while lacking a theology capable of being so applied in any but the most negative fashion.” Thus Evangelicals condemned the theatre out of hand, making it impossible to replace (or at least supplement) the decadent theatre of the day with one that reflected the Christian faith and opening themselves to seemingly sanctified forms of pride and self-deceit. The separation between matter and spirit had become so sharp that it was difficult to recommend engaging in culture in moderation, with good sense of prudence. It had to be all or nothing.

As the Evangelicals became involved in their own organisations, their own pastimes, their own increasingly homogeneous and therefore idiosyncratic communities, the repression of activities appealing to the senses took forms that may not have been, even by their standards, improvements over the proscribed activities. Evangelical children, not permitted normal display of talent, performed their musical and other skills at Sunday school affairs. Since dramatic performances were not countenanced, emotional needs were similarly satisfied by oratorical performances in the pulpit or by the emotional fireworks at an Edward Irving service.

These anomalies did not escape the notice of Evangelicals of the day. Henry Thornton’s daughter, Marianne, ruefully referred to them when speaking of “we good people who do not go to plays” but cavort in worldly ways at Evangelical gatherings. The physical and emotional separation from society was accompanied by a falling away from the single-minded dedication of the Wesley-Simeon-Newton-Wilberforce generations as Evangelicals entered the mainstream of political and social life in the mainstream of the Church. Modern students of the Evangelical novel around mid-century noticed a softening of the concept of sin, so that it was no longer something to repent of with bitterness, as the Tractarians continued to teach, but rather an emotion that served to sentimentalise the repentance that followed. The Dissenters did not escape the malady. William Jay, by the time his long ministry ended in 1853, found his parishioners too fond of “sentimental comfort” rather than real repent-

ance for sin. According to the *Record*, Evangelicals “had lost the old Puritan theology that made societal transformation intelligible. The increasing chaos of ideas, the declining sense of intellectual and cultural cohesion, is the kind of problem that can only be addressed by those with a coherent sense of truth. The Evangelicals had this, yet were unable to deal with the issue successfully or for the most part even know the problem existed. They were, as their theology stressed, experience driven. Beginning with Wesley, they had rebelled against the dull formalism of standardised religion, in both its antinomian and its moralistic forms, and had insisted that the experience of grace in the believing heart, of conversion with its wiping away of the old and the bringing in the new, was the essence of Christian faith.

In the final pages of his ample study, Schlossberg refers to the frequent topic of the alleged sexual repression people suffered during the Victorian age. According to our writer, no consideration of modern interpretation of the era can ignore the widespread condemnations of Victorian “repression” of the sexual urge, which is a typical example of the failure of the historical imagination—the failure, that is, to understand a society in the light of what preceded it rather than what followed it. Hypocrisy is a common addendum to the charge because, as always, many people then were tempted to live short of their principles. But as a recent study of Victorian sexuality notes, it is not the Victorians that were out of step with the broad range of humanity but rather their twentieth-century critics who have regarded sensual pleasure as the be-all of existence. That is why “to suppose that there is anything out of the ordinary about the basic framework of sexual orthodoxy in the Victorian period is a blunder of the crudest sort.” The frequent assertions, then and now, that the Evangelical rise represented a recrudescence of Puritanism should be enough to alert us that the Old Testament, which Puritanism regarded as a document providing social guidance for all ages, furnishes an important clue to understanding the mind and matter of the nineteenth century in England. The great growth in Bible reading among all classes had itself and enormous transformative effect. The Bible provided a great motivation for the spread of literacy and permeated the culture of the period, not only its private reading and its worship services, but such cultural artifacts as wall hangings, almanacs, song, and so on. It was everywhere, in houses and alehouses alike, and even people who never opened a Bible and could not read it if they did were familiar with its teaching. The same was true in the early nineteenth century—only more true because the literacy level was much higher (itself partly a function of biblically inspired missionary and educational work), and because the organs of cultural activity were more varied and omnipresent: novels and tracts spread the word to every class.

Conclusion

People who were setting the new agenda in the eighteenth century ended up creating a very different society in the nineteenth. Wesley and Whitefield, Venn of Huddersfield and Walker of Truro thought they were recreating in tiny villages or in isolated parishes the promise of a gospel that had atrophied from neglect and self-interest. As the movement spread, it coalesced around academic leaders in Cambridge and then political leaders in Clapham; it spawned

publications and societies almost beyond number; it attracted the allegiance of many millions of people who accepted its claims upon them. They sought the recovery of the gospel that had animated the early Church, and they believed in the seriousness of religious profession and the conduct that flowed from it.

The Evangelicals saw that *gospel* in narrow terms, believing that the recovery of that teaching about sin and redemption in Christ would lead to whatever else was necessary. The Tractarians believed that nothing could avail if the vessel in which the gospel was found—the *Church*—was neglected. Coleridge and Arnold and their followers had their focus on the *world* that ought to be transformed by the recovery of the gospel. Gospel, Church, and World. The extent of the change wrought in society by the religious revival was revolutionary in its scope and its depth, and in the staying power of the transformation, but we have not seen in this what might have happened if the three visions had been combined more perfectly into one, mutually compensating for each other’s deficiencies. This new society, a product of the silent revolution from within its own resources, its own history and traditions, was far from perfect, but it freed slaves, taught the ignorant, brought spiritual life where there was darkness, turned the drunk and indigent into useful citizens and effective parents, and ameliorated the harsh conditions brought about by industrialisation, internal migration, and rapid population growth. It was a revolution that succeeded in making almost all things better. There are not many like that.

