THE POLITICS OF GOD
AND THE POLITICS OF MAN
By the same author:

*The Christian Philosophy of Education Explained*, 1992
*Christianity and Law*, 1993 (Second Edition 2012)
*A Defence of the Christian State*, 1998
*Common-Law Wives and Concubines*, 2003
*The Problem of the Gifted Speaker*, 2009
*Baal Worship Ancient and Modern*, 2010
*The Great Decommission*, 2011
*The Christian Passover: Agape Feast or Ritual Abuse?* 2012
POLITICS and religion are inseparable. This fact alone accounts for the persecution of the early Church by the Roman State. Francis Legge stated the matter clearly when he said that “The officials of the Roman Empire in time of persecution sought to force the Christians to sacrifice, not to any of the heathen gods, but to the Genius of the Emperor and the Fortune of the city of Rome; and at all times the Christians’ refusal was looked upon not as a religious but as a political offence.” At the trial of Christ the chief priests of the Jews said to the officials of the Roman Empire: “We have no king but Caesar” (Jn 19:15). The early Christians, when faced with the same question, replied: “We have another King: the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Romans understood what this meant: either Jesus would bow the knee to Caesar or Caesar would have to bow the knee to Jesus (cf. Jn 19:12). The Church faces this same question again today, and in a way that she has not had to face it since the days of the Roman emperors. Who is Lord: Christ or Caesar? Christ or the modern secular State? There was, and is, no third option, no “third way.” This was, and still is, a political issue. Jesus Christ was victorious in his struggle with the Roman State. He will be victorious in his struggle with the modern secular State. The only question that remains is this: on whose side will you stand? Whom are you for? Whom will you obey? The Lord Jesus Christ or the modern idolatrous secular State?

Christianity is not a mystery cult, a private devotional worship hobby, that could find a quiet place in the greater context of ancient Roman idolatry. Christianity is not comparable with the mystery cults that were popular in ancient Rome. For the early Church, merely adding Christ to the Roman pantheon—a tactic that was tried, unsuccessfully, by at least two Roman emperors—would have
been a denial of his lordship and sovereignty and would have successfully neutralised Christianity as a threat to the Roman State. But Christianity is more than a devotional cult. It is a religion that structures the whole of man’s life. Both the early Church and the Roman State understood this. Modern Christians on the whole have signalantly failed to understand this. And it is in large measure this failure that accounts for the decline of Christianity in the West today.

The Lord Jesus Christ does not merely demand that we refrain from burning the incense to Caesar; he demands that Caesar burn the incense to him and acknowledge his lordship and sovereignty over Rome and the empire. To burn the incense to Caesar was to acknowledge that Caesar was the political overlord. For Christians, to refuse to burn the incense meant that Jesus Christ is the political overlord, the King of kings to whom all kings must bow, Caesar included. There is no area of religious neutrality anywhere in the created order. Politics is not a religiously neutral enterprise, it is an intensely religious enterprise. Burning the incense was a religious act of political submission. Refusing to burn the incense was not a religious crime in the narrow sense (a devotional offence); it was, rather, a religious act of political rebellion against Rome.

The Church in the twenty-first century must recognise this truth and begin living in terms of it, as did the early Church, by challenging the political idolatry that is destroying the Western world today. Only when the Church awakens from the deadening slumber that has overtaken her and proclaims once more the lordship and sovereignty of Jesus Christ over the whole of life, including the political realm, will the world be delivered from its slavery and bondage to sin as manifested today in the politics of rebellion against God; and only then will the world experience real freedom, the glorious liberty that the gospel of God brings to all nations that submit to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

The law and gospel of God is a public truth, a light not only for man’s personal devotions but also for the government of the nations. This is not a new doctrine, it is the established orthodox teaching of the Christian faith. For example, on 2 June 1953 Queen
Elizabeth II was crowned in Westminster Abbey. One of the first things she did in the coronation ceremony was to swear an oath that she would to the utmost of her power “maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel” and to the utmost of her power “maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law.” After swearing this oath a Bible was presented to the Queen with the following words: “Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God.” It is true, of course, that since this oath was taken and these solemn words were spoken the British political establishment and the British people as a whole have turned away from the Christian faith and adopted the atheist religion of secular humanism as public truth. What this means, however, is not so much that Britain is no longer a Christian nation, at least covenantally and constitutionally, as that Britain is now an apostate nation. The answer to this apostasy is not abandonment of the Christian faith as the religion of State, but rather repentance and reformation, a whole-hearted return to the Christian faith as the guiding principle of our national life. If this is to happen the law and gospel of God must inform all that we think, say and do, as individuals and as a nation. Only when submission to the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a reality in the life of the nations of the earth can it be said that the Great Commission is being fulfilled, since the Great Commission is not a command to disciple individuals from among the nations, but a command to disciple the very nations themselves—i.e. to make Christian nations.

It is the comprehensive nature of the Christian faith that these essays seek to explore, but especially as the faith relates to the realm of politics, social order and national life.

This book is a collection of individual essays. With the exception of the Introduction (Chapter One), which is meant to be read before any of the others, these essays do not have to be read in the...
order in which they are presented here. Nevertheless, the order in which they are presented here is the one that I consider to be the most logical and appropriate. The Introduction deals with certain questions that the other essays do not deal with, questions to which readers may well want answers before they consider the material presented in the other essays. The Introduction also provides definitions of some important words and terms that are used throughout the book.

The common theme running through these essays is the nature of Christianity as public truth. Over the past century Christianity has increasingly ceased to function as public truth in the Western nations. Whatever a society considers to be public truth will inevitably function as the religion of that society. What functions as public truth in modern Western nations is secular humanism. Secular humanism is the religion of the West today. Christianity has been reduced to the status of a mere mystery cult, i.e. a personal salvation cult. But secular humanism is too weak to function as a stable foundation for civilisation. Nor is this a problem that can be corrected. The spiritual and moral relativism that lies at the heart of secular humanism’s core values makes it impossible for secular humanism to function as a stable foundation for civilisation. Like its offspring, multiculturalism, secular humanism is a temporary phenomenon, a staging post in a process of transition from one civilisation to another. Eventually the secular humanist multicultural society must give way to the dominating influence of some other religion as the foundation of Western civilisation. It is my contention that only the Christian religion can provide a true, stable and lasting foundation for civilisation, and that the abandonment of Christianity as public truth in the twentieth century has led the world into chaos. The answer to the chaos that the modern world faces is therefore the revival of Christianity as public truth, i.e. as the religious foundation of our civilisation, in terms of which both individual men and nations, with their civil governments, must organise their whole life by conforming to the precepts and teachings of the Bible. In other words Christianity must be the established religion of all nations. This is precisely
what the Great Commission calls for. But this brings us to another equally important theme that runs throughout these essays, namely that the fulfilment of the Great Commission will not be possible without the manifestation of the Kingdom of God in the lives of both individual Christians and the Christian communities of all nations as a concrete social order that models to the world what true society should be, and by doing this calls the world to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the manifestation on earth in tangible form of this prophetic social order the world will not be won for Christ. The Christian community is to be a light to the world. Only as that light is seen, i.e. only as Christians are seen living as a real social order that transforms the whole life of man, will the world be drawn to it: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up swords against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Is. 2:2–4).

Most of the essays in this collection are based on lectures originally given in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Africa between 2001 and 2006, the texts of which were subsequently published in Christianity & Society, the journal of the Kuyper Foundation. Because they were originally delivered as separate lectures there is a certain amount of overlap in subject matter in places. It seemed better to leave this overlap standing rather than truncate individual essays merely for the purpose of eliminating all repetition. All these essays, however, have been re-edited, extensively revised and considerably expanded for this collection.

I should like to thank Esmond Birnie, Dennis Cavaghan, Jason
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Stephen C. Perks
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True justice has no existence save in that republic whose founder and ruler is Christ . . . Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If, by the admittance of abandoned men, this evil increases to such a degree that it holds places, fixes abodes, takes possession of cities, and subdues peoples, it assumes the more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity. Indeed, that was an apt and true reply which was given to Alexander the Great by a pirate who had been seized. For when that king had asked the man what he meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with bold pride, “What thou meanest by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, whilst thou who dost it with a great fleet art styled emperor.”

—Augustine of Hippo
The history of Christian thought and practice relating to the political sphere of life presents us with two contradictory ideals, both of which claim to be based on Scripture. On the one hand there are those who claim that Christianity is not a political faith, that essentially the life and message of Jesus Christ do not address the issue of politics and therefore that the gospel does not apply to the nations politically. In other words, it does not apply to nations as nations, but only to nations as they are considered as collections of individuals. The message of the gospel is essentially individualistic. In this sense there is no such thing as a Christian politician, only Christians who are also politicians. The Christian faith applies to these people as individuals and affects the way they live their own lives, and therefore their personal witness is capable of having an indirect effect on the political process by modelling personal virtues that hopefully others, including politicians, will emulate in their own lives. This principle applies in the same way to those with the political franchise so that it will affect, for example, the way they vote at political elections. But the gospel is not seen as addressing directly the issue of how politics should be done, how nations should be ruled, in other words how the State is to conduct its business. There are no political principles that can be applied directly to the theory of how the State should order its life. Although those who espouse this view usually claim that their views are biblical this claim is based exclusively on an
appeal to the New Testament; it does not take into account the teachings of the Old Testament. The political virtues, ideals and principles set forth in the Old Testament, although recognised as being directly applicable to Israel prior to the coming of Christ, are deemed to have become obsolete with the inauguration of the Christian era, or at best can now only be applied to individual Christians and Churches by means of indirect analogy with the “spiritual life” (spiritualisation). The New Testament is believed to have replaced the political focus of the Old Testament with a focus that concentrates on the individual and on the Church as an apolitical devotional institution. This understanding of the nature of the Christian faith as essentially apolitical was represented among Protestants by certain groups associated with the Radical Reformation and survives in the traditions of the pacifistic Anabaptists and the Protestant pietistic sects, which have borrowed heavily from Anabaptist theology. For example, according to the Anabaptist brethren who composed the Schleitheim Confession (1527) “it will be observed that it is not appropriate for a Christian to serve as a magistrate because of these points: The government magistracy is according to the flesh, but the Christians’ is according to the Spirit; their houses and dwellings remain in this world, but the Christians’ are in heaven; their citizenship is in this world, but the Christians’ citizenship is in heaven; the weapons of their conflict and war are carnal and against the flesh only, but the Christians’ weapons are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil.” Likewise, the Hutterite Peter Rideman said that “no Christian is a ruler and no ruler is a Christian.” Another good example of this perspective is the statement by Lord Hailsham that “the Christian religion itself, being concerned with grace and love, is, despite much that is written and asserted at the present time, very

largely devoid of political or social doctrine. This is not so of the Old Testament."

On the other hand there are those who argue that Christianity does have a direct application to the political sphere, that the State should be a Christian institution and that it should order its business in obedience to God as his servant and in accordance with political principles derived from Scripture. Those who espouse this ideal also claim that this is a biblical ideal, but their appeal to Scripture is inclusive of both Old and New Testaments. In seeking to understand what the New Testament says about how Christians are to relate to the political sphere of life the Old Testament is believed to have an important role in providing the proper context for interpreting the New Testament. This understanding of the Christian faith as having a direct political relevance and application to modern life was represented among Protestants by the Magisterial Reformers. Heinrich Bullinger, for example, in his treatise *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*, taught that “The judicial or civil laws [of the covenant—SCP] provide rules for the maintenance of peace and public tranquillity, for punishing the guilty, for waging war and repelling enemies, for the defense of liberty, of the oppressed, of widows, of orphans and of the fatherland, and for the making of laws of justice and equity relating to the purchase, the loan, possessions, inheritance, and other legal subjects of this sort. Are not these things also included in that very condition of the covenant which prescribes integrity and commands that we walk in the presence of God? Now if anyone thinks that this opinion of ours is not valid or clear enough, let him consider the very deeds of Abraham, whom the apostle calls the father of all believers (Rom. 4 [11]). Abraham certainly endured faithfully within the covenant of God and walked uprightly before him. Insofar as judicial, civil, or external affairs are

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3 Lord Hailsham, *The Door Wherein I Went* (London: Collins, 1975), p. 69. Although an Anglican himself Hailsham observed that his ancestors were Quakers (ibid., p. 56, 237f.), and his own views on the relationship between Christianity and politics have more in common with the latter than with traditional Anglicanism. Hailsham’s general Christian perspective was underpinned by a nature/grace schema similar to that of Aquinas (see pp. 136–142 and 155–170 infra).
concerned, Abraham conformed to certain principles in punishing crime, in making covenants, in declaring war, in preserving possessions and public peace—and these principles are nothing else than what purity of the soul, sincerity of faith, and love of virtue and the neighbor dictated. Indeed, much later, Moses, speaking for God, taught the Jewish people to observe the same principles (insofar as it pertains to the same substance and sum of the matter). For these are also the obligations of piety, or necessities for the holiest of churches, so necessary that without them they could not properly exist, and they have never existed apart from them without danger. In connection with that, according to the word of the Lord (Matthew 13), there will always be tares in the field of the Lord, nor will it ever be without them. For the Lord did not wish the tares to be uprooted because their uprooting would ruin the wheat, that is, the righteous and the holy church. So Jesus said ‘Allow both to grow, lest while you gather together the tares you at the same time also uproot the wheat with them.’ But who doubts that those same tares ought to be cut off with the scythe of justice, when their excessive and untimely strength and quantity tends toward the subversion of the church? Furthermore, the saints consist not only of spirit but also of flesh. As long as they live on this earth they do not entirely lay aside the human shape and totally turn into spirit. But also their laws are made to order external dealings among people in their social life. For these reasons, they need magistrates and the work of the civil law covering many subjects. What is more strange than the insanity that drives those who exclude the magistrate from the church of God, as if there were no need of his functions, or who consider his functions to be of the sort that cannot or ought not to be numbered among the holy and spiritual works of the people of God? Nevertheless, those deeds of Abraham which are truly judicial are praised by the Holy Spirit of God as among the first and most excellent works. Therefore that same Abraham, inasmuch as he was named the father of all believers by the apostle and called a friend of God

4 Bullinger is almost certainly here referring to the Anabaptists; cf. the quotation from the Anabaptist Schleitheim Confession on p. 20 supra.
prior to the law, possesses a foremost place in the true church of Christians; he nevertheless exercised judicial powers.” Bullinger goes on to point out that “in respect to the Decalogue and civil laws, no difference at all has arisen regarding the covenant and people of God. For everywhere the love of God and the neighbor, faith and love maintain the mastery.”