At a time when Christianity is largely ignored and its decisive role in the framing of Western civilisation is being overlooked by historians and cultural educators, Schlossberg’s book is a timely call to memory and a reminder that without the transforming impact of the gospel on the lives of people, the progress and development of England as a nation, and of all the other Western countries, cannot possibly be explained nor understood.

APPENDIX

Notes on Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle

In his book, H. Schlossberg regards S. T. Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle as men of faith and largely free from the Romantic trends of the time. “The early nineteenth century is often considered to be the heyday Romanticism but our prophets were opponents of one of the main features of the Romantic impulse—that is, what they considered to be the wild and untrammelled individualism of such poets as Byron and Shelley” (p. 143). Coleridge was certainly a religious man, but can we regard him as an Evangelical Christian? As for Carlyle’s religion, the question is too ethereal to be defined. If Carlyle was a religious man, then religion can be almost anything. As to their Romanticism, although it was not as individualistic as that of Shelley, Byron, or even that of Keats, nevertheless we find other important Romantic traits in both authors—especially in Coleridge. Let us not forget, in this connection, that the collection of poems Coleridge and Wordsworth published under the title of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, became the manifesto of English Romanticism.

W. Wordsworth, R. Southey and S. T. Coleridge are known as the great Lake Poets. “In general [writes Schloss-

berg] the Lake Poets were much more orthodox than many have supposed. Older works often associate them with pantheism, largely because of their preoccupation with nature. During Wordsworth's lifetime, the Irish poet and critic Aubrey de Vere, who knew him well, regarded him as an orthodox Christian, increasingly so as he grew older. De Vere was once amazed to see Wordsworth's portrait among those of the saints in a Cistercian monastery. The abbot explained that he had placed it there in gratitude for Wordsworth's spiritual help. He had decided to enter monastic life partly as a result of reading *The Excursion*.¹⁷ For years I have been an enthusiastic reader of William Wordsworth's poetry and from a purely aesthetic perspective I value his work greatly. Nevertheless I am unable to regard his literary production as distinctively Christian. The divinisation of Nature, which began in the modern world with the Renaissance and proceeded during the eighteenth century, culminates for English literature in Wordsworth. Wordsworth says of his Wanderer (i.e. himself) that though he had early learnt to reverence the Bible, yet "in the mountains did he *feel* his faith . . . nor did he believe,—he *saw*." In a passage of *The Excursion* he writes that "in Nature he has found the anchor of his purest thoughts, the guide and guardian of his heart, and soul—of all my moral being." In *The Tables Turned*, he writes:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man;
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

The Divinity really reveals himself in the lonely mountains and the starry heavens. By contemplating them we are able to rise into that "blessed mood" in which for a time the burden of the mystery is rolled off our souls, and we can "see into the life of things." *The Excursion* voices the most characteristic attitude of the Romantic age, and in the "Preface" of *The Lyrical Ballads* he defines most romantically all good poetry as an "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."

Coleridge's poetry and prose is indeed of significant value. Although he wrote very few poems, his verse is a monument of English literature. He was a man of extraordinary gifts and talent but his character was plagued with many weaknesses and defects. For one thing, he could never overcome his addiction to opium. Coleridge was the youngest of fourteen children, the son of a learned clergyman who delighted his congregation with long quotations from the Old Testament in Hebrew—"the immediate language of the Holy Ghost." He was a precocious and lonely child. Even his best poetry, with the single exception of *The Ancient Mariner*, is fragmentary. The pattern of his life is fragmentary also. According to L. Stephen: "To tell the story of Coleridge without the opium is to tell the story of Hamlet without mentioning the Ghost." During his tour with the Wordsworths in Scotland in September 1803, and having already become habituated to opium, Coleridge was troubled with terrible nightmares—"with all their mockery of guilt, rage, unworthy desires, remorse, shame and terror," from which he awoke with screams of fear. In *The Pains of Sleep* he speaks of a "sense of intolerable wrong . . . shame and terror, horror guilt and woe." Often in his letters he refers to his enslavement to laudanum, or liquid opium. In a letter dated December 1813, from the depths of his soul he cries: "O

infinite in the depth of darkness, and infinite craving, and infinite capacity of pain and weakness . . . O God save me—save me from myself . . . driven up and down for seven dreadful days by restless pain, like a leopard in a den, yet the anguish and remorse of mind was worse than the pain of the whole body . . ." Later, in a letter to Byron (April 1816), he described opium addiction as a "specific madness which leaving the intellect uninjured and exiting the moral feelings to a cruel sensibility, *entirely suspended the moral will*."

Coleridge was a leader of the English Romantic movement, especially in his views on imagination—the faculty for apprehending certain truths not accessible to the intellect—and with his theory of artistic creativity. His speculative and inquiring mind was a constant intellectual stimulus to his contemporaries. John Stuart Mill considered Coleridge to be "one of the two great seminal minds of England." Carlyle spoke of him as "a bottle of beautiful soda-water." In his religious convictions Coleridge was not an Evangelical. He often preached in Unitarian chapels, and his religious views influenced many theologians, notably those of the Broad Church movement. He offered a view of Christianity as a set of beliefs that remained *symbolically true*, whatever the status of the historical tradition that enshrined them. He held that it was not necessary to believe every part of the Scriptures to be equally inspired. According to Thomas De Quency, he was a Socinian, therefore, he wrote, "I cannot hold him a Christian." Schlossberg uses the term "Evangelical" in a rather loose and broad sense. Can we regard as Evangelical anyone who denies the "verbal inspiration of the Bible"—as certainly Coleridge did? Perhaps the main reason the Evangelicals distrusted Coleridge—argues Schlossberg—"was what they thought to be his denigration of the Bible. In fact, what he denigrated was the idea that the Bible was handed down from God as a ready-made primer that was protected from any error and therefore to be interpreted literally, a view for which he invented the term *bibliolatry*. Yet he was far from passing over to the other side, for he continued to uphold the Bible as the reliable guide to faith and life."

With regards to Carlyle, Schlossberg writes that, "although religious faith seemed to dominate much of what he wrote, it is not easy to say with confidence just what it was; sometimes he seemed to write as an orthodox Christian, at other times as a pantheist or as a believer in the life force . . . And although he threw off the strict Calvinist Evangelicalism of his parents (and indeed the Christianity of which it was an expression), he kept much of what flowed from it." This is, indeed, the important question: how are we to interpret the statement that Carlyle threw off Christianity, but kept much of what flowed from it? Can we have fruits without the plant? In his character and determination Carlyle inherited the Calvinistic moral traits of his Scottish Presbyterian ancestors; yet under close examination we find that his thought owes more to naturalistic philosophy than to Christianity. His ethical ideal is defective from its identification with physical and moral order, of might and right. Hence his fundamental ethical fallacy expounded in *Hero and Hero Worship* and applied in *Frederick the Great*. A salient note in these works is the reverence of strength, regardless of moral quality. His conception of history as only the record of the world's great men is radically false. He has no sense of the popular power in the solution of political problems. The logical outcome of his political philosophy is a slavery of

despotism. Basically he is a Victorian Romantic: with much talk about veracity, the real and practical, his philosophy is intuitional and sentimental, emphasising feeling above reason. After devoting several pages to Carlyle, Schlossberg ends up by saying that “his influence was less in his ideas than in his personality, in the vigor with which he held his convictions, and in the fiery nature of his writings” (p. 153). This statement leaves us in a thick fog of confusion. Earlier Schlossberg had stated that one of the reasons the religious revival penetrated so deeply into the English consciousness was that “it had a profound influence on intellectuals whose writings in turn were widely embraced by people who did not listen to (or read) sermons, disdained tracts, and did not attend worship services.” Both Coleridge and Carlyle belonged to these influential intellectuals, yet, in the case of the Scot, his influence did not go beyond that of being an “exemplary personality.”

In her book *Thomas Carlyle: “Calvinist without the theology,”* Eloise M. Behnken defends the thesis that Carlyle is far more radical than he is usually thought to be, for the worldview he gradually builds and refines “has much more in common with the death-of-God theology of the 1960s and 1970s than with the Calvinism he is often said to have inherited.” According to Behnken, the orthodox belief in God’s active power and responsibility for salvation is the key point that reveals Carlyle’s departure from Calvinism. Carlyle puts the ultimate responsibility for history and human destiny squarely on men’s shoulders, not on God’s. Indeed, men, especially Heroes, are the principal actors on the world’s stage, for they must govern the world and be responsible for it. The Almighty God of Calvinistic theology, the God of grace and mercy, has been replaced by an abstract unfeeling, impersonal destiny in the face of which man is compelled to act heroically or be snuffed out. *C&S*

ENVY AND COVETOUSNESS[†]

by Derek Carlsen

THE sin of envy is not much talked about in our day. Actually, it is so ignored that one feels this sin doesn’t even exist and as a result we have allowed this vice to thrive in our midst. The feeling of envy is thought to be as natural as feeling hungry and by failing to check its growth it has put down strong roots in our society and what we find is that we are now in the clutches of a devouring monster. What is envy? It is a feeling of resentment towards those who have what you do not have. Anyone who is more favoured than yourself (whether it be economically or in some other way), is hated and this hatred produces the desire to see him deprived of these things. Envy is not only grieving about the advantages that another has, but in its mature stage includes wanting to destroy that person and his advantages, i.e. hating his success. Usually when the envious destroy those they hate, there is no chance that they will benefit personally from it—what motivates them is not the desire for personal gain, but merely to see the destruction of that person, who, in some way, is better off than themselves.