Similarly, John Calvin says that “The Lord has not only testified that the office of magistrate is approved by and acceptable to him, but he also sets out its dignity with the most honourable titles and marvellously commends it to us. To mention a few: Since those who serve as magistrate are called ‘gods’ [Ex. 22:8, Vg.; Ps. 82:1, 6], let no one think that their being so-called is of slight importance. For it signifies that they have a mandate from God, have been invested with divine authority, and are wholly God’s representatives, in a manner, acting as his vicegerents . . . But Paul speaks much more clearly when he undertakes a just discussion of this matter. For he states both that power is an ordinance of God [Rom. 13:2], and that there are no powers except those ordained of God [Rom. 13:1]. Further, that princes are ministers of God, for those doing good unto praise; for those doing evil, avengers unto wrath [Rom. 13:3–4]. To this may be added the examples of holy men, of whom some possessed kingdoms, as David, Josiah, and Hezekiah; others, lordships, as Joseph and Daniel; others, civil rule among free people, as Moses, Joshua, and the judges. The Lord has declared his approval of their office. Accordingly, no one ought to doubt that civil authority is a calling, not only holy and lawful before God, but also the most sacred and by far the most honourable of all callings in the whole life of mortal men. Those who desire to usher in anarchy object that, although in antiquity kings and judges ruled over ignorant folk, yet that servile kind of government is wholly incompatible today with the perfection which Christ brought with his gospel. In this they betray

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not only their ignorance but devilish arrogance, when they claim a perfection of which not even a hundredth part is seen in them. But whatever kind of men they may be, the refutation is easy. For when David urges all kings and rulers to kiss the Son of God [Ps. 2:12], he does not bid them lay aside their authority and retire to private life, but submit to Christ the power with which they have been invested, that he alone may tower over all. Similarly, Isaiah, when he promises that kings shall be foster fathers of the church, and queens its [sic] nurses [Isa. 49:23], does not deprive them of their honour. Rather, by a noble title he makes them defenders of God’s pious worshipper; for that prophecy looks to the coming of Christ . . . But most notable of all is the passage of Paul where, admonishing Timothy that prayers be offered for kings in public assembly, he immediately adds the reason: ‘That we may lead a peaceful life under them with all godliness and honesty’ [1 Tim. 2:2]. By these words he entrusts the condition of the church to their protection and care.’

Likewise, Martin Luther states that “worldly government is a glorious ordinance and splendid gift of God, who has instituted and established it and will have it maintained as something men cannot do without. If there were no worldly government, one man could not stand before another; each would necessarily devour the other, as irrational beasts devour one another. Therefore as it is the function and honor of the office of preaching to make sinners saints, dead men live, damned men saved, and the devil’s children God’s children, so it is the function and honor of worldly government to make men out of wild beasts and to prevent men from becoming wild beasts. It protects a man’s body so that no one may slay it; it protects a man’s wife so that no one may seize and defile her; it protects a man’s child, his daughter or son, so that no one may carry them away and steal them; it protects a man’s house so that no one may break in and wreck things; it protects a man’s fields and cattle and all his goods so that no one may at-

tack, steal, plunder, or damage them . . . It is certain, then, that temporal authority is a creation and ordinance of God, and that for us men in this life it is a necessary office and estate which we can no more dispense with than we can dispense with life itself, since without such an office this life cannot continue. That being true, it is easy to understand that God has not commanded and instituted it only to have it destroyed. On the contrary, he wills to have it maintained, as is clearly stated by Paul in Romans 13:4, and in 1 Peter 3:2:13–14, to protect those who do good and to punish those who do wrong. Now who will maintain this office except us men to whom God has committed it, and who truly need it?”

The difference between these two positions can be summarised by saying that the one maintains that Church and State should be completely separate (disestablishmentarianism) while the other maintains that the Church should be recognised by the State and the Christian religion established in law (antidisestablishmentarianism).

Those who reject establishment of the Church argue that such a position is incompatible with the nature of the Christian faith. Underpinning this argument is the fact of the persecution of heretics by Christian States in the past. This critique of the religious persecutions that have taken place in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is believed to demonstrate the incompatibility of the Christian virtues with those qualities deemed necessary for

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7 Martin Luther, “A Sermon on Keeping Children in School” (1530) in Luther's Works, Vol. 46, The Christian in Society, III (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967, trans. Charles M. Jacobs, revised by Robert C. Schultz), p. 237f. See also the Genevan Confession (1536), Ch. XXI; Second Helvetic Confession (1562), Ch. XXX; The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1571), Article XXXVII; The Irish Articles (1615), Article XI; The Belgic Confession (1619), Article XXXVI; The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), Ch. XXIII cf. Savoy Declaration (1658), Ch. XXIV; Martin Luther, Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed (1529); Philip Melanchthon, Loci Communes (1520); The Decades of Heinrich Bullinger (1549), Second Decade, Sermons Six to Nine; Martin Bucer, De Regno Christi (1557); Johannes Althusius, Politica (1603).

8 I am referring here to the Church as an institution. On the etymology and meaning of the word church see definition §1 in the Excursus on p. 43ff. infra.
effective political rule. It is my belief, however, that this argument is profoundly mistaken. But it is not merely profoundly mistaken. Worse, it is an argument that will inevitably lead, and has already led, to the denial in practice of the Great Commission, and indeed to the very antithesis of the Great Commission, namely the de-commissioning of the nations as Christian nations and the inevitable re-commissioning of idolatry as the religion of State that such a process entails, although those who hold to this erroneous belief may be quite oblivious of such an outcome. The reason for this is that religious neutrality is impossible in any sphere of life. It is not possible, therefore, to engage in a-religious politics. Abraham Kuyper stated this truth in the well-known aphorism: “no single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” There is no area of religious neutrality in the whole of Creation. In everything we think, say and do, including what we think, say and do politically, we are either for Christ or against him. There is no middle way, no neutrality.

But what about the persecutions? Does this mean that the persecution of non-believers and heretics in Christian States is acceptable? Nothing could be further from the truth. Such per-

9 Calvin also addresses this issue, arguing that the work of the magistrate is compatible with the Christian virtues. “[H]ow can magistrates be pious men and shedders of blood at the same time?” he asks. The answer is that “if we understand that the magistrate in administering punishments does nothing of himself, but carries out the very judgments of God, we shall not be hampered by this scruple. The law of the Lord forbids killing; but, that murderers may not go unpunished, the Lawgiver himself puts into the hands of his ministers a sword to be drawn against all murderers . . . Would that this were ever before our minds—that nothing is done here from men’s rashness, but all things are done on the authority of God who commands it; and while his authority goes before us, we never wander from the straight path!” (Calvin, op. cit., p. 1497 [Bk IV.x.x.10]).

10 On this point see further my essay The Great Decommission (Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, 2011).

Introduction

secution is unacceptable, without any warrant in Scripture, and has no part in a biblically informed understanding of the role of the State. I therefore fully endorse criticism of the many religious persecutions that have taken place in the history of the Church. It is true that Protestants have also persecuted people for “religious crimes” that have no warrant in Scripture, that such persecutions have been not merely tragic mistakes but constitute serious miscarriages of justice, and that reputed justification for such persecutions has been unbiblical.

Nevertheless, I disagree with the philosophy underpinning the arguments of those who believe that these persecutions validate the complete separation of Church and State. There is a difference between arguing for a separation of the powers of Church and State and arguing for a complete separation of Church and State. This is an important distinction. An argument for the separation of powers does not necessitate a complete separation of Church and State. While a Christian view of the State that is consistent with the whole of Scripture necessitates a separation of powers it must reject the complete separation of Church and State. Why?

§2
The Establishment Principle

The establishment of the Christian religion as the religion of State necessarily involves recognition of the Church as an independent public legal institution with her own sphere sovereignty forming part of the societal structure of the nation. Ultimately there can be no establishment of Christianity as the religion of State without the establishment of the Church (the Christian ecclesia) as a societal institution with her own sphere sovereignty. The attempt to establish Christianity as the religion of State without the concrete realisation or incarnation of that religion in an historical community is ultimately meaningless. The practical means necessary for the manifestation of Christianity as the established religion of

\[ On sphere sovereignty see pp. 120–134 infra. \]
State is the existence of the Christian Church as an independent societal institution with her own sphere sovereignty. Without any formal link between Church and State Christianity cannot be said to be established in any meaningful way. Without separation of the powers and functions of Church and State it cannot be said that there is any difference between Church and State. Establishment of the Christian religion, therefore, necessarily requires recognition by the State of the Church as an independent public legal institution with her own sphere sovereignty.

It is this recognition of the Church by the State that constitutes the establishment principle, not any formal act of establishment by the State. “The Church of England as a whole has no legal status or personality. There is no Act of Parliament that purports to establish it as the Church of England . . . the relationship which the state has with the Church of England is one of recognition, not the devolution to it of any of the powers or functions of government.” This is an important point for the perhaps inaptly named establishment principle, although the Coronation Service does speak of the “Protestant Reformed Religion established by law.” Properly speaking the State does not and should not attempt to establish the Church. For the State to do so would be presumptuous. Rather, the State recognises the Church. Nevertheless, the ecclesiastical law of the Church of England is part of the law of the land: “The law is one, but jurisdiction as to its enforcement is divided between the ecclesiastical courts and the temporal courts.”

Disestablishment of the Christian faith, i.e. complete separation of Church and State, denies in principle the notion that the Church is an independent public legal institution with her own sphere sovereignty forming part of the societal structure of the nation, thereby making the Church merely one more private association.


among many—permitted, tolerated, but ultimately regulated by the State. (The secular State acknowledges no sovereignty other than its own and is therefore in principle totalitarian in nature. Just as Rome accepted the various mystery cults provided they were subordinated to the political supremacy of Rome, so the modern secular State will accept the Church as long as she is prepared to subordinate herself to the political supremacy of the secular State by relinquishing her own sphere sovereignty.) The denial of or even failure to recognise the independent public legal character (sphere sovereignty) of the Church is a denial of the lordship and sovereignty of Jesus Christ, and it was the denial of this sovereignty by Rome and the assertion of it by Christians that constituted the dispute between the early Church and Rome and that led to the persecution of Christians for treason against Rome. In other words, the implications of a complete separation of Church and State are that the Christian faith has no direct application to the political sphere and that the State has sovereignty over the Church.

The reason that complete separation of Church and State necessarily involves subordination of the Church to the State is that denial of the Church’s sphere sovereignty is implicitly a denial of God’s sovereignty over society. But sovereignty is an inescapable concept. It is an attribute of deity. If sovereignty is denied as an attribute of God, or if the existence of God is denied, the concept of sovereignty does not disappear; rather, it is attributed to someone or something else. Historically, what this means is that sovereignty is attributed to the State, either in the form of sacral rulers such as the Pharaohs and divine emperors, or in the form of sovereign secular States. Both these forms of human sovereignty are idolatrous and constitute rebellion against the divinely ordained covenantal social order revealed in Scripture as the only sustainable basis for human freedom and political stability.

I said above that an implication of the complete separation of

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15 See further the discussion at note 83 on p. 87 infra. Cf. also the quotation in note 70 on p. 82 infra.

16 See further pp. 116–154 infra; see also my essay Baal Worship Ancient and Modern (Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, 2010), p. 31ff.
State and Church is that the Christian faith has no *direct* application to the political sphere. The operative word here is “direct” since it is true that disestablishment of the Christian religion would not necessarily mean that Christians would be unable to exert any influence at all in the political realm. A commitment to the *principle* of disestablishment by Christians would mean, however, that they would be unable to argue consistently that the State is accountable to God and that it must submit to his law and kiss the Son, i.e. do homage to Jesus Christ, as the Bible commands the kings of the earth (Ps. 2:10–12). The influence of Christians would be restricted to the effect of their personal witness generally on the culture of the nation and to requesting the State to do their bidding (lobbying), *possibly* on rational and moral grounds, depending on the general state of the nation and the degree of common grace operative, but only in the same way that any group of citizens, Satanists, pederasts and paedophiles included, would be able to request special dispensations from the secular authorities. They would not be able, logically, to call the nation back to obedience to God’s law as a basic principle of the State’s legitimacy and authority since this would imply establishment of the Christian faith and therefore establishment of the Church. In constitutional terms the State would be to all intents and purposes unaccountable to God. But the State would *not* be religiously neutral; rather, the established religion would be secular humanism or some other religion, although this may not be readily perceived or acknowledged in the case of secular humanism. The situation would be similar to that faced by Christians in ancient Rome prior to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of State. This should not be taken to imply that the settlement between Church and State reached under Constantine, Theodosius and Justinian was without its problems and abuses, much less that is was an ideal form of establishment.

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18 See definition §2 in the Excursus on p. 46f. *infra.*
Introduction

It was a beginning, and it seems clear with hindsight just how problematic, indeed how inconsistent with Scripture in many ways, that beginning was. Nevertheless, the failures of the Constantinian settlement, which were largely the failures of the Roman imperial system, with which the Church was so closely identified, do not invalidate the establishment principle. But whereas the early Church could espouse Christianity as a world-conquering faith and work towards the discipling of the nations to Christ, a commitment to the principle of disestablishment (complete separation of Church and State) would render such a mission obsolete. In other words a commitment to the principle of disestablishment of the Church would mean that the Great Commission itself would become obsolete, since the Great Commission is not a command to disciple individuals from among or out of the nations, but rather a command, first, to disciple the nations as nations, second, to baptise the nations, and third, to teach God’s law to the nations. The very principle underpinning the Great Commission is the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the nations as nations. The principle underpinning the idea of disestablishment of the Christian faith as the religion of State is a negation of the Great Commission.

The principle of complete separation of Church and State underpinned much of the Radical Reformation and is today being revived in the idea of Principled Pluralism. The basic premiss

19 “Delivered to the small Hebrew nation, the Christian revelation spread over a world in which there was no thinking except in the terms and concepts that had been elaborated by Hellenism. The Christian faith was thus led to speak in Greek too. But its discourse gathered together a people and raised up a community. The latter called for embodiment and institutions. And it happened that on the political and social plane there was only the Roman world. The Church was accordingly organized within the framework of the Empire, even as its [sic] doctrine was informed within the categories of Dialectic” (Denis de Rougemont, Man’s Western Quest: The Principles of Civilization [London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1957], p. 22).

20 See further my essay The Great Decommission. See also the Excursus on p. 112ff. infra.

21 For a critique of Principled Pluralism see my book A Defence of the Christian State, pp. 9–124.
behind Principled Pluralism is the idea that the State should not be a religious institution and therefore that it should not interfere with religious matters in any way; instead it should respect and preserve people’s religious freedom. It is this idea that I wish to take issue with here because the Kingdom of God is primarily a political order and therefore Christianity is primarily a political faith. Religion and politics cannot be separated. “Politics,” said Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, “being a process of realization, must be driven by the force of some unlimited faith.” Politics is inevitably a religious enterprise. This is the case simply because human life is inevitably religious in nature. Consequently politics is as much under the leading of a faith commitment as any other sphere of human activity. The Dutch Christian philosopher and Professor of Law at the Free University of Amsterdam, Herman Dooyeweerd, stated the matter in the following way: “. . . the State as such necessarily functions in the modal law-sphere of faith. In its public communal manifestations the body politic may recognize a God above it and above the entire world-order; or it may deify itself or human reason; or again openly declare itself a self-sufficient ‘état-athée’ [godless State] which only appeals to the belief in a social ideal and in man’s autarchical power to realize it. But never can the State as a temporal societal relationship struggle free from the grasp of the sphere of faith, within which a higher will than its own has assigned a structural function to it. This is the astounding truth which must at least arouse every wavering mind from his dreams of political neutrality with respect to the life of faith. The State can no more be neutral in this respect than science. The political slogan of neutrality is as much under the leading of an attitude of faith and as certainly originates from a basic religious commitment as any other political conviction.”

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23 On the meaning of the term *religion* see further definition §2 in the Excursus on p. 46f. *infra*.

The question we must face therefore is not whether the State should be a religious institution, but rather which religion should be established as the religion of the State. The State is inevitably a religious institution because man is by nature a religious being, created by God to serve and glorify his Maker. In the state of sin man has turned away from his Creator and Lord and instead of seeking the meaning and purpose of life in God’s revealed will for mankind he seeks to find the meaning of life in something or someone else. The Bible calls this idolatry, because it places some aspect of the created order, whether ideological or physical, in the place of God, who alone is the one in terms of whom ultimate meaning is to be sought. When the State rejects God as the source of its authority and power and the one who alone defines its purpose, it engages in idolatry. Men will either serve the God of the Bible or they will serve some idol of their own making. This is inevitable. Men may be unaware of their idolatry, but this does not mean they are not idolatrous. All of human life is religious, and therefore politics is inevitably a religious enterprise.

The State, therefore, may not be a Christian institution, but it will necessarily be a religious institution. A secular humanist State is a religious State no less than a Christian or a Muslim State. It will therefore serve some God of its own making, whether this is the ideal of democracy, socialism, any aspect of the created order, or indeed, as with the modern secular State, itself. In other words it will engage in idolatry. The Bible condemns this. The State no less than the Church must honour God and acknowledge his rights by ordering its work in accordance with his will as this has been revealed in Scripture.

Of course it is not the duty of the State to proclaim the Christian faith and compel people to believe the truth. The State has no authority or power from God to do this. The power of the State is the sword, coercion, and the use of force to compel belief is ineffective, since “He that complies against his Will, Is of his own Opinion still.” The task of proclaiming the faith and discipling the nations—the Great Commission—is given to the Church, and the means to be used is the preaching of the gospel. But this does not mean that the State must not order its work according to the light of God’s word, that it must not bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ and serve him in all that it does (Ps. 2:10–12). How, then, is the State to serve God if it is not called to preach the gospel?

The calling of the State is to administer public justice. If the State, as God’s servant in this matter, is to do this properly, as Paul clearly teaches in the New Testament (Rom. 13:1–6), what constitutes the public justice that the State is called to uphold must be defined by God’s law as this has been given to us in Scripture, and it is the duty of the State to uphold God’s law as it relates to the sphere of public justice even where those guilty of acts defined as criminal offences by that law believe action by the State in such matters to be a violation of their religious and civil liberties (cf. 1 Tim. 1:8–11). In such cases people are not persecuted for their beliefs; rather, they are punished for their crimes. There is a difference between tolerating the beliefs of non-believers, heretics and those who worship false gods, and tolerating criminal actions that are the fruit of such beliefs. It is the latter only that the State must suppress by the use of force, not false beliefs. But what constitutes the crime that the State must suppress must be defined by God’s word, and therefore the State must look to God’s law to guide it in its calling as the servant of God.

This means, for example, that Muslims should not be permitted the religious freedom to establish *sharia* law in the United Kingdom for their own Islamic communities, since this would be a fundamental denial both of the biblical principle that one law should be applicable to the entire nation (Ex. 12:49; Lev. 24:22; Num. 15:15, 16, 29) and the English common-law principle that the law of the land should be in accord with the law of God,—that “any law is or of right ought to be according to the law of God.” The State must enforce the common law of the land (which should be Christian law) even when Muslims believe this to be a denial of their reli-

26 I am not referring here to voluntary arbitration services based on *sharia* that do not have the force of law in the United Kingdom, but rather to a law-system based on *sharia* that has the authority and power to enforce its decisions within United Kingdom Islamic communities and that therefore undermines the common law of the land. The use of *sharia* law as the basis of a private and voluntary arbitration service would in principle be no different from any other voluntary arbitration service provided any judgements arrived at did not contradict the law of the land. The latter limited role of voluntary arbitration, however, is not what the proponents of *sharia* law have historically aimed at, but rather the establishment of *sharia* as the law of the land along with the coercive force necessary to guarantee its full implementation. For example, Pakistan was originally founded in 1947 as a secular State with freedom of religion. But the development of *sharia* law as a parallel jurisdiction has undermined the supremacy of parliament in Pakistan. Eventually *Sharia* law was established as the supreme law of the land by the Enforcement of Sharia Act 1991. A Federal Sharia Court has been established with the power to overturn any statute law contrary to the teachings of Islam. This Federal Sharia Court constitutes a parallel judicial system that has undermined the supremacy of Parliament. *Sharia* law is applicable to non-Muslims but a non-Muslim lawyer is not permitted to practise before the Federal Sharia Court. Astonishing as it may seem, the development of such an alternative *sharia* legal system has already begun in Britain. There are an estimated 85 *sharia* courts operating in the United Kingdom (www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3682/uk-sharia-courts; www.telegraph.co.uk, 7.00 AM BST, 20 Oct. 2012). On 7 June 2011 a private members’ bill, the Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill, was introduced into the House of Lords by Baroness Cox with the aim of stopping “a rapidly developing alternative quasi-legal system which undermines the fundamental principle of one law for all” (www.parliament.uk/business/news/2012/october/lords-arbitration-and-mediation-services-bill-second-reading). The problem was also reported on a BBC *Panorama* programme broadcast on 25 April 2013.

This is a pertinent example of the problems posed by the doctrine of complete religious tolerance as understood by secular humanists. Both the fatwa condemning the author Salman Rushdie to death, which led to criminal acts being committed in the United Kingdom by British Muslims seeking to demonstrate their support for the fatwa, and the increasingly frequent cases of honour killings in the United Kingdom demonstrate the naïvety of the ideal of complete religious liberty. The State may not turn a blind eye to these religious crimes and must, when necessary, use force to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice. No doctrine of religious freedom or toleration should be permitted to interfere with the State’s duty in this matter. These are crimes and the State is authorised by God’s law to use force in dealing with criminals. This is not merely an Old Testament doctrine but a New Testament doctrine also, as Paul teaches in Rom. 13:1–6 and 1 Tim. 1:8–11. The State is called to administer public justice without regard to the person on religious or any other grounds.28

The State, therefore, must pursue public justice as this has been defined by the law of God. The State must go this far but no further. It is my belief that in the past Christian States have often gone far beyond their biblical mandate and engaged in the persecution of heretics, and with regard to this I again fully endorse criticism of such persecutions. Nonetheless, the State is no less bound to obey God’s law in its definition of crime and its responsibility to uphold public justice as defined by God’s word. Therefore, the State must look to God’s law as the standard that...
defines public justice. It must, in the entirety of its work, seek to conform itself to the precepts of God’s law as it seeks to perform its duty. The State is every bit as much the servant of God as the Church (Rom. 13:1–6), and therefore it is inevitably a religious institution.

In our criticism of the persecutions that have taken place in the name of Christ we must not lose sight of this fact. It is not the task of the State to persecute people for not believing the truth or for believing error, nor is it the duty of the State to abridge the liberty of non-believers on account of their disbelief. But it is the duty of the State to punish people for their crimes, and it is the duty of the State to define crime in terms of God’s law. Of course, not all law in Scripture is law that should be enforced by the State, i.e. statute law. The Hebrew word torah means instruction, doctrine as well as law.\footnote{Gesenius’s Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1839, trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles), p. dcccclxaf.} Much law in Scripture is given as instruction and guidance for the individual, the family and the Church, and we must be ever mindful not to confuse those laws given to the Church with those given to the State. It is my belief that on many occasions the Church has indeed confused the two and assumed that the State must enforce laws that were given to govern the Church. This confusion was evident in the beliefs and practices of not only the mediaeval papacy but also, to a lesser extent, of the Reformers and Puritans as well.\footnote{For some examples see my book A Defence of the Christian State, pp. 125–140.} This is a confusion of the boundaries of these two different spheres. It is my belief that Principled Pluralism also confuses these two spheres of the State and the Church, assuming that because the State may not administer Church law therefore the State has no duty to enforce God’s law at all. This is equally mistaken. Where the Bible gives law that relates to the magistrate’s duty to administer public justice the State must take notice and order its work in accordance with Scripture.
§4  THE SECULAR STATE AND PERSECUTION

We must not forget also that it is not only Christians who have engaged in religious persecutions and murdered men for their beliefs. The record of secular humanist States is worse, not better, than that of Christian States. Modern secular States have slaughtered more innocent people in pursuit of their secular humanist Utopias than any other form of religious establishment in history. While it is true that much violence has been committed in the name of Christianity and Islam throughout history, it is secular humanism that has proved to be the most intolerant and persecuting of all religions. It has been estimated that the total number of people killed by State repression between 30 B.C. and 1900 A.D., excluding war, was 133 million, while the number killed by State repression from 1900 to 1987, again excluding war, was 170 million. The campaign of terror unleashed on the world by the French Revolution, i.e. the religion of secular humanism, is a fire that has never ceased to burn in some part of the world since its inception, and has brought, and still brings, untold misery and suffering to countless people. This religion of secular humanism has its own doctrines of orthodoxy—political correctness for example—and secular States have persecuted fiercely those who have refused to submit to their secular belief systems. “Nazism and Stalinism” said Denis de Rougemont “have each had a pope and infallibility; hierarchies, orders, forms of worship and dogmas, an Inquisition more effective than the other [i.e. Roman Catholic Inquisitions—SCP] in the eradication of heresy from the utmost recesses of the cerebellum.” Aldous Huxley stated the problem well: “In mediaeval and early modern Christendom the situation of sorcerers and their clients was almost precisely analogous to that of the Jews under Hitler, capitalists under Stalin, Communists and

32 Denis de Rougemont, op. cit., p. 72, my emphasis.
fellow travellers in the United States. They were regarded as the agents of a Foreign Power, unpatriotic at best, and, at the worst, traitors, heretics, enemies of the people. Death was the penalty meted out to these metaphysical Quislings of the past and, in most parts of the contemporary world, death is the penalty which awaits the political and secular devil-worshippers known here as Reds, there as Reactionaries. In the briefly liberal nineteenth century men like Michelet found it difficult not merely to forgive, but even to understand the savagery with which sorcerers had once been treated. Too hard on the past, they were at the same time too complacent about their present and far too optimistic in regard to the future—to us! They were rationalists who fondly imagined that the decay of traditional religion would put an end to such devilries as the persecution of heretics, the torture and burning of witches . . . But looking back and up, from our vantage point on the descending road of modern history, we now see that all the evils of religion can flourish without any belief in the supernatural, that convinced materialists are ready to worship their own jerry-built creations as though they were the Absolute, and that self-styled humanists will persecute their adversaries with all the zeal of Inquisitors exterminating the devotees of a personal and transcendent Satan. Such behaviour-patterns antedate and outlive the beliefs which, at any given moment, seem to motivate them. Few people now believe in the devil; but very many enjoy behaving as their ancestors behaved when the Fiend was a reality as unquestionable as his Opposite Number. In order to justify their behaviour, they turn their theories into dogmas, their by-laws into First Principles, their political bosses into Gods and all those who disagree with them into incarnate devils. This idolatrous transformation of the relative into the Absolute and the all too human into the Divine, makes it possible for them to indulge their ugliest passions with a clear conscience and in the certainty that they are working for the Highest Good. And when the current beliefs come, in their turn, to look silly, a new set will be invented, so that the immemorial madness may continue to wear its customary mask of legality, idealism and true religion . . . From about 1700 to the
present day all persecutions in the West have been secular and, one might say, humanistic. For us, radical Evil now incarnates itself, not in sorcerers and magicians (for we like to think of ourselves as positivists), but in the representatives of some hated class or nation. The springs of action and the rationalizations have undergone a certain change; but the hatreds motivated and the ferocities justified are all too familiar."\(^{33}\)

Other estimates put the number of people killed during the twentieth century by secular States in pursuit of the religious ideals of secular humanism between 110 and 231 million.\(^{34}\) Within the period of a single century secular humanist States have persecuted and put to death more people than those killed throughout history by Christian and Islamic States combined. The modern British State, under the dominating influence of secular humanism, is now increasingly anathematising and persecuting those who refuse to kowtow to political correctness and many Christian values and beliefs that conflict with secular ideals have already been subject to such intense criticism that adherence to these values and beliefs is treated as a kind of heresy that must be extirpated from the land by means of laws that criminalise those who refuse to accept the practice of political correctness. The 2004 Gender Recognition Act and the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act are good examples of just such intolerance and the willingness on the part of secular humanists to use the full coercive power of the State to enforce their belief system on society and to punish those who refuse to submit to the new orthodoxy. The abandonment of Christian values in the political sphere is not leading the nation towards more religious freedom at all, but rather towards a vicious type of secular humanist inquisition that has already shown itself to be relentless and utterly brutal in its persecution of those whom it considers to be heretics.


\(^{34}\) These figures include both world wars. See further p. 89ff. *infra.*
It is true of course that the history of Christendom has been marred by the murder of heretics. But the freedoms that people in the West have rightly enjoyed for so long, and which they continue to proclaim so eagerly despite increasing curtailment of individual freedom by the modern secular State, are not the product of secular humanism and its doctrine of complete religious liberty, i.e. total liberation from the law of God. They are, rather, the fruit produced by the Christian cultures of Protestant nations that have sought to apply the biblical doctrine of man’s legitimate and limited freedom under God’s law in the political sphere. This biblical doctrine of man’s freedom under God’s law is the source of all our true freedoms (as opposed to mere licence to commit crimes, which is what we increasingly have under the rule of secular humanism) and virtually all the blessings of our civilisation, which secular humanists today wish to attribute to the abandonment of the Christian faith and the triumph of autonomous human reason. But these freedoms and blessings are the fruit of human reason held captive by the grace of God in Christ and the ordering and development of our civilisation under the influence of the gospel and law of God, not the religion of secular humanism. We have yet to see secular humanism’s martyrs die in their thousands that others might be free to worship God according to their consciences. These freedoms are the fruit of a Christian civilisation and of the witness of Christian martyrs who have died in their thousands throughout the Christian centuries, including those who died for their commitment to the Magisterial Reformation.

While condemning the unjust and murderous persecution of heretics by Christians in the past we must not lose sight of the benefits that Christendom has brought to mankind. Islam offers no freedom for non-Muslims, Christians included, despite the fact

35 On the idea of the autonomy of human reason see further my book A Defence of the Christian State, p. 12f.
that much more has been made of the status of so-called “people of the book” in Islamic States than can be justified historically; and it is becoming increasingly evident with the passing of legislation aimed at suppressing Christian values and beliefs by modern Western States that secular humanism, once it has reached full maturity in terms of its fundamental principle of unbelief,—i.e. once its own brand of fundamentalism has become institutionally dominant in the form of a totalitarian State, something that has not yet happened in the post-Protestant West, but comes closer with every day that passes—will oppose in theory and in practice everything that Christianity stands for and offer no more freedom to Christians than Islam does.

The persecution of heretics by the Church and by Christian States for beliefs and practices that are not defined as crimes by God’s law is unjust and any attempt to justify such persecutions on historical, theological or on any other grounds is morally perverse. But it would be no less perverse to cast off the countless benefits of the establishment of the Christian faith as the religion of State because of the mistakes of previous generations of Christians by adopting a secular political ideology, since the fruit of the latter, e.g. the secular humanist witch-hunts and persecutions, will prove—and indeed have already proved—to be far worse than the persecutions of heretics in Christendom, and the benefits will be non-existent.