Proverbs 27:4 says, “Who is able to stand before envy?” The clear implication is that no one can, for while envy might include wrath and anger, its actual outworking is worse than these. At the very *centre* of Satan’s being exists this vile corruption of envy. There is nothing more opposed to love and justice than envy: it is the characteristic that is furthest removed from the character of God and thus utterly destroys the possibility of having fellowship with him. We not only see this illustrated, but are made aware of the

destructive consequences of envy in a number of different places in Scripture.

Moses was envied by his brethren in Egypt before the Exodus. He had been raised up and sent by God to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. However, the reception he received from those he was sent to deliver was resentment, i.e. envy. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt had set his heart on tyrannising the Israelites, thus God sent Moses to their aid, yet the Israelites sought to destroy Moses (Acts 7:23–29). There is no rational explanation for the way the Jews reacted towards Moses. They hated him because they envied him and the envious will use whatever means they can to destroy the privileged positions of those whom they envy. Moses, a high ranking official in Pharaoh’s household, clearly and unashamedly identified himself as the slaves’ helper. When he killed the Egyptian it was proof that he had turned his back upon the privileges of Egypt (Heb. 11:24–27), yet the slaves saw this as an opportunity to destroy him. There was nothing that they would personally gain if Moses was brought down. Actually, any way you look at it, by destroying Moses they could only hope to add to their own misery. Moses was the only person on the Jews’ side who was in a position within the State to realistically ease the harsh policies towards them. He was a very powerful man politically and it was quite possible that he would have been the next Pharaoh. Here we see the ripe fruit of envy: there was nothing for the Jews to gain by destroying Moses, but due to envy (because he was better off than they were), they wanted to destroy him, even if that meant increasing their own suffering.

Why did Joseph’s brothers want to destroy him? They hated him because they perceived his position in life would

[†]This essay was originally published as *Muse Time* paper 38 by Reason of Hope Ministries in Mutare, Zimbabwe (September 2001).

be greater than theirs (Gen. 37:11, 18). His position was not something that they could have taken for themselves, yet they desired to kill him. The secret wish of the envious person is murder, because this is the most sure way, they think, that they can prevent someone from being better than themselves.

Christ too was murdered by those who envied him (Mk 15:10, 13). There was no way those who envied Christ were going to attain the following or position that he had. Their hatred for him and their desire to kill him was because he had something that they didn't and couldn't have.

Envy is possibly the most dangerous of all sins. It is a cancer dwelling in the depths of our being that will devour everything that is good. The seed of envy (each envious thought is a sin), which starts small, has one objective—maturity, and when allowed to mature in someone's life, he will desire destruction for those who are perceived to be better off than he is.

Envy tries to camouflage itself with terms like “equality,” but this is merely envy in fancy dress. We allow vile sins in our days by decorating them, so they appear “modern” and acceptable, but to tolerate envy in your heart is like allowing a malignant cancer to dwell in your most vital organs—it means certain death. That is why we are told to keep our heart with all *diligence* for out of it are the issues of life (Pr. 4:23). To tolerate envy in your own heart and think you can control its growth is madness—you cannot, because envy is a master and a destroyer. It attacks the conscience and will eventually rot it completely: envy is the “rotteness of the bones” (Pr. 14:30), rotting from the inside to the outside till all is putrefied.

When envious people hate the virtues or upright principles manifested in someone's life, they are not wanting to be virtuous and upright themselves. They are not trying to imitate those good qualities, but are wanting to remove the very idea of integrity and uprightness. Why? They want to rid themselves of the virtuous example because it exposes their own lack. The coward wants the courageous person to be destroyed; the sluggard wants the diligent hard worker to be crushed; the dishonest person wants the honest person to be defiled etc.

When envy dominates a community where the people have comparable incomes, it is extremely difficult for someone from within that community to lift themselves out of that community economically. The envious community will not allow “one of their kind” to rise to a position (whether in income or stature) that is higher than theirs. Someone once confessed, “Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something in me dies.” This is envy—it is resentment and it is death.

The only way to account for envy is to see it as God does: a result of sin and corruption that rots the very core of a person's being. It is out of this rotting mess that the envious plan how to relate to and deal with the people they envy. To tolerate envy is to sell your soul to the devil himself, for in time, the person who entertains it (in whatever form) will sink ever deeper into its festering pool whereby they will believe, say and do what is utterly perverse. They will stand against every thing that is virtuous and that they previously said was virtuous. The envious have rational “justifications” for their feelings of displeasure and hatred towards those they envy and explain why such people ought to be despised and destroyed. Envy removes a people's commitment towards real justice because when you delight in the misfortunes of

others, you don't care if this comes about through State-organised injustice. No matter how small the manifestation of envy is in your own life, you must confess it as a despicable and dangerous sin (gossip also fits in here because it can *destroy* a person's reputation). We are not to find pleasure in the misfortunes of others, or tolerate feelings of resentment towards them merely because they are better off in some way than we are. If we do not deal ruthlessly with this sin in our own lives, it will mature to the place where we hate people because of their happiness and success. Love, on the other hand, seeks to *advance* the success and reputation of one's neighbour, friend or employer, for the glory of God.