The corrective to abuse is never disuse, but proper use. We are called to confront our generation with the gospel of God. We must also acknowledge the errors of the past. But we must equally lay before men and nations the claims of God as the only hope of a remedy for those errors. The Christian faith is a public truth, not a devotional mystery cult. It applies to the whole life of man. The gospel of God, the good news of salvation from sin through the merit of Christ’s life, death and resurrection, requires us to call all men everywhere to repent of their sin (Acts 17:30) and turn to Christ in faith and obedience to his law (Mt. 28:19–20), and this means inevitably also that the State must bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ, submit to his word, and order its work in accordance
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with his will as this has been revealed in Scripture (Ps. 2:10–12; Rom. 13:1–6).

Excursus

Definition of Terms

§1

Church

There are problems with the use of the English word church. We use the word in a variety of ways to mean different things, usually without defining what we mean by it and very often without even being aware ourselves that we are using the same term in different ways to refer to different things. This leads to confused thinking and consequently to misunderstanding. In order to avoid these problems we need to understand something of the etymology and history of the word and its use, and we need to be careful in our use of the term to make sure that we understand ourselves and indicate clearly to others what we mean by it.

The English word church comes from the Old English cirice or circe, which is derived from the Greek word kyrikon (κυρικόν), meaning God’s house, a popular fourth-century form of the Greek word kyriakon (κυριακόν), an adjective meaning imperial, of the lord.36 This Greek word was used of “the lord’s house” (τὸ κυριακόν δῶμα). The English word church is derived, via this route, from the Greek adjective kyriakos (κυριακός).37 This adjective is used only twice in

36 The German word for church, Kirche, shares the same etymology. Compare, however, the French, église, the Spanish, iglesia, and the Italian, chiesa, which are all derived from the Greek word ἐκκλησία. On the etymology of the English term church and the problems relating to its use as a translation of ἐκκλησία see my book The Nature, Government and Function of the Church: A Reassessment (Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, 1997), pp. 9–19.

the New Testament, however, and in neither instance does it have reference to the Greek word *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία), which is the word usually translated as *church* in English translations of the Bible. In 1 Cor. 11:20 it is used of the Lord’s supper (κυριακόν δείπνον), and in Rev. 1:10 it is used of the Lord’s day (ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ). Nowhere in the New Testament is this term used to refer to the Lord’s house. Strictly speaking therefore, the notion or concept of the *church* is not part of the new covenant—though it is of course part of the old covenant, i.e. the Temple. The concept of the church—i.e. a building and its appurtenances, set apart as a special sanctuary for Christian worship—is not found in the New Testament and is not a feature of the new covenant.

In his translation of the New Testament William Tyndale did not use the word *church* to translate the Greek word *ecclesia* and rendered it more accurately throughout as *congregation*. Nowhere in Tyndale’s translation of the New Testament do we find the word *church* used of the assembly or community of believers. The New Testament does not identify the *ecclesia* as the house of the Lord, i.e. a building and its appurtenances, but as the people of God, a covenant community called out of the world of sin and unbelief into fellowship with God as his holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). Unfortunately, subsequent translations of the Bible into English, including the Geneva Bible, did not follow Tyndale’s lead in this matter and mistranslated the Greek word *ecclesia* as *church*.

The Greek word *ecclesia* is derived from a Greek verb (ἐκκάλεω) meaning *to call out or summon forth*. The noun, *ecclesia*, is a political term meaning *an assembly of the citizens regularly summoned, the legislative assembly*. In its use of this term, therefore, the New Testament stresses not only that members of the body of Christ are called out of the world of sin and unbelief, but that they are also called into participation in a new political organism, a new community

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38 At Acts 19:37, for example, he uses the word *churches*, but the Greek word that he is translating is ἱεροσύλους, i.e. *robbers of temples, sacrilegious persons*, not *ecclesiai*, and refers to a building and its appurtenances, not the assembly of the Christian community.


40 Ibid., p. 435a.
or society with its own distinctive social order: the Kingdom of God.\footnote{See further p. 59ff. infra.}

The English word church is used in most English translations of the Bible to translate the Greek word ekklesia. However, as we have already seen, this is a mistranslation since the ekklesia is not a building but an assembly of the people constituted as a body politic. There were, strictly speaking therefore, no Christian churches in the New Testament; believers met in their homes or in other places, but there were no specially designated buildings set apart for Christian worship. There was the Temple of course, and there were synagogues, where the first Jewish Christians probably worshipped on the sabbath, but they were soon obliged to leave these, and they worshipped elsewhere on the Lord’s day, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, and Gentile Christians never worshipped in the synagogues. Originally, however, the term synagogue did not refer to a building either, but to a gathering of people, an assembly, from the Greek word synago (συνάγω), meaning to gather together, and was used of local communities of Jews who met together on the sabbath for worship, instruction in the law and for educational and social purposes. That is to say, it referred to people, a community, not to a building, and only came to signify a building at a later date because of its use as a metonym for the building in which the community met. It was exactly the opposite with the term church; that is to say, the building, which is properly called a church from the etymological point of view, came to signify the community of Christians that met in it.

According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English\footnote{All references to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English are to the Eighth Edition (1990).} the English word church can mean: 1. a building for public worship, 2. a meeting for public worship in such a building; then, with the first letter capitalised (Church), 3. the body of all Christians, 4. the clergy or clerical profession, 5. an organised Christian group or society of any time, country, or distinct principles of worship, 6. institutionalised religion as a political or social force.
In this book I use the word *church*, without any capitalisation, to refer to the building, and sometimes with reference to the rituals and forms of service that take place in the building. This corresponds to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*’s definitions 1 and 2 mentioned above. This use of the word, uncapsalitised, is not to be understood of the Church as an *institution*, which is a wider concept than the church as a building and the rituals and forms of service that take place in the building. I use the word *Church*, with the first letter capitalised, to refer to the body of Christ, the Christian people or society, as an *organism* (i.e. the Christian *nation*), which includes the Church as an institution but is not limited to the Church as an institution. The Church as an *organism* is a much wider concept than the Church as an *institution*, and refers to the Christian *nation* or *society*. Where I refer to the Church (again with the first letter capitalised) specifically as an *institution*—i.e. as a cultic organisation with ministers for governing a specific sphere of social life—in contrast to the Church as an *organism*, it will usually be apparent that this is the case from the context. Nevertheless, where I think there may be misunderstanding I have made my intention clear in the text or in a footnote. I do not use the word *Church* to mean the clergy or the clerical profession.

§2

Religion

The term *religion* is commonly confused with the term *theism*. Theism refers to belief in a personal supernatural God, from *theos*, the Greek word for God. Theistic faiths are often religions. Certainly the three main monotheistic faiths, Christianity, Judaism and

43 The Christianity of the Bible and of history is a religion. Modern evangelicals are fond of claiming that Christianity is not a religion, and it is true that modern evangelicalism is not a religion. The religion of most modern evangelicals is secular humanism, since it is secular humanism that shapes their world-view. For modern evangelicalism the Christian faith is merely a mystery cult that focuses on Jesus as the object of a subjective personal devotion. But this is not the Christianity of history or of the Bible.
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Islam, are religions. But not all religions are theistic. Religion refers to the belief system or world-view that structures human thought, life and society. The word religion comes from the Latin word religio, which means obligation, bond, reverence for the gods, from the verb religare meaning to bind. The root of religio is lig, to bind, and is cognate with the word lex, meaning law. Inevitably, religion brings obligation, duty, i.e. life in accordance with an obligation that binds man. Religion, therefore, structures life; it structures the thought and life of the individual and of society. Christianity, Judaism and Islam are clearly religions that structure human thought, life and society. They are also theistic religions. Secular humanism is a belief system or world-view that structures human thought, life and society; it is, therefore, a religion, but it is not theistic. Someone who does not believe in a personal supernatural God is not a-religious, he is merely a-theistic. His religion is atheism.

Although the religious nature of secular humanist beliefs is not acknowledged by many people some secular humanists do recognise that secular humanism is a religion. See for example the Humanist Manifesto, 1933, the preamble to which speaks of “religious humanism.” The United States Supreme Court has also defined secular humanism as a religion: “Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others.”

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45 See: www.americanhumanism.org.
I use the words *politics* and *political* in two ways: (1) in the narrow or specific sense to refer to the sphere of *civil government*, i.e. the work of the *magistrate* or *State*, and (2) in a wider sense to refer more generally to the way the life of both the individual and society should be governed. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* defines the word *politics* as “the art and science of government.” The whole of life is political in this wider sense; in other words it is the outworking of the law of an ultimate authority, i.e. a God, in the totality of life, whether that God is a personal supernatural being, such as the God of the Bible, an ideology or philosophy, such as socialism, or even man himself as a self-proclaimed autonomous individual (anarchy). I use the words *politics* and *political* in this wider sense to include spheres and institutions other than the State, e.g. family and Church, which should be governed according to God’s word (as should the State), and which do not derive their life or forms of government from the State, but from God, via his word. The Bible teaches that God has committed the government of all the nations into the hands of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Is. 9:6–7; Mt. 28:18–20; Rev. 11:15), and that the nations owe an absolute allegiance and obedience to him in all things (Ps. 2:1–12). In this sense the whole of life is about the politics of God, i.e. how we are to be ruled by God’s word, as individuals, as families and as a society, since God’s kingdom encompasses all things, in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18).

The legitimate work of the State is one aspect or sphere of the rule of Jesus Christ as King of kings, one aspect of his kingdom. There is no independent political sphere of life in which man does not owe obedience to the Ruler of Nations, who has delegated his rule to various institutions that are independent of each other and limited in authority. The State is only one of these institutions. But

47 See definition §4 infra.
the Lord Jesus Christ rules over all things—his kingdom has no limits. Since politics is about how men are governed, and all power and authority have been given to Jesus Christ, the whole of life is political in this wider sense, i.e. it is about how man is to subject himself obediently to God in all things by governing himself, his family and his society according to God’s law and thereby pursue the coming of the Kingdom of God above all else (Mt. 6:33). However, I use the terms political sphere and political realm to refer to politics in the narrow or specific sense, i.e. the work of the State or civil government.

§4
STATE, CIVIL GOVERNMENT, MAGISTRATE

I use the term State to mean the civil government or what used to be called the magistrate or civil magistrate, in other words the ministry of public justice. This concept of the State is a narrow one that is by no means shared by much of modern political thought. In the perspective of humanistic socialism, for example, the State is conceived in much broader terms, nearer perhaps to the concept of the nation than to that of the civil magistrate. As a Christian, I do not, of course, accept the socialist concept of the State nor its vision of society, since it is a reductionist vision of mankind and society, i.e. a vision that absolutises—and therefore idolises—one aspect of the created order above other equally legitimate aspects of Creation that exist independently of the State. I use the term State as a synonym for civil government or civil magistrate. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines the State as “an organized political community under one government; a commonwealth; a nation.” I accept only the first part of this definition. The State is the political government of the nation in the narrow or specific sense (the political sphere), which is one aspect of society, one aspect of the nation, namely the ministry of public justice. The nation includes all the other spheres of life as well as the political sphere. The State,
therefore, should confine itself to the activities of a civil government or magistracy.

However, the concept of civil government or the State as a ministry of public justice includes the executive, legislative, judicial, diplomatic, military and law enforcement functions of the State. My restriction of the function of the State or civil government (magistrate) to that of administering public justice is not intended to exclude any of these necessary functions of the civil authorities; but it is intended to restrict such aspects of the State’s work to their proper sphere of authority. All these aspects of the function of the State find their purpose in terms of the establishment and maintenance of public justice.

§ 5

MULTICULTURALISM

The tension that large scale immigration has caused in some cities and large towns in the United Kingdom and other Western countries is usually represented by British politicians and by the British media as a race relations problem and multiculturalism, one of the chief shibboleths of the new atheist religion of secular humanism, is endlessly championed as the answer to this problem. Unfortunately, the real nature and meaning of multiculturalism has been misunderstood by politicians and media people alike and, along with the tension created by the presence of large Islamic and Hindu communities in British cities, has been defined in terms of race. But this is a serious mistake. Culture does not have its origin in race, and the constant obsession with race by the media and politicians in British society only exacerbates the problem since it reinforces the prejudices of fanatics while offering no meaningful analysis of the problem—indeed it gets in the way of a better understanding of the problem.

Culture is a religious phenomenon. Christopher Dawson pointed out that “from the beginning the social way of life which is culture has been deliberately ordered and directed in accordance
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with the higher laws of life which are religion.”\(^{48}\) In other words “a people’s religion comes to expression in its culture.”\(^{49}\) What underpins cultural differences, therefore, is not race but religion, since culture is the incarnation of religion.\(^{50}\) “Every social order” said R. J. Rushdoony “rests on a creed, on a concept of life and law, and represents a religion in action. Culture is religion externalized.”\(^{51}\) Cultural tensions exist where religions come into conflict among populations. The conflict in India between Muslims and Hindus when the British Raj came to an end and India became independent was not based on racial differences, but on religious differences.

It is true that culture—i.e. religion as it is externalised or incarnated in particular societies—sometimes exhibits its distinctive features along racial lines. That is to say, particular races that have lived without assimilating with other ethnic groups tend to maintain their own individual cultural identity. But the fact that cultural differences sometimes break down along racial lines in this way is entirely coincidental and has no bearing on what determines a particular cultural identity. It is not race that determines culture, but rather religion, and this is also the case where racial differences between societies coincidentally correspond to cultural differences. It is vitally important that we recognise that the concept of race is at most a coincidental fact likely to mislead us, not an essential element of culture, if we are to understand the problems posed by mass immigration from the Third to the First World today. Race is irrelevant. Religion is what counts, what determines cultural

\(^{48}\) Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture: Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh in the year 1947* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 49. Dawson continues: “As the powers of heaven rule the seasons, so the divine powers rule the life of man and society, and for a community to conduct its affairs without reference to these powers, seems as irrational as for a community to cultivate the earth without paying any attention to the course of the seasons.”


identity, and we shall not get anywhere near to solving the multi-
cultural problems that face our societies until this fact is recognised
and people are prepared to deal with the issues it entails.

§6

World-view

The English term *world-view* is a translation of the German word *Weltanschauung*. According to James Orr, “The idea of the ‘Weltanschauung’ may be said to have entered prominently into modern thought through the influence of Kant, who derives what he calls the ‘Weltbegriff’ from the second of his Ideas of Pure Reason, to which is assigned the function of the systematic connection of all our experiences into a unity of a world-whole (Weltganz). But the thing itself is as old as the dawn of reflection, and is found in a cruder or more advanced form in every religion and philosophy with any pretensions to a historical character.”

I use the term *world-view* to mean the perspective in terms of which a man understands the whole of life and the world around him. A world-view is the product of one’s presuppositions and preconceptions and of the totality of one’s experience of life. Everything that a person experiences will go in some measure towards forming his world-view, regardless of how self-conscious or unselfconscious he is of this, regardless even of whether he is aware of or understands the very concept of a world-view. A man’s world-view is therefore personal and subjective, since each man will have a different personal experience of life, and this will have a formative effect on his world-view. A world-view can be likened to a pair of spectacles, tinted by a man’s presuppositions and preconceptions about and by his personal experience of life, through which he views, perceives and understands the world around him and the nature of reality itself.

Of course man is not only an individual but also a member of

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society whose understanding of life is shaped by interaction with the community of which he is a part, especially as he imbibes the presuppositions and preconceptions of the community into which he is born and in terms of which he learns to make sense of life and the world around him as he grows up. Although truth is absolute, for man understanding the truth always takes place in the context of a community. Man does not come to an understanding of the world around him in isolation from others but rather in community with others. Isolation leads men to question their understanding of truth. Complete isolation from community with others will lead men to lose their grip on reality. As human beings we understand the truth not merely as individuals but in relation to the community of which we are a part. There is, therefore, also a strong social component and context to man’s world-view. The shared presuppositions and experiences of a community will have a determinative influence on the world-view of the individuals who constitute that community. Despite the personal and subjective nature of a person’s world-view, therefore, we can speak of the world-views of particular societies and communities, which are rooted in the shared fundamental religious beliefs of the individuals who constitute those communities.

53 In order to brainwash someone and reprogram his mind with false ideas, false memories or a radical change in his perception of reality it is necessary first to isolate him from others, and especially from the community in the context of which he has come to understand the nature of reality. Once he has been isolated he can be deprogrammed and then reprogrammed by being integrated into a new community with an alternative world-view. Techniques used for brainwashing and also for inducing false confessions usually involve some kind of isolation of the individual from the community in which his understanding of reality was formed (cf. Jacques Ellul, Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes [New York: Vintage Books, (1965) 1973], Appendix II, “Brainwashing,” p. 311ff.).

54 According to Herman Dooyeweerd, “If it is to maintain its true character, a worldview must issue from the religious root, the heart, of human existence. It must also influence one’s entire perspective on life, not merely one’s theory. Such a worldview demands a strong communal faith in the absolute truth of its religious foundations; and it simply cannot be united with a theoretical relativism. A genuine worldview is immediately recognizable by its radicalism, a radicalism that issues from the religious root of life” (Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy [Grand Rapids: Paideia Press, 2013, trans. Magnus Verbrugge], Vol. II, The
speak of the secular humanist world-view, which is the world-view generated by the dominance of secular humanist ideas as public truth in society; we can speak of the Muslim world-view, which is the world-view generated by the acceptance of Islam as the true religion by Muslim communities; we can speak of the Christian world-view, which is a world-view generated by the acceptance of Christianity as the true religion in Christian communities; and we can speak of the atheistic world-view, which is generated by the rejection of belief in a personal supernatural God in secular humanist communities. It is also possible to have a syncretistic world-view, i.e. a world-view that is the product of the conflation of two or more religious belief systems.

However, I also believe that the Bible gives us a world-view of its own, a world-view that gives us an objectively true view of reality in terms of which we as individuals and as communities of faith in Christ must seek to conform ourselves in our understanding of all things. Christianity, says James Orr, “is a religion, historical in its origin, and claiming to rest on Divine Revelation. But though Christianity is neither a scientific system, nor a philosophy, it has yet a world-view of its own, to which it stands committed, alike by its fundamental postulate of a personal holy, self-revealing God, and by its content as a religion of Redemption... It has, as every religion should and must have, its own peculiar interpretation to give of the facts of existence; its own way of looking at, and accounting for, the existing natural and moral order; its own idea of a world-aim, and of that ‘one far-off Divine event,’ to which, through slow and painful travail, ‘the whole creation moves.’ As thus binding together the natural and moral worlds in their highest unity, through reference to their ultimate principle, God, it involves a ‘Weltanschauung.’”

The biblical world-view is objectively true because it conforms

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55 See definition §2 supra.
56 For an explanation of this see my essay Baal Worship Ancient and Modern.
57 James Orr, op. cit., p. 8f.
to the Creator’s word, which is truth (Jn 17:17). However, the biblical world-view is not necessarily identical with the Hebrew world-view, since the Hebrews were often in rebellion against God and apostate, and their religion was often syncretistic. Likewise, the world-views of individual Christians and Christian communities will to a greater or lesser extent, since they are the world-views of fallen sinful individuals and communities that are not yet perfectly sanctified, fail to conform perfectly to the objectively true world-view given us in Scripture. This does not mean, however, that individuals and communities of faith, under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, cannot increasingly conform their own world-views to the world-view given us in Scripture, and to the extent that they do so their world-views, though not perfect or infallible, will nevertheless be characterised by the objective truth of God’s word. The Lord Jesus said: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth [i.e. the Holy Spirit], is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (Jn 16:12–14).

World-views operate much of the time at a subconscious or subliminal level. As we go about life we often do not self-consciously assimilate the various experiences we have into our world-view or self-consciously interpret our experiences in terms of our world-view, but we do assimilate our experiences of life into our world-view and interpret the world around us in terms of this world-view, self-consciously or unselfconsciously. Some people will be more aware of their world-view than others, but everyone’s world-view will operate subliminally some of the time. If, however, as Christians we are to understand the world that God has put us in, and the commission to disciple the nations that the Lord Jesus has given to us, it is important that we should understand how our world-views affect both ourselves and the world we live in. If we are to understand and address meaningfully the age in which we live, and call all men and nations to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ,
we must be able to identify and mount an accurate and effective critique of their sin and apostasy, and be able to show how the Christian world-view differs from non-Christian world-views and therefore how the Christian life in its fullness and in all its individual aspects differs from the life of non-belief. It is important, therefore, that we should *self-consciously* seek to understand the biblical world-view and bring our own world-view into conformity with it. And we must seek to understand the world-views of the societies and communities that surround us so that we can challenge them with the truth and call them to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICS OF GOD
AND THE POLITICS OF MAN

§1
POLITICS AND RELIGION

The word *politics* comes from the Greek word *polis*, meaning *city*. The term *polis* originally referred to a fortified place of refuge, but came to mean “the ruling political centre of a given district, or the territory ruled therefrom.”¹ The Greek States were small city States originally founded on a religious worship. According to Fustel de Coulanges “With the ancients, a city was never formed by degrees, by the slow increase of the number of men and houses. They founded a city at once, all entire in a day; but the elements of the city needed to be first ready, and this was the most difficult, and ordinarily the largest work. As soon as the families, the phratries, and the tribes had agreed to unite and have the same worship, they immediately founded the city as a sanctuary for this common worship, and thus the foundation of a city was always a religious act.”² Furthermore, “We must not picture to ourselves the city of these ancient ages as an agglomeration of men living


mingled together within the enclosure of the same walls. In the earliest times the city was hardly the place of habitation; it was the sanctuary where the gods of the community were; it was the fortress which defended them, and which their presence sanctified; it was the centre of the association, the residence of the king and the priests, the place where justice was administered; but the people did not live there. For several generations yet men continued to live outside the city, in isolated families, that divided the soil among them. Each of these families occupied its canton, where it had its domestic sanctuary, and where it formed, under the authority of its pater, an indivisible group. Then, on certain days, if the interests of the city or the obligations of the common worship called, the chiefs of these families repaired to the city and assembled around the king, either to deliberate or to assist at a sacrifice. If it was a question of war, each of these chiefs arrived, followed by his family and servants (sua manus): they were grouped by phratries, or curies, and formed the army of the city, under the command of the king.

When the State grew to embrace a larger area the term polis also embraced this wider area. Hence the term had primarily a political sense. The polis is the political centre, as opposed to the town in a geographical sense. Towns that were subordinate to the polis were not cities in this political sense.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines politics as “the art and science of government.” It is not pragmatism or “the art of the possible” as Otto von Bismarck famously claimed. Politics deals with how society should be governed.

What, then, is the relationship between politics and Christianity? Does Christianity have anything to do with politics? The correct answer to this question is that Christianity has a great deal to do with politics, indeed that the Christian religion is, by its very nature, a political faith. It is not merely that Christianity has a political dimension. Rather, in its purest form—i.e. when it appears unmixed with the compromising effects of syncretism with false religions and idolatrous spiritualities that are alien to its own

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 229.  \(^4\) Strathmann, op. cit., p. 517.
principles—the Christianity faith is essentially political in nature. Christianity is the true politics, and this is because the Church, the Christian community, is the true society, just as the Kingdom of God is the true social order, in the sense that all societies that turn away from the covenant social order established by God’s word are idolatrous, the abandonment of God’s true purpose for mankind and therefore the corruption and defacing of what humanity and human society were meant to be in the divinely ordained order of Creation. Rebellion against God and rejection of the covenant social order revealed in his law is a move from life to death, from the true meaning of man’s life to a false meaning for life, from the true humanity to human corruption and depravity, from true society to social dysfunctionality and disintegration, with all the consequences that such apostasy entails. If the history of the human race has taught us anything it is surely this, since as Scripture declares, “he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death” (Pr. 8:36).

In relation to the Christian religion the term politics can be used in two senses—in a general sense and in a more specific sense. Christianity is inevitably political in both these senses. We shall look first at politics as a general category for understanding the Christian faith.

§2
Politics as a General Category for Understanding the Christian Faith

Most of the Greek city States of classical antiquity aspired to and at various times established some form of democratic rule, i.e. government of the State by the “people,” the free citizens. The

5 “[T]hough democracy was not everywhere victorious—though even the states in which it was most firmly established were exposed to the dangers of oligarchical conspiracies—yet everywhere the people aspired to it; and we may say that the chief feature of the domestic history of most Greek cities, from the end of the seventh century forward, is an endeavour, here successful, there frustrated, to establish or maintain popular government” (J. B. Bury and R. Meiggs,
Greek word for people in this sense was *demos*, from which we derive the English word *democracy*. In classical Greek the term *demos* "denotes the people as organized into a body politic" as opposed to the *laos*, which refers to the unorganized people at large. *Demos* is a political term. The assembly of the *demos* for political purposes was called the *ecclesia*. For example, in Athens the *ecclesia* was the assembly of the *demos* at which all the officers of State not chosen by lot were elected. The *ecclesia*, therefore, was from the fifth century B.C. onwards in Athens and most Greek city States the assembly of the *demos*, the people constituted as a political body.

It is the Greek word *ecclesia* that the New Testament uses to refer to the assembly or congregation of believers and therefore that the Holy Spirit has chosen to denote the nature of the body of Christ, and which has usually but quite erroneously been translated in most English versions of the Bible as *church*. It is imperative, especially in the modern world, which is so much under the mesmerising sway of post-Enlightenment secular humanist idolatry of political power, that Christians recognise the significance of this fact. In using the term *ecclesia* to denote the assembly of the body of Christ, the society of the faithful, the Holy Spirit has given us an intensely political term. The body of Christ is a political body. She is the *ecclesia*, the congregation of the freemen of the New Jerusalem.

For those with ears to hear, this fact thunders out from the pages of Scripture, only to be smothered and buried by centuries...

*A History of Greece to the Death of Alexander the Great* [London: Macmillan Press, (1900) 1981], p. 104; cf. Fustel de Coulanges, *op. cit.*, pp. 267ff, 327ff. However, the free citizens who were able to vote constituted only a part of the populations of Greek city States. In fifth century B.C. Athens, and generally throughout the ancient Greek world, with the exception of Sparta, somewhere between a third and half the population were slaves. Women could not vote either.


10 Tyndale’s translation is an exception to this erroneous tradition. See further definition §1 in the Excursus on p. 43ff. *supra*. 
of mistranslation and the irrelevant spiritualising of God’s word, which has rendered the modern Church’s mission in the political sphere of life virtually useless. The result has been that instead of discipling the nations to Christ, as he commanded in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18–20), the modern Church has been reduced to cleaning up secular humanism, accepting and compromising with its principles and practices, conforming to its institutional norms and way of life, content only with cleaning its collars and cuffs and presenting it as something it is not. But the Lord Jesus Christ did not come into this world to provide secular humanism with a laundry service. He came to claim the kingdoms of this world for himself as his rightful inheritance (Ps. 2:7–9), and he commissioned his Church to disciple the nations.11 The Church will not have fulfilled her mission, nor will she enter her rest, and therefore will not see the end of her tribulation (Acts 14:22), until it can be said that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev. 11:15).

The word *ecclesia* is *not* a cultic term, i.e. a term denoting the meeting of a group of people united by their devotion to a particular deity and the maintenance and promotion of his cultus. *Ecclesia* is a thoroughly political term denoting the assembly or congregation of those who are members of a body politic. To be a member of the Christian *ecclesia*, therefore, means to be called *out of* the world of unbelief and sin and *into* a new political community with its own social order: the Kingdom of God. There were many words available to denote cultic groups in classical Greek culture and literature, which the authors of the New Testament could have used to identify the Church primarily as a cultic group devoted to maintaining the cult of Jesus,12 and indeed pagan writers did use such words to describe the Church. Even Eusebius refers to Christians as *thiasotai*, i.e. members of a *thiasos*, a pagan religious

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11 See further the Excursus on p. 112ff. infra.
12 “[A]lthough ἐκκλησία is from the very first a secular and worldly expression, it expresses the supreme claim of the Christian community in face of the world. Intrinsically a Christian cultic society . . . might well have selected various other words to describe themselves. The world of societies and mystery groups offered a wealth of such terms” (K. L. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 515).
But the Bible, written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, does not use such words of the Church. It does not identity the Church as a mystery cult. According to A. D. Nock an inquisitive non-believer in the ancient Roman world who gained access to a Christian assembly expecting to find some kind of mystery cult would have been disappointed. He would have heard, says Nock, “scriptural readings, a little wearisome, perhaps, by reason of their length, an exhortation like those of the synagogue, and his impression here also may well have been that this was of the nature of a philosophical school. If he was able to stay for the central ceremony, he would have difficulty in recognizing it as cultus in any ordinary sense. The officiates did not use a fixed form of words, followed as in Roman prayers through fear that the supernatural powers invoked would not give what was desired if one syllable or gesture was varied.”

Furthermore, in the context of the Graeco-Roman world in which the Christian gospel was first proclaimed outside Judea the worship of Christ as an object of personal devotion was not prohibited. At the time of the Caesars the ancient Roman laws prohibiting the worship of foreign gods were no longer strictly enforced, having been subverted by the many foreign mystery cults that were popular in Rome. “The Romans, who were religiously inclined,” said Augustus Neander, “attributed their sovereignty of the world to this policy of conciliating the gods of every nation. Even without the limits of their own country, individuals of these nations were allowed the free exercise of their opinions; and hence Rome, into which there was a constant influx of strangers.

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13 Ibid., p. 515f. A θίᾰσος was “a band or company, that marches through the streets dancing and singing, esp. in honour of Bacchus . . . it seems sometimes to have been a sort of religious brotherhood” (Liddell and Scott, op. cit., p. 677b).


16 But note the political focus of the official religion of ancient Rome in the early centuries of the Christian era discussed below.
from all quarters of the world, became the seat of every description of religion.” Charles Norris Cochrane refers to the “easy toleration which was normally accorded to ‘unlicensed cults’” by the Roman authorities. Consequently, devotion to Christ and the maintenance of his cultus was not in itself considered a problem in ancient Rome at the beginning of the Christian era. All the gods found their place in Roman culture. Jesus was not an exception. At one point the Emperor Tiberius had even proposed to the Senate that Jesus be consecrated as a Roman god. Hadrian is said to have built temples in Christ’s honour and Alexander Severus had in his private chapel statues of Christ and Abraham. Even the apostate emperor Julian was prepared to accept the Jehovah of Judaism into the pantheon of his syncretistic religion. He also recalled the banished Christian clergy and insisted on equal

18 Charles Norris Cochrane, Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine [Oxford University Press, 1944], p. 225.
toleration for the Jews and all Christian sects.\textsuperscript{22} The worship of Jesus as the deity of a devotional mystery cult posed no threat to Rome. But this is not how the Bible proclaims Christ, nor was it how the early Church proclaimed Christ. Rome rejected Christianity not because it rejected the worship of Christ as a god, but rather because Christianity represented a rival political order to the Roman Empire. The Romans perceived the Christian faith as a political threat to Rome, and the proclamation of Christ as Lord as a political offence, not a religious offence in the narrow sense.