Distinct from, though closely related to the sin of envy, is the sin of covetousness. While the focus of envy is not upon the envious person enriching themselves in some way, the covetous person has his own personal advancement as the primary motivating drive for all that he does. The covetous person has one supreme desire towards which his whole life is directed and that is the accumulation of wealth. This consumes his mind, affections and energy, but one has to ask, “How much is enough?” (Pr. 27:20; 30:15; Eccl. 5:10). Where is satisfaction found in this life? Only by resting in the goodness of God (Jer. 31:14; 1 Tim. 6:6)—certainly *not* in the abundance of wealth and the increase of possessions. The covetous person will do anything to satisfy his inordinate lust after goods and wealth, even being prepared to do what is evil in his futile attempt to satisfy what cannot be satisfied. To give your heart and life to wealth in this way is nothing but idolatry (Col. 3:5)—a great pollution of the spirit. You might be wealthy in worldly terms and say you have all you desire, but if wealth is your god, there will be real leanness in your soul (Ps. 106:15). The covetous person boasts about what he has, feeling nothing about adding to it by devising ever more corrupt means, but the God who observes it all, is forever the God of justice (Ps. 10). While covetousness eventually leads to perverse actions, it begins in the heart (Ex. 20:17). When people tolerate wrong feelings towards that which belongs to others, they are on the path to acquiring that property in an unlawful way. Covetousness is likened to idolatry because it makes something other than the true God the ultimate focus in life.

This “other thing” is usually the individual himself, because covetousness is ultimately an expression of dissatisfaction with God's provision and order in this world, saying instead, that whatever we lust for we ought to have and it makes no difference how we get it. When Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, nothing could restrain him from taking what he wanted—even if it meant perverting justice and murdering Naboth (1 Kings 21). Violence is a close ally of covetousness (Jer. 22:17; Micah 2:2; Hab. 2:9, 10). Thus, a fundamental requirement for national leaders is that they hate covetousness (Ex. 18:21)—we have neglected this requirement to our own peril! When people reject God's word, they are not only without wisdom, but will be consumed with covetousness and thus prepared to be false in their dealings, i.e. fraudulent (Jer. 8:9, 10). It was covetousness that destroyed Achan and his household (Josh. 7:21).

The way to deal with covetousness in one's own life is to trust God's fatherly provision and care for us and to live by every word that proceeds from his mouth. This means when we wish to advance ourselves, it must be done in accordance with his word and for the primary purpose of serving his Kingdom. If these are not fundamentals in our thinking and

living, then we will be setting ourselves upon the path of entertaining inordinate affections towards possessions and wealth. If we want something just because *we* want it or because *we* believe we deserve it, that is idolatry.

Remember, we exist for only one reason—God’s glory and pleasure, thus to put our own pleasure or glory above that, is idolatry. We are not to covet because one of the fundamental principles of life in God’s world is respect for the property of others. When this is not ingrained into the thinking of a society, then that society will act in a way that encourages covetousness and violent theft. If we are not dealing with covetousness in the lives of our children then we will be raising a generation that will think nothing of using violence and fraud to take other people’s possessions. Later generations will act out the sins that the previous generation tolerated in their thoughts. Fearing God, being self-governed, seeking true justice and working hard, are the only things that will give a future to any society. When people allow the covetous to lead them, it is because they are

themselves covetous and when they tolerate envy they are a society that is already decomposing. Without Christ we will never be able to deal with these deep sins of the heart. Only he can deliver us from self-destruction. The longer our nation hates God and his righteousness, the closer we get to annihilating ourselves—for all they who hate God, love death (Pr. 8:36). The disintegration we see around us is from our lusting after dishonest gain and perverting everything that is righteous, just and sane—this is suicide! We cannot despise God and his eternal law and hope to survive. Proof that a society is full of rottenness is seen when people not only think they can despise God and survive, but think they can despise God and *thrive*. This is delusion and death and the only solution is to embrace Christ as Lord and Saviour, seek his forgiveness for our rebellion and then live by every word from his mouth. It must all start in our own lives by our dealing ruthlessly with our own envy and covetousness. May the Lord have mercy upon us and our nation. *Think about these things! C&S*

Book Reviews

A PEOPLE BETRAYED:
THE IMPACT OF ISLAMISATION ON THE
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN PAKISTAN
BY PATRICK SOOKHDEO

Christian Focus, 2002, 454 pages, ISBN 1-85792-785-0

REVIEWED BY JOHN PECK

This is a predominantly factual book, and on that very account rather depressing. It is the record of a country newly forming, and at deep unease with itself. And it tells of a Christian minority mistreated by those it helped to put in power in its own land, and ignored by co-religionists outside.

Readers often neglect to read the preface of a book; but in this case such neglect would entail a severe loss. Taking a single incident in Pakistan in which fifteen Pakistan Christians were massacred in a church, the author demonstrates the appalling failure of the news media in Britain to record and comment properly. It is against this background of ignorance and neglect that the story of Pakistan’s Christians is displayed in sharp relief.

The book begins with the long history of Christianity in India and Persia, going back to apostolic times. This is an important introduction, since one of the forces making for neglect of the Christian community is the notion that Christians there are an anomaly comparatively recently created by the British Raj, a Western imposition. (In actual fact, the Raj tended to obstruct the work of Christian missionaries, since they were felt to be a threat to the stability of the social order ruled by the caste system). Tragically, the Christians were largely in support of Pakistan as a separate State, and felt that they had more affinity with Muslims, not only by virtue of a

shared monotheism, but also because they had both suffered heavily as minorities from the effects of the Hindu caste system. They were encouraged to expect a liberal State by declarations of toleration for all religions by the new leadership. But from then on, there was a continual pressure to create a “pure land” ordered by traditional Islamic law, and in spite of heroic efforts by the more liberal Muslims, the logic of Islam as a political religion has proved irresistible.

There is a history of constitutional changes, new ones, amendments, protests, anti-protests, (three new constitutions, and at least 15 amendments since 1947), always moving away from the spirit of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, to which Pakistan is officially a signatory. Thus non-Muslims are increasingly marginalised; their status becomes virtually that of a subject people. Conversion from Islam can carry the death penalty under its apostasy laws, and there are many who are willing to carry it out without any due process of law. In close support is the blasphemy legislation. The legal system gives very little weight to non-Muslim testimony, especially from women, to the extent that a woman who is raped may easily be indicted for adultery.

Patrick Sookhdeo, the author of this book, is director of a centre for the study of Islam and Christianity, and also the founder of the Barnabas Fund, set up to give aid to Christians suffering under oppressive regimes, especially in Moslem countries. He is uniquely qualified to speak of the situation in the Indian subcontinent, and of Christian converts in particular. Thus he examines not only the official treatment of Christians, but also the social conditions as well. He brings into sharp focus the atmosphere of threat and insecurity under which Christians in Pakistan often live, especially in the rural areas, where the police and judiciary have very little sympathy or care for the fate of the Christian minority.

With the best will in the world, it is difficult to see how the more liberal elements in Islam can win. Unlike Christianity, with its paradigm of a Servant, gladly suffering for the salvation of his enemies, engendering a voluntary community, Islam's paradigm is that of military conquest and the establishment of a State whose members' religious as well as secular life is under legislative authority sanctioned by force. Hence it is in principle intolerant. This book demonstrates the outworking of this logic in a specific historical example where there are even substantial voices for a more liberal society. It is factual throughout, and, as befits the Ph.D. thesis on which it is based, dispassionate in style and documented extensively and in detail.

The presentation is generally helpful to the reader—the font of the footnotes is the same as the text. There are a few irritating misprints, and some last minute information printed at the front is repeated three times in footnotes. These give the publication a faintly non-professional impression. There is a useful index—though unfortunately the pages are numbered in a rather confusing “chunky” font. There is a massive bibliography—no less than 50 pages! and an invaluable glossary. It is not a happy book, and points to conclusions which in the present atmosphere of toleration at all costs will hardly be “politically correct.” But if you want factual truth about some of the major issues of world religion and politics today, then this is well worth its money. *C&S*

THE PURITAN MILLENNIUM:
LITERATURE AND THEOLOGY 1550–1682
By CRAWFORD GRIBBEN

Four Courts Press, 2000, Hardback, 224 pages (including indices), ISBN 1-85182-577-0

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN HAYHOW

In the modern situation we are used to the three broad classifications of eschatology: pre-, a-, and post-millennial. While there are schools within these schools, we are usually able to classify a view within one of these three broad categories. However, a reading of the eschatology of the seventeenth century opens a bewildering array of millennial visions. Some people in the seventeenth century believed in a six thousand world history, others “historicised” the book of Revelation, reading it as a “telling” of Protestant Church history, including the Reformation and so on. The latter view has recently been revived by Francis Nigel Lee.

This book examines the views of five Puritans: the Anglican James Ussher, the Presbyterian George Gillespie, the Independents John Milton and John Rogers and finally the Baptist, John Bunyan. But many others are fed in along the way: John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Junius, the Westminster theologians and more.

As with so many in the history of the Church there was this over-arching tendency to believe that one was appointed to live in the very “last days” and that the final events of human history were unfolding before one's very eyes. Even amongst these men, there was this tendency and it led some of them to countenance quite extreme positions, witness Thomas Goodwin's flirtation with Fifth Monarchism, albeit temporary as it was. Also, Goodwin saw a glorious period yet future when all “means of grace” (sacraments, Scripture etc.) would be surpassed and more direct means would be in place.

The historicist view essentially reads Church history back into an interpretation of biblical texts, especially Revelation.

John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was constructed along these lines. According to Foxe the millennium began with the end of the persecutions and the accession of Constantine in 324 A.D. The millennium then ran until Wycliffe and Huss appeared in the fourteenth century. This millennium is split into two periods: the first three hundred years are a period of growth and health, but the later period signified decline and led to the Reformation. Thus Satan was loosed in 1324 (at the end of the Millennium) and anti-Christ (the Roman Church) unleashed a persecution, which for Foxe had run for 300 years. As the season of Satan's loosing was to be a short period the apocalypse was expected very soon.