Had Christianity been merely one more cult among the many mystery cults that existed in Rome there would have been no problem. But Christianity is not a mystery cult.\textsuperscript{23} The Christian Church, i.e. the body of Christ, is an ecclesia, a political body that acknowledges one King as Lord over all, whose law is to be obeyed by all, and who tolerates no rivals. To worship Christ merely as the object of some devotional cultus is a denial of his lordship. The point for Rome was simply this: either Caesar is Lord or Christ is Lord. As long as Caesar was acknowledged as Lord, Christians were permitted to worship Jesus as the object of their personal devotion. In other words they were permitted to practise their faith as a Christian mystery cult—i.e. as a personal salvation cult. But their politics had to be the politics of Rome and it was submission to this political principle that was symbolised by emperor worship. As Stewart Perowne pointed out: “Whereas for the Christian politics must always be the servant of religion, for the pagan it is the other way round—religion must serve the ends of policy; and that is the fundamental cause of the opposition of Christian and pagan


\textsuperscript{23} On the relationship of Christianity to the devotional cultus and the nature of Christianity as a religion see my essay “Christianity as a Cult” in \textit{Common-Law Wives and Concubines: Essays on Covenantal Christianity and Contemporary Western Culture} (Taunton: The Kuyper Foundation, 2003), pp. 9–19.
polities.” It was no different for Rome. The function of Roman religion in the age of the emperors was political, i.e. to act as social cement and to support the State. Referring to the official cults authorised by the Roman college of pontiffs C. N. Cochrane writes: “In origin and purpose, in the various techniques of propitiation and augury which they employ, in their ritual of purification and appeasement, their one and only object is to maintain the ‘peace of the gods’ (pax deorum). And for this literally anything will serve, so long as it is felt to be ‘politically’ expedient; even though, as with certain importations from the Orient, it may be found necessary to emasculate or quarantine the cult lest it should ‘pollute’ the native atmosphere. But to say this is to suggest that the spirit of official religion was utterly pragmatic. Accordingly it becomes purely irrelevant to inquire into its substantial truth or falsehood; ‘formally’ speaking, a question of this kind simply does not arise . . . It is only by appreciating these facts that we can possibly understand how intelligent and high-minded citizens like Cicero or the emperor Augustus himself could have given any countenance to practices which, as they perfectly well knew, were sheer and unmitigated humbug, justifying themselves on the ground that these were material to the preservation of social order.” Accordingly, Seneca “attacked ‘superstition’ but recommended the worship of the political gods both as ‘a matter of form’ and as expedient ‘for binding the masses to civil society.’” Augustus Neander observed that “Ideas of the universal rights of man, of universal religious freedom and liberty of conscience, were altogether foreign to the views of the ancient world. Nor could it well be otherwise: for with them the idea of the state was the highest idea of ethics—the end and realization of the supreme good. Consequently the development of whatever else is good, or an object of human desire, was made dependent on this. And so even the religious element also was

26 Cochrane, op. cit., p. 101f.
27 Ibid., p. 163.
subordinated to the political. They knew of none but state religions and national gods. It was Christianity that first of all and alone substituted more enlarged views for this narrow principle of antiquity.28 Instead of national deities, and the paramount obligation of political ties, it taught men to worship the one God of all human [sic], and to see in all men alike the common image of that one God, while, in the place of the state as the centre of human interest, it substituted an universal kingdom of God, embracing and superior to all human polities. Looked at from this point of view, which was the one actually taken by the ancient world, a defection from the religion of the state could not appear otherwise than as a crime against the state.”29 Neander goes on to point out that “all this especially applies to the ancient Roman world, with its exclusive political principle, which engrossed every other interest.”30

The great adversary of Christ—indeed the great Antichrist—in the early centuries of the Church’s history was the State as conceived by classical antiquity, not the worship of the pagan gods. In his study of Christianity and classical culture C. N. Cochrane refers to “the Aristotelian doctrine that man is an animal whose potentialities can be realised only in the polis” and goes on to argue that Aristotle “fully agrees with Plato in his supposing that the individual substance possesses significance only, so to speak, as the ‘carrier’ of the type; furthermore, that, while everything else in him

28 This statement is open to criticism, as the easy acceptance of the eastern cults in Rome demonstrates. Fustel de Coulanges seems to make the same claim for Christianity (op. cit., p. 391ff.). According to Stewart Perowne, however, “The Alexandrian system did away with this narrow religious nationalism for ever. Henceforth religion was to know no frontiers, no nationality. This idea, which sounds so modern, so ‘Christian’, in fact antedates Christianity by three centuries” (op. cit., p. 54). Nevertheless, the point I wish to emphasise here is that the official religion of Rome was maintained and outward compliance with its ceremonies and rituals was required almost entirely for rational political reasons, i.e. to support the Roman State, not out of respect for or serious religious devotion to the Roman gods. See further the quotation from Francis Legge at note 44 on p. 71 infra.


belongs to the ephemeral world of \( \gamma\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon\alpha\sigma\varsigma \) [generation] and \( \phi\theta\rho\omicron\acute{\alpha} \) [decay], the ‘typical’ alone is permanent, essential, and intelligible (\( \pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\varepsilon\iota\pi\sigma\theta\acute{\eta} \mu\acute{\iota} \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \kappa\alpha\theta\omicron\omicron\lambda\upsilon\omicron \))31; finally that for the realization of this permanent, essential, and intelligible ‘part’ of his being, what he requires is to live in the \( \textit{polis} \).”32 Moreover, for Aristotle “the \( \textit{polis} \) constitutes a response to the specifically human demand for a specifically human order. In this sense it may properly be described as ‘natural’. But its ‘naturalness’ is in no sense that of a spontaneous growth. On the contrary, it is that of an institution designed, within limits conditioned by the potentialities of the material, to secure mankind from ‘accident’ or ‘spontaneity’ (\( \tau\alpha\upsilon\alpha\omicron\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\omicron \)), thereby making possible the attainment of his proper \( \tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma \) [end]. From this standpoint the order embodied in the \( \textit{polis} \) is profoundly unhistorical. What it promises, indeed, is immunity from the ‘flux’ which is all that idealism discerns in mere movement. And this is the reason why, according to Aristotle, ‘the man who first invented the state was the greatest of benefactors.’”33 In other words the State is man’s saviour; it is that in which man lives and moves and has his being. “If we call to mind” said Fustel de Coulanges “that among the Greeks the state was an absolute power, and that no individual right was of any value against it, we can understand what an immense interest every man had, even the most humble, in possessing political rights,—that is to say, in making a part of the government; the collective sovereignty being so important that a man could be nothing unless he was part of this sovereign. His security and dignity depended upon this.”34 The State therefore defines man, who is effectively conceived as being made in the image of the State. Similarly, Joseph Lecler writes that in Aristo-

31 “All knowledge is of the universal.”

32 Cochrane, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 74, 82. According to Aristotle “it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either above humanity, or below it; he is the ‘Tribeless, lawless, hearthless one,’ whom Homer denounces” (\textit{Politics} [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1905, trans. Benjamin Jowett], p. 28 [1.2, 1253a]). Compare this with Hegel’s doctrine of the State quoted in note 71 on p. 82, and at notes 75 and 76 on p. 84 \textit{infra}.

33 Cochrane, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 82.

34 Fustel de Coulanges, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 328.
tle's *Politics* the State is "presented as a natural product of human evolution, deriving from the life of the family and then from that of the village—as a 'perfect society' based on natural law, without any aid from Revelation."³⁵ By contrast, in the biblical perspective the State is not the natural product of the evolution of human society but rather an institution established by divine mandate to mitigate specific evil effects of the abnormal condition prevailing as a result of man's fall into sin.³⁶ For the Christian, God is the one in whom man lives and moves and has his being (Acts 17:28), the one in whose image mankind is made, and therefore the one who defines mankind.

In the ancient world this spirit of Antichrist achieved its most potent manifestation in the cult of the Roman emperors. Speaking of the early Church Christopher Dawson said that "The Christian . . . regarded the official worship of the emperor as a supreme act of blasphemy—the deification of material power and the setting up of the creature in place of the Creator. So long as the Empire confined itself to its secular function as the guardian of peace and order, the Church was ready to recognise it as the representative of God, but as soon as it claimed an exclusive allegiance and attempted to dominate the souls as well as the bodies of its subjects, the Church condemned it as a representative of Antichrist. Thus the denunciations of the Apocalypse are as integral a part of the Christian attitude to the Empire as St. Paul's doctrine of loyal submission. To St. John the official cultus of the emperor, as organised in the province of Asia, is the worship of the Beast, and Rome herself, the *Dea Roma* of the state religion, is the great harlot enthroned upon the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."³⁷

Sacrificing to the emperor—i.e. the burning of incense on an alter before an image of the emperor—was an act of political

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³⁶ See also the discussion of Thomas Aquinas' compromise with the pagan Aristotelian doctrine of the State on p. 136ff. *infra.*
³⁷ Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 208. See also the quotation from Stauffer in note 101 on p. 93f. *infra.*
compliance. By the time of Claudius it had become, says A. D. Nock, an outward sign of loyalty that involved little sentiment. Christians were not required to believe in the divinity of the emperor; they were required merely to observe the rite outwardly, thereby acknowledging the political supremacy of Caesar. Neither the people nor the emperors themselves, with the exception of those that were mad, actually believed that the emperors were gods. Augustus laughed at the idea and Vespasian mocked the prospect of his apotheosis on his death bed. Accordingly, many of the magistrates, who felt no personal antipathy to Christianity, urged the Christians who were brought before them to comply, at least outwardly, with what the laws required; viz., to observe the religious ceremonies prescribed by the state; and explained to them that the state concerned itself only with the outward act, and that consequently, so long as these were performed, it would leave them free to believe and worship in their heart whatever they chose.

Rome did not have a problem with people worshipping Jesus as an object of personal devotion. The mystery cults were well-established in Rome at the time of the persecutions and the practice of the Christian faith as merely one more mystery cult among many posed no threat to Rome. The problem was with the idea that someone or something other than Rome itself, as symbolised and embodied in the Roman emperor, should have a prior political claim on anyone’s allegiance. The real battle that the early Church faced was not between Christ and any of the pagan gods and religions but rather between Christ and Caesar, both of whom claimed divine authority and sovereignty over the same world. This was a political battle. As Ethelbert Stauffer explains: “Such, then, was the inner state of the people of the Roman world. What was the truth? Reason of state must decide what was valid and invalid, what was to be said and not said. What was faith? Everyone had ceased to believe in the gods, or the mysteries. All that was left was belief in the emperor. Nor was even that taken

39 Stauffer, op. cit., p. 211; Cochrane, op. cit., p. 129.
40 Neander, op. cit. (1869), Vol. I, p. 120f.
seriously, in the end. No one believed in anything. The veneer of piety masked an absence of all belief. Was the Christian far wrong when he said that the Gospel in the Roman world was the witness to the truth in a world full of semblance and lies and self-deceit? To speak of deceit was no cheap Christian reproach, but deceit was in fact the fatal sickness of the worship of the emperor, known by all, acknowledged by none.”41 In other words, observing the cult of the emperor was a form of what we should perhaps today call “political correctness.” The political culture of ancient Rome (idolatry of political power justified by deceit—“spin”) offers a striking comparison with the political idolatry that characterises modern Western culture, though the latter exists in a more consistently secularised form. The materialism of ancient Rome also offers comparison with modern Western culture.42 Nonetheless, the conflict between Rome and Christianity was primarily a political conflict. “It is, indeed, true” wrote C. N. Cochrane “that Christianity never preached or advocated the forcible overthrow of the Roman order. None the less, it regarded that order as doomed to extinction by reason of its inherent deficiencies, and it confidently anticipated the period of its dissolution as a prelude to the establishment of the earthly sovereignty of Christ.”43

Christianity was a political problem for Rome. The idea that the conflict between Rome and Christianity was a religious conflict in the narrow sense of the term, i.e. a conflict caused by the refusal of Christians to worship the pagan gods, is false. Francis

41 Stauffer, op. cit., p. 211f.
42 According to Dawson “The true religion of society was not the philosophic paganism of men like Marcus Aurelius or St. Augustine’s correspondent, Maximus of Madaura, but the cult of material pleasure and success. Christianity had more to fear from Trimalchio than from Julian, and the real Antichrist was not Apollo, but Belial, ‘the prince of this world.’ And this is fully recognised by the majority of Christian writers from the time of St. Paul down to the fifth century. St. Augustine himself, in a well-known chapter of The City of God, reveals the naked materialism which lay behind the opposition of pagan society to Christianity, and shows that it was as irreconcilable with the old Roman traditions as with Christian teaching. Its ideal was not civic virtue and patriotism, but to have a good time and bigger and better shows” (op. cit., p. 205; see also Augustine, The City of God, Bk II.20). 43 Cochrane, op. cit., p. 177.
Legge stated the real nature of the conflict between Rome and Christianity: “The... picture of ‘Diana or Christ,’ representing a young woman called upon by a sympathetic Roman magistrate to choose between sacrificing to the statute of the many-breasted Artemis of Ephesus and condemnation to death as a Christian, attained great popularity in its day, and shows with fair clearness the view of the relations between Paganism and early Christianity supposed at the end of the last [i.e. nineteenth] century to have been current in the first. Yet hardly anything could give a falser idea of the religious history of the period. The officials of the Roman Empire in time of persecution sought to force the Christians to sacrifice, not to any of the heathen gods, but to the Genius of the Emperor and the Fortune of the City of Rome; and at all times the Christians’ refusal was looked upon not as a religious but as a political offence. For the rest, the worship of the Olympian gods had, when Christianity came to the surface, almost entirely died out, and both Greek and Latin writers witness to the contempt with which it was regarded by both races at the beginning of our era.”

Nevertheless, the emperors continued to use the old religion for political purposes. “In the Principate, it is true, the old belief in the gods was encouraged by Augustus and his successors on political grounds. But the philosophers shrugged their shoulders at the superstition of the people, who worshipped the grave of Zeus in Crete, or recounted tales of heroes playing dice with the gods in the underworld, and bringing back a golden towel as a souvenir. And when Christians were offended by such stories of the gods the philosopher Celsus smilingly explained that nobody really believed these things any more, and for that very reason people should not be asked to believe their stories about Christ... It was the end of the old religion of the gods, which ceased to be taken seriously.”