Gribben's account is for those with detailed interest in the Puritans, eschatology and historical theology. It reminds us that real history is never simple, that there are rarely unified camps of opinion, and that the whole thing is more difficult to unravel than we ever thought it could be. *C&S*

TRUTH DECAY: DEFENDING CHRISTIANITY
AGAINST THE CHALLENGES OF
POSTMODERNISM
BY DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS

IVP, 2000, paperback, 303 pages including indices,
£8.99, ISBN 0-85111-524-1

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN HAYHOW

Is there such a thing as absolute, objective and universal truth? Does truth apply to all men in all ages, or is it relative, socially constructed and “created” for the moment under the pressure of certain needs? Modernism aimed to give us truth that was objective, universal and absolute, but grounded it in man as the new “god.” Post-modernism takes us one step further: man is still enthroned, but the world around him, his environment, is no longer meaningful, purposeful, hence he must construct “truth” for himself. Listen to Richard Rorty, leading post-modernist philosopher and writer: “It is useless to ask whether one vocabulary rather than another is closer to reality. For different vocabularies serve different purposes, and there is no such thing as a purpose that is closer to reality than another purpose. Nothing is conveyed in saying . . . the vocabulary in which we predict the motion of a planet is more in touch with how things really are than the vocabulary in which we assign the planet an astrological influence” (cited on p. 93).

Obviously this rule applies to everything, oh yes, except post-modern philosophers who can assure us, absolutely (no doubt), that their version of reality is the *really* real thing! So there is no absolute truth except, naturally, the absolute truth of post-modern relativism.

Douglas Groothuis is associate professor of philosophy at Denver Seminary, USA and he has written this good but mixed introduction to post-modernism. Setting out the post-modernists' own views, Groothuis then moves into a biblical critique by contrasting the biblical notion of absolute truth with the shifting sands of post-modernity. Groothuis gives us excellent chapters on the biblical doctrine of truth, and more on explaining the shift from modernism to post-modernism. All in all his presentation of the post-modernists arguments is well presented.

One of the most interesting sections is the one where Groothuis takes to task modern theologians who, he says, have capitulated to post-modernism in some way or other. These include men such as Alister McGrath, Stanley Grenz, Leslie Newbigin and others. These men, says Groothuis, want us to

move away from a focus on propositional truth to “a personal encounter or experience of God articulated within the community of faith (which) should characterise our witness, not a focus on propositional truth” (p. 116). However, I have to say that it is not at all clear, from the citations given, that all of these men are really the culprits of a compromise with post-modernism. For example, McGrath seems to be reacting against the rationalistic tendencies of Montgomery and Geisler, but it is unclear whether he has really capitulated to post-modernism *per se*. Where Groothius quotes McGrath he seems to be criticising the tendency to place reason over Scripture, somehow as if reason were the criteria by which Scripture is to be evaluated.

Later on some of Groothius’ criticism of another supposed culprit, Leslie Newbigin, might also be cast at Cornelius Van Til’s presuppositional methodology. On p. 154 Groothius objects to Newbigin’s not following the traditional methodology in apologetics. Groothius seems to believe that man can truly know reality apart from God, objectively. Therefore, he would not like Van Til’s statements about the fact that there are no “brute facts” only interpreted facts, but that it is possible to have real knowledge of reality because God has total and exhaustive knowledge of all things and that to align with God’s perspective (through the Bible and regeneration) we come to see reality from his divine perspective.

The chapter on Apologetics follows the “traditional” or classical method rather than the presuppositional, but many of the things he says about how to construct an apologetic are helpful. The chapter that deals with race and gender is disappointing because of Groothius’ support for “evangelical feminism.” So this is a mixed book, but it is still a good introduction to a potentially complex subject. *C&S*

WISDOM AND WASTELAND: JEREMY TAYLOR IN HIS PROSE AND PREACHING TODAY

BY THOMAS K. CARROLL

Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001, hardback,
£39.99, 288 pages, ISBN 1-85182-581-9

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW VOGAN

JEREMY TAYLOR (1613–67) has been highly lauded as the “Shakespeare of English Prose” and the “Chrysostom of English Preaching”: a reputation that adds interest to a collection of abridged sermons such as this. Taylor was in today’s terms a High Church man. He was the most active of the underground priests during the Commonwealth and in these sermons his sacerdotalist view of marriage and the priesthood and his regard for “Saints” legends and tradition reveal an Anglo-Catholic persuasion. To read Taylor is to understand what William Perkins meant in deprecating classical quotations and “fine ringing sentences of the Fathers.” The discerning reader may find it fruitful to consider Taylor as a foil to his Puritan contemporaries—e.g. Thomas Watson, Thomas Brooks and Richard Baxter.

There is, however, a helpful emphasis given to making “religion the business of our lives” and Taylor often insists that the knowledge of God is the fruit of holy obedience: “we know Him with the eyes of holiness.” He is considered the father of Anglican spirituality, which H. R. McAdoo summarises by five D’s: devotion, duty, discipline, detail and doctrine, although Anglicanism today knows little of this. The editor and McAdoo recognise this but unfortunately their revival of interest in

classical Anglican theology is motivated by an ecumenical desire to find common ground with Rome.