45 Stauffer, op. cit., p. 206f.
Christopher Dawson makes the same point: “The religious element in ancient culture, which had been the inspiration of civic patriotism in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C., had almost disappeared from the cosmopolitan civilisation of the imperial age. The temples and the gods remained, but they had lost their spiritual significance and had become little more than an occasion for civic ceremonial.”46 Indeed, Dawson described the Roman Empire as the “greatest experiment in secular civilisation that the world had ever seen”47 and goes on to point out that “It is a mistake to suppose that the age of the Empire was a religious one because it was marked by so many new religious movements. The mystery religions and the tendency towards mysticism and asceticism are a proof of the religious bankruptcy of society which drove the religious-minded to seek spiritual life outside the life of the city and of society in an esoteric ideal of individual salvation. Even Stoicism, the one sect of the time which inculcated a disinterested ideal of social duty, was fundamentally an unsocial and individualistic creed. The reigning culture had become almost completely secularised, and the religious and the social instincts were becoming opposed to each other.”48

Moreover, as Ethelbert Stauffer makes clear: “The Roman authorities were fundamentally tolerant in religious matters. Every people of the empire could have its own beliefs, and every individual could strive for salvation in his own way. No religious community was suppressed so long as it fell in with public order. Only the worship of the emperor was obligatory on all, for it was grounded in imperial law, and the Roman authorities permitted no laxity in matters of law. The worship of the emperor was therefore not fundamentally a matter of belief, but one of public order and discipline, a duty for civilians and soldiers alike, an obligation of honour which every loyal subject strove eagerly to fulfil.”49 Denis de Rougemont summed up the real nature of Roman society:

47 Dawson, op. cit., p. 200. However, Dawson describes this Roman experiment in secular civilisation as a failure.
"Man no longer drew his unique dignity from some indestructible essence, but from the personage which he had become in the city now that the city was supported by the edifice of the law and of institutions duly set in a hierarchy. Social puritanism, a morality of service of the state, is what made the grandeur of the Empire and its subjects’ poverty of spirit. If dissociation permanently hung over the Greek city-state, it was collectivist sclerosis that brought about the fall of Rome... Christianity had to contend with no more than a civic religion which frustrated the hunger of the soul."

The refusal of Christians to burn the incense was a political statement that Rome could not ignore without conceding everything in principle to the God of the Christians. Burning the incense was not something a Christian could do without conceding everything in principle to the Roman political idolatry that it symbolised. Refusal to burn the incense said everything—"Caesar is not Lord; Jesus Christ is Lord. No sphere of life is beyond his jurisdiction and no area of life is religiously neutral."

Consequently, as Dawson points out, "it was inevitable that Christianity should come into conflict with the pagan government and society. To the ordinary man the Christian was an anti-social atheist, 'an enemy of the human race,' who cut himself off from everything that made life worth living. To the authorities he was a centre of passive disaffection, a disloyal subject who would not take his share of the public service or pay homage to the emperor." Nor was the problem merely one of perception on Rome’s part—i.e. paranoia. According to Stauffer “Christianity offered in fact the only open resistance in the whole empire to the cult of the emperor. This resistance movement became more and more dangerous through its alliance in the capital itself with the senators of the old school, and through its penetration of the ruling classes, of the court itself, and even the imperial family." As we have seen, the word ecclesia is an intensely political term not a cultic term. For Christians to claim that they are members of the ecclesia

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51 Dawson, op. cit., p. 208.
52 Stauffer, op. cit., p. 163 f., my emphasis.
of another kingdom with a divine King whose authority extends to all nations and to whom all men must, and one day will, bow the knee was a great political offence to Rome. Worse, it was treason against Rome because Christ was proclaimed as a superior Lord to Caesar, a King above the Roman emperor to whom Christians prayed “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth . . .” This is made clear by the complaints lodged against Paul and Silas with the rulers of Thessalonica by the non-believing Jews: “These all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17:7). Though malicious in intent, this was not a false claim. The Christians did proclaim another, and indeed a superior, King. This is evident also in a church liturgy from the third century, which states: “Almighty God, to Thee be the glory, the honour, the majesty, the adoration and worship, to Thee and Thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and God and King.” To this the congregation responded: “It is worthy and meet, Christ is Victor, Christ is King, Christ is Caesar. His is the glory for ever. Amen.” Christians claimed that Jesus Christ is Lord, not the Roman emperor. That lordship comprehends everything, politics included. In the end the only way to save Rome politically was for Caesar to bow the knee to Christ.

The problem with the Christians from the perspective of Rome was not that they worshipped the wrong deity, but that they were traitors to Rome; i.e. they espoused a rival political order to that of Rome. In this the Romans were entirely correct, and nothing demonstrates this fact better than the use of the term ecclesia as the proper designation for the members of Christ’s congregation. The Church, as the covenant community of the Lord’s people, is a political organism.

This concept of the covenant community as a political body is confirmed by Scripture in other ways. The Christian community is described in Scripture as a nation: “ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people . . .” (1 Pet.

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54 Cf. Stauffer’s interesting comments on Clemens and Domitilla and their sons in *ibid.*, p. 164ff.
The Politics of God and the Politics of Man

2:9). It would be easy, given the familiarity of biblical language and imagery bequeathed to Western culture by two thousand years of Christian history, to pass by this language without noticing anything of political significance in it. And indeed this has usually been the case. But we must remember that this is a quotation from the Old Testament in which the people of Israel are described in the very same terms. Moses was commanded to speak these words to the children of Israel: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Ex. 19:5–6). According to Stauffer there is a connection here with the word **ecclesia**: “The Church that calls itself [sic] ecclesia means to be neither Synagogue nor anti-Synagogue nor yet para-Synagogue, but the covenant community of the Messiah, seeing its roots back beyond the age of the formation of the Synagogue in the very beginnings of Israel. She intends to revive the inheritance of the Mosaic covenant community and now at last bring its original purpose to its fulfilment: the hallowing of God’s name.”

Moreover, Jesus came preaching the **Kingdom of God** (Mt. 4:23; Mk 1:14) and believers are heirs of this kingdom, indeed joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). “Let us make sure” says V. H. Stanton “that we realize the extraordinarily prominent position which the subject of the Kingdom of God occupies in the Gospels, more especially in the Synoptists. This is essential if we would form a true conception of the nature of Christianity... descriptions of the characteristics of the Kingdom, expositions of its laws, accounts of the way men were actually receiving it, forecasts of its future, make up the whole central portion of the synoptic narrative.” Likewise, Herman Ridderbos says that “the gospel by which the entire New Testament **kerygma** is summarized

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(Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16) has the kingdom of God and its coming for its content. It may be rightly said that the whole of the preaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles is concerned with the kingdom of God, and that in Jesus Christ’s proclamation of the kingdom we are face to face with the specific form of expression of the whole of his revelation of God.”57 In short, “In our Lord’s teaching the Kingdom of God is the representative and all-embracing summary of his distinctive mission.”58 But the long-established traditions of mysticism, pietism, and other-worldliness among Christians have exercised an almost blinding influence upon the Church’s reading of Scripture at many points, and this has made it is all too easy to forget that a kingdom is a political concept, not a cultic concept. To speak of the Kingdom of God is to speak of a divine political order that stands in contrast to the politics of man. Christians throughout the world are not merely members of the various nations who worship the same God in their personal devotions. They constitute a nation in their own right, a distinctive people, called out of and separated from the kingdoms of the world, and born from above through faith in Christ into another kingdom—a kingdom with its own political order.

The form of this political order is absolute monarchy. Regardless of the particular forms of administration under which the Monarch’s sovereignty is delegated to his ministers in the different spheres of life (i.e. family, Church, State), the Christian nation is governed by an absolute Monarch whose law is unchangeable, whose jurisdiction is unlimited, and whose will is final. His ministers, or vicegerents, who govern under his law in the various institutional aspects of the life of the nation, may or may not be chosen by means of elections, depending on the nature of the


institutions (e.g. elections may be used in choosing elders—Ex. 18:25; Dt. 1:13–15; Acts 14:23; cf. 6:3–6, but such elections have no place in the family). Nevertheless, those chosen by whatever means are bound absolutely to govern these institutions under the will of God as revealed in his law. This applies not only in the government of the Church but in the family and the State also. No Christian politician, chosen by whatever means, or belonging to any particular political party, has any dispensation to serve any other Lord. In his work as a politician he owes an absolute and unswerving loyalty and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rome recognised the inevitable conflict between Christ and Caesar that this fact created. So did the early Church. It is the modern Church’s failure to recognise the inevitable and exhaustive nature of this antithesis that has in large measure rendered the Church so irrelevant and powerless in the modern world. We can put this another way by saying that the modern Church has failed to recognise that all political thought and action is inevitably religious, and that since Christianity is a religion it must of necessity have a distinctive view of political order. Had the early Christians been prepared to do what the modern Church on the whole seems prepared to do, namely to restrict the worship of Christ to a personal salvation cult, which is what the various permitted mystery cults were, there would have been no conflict with Rome. But they were not prepared to do this. The conflict was a political conflict because it was a religious conflict. It has been observed that in Rome

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59 The word translated as ordained in the Authorized Version at Acts 14:23 is χειροτονήσαντες, aorist participle of the verb χειροτονέω, meaning to vote for, or elect by show of hands. This word was used for the stretching out of one’s hand for the purpose of giving one’s vote in the Athenian ἐκκλησία (Liddell and Scott, op. cit., p. 1721b).


61 Even in the mediaeval period when feudalism was the social order of the West all oaths of fealty to lords, including the liege lord, included a saving clause for God. No one could swear fealty to any lord in such a way that his duty to God was compromised. Cf. Frederick Pollock and Frederic W. Maitland, The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I (Cambridge University Press, [1895] 1911), Vol. I, p. 300.
“The framework for the religious and familial acts of piety was Rome itself, the central and most sacred community. Rome strictly controlled all rights of corporation, assembly, religious meetings, clubs, and street gatherings, and it brooked no possible rival to its centrality. One of the reasons for the later supremacy of the military bodies over Rome was the lack of any organized bodies within the state to provide a counter-balance to the two swollen bodies which became the rulers of the Empire: the army and the abiding and growing civil service. The state alone could organize; short of conspiracy, the citizen could not. On this ground alone, the highly organized Christian Church was an offense and an affront to the state, and an illegal organization readily suspected of conspiracy.”

The early Christians proclaimed Christ as Lord not only with their words, but with their lives also in the way they lived and organised themselves as a community, and in doing this they constituted a distinctive social and political order that was in direct and open conflict with the social and political order of Rome. “Very early in her life the Church set up agencies to deal with every sphere of life. They had their own courts, schools, exchequers and hospitals. It was their faith that dominated every sphere of life; to have any area of life outside the Lordship of Christ was considered idolatry. The reason behind the violent Roman persecutions of the third century was not religious, but rather that, as the charge read, the Christian Church was—imperium in imperio—a sovereignty within a sovereignty; an absolute authority within the jurisdiction of another. It was because they were regarded as politically subversive that they had to be destroyed.” Speaking of Celsus’s opposition to Christianity A. D. Nock observed that “Both the Christians and their opponents came to think of themselves as a new people: and it is clear in the work of Celsus that his real aim was to persuade the Christians not to forget loyalty to the State in their devotion to

62 R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*, p. 92f. See also the quotation from Stewart Perowne at note 121 on p. 110 infra.

this new state within the State." According to Allen Brent "The victory of early Christianity and its success in annihilating its pagan rival both as a political and intellectual force is the victory of a state within a state, an imperium in imperio, which both challenged the State itself, and sought finally and unsuccessfully to replace it totally."

We must recognise, therefore, first, that the Kingdom of God, the body of Christ on earth, and the Christian ecclesia, are political concepts, and second, that the realisation of these concepts in human life and society constitutes a distinctive form of political action. There is a sense, therefore, in which we can say that the Kingdom of God is primarily a political order and that the Christian faith is primarily a political faith. Politics for the Christian is not merely one aspect of life among others, but the whole of it. Christianity is about politics.

Not only is it the case that for the Christian politics, in this general sense, is the primary context of life; it is the case also for the non-believer. Life is primarily political because politics is inevitably religious and has as its raison d’être, its entire rationale, the administration of the law of an ultimate authority, i.e. a God, in the totality of life. In this sense, therefore, we can say that Christianity is the only true politics. All other political ideologies are false, i.e. idolatrous. There is only either obedient or disobedient politics in God’s sight. The body of Christ, as the polis (the city) of God, whose demos (people) constitute the ecclesia (the body politic) of the Kingdom of God, is a political organism, and all other political organisms are apostate and in rebellion against God, their only rightful King, to whom the nations of the earth have been given as his rightful inheritance. Christianity is the true politics, the only

64 A. D. Nock, op. cit., p. 207.
67 It is not being claimed here that all political institutions other than the Christian Church are apostate, but that all political organisms other than the Kingdom
true politics. Christianity is primarily a political order because it concerns the Kingdom of God, which is the heart of the Christian gospel, and which we are commanded to put first above all else (Mt. 6:33).

It is important at this point that we understand precisely what is being claimed here and what is not being claimed. First, it must be remembered that I am using the term politics here in a wide sense as a general category for understanding the Christian faith. I am not, at least at this point, referring to a particular form of civil government or to a particular form of the administration of public justice.

Second, it has been claimed that Christianity is primarily a political faith because it concerns the Kingdom of God, which is a political order because a kingdom is a political concept. However, it is clear from Scripture that the Kingdom of God is not of this world (Jn 18:36). There is, therefore, a radical break, a discontinuity, an antithesis, between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world. Christ’s authority and power are not of this world—in other words he does not derive his authority and power from the political orders and empires of men. His authority comes from God. But this does not mean that his authority has no relation to the world of politics and the empires of men, that it does not address the political life of men and nations. It does. We are commanded to pray “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). The source of Christ’s authority and power is not in this world; but its object is the transformation of the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of Christ (Ps. 2; Rev. 11:15). The Christian nation or kingdom is not just another political order among the many political orders that exist in the


68 See further p. 134ff. infra, particularly the quotations from Augustine at note 40 and Abraham Kuyper at note 41 on p. 142 and the discussion at note 40 on the same page.
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world. It stands out over and against these and is completely different in origin and nature. There is a complete antithesis between the two. Nevertheless, the theatre in which God’s kingdom is to be manifested is the world of men and nations, not some vague otherworldly spiritual realm. It is the nations that are to be brought under the discipline of Christ by the preaching of the gospel (Mt. 28:18–20).

Third, there is a fundamental principle of secular humanist politics that demonstrates very clearly the nature of the antithesis that exists between the kingdoms of the world, or the politics of man, and the kingdom of Christ, i.e. the politics of God. In the politics of man human government takes priority over all else. Man becomes the measure of all things. Man is supreme. This supremacy must manifest itself in the form of human government over all spheres of life. This inevitably leads to totalitarianism and the denial of human freedom in the name of man, indeed even in the name of the rights of man. Well did Jesus say “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Jn 8:36). There is no real freedom outside of Christ, only idolatry, and all idols are tyrants that enslave men and crush their spirits. This is no less the case with the modern idolatry of democratic political power in which man rules himself according to his own law in the name of human rights. This kind of human autonomy from God, i.e. the proclamation of the rights of man, can only be achieved by denying the rights of God over all spheres of life. Such a proclamation of the rights of man, because it is a denial of the rights of God, is necessarily in principle also a denial of all the freedoms that God has given to men, and ultimately will inevitably produce a society that in practice denies these freedoms in the name of man as the captain of his own fate. This is a serious problem that we now have to face in Britain. Politics in modern Britain has become a relentless campaign to strip men of their legitimate freedom under God and replace it with State control over the whole of life in the name of human rights that are superficial and ineffective and virtually meaningless to the individual. The antithesis here

69 On the nature of the antithesis see further pp. 254–275 infra.
reaches its zenith in the idolatry of secular humanism, which offers real men, or rather forces upon men, a new kind of salvation, a salvation in which the State, as the embodiment of man’s own idea of himself as God, rules over every facet of human life and provides men with their “rights” and the solutions to all their problems. This is the State as God, the new Rome. Hegel even refers to the State as “this actual God.” The only real difference between ancient Rome and the new Rome is the more consistently secularised form in which the new Rome is manifesting its tyranny. “Just as the church organized the faith during the medieval era in Europe,” says Shlomo Sand, “the national state regiments it in the modern era. The state sees itself as performing an eternal mission: it demands to be worshipped, has substituted strict civil registration for the religious sacraments of baptism and marriage, and regards those who question their national identity as traitors and heretics.”