A long and arcane introduction on Scripture, poetry and “sacramental words” (impenetrable even to a postgraduate in English literature) could have been dispensed with in the interests of printing all (instead of half) the content of Taylor’s sermons. The attractiveness of his writing (the sonorous prose style for which he is renowned) is greatly diminished by the string of bitty selections that we have here. This volume seems to fall between the two stools of a popular anthology and a scholarly edition. If the publishers wanted a popular version it would need to have been in paperback without that introduction. Nevertheless, anyone making a study of seventeenth-century English preaching will no doubt find it worth consulting. *C&S*

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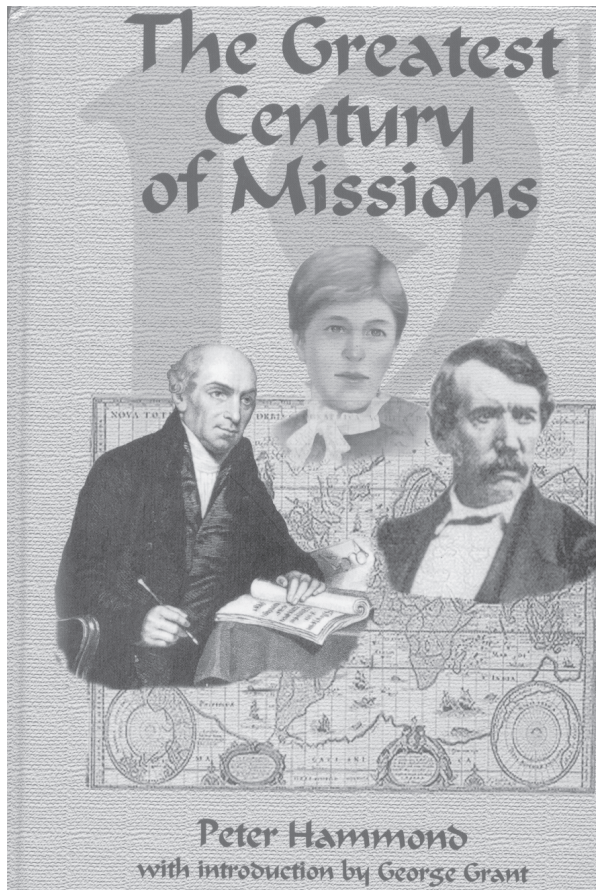
The Greatest Century of Missions

by PETER HAMMOND

with an INTRODUCTION by GEORGE GRANT

Published by

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY BOOKS, 2002, • 150 pages • 90 photographs, including maps
Hardback, £12.00 (US\$16.00), ISBN 0-9584549-2-2 • Paperback £8.00 (US\$10.00), ISBN 0-9584549-1-4



The role models being offered to our children today by Hollywood and by state education, are at best, superficial, and often, immoral and unchristian. We need to train a new generation of missionaries—with the examples of those whom God blessed in such extraordinary ways. There is a tremendous need for Christian History books. A whole generation is growing up ignorant of our Christian heritage. Most Christians today are oblivious of the staggering sacrifices that were made to enable us to enjoy the privileges that we so often take for granted today. It is our prayer that the selected adventures, sacrifices, exploits, pictures and achievements presented in this book will provide families with examples of excellence and inspire a new generation to expect great things from God and to attempt great things for God.

The Greatest Century of Missions presents many unforgettable pictures and stories about fascinating missionaries, such as the woman who stopped the killing of twins in Nigeria; the carpenter who built ships, schools and churches and was eaten by cannibals in the Pacific; the missionary who was captured on the high seas, escaped from prison and won a whole tribe to Christ; the world-famous cricket captain, who pioneered missions into the heart of Africa; the man who was dedicated by his parents—before birth—to be a missionary to China; the man who successfully fought to end the slave trade and the slave who became a pioneer missionary and Bishop.

“The nineteenth century missions movement . . . was a great era of Biblical faith. Appropriately, Dr Peter Hammond beautifully captures this remarkable multifaceted legacy in *The Greatest Century of Missions*. Not only does his fluid narrative make the individual missionaries come to life, he highlights their vision, their motivation, their theological faithfulness, and their long-term cultural impact. It is my prayer that as modern Christians read this much needed book, they will see the great pioneers, these culture-shapers, these soul-winners and nation-builders of the nineteenth century in an entirely new light—and that we will model our own twenty-first century efforts after theirs. I am convinced that if we do, we too will see a glorious transformation of men and nations.”—From the Introduction by George Grant

“This book is not only a good read, but also a timely reminder of the tenacity and courage of the remarkable 19th century missions movement upon which our present amazing numerical growth of non-Western Christians is built. Yet, this is also a wake-up call to us who should be carrying the torch of the Gospel in this dangerous post 11 September world, where equal fortitude and faith is needed.”—Patrick Johnstone of WEC International, author of *Operation World*

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