70 Cf. Jacques Ellul’s interesting comment that “The state, whenever it expresses itself, makes law. There are no longer any norms to regulate the activity of the state; it has eliminated the moral rules that judged it and absorbed the legal rules that guided it. The state is a law unto itself and recognizes no rules but its own. When, in this way, technique breaks off the indispensable dialogue between the law and the state, it makes the state a god in the most theologically accurate sense of the term: a power which obeys nothing but its own will and submits to no judgment from without” (The Technological Society [London: Jonathan Cape, 1954] 1965, trans. John Wilkinson, p. 299).

71 “The state is the march of God in the world; its ground or cause is the power of reason realizing itself as will. When thinking of the idea of the state, we must not have in our minds any particular state, or particular institution, but must rather contemplate the idea, this actual God, by itself” (S. W. Dyde, trans., Hegel’s Philosophy of Right [London: George Bell and Sons, 1896], p. 247 [§258 add.]).

72 Shlomo Sand, The Invention of the Jewish People (London/New York: Verso, 2008) 2009, trans. Yael Lotan, p. 43f. Sand is here summarising the views of the American historian Carlton Hayes. Sand goes on to say: “There are significant differences between nationalism and the traditional religions. For example, the universalistic and proselytizing aspects that characterize a good part of the transcendental religions differ from the contours of nationalism, which tends to enclose itself. The fact that the nation almost always worships itself, rather than a transcendental deity, also affects the manner of rallying the masses for the state—not a permanent feature of the traditional world. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that nationalism is the ideology that most closely resembles the traditional
This is the religion by which Western societies live today. And yet the body of Christ, the Christian nation, those who are subjects of the Kingdom of God and who therefore belong to a different political order that claims their absolute loyalty, must also live amongst this apostate and rebellious political order in which man usurps the place of God and whose chief idol, the secular State, is accorded all the attributes of divinity, although in a secularised form. How are Christians to do this? How are the members of the ecclesia of God, a rival political order, to live among the political orders of men that now dominate society? How are we to live in the antithesis while both maintaining that antithesis and at the same time supplanting the political orders of man with the political order of God’s kingdom so that the latter triumphs over and vanquishes the former? (1 Jn. 5:4) How are we to practise the politics of God amongst the political orders of men?

The correct response to this question will involve us in a great deal of sacrifice. It cost many of the early Christians their lives. Unfortunately, the way that the modern Church has dealt with this question on the whole has been either to deny the validity of the question and embrace pietistic withdrawal, or, as with liberalism,
to deny the antithesis. Neither approach is correct. If we deny
the antithesis or the validity of the question the result will be that
we shall engage in the politics of man instead of the politics of
God. This may be self-conscious or unselfconscious. But it will be
inevitable. There is no third way politics for the Christian. There is
only the politics of God and the politics of man. Either we engage
in the politics of God or we succumb to the politics of man.

What is the difference? In what does the antithesis consist?
Simply in this, that in the politics of man the State, as the ultimate
embodiment of human Will, governs the life of the individual and
the society to which he belongs in terms of fallen man’s own defi-
nition of right and wrong, good and evil, a definition that rejects
God’s word, God’s law, as the touchstone of all truth at the outset
and replaces it with the pretended autonomy of human reason.74
In the politics of God man looks to God as the source of all good
and seeks to live in conformity with his will as it is revealed in
Scripture. In the politics of man, the individual and society look
to the State as the source of all good. The State provides for man’s
education, health care and welfare; it provides work, pensions,
runs the economy, controls the raising of children in the home
as well as outside the home; it is that in which man lives and moves
and has his being. The State is Lord, and as Hegel explained, “It
must further be understood that all the worth which the human
being possesses—all spiritual reality, he possesses only through
the State . . . For Truth is the Unity of the universal and subject-
ive Will; and the Universal is to be found in the State, its laws, its
universal and rational arrangements. The State is the Divine Idea
as it exists on Earth.”75 In other words the State is the incarnation
of divinity, man’s true God. Accordingly, Hegel tells us that “Man
must therefore venerate the state as a secular deity.”76 In the an-

74 On the pretended autonomy of human reason see further my book A Defence
of the Christian State: The Case Against Principled Pluralism and the Christian Alternative
75 G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History (New York: Dover Publications,
76 T. M. Knox, trans., Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (Oxford: The Clarendon Press
[1942] 1945), p. 285 [§272, add. 164]. The word that Hegel uses here to describe
cient world this ideology of the State (polis) as man’s saviour was sacralised in the figure of the divine-human ruler, supremely in the cult of the Roman emperors. The Church rejected this whole political ideology and confessed Jesus Christ as God incarnate, the divine-human Saviour and Ruler—i.e. Lord—whose kingdom is everlasting and to whom all the kings of the earth must and one day will bow the knee, Caesar included. “The New Testament writers” says Ethelbert Stauffer “radically rejected this apotheosis of human beings, particularly the cult of the emperors. The rejection is expressed in three ways. First, they refuse the emperor any sort of divine honours or acclamation. None has the right to claim worship save God and his Christ. Second, the rejection is seen in the names and titles of honour that are bestowed on Christ. Titles taken over from the old biblical tradition and which had become a staple part of the christology of the primitive Church found a new use as providing an antithesis to hellenistic ideas. New hellenistic names and formulae were also added to the Church’s vocabulary, names claimed for Christ alone, and making him a rival to the emperor. Third, and last, the Church expressed its rejection of hellenism in the far-reaching form of interpreting the ancient world’s adoration of its heroes, its apotheosis of the emperor and its expectation of a saviour in terms of its own theology of history as prophecies and anticipations of Jesus Christ and his saving work.”

The politics of God claims that Jesus Christ is Lord (i.e. Saviour and Ruler), God incarnate, and that we are to look to him as the source of all good and govern our lives and society according to his law. God is the one in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28), and the one whom we must worship. With the appearance of the modern godless and God-denying State on the stage of world history, therefore, we have the return of the ancient State as a secular deity is Irdisch-Göttliches, which means literally “Earthly-Godly.” According to Knox “Hegel here follows Kant who, e.g. at the end of his essay on Theory and Practice, refers to nation states as Erden-Götter” (ibid., n.), i.e. “Earth-Gods.”

Antichrist in secular form, since “Antichrist is the strongest world power in history. In him all political power is concentrated . . . In antichrist there is the final revelation of creaturely sovereignty” and the secular State claims complete sovereignty over both the individual and society. In 1938 Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy stated the problem in relation to Germany in the following way: “Nobody can understand the German’s exaltation of the ‘State’ unless he knows that it is rooted in the depreciation of a visible church. Today, four hundred years later [i.e. after Luther’s Reformation—SCP], the Hitler régime shows the reverse of the medal: his government commands more religious devotion than was ever asked by any pope or clergy. The balance between Church and monarchy has been upset because the Church has ceased to be real. For that reason German Protestantism has become shallow.”

In the modern State man incarnates his own Will as sovereign over his world; in other words man becomes, in the form of the secular State, his own God (Gen. 3:5).

Well, what are the consequences?

The triumph of secular humanism has led to a complete shift in the way people in British society think, speak and live, and it has also led to a complete shift in the way British society is governed. Under secular humanism the control and regulation of life by the State will continue relentlessly. It has to because this is the logic of the idolatry of man as his own God. This is why individual freedom is ultimately an obsolete concept for secular humanism. Even the terminology has now shifted decisively away from freedom to rights. This means that there has been a shift from the real, the tangible, the individual, to the abstract and the ideal, which must be embodied in some institution that has absolute control and authority. This move to the abstract is inevitable because individual men disagree and dispute with each other and their rights cannot be harmonised on an individual basis. Therefore the many (individuals) must always give way to the one, the abstract idea of human Will,

79 Ibid., p. 213, 215.
which is embodied in the State. The one and the many cannot be
reconciled on the basis of man as his own ultimate principle, man
as God. The question therefore is this: can the abstract, the ideal,
as embodied in the State, guarantee the freedom of the individual?
The answer is that it cannot. In enforcing the rights of one it must
negate the freedoms of another. The State, therefore, must rule
as an absolute authority and suspend the liberty of the individual
in principle. This is the only alternative to total anarchy for secular
humanism. According to Ernst Nolte, “The word ‘totalitarian,’ in
the sense of laying full claim to, and obligation on, a human being,
is applicable to every religion, every outlook on the world and on
life, even the liberal. But only in the eyes of liberalism is this form
really purely formal—that is, not ultimately concretizable and hence
Kant’s categorical imperative is its classic formulation. It
leaves religions free, tolerates them, because it does not regard truth
as demonstrable or personal freedom as definable. The only reason
it is non-totalitarian in the material sense, and appears to abandon
man to the mere whim of his moods, is because, from a formal
point of view, it is more totalitarian, that is, more inexorable, than
other ideologies.” But in the West it appears now that the more
liberalism has become disconnected from the Christian cultural

81 See for example Jean Jacques Rousseau’s concept of the “general will” in

82 On the philosophical question of the equal ultimacy of the one and many
and the irreconcilable nature of these concepts outside of Christian thought see R.

83 Ernst Nolte, *Three Forms of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National
Socialism* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965, trans. Leila Vennewitz], p. 219). Nolte goes on to say that “In an analogous sense Western Christianity is
also liberal. By distinguishing between God’s sphere and the emperor’s, it leaves
many possibilities open to political man; but it lays unyielding claim to his soul
for its path to salvation. The ancient world never knew this kind of separation,
this kind of freedom, even the *polis* was ideally a completely totalitarian unity
of the spiritual and the political” (*ibid*). It is just such a bifurcation between the
kingdoms of Christ and Caesar that I am here concerned to show is a misunder-
standing, indeed a complete distortion, of the Christian faith; and despite the
fact that it has been such a strongly held idea in some Christian traditions it has
never been the teaching of the Church universal. See for example the quotations
from Augustine and Abraham Kuyper at notes 40 and 41 respectively on p. 142
*infra*. 
matrix in which it originally developed the less its totalitarianism has remained purely formal and the more liberal regimes have sought to realise this totalitarianism in concrete social forms, and consequently the less freedom the liberal political establishment is willing to grant to Christians in the modern liberal societies of the West. Britain’s increasingly institutionalised apathy and even hostility to Christianity and the growing restriction of previously recognised fundamental freedoms stemming from its Christian past are testimony to this fact. It is precisely this trend that gives modern liberal Western States the character of totalitarianism similar to that of ancient Rome.84

Ultimate authority has to reside somewhere, and if there is no God then ultimate authority must belong to man. But such authority cannot belong to each man. Ultimate authority is therefore embodied in the State as the realisation of the abstract idea of human Will, and the one (the State) takes precedence over the many (individuals), thereby abridging the God-given liberty of the individual. The State, therefore, as Hegel tells us, is its own motive and absolute end; and the highest duty of the individual, over whom the State exercises a supreme right, is to be a member of the State.85 The State is “the objective spirit, and [the individual] has his truth, real existence, and ethical status only in being a member of it.”86 This is where Great Britain is heading. The increasing

84 Nevertheless, because of its relativism modern liberalism is morally weak and cannot provide a stable foundation for civilisation, as was the case with imperial Rome, and it is becoming apparent now that Western liberalism is a transitory phenomenon, a mere staging post on the road from one civilisation to another, as was also the case with imperial Rome.

85 “The state, which is the realised substantive will, having its reality in the particular self-consciousness raised to the plane of the universal, is absolutely rational. This substantive unity is its own motive and absolute end. In this end freedom attains its highest right. This end has the highest right over the individual, whose highest duty in turn is to be a member of the state” (S. W. Dyde, trans., Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, p. 240 [§258]).

86 Ibid., p. 240f. [§258]. According to Hegel “The State is . . . the embodiment of rational freedom, realizing and recognizing itself in an objective form . . . The State is the Idea of Spirit in the external manifestation of human Will and its Freedom” (The Philosophy of History, p. 37). Bertrand Russell described Hegel’s doctrine of the State as “a doctrine which, if accepted, justifies every internal
control and regulation of life by the State is all part of the religious apostasy of the age, all part of the politics of man. Slavery is the end product of the politics of man. It always has been, and it will be no different in the societies of the Western nations as they increasingly reject the Christian faith. The thin veneer of liberty that we still have in Western society is being relentlessly stripped away by the modern secular State. “[W]hile under the old order” says Christopher Dawson “the state had recognised its limits as against a spiritual power, and had only extended its claims over a part of human life, the modern state admitted no limitations, and embraced the whole life of the individual citizen in its economic and military organisation.”

The consequences for mankind of this idolatry of political power by modern secular States have been immense, from the reign of terror unleashed by the French Revolution to the mass murder programmes of national and international socialism. Leaving aside those killed by the two World Wars, over 100 million people were murdered in the twentieth century alone by secular States in pursuit of the religious ideals of secular humanism. This is a fairly conservative figure, though not the most conservative. Gil Elliot, writing in 1972, estimated the total number of “man-made deaths” in the twentieth century up to that point, including both World Wars, between 80 and 150 million and assumed a mean figure of 110 million, with World War One accounting for about 10 million and World War Two accounting for about 40 million deaths. A more recent conservative estimate, again including both World Wars, has put the total number killed by the State in the twentieth century at 188 million. A less conservative estimate

tyranny and every external aggression that can possibly be imagined” (A History of Western Philosophy [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946], p. 768f.).

87 Dawson, op. cit., p. 111. But see further my comments on the Roman Catholic understanding of the relationship between Church and State on pp. pp. 136–144 infra, particularly p. 138ff.


89 Ibid., p. 215.

puts the figure at 231 million. According to Jung Chang and Jon Halliday the Chinese Communist State alone was responsible for over 70 million peacetime deaths under the leadership of Mao Tse-Tung. Alexander Solzhenitsyn claimed that a similar number perished in the Soviet Union. Commenting on State activity in the twentieth century Paul Johnson writes: “The state has proved itself an insatiable spender, an unrivalled waster. It has also proved itself the greatest killer of all time. By the late 1990s, state action had been responsible for the violent or unnatural deaths of some 135 million people during the century, more perhaps than it had succeeded in destroying during the whole of human history up to 1900. Its inhuman malevolence had more than kept pace with its growing size and expanding means.” Likewise, Niall Ferguson states that the “hundred years after 1900 were without question the bloodiest century in modern history, far more violent in relative

92 Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, Mao: The Unknown Story (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), p. 3. Of all secular political systems it is the socialist States that have proved to be the most oppressive, both economically and socially, and the most murderous. Yet ironically Lenin predicted in 1917 that the Communist State would be transitional, eventually “withering away,” that it would cost mankind less than the capitalist State, and that it would engage in less bloodshed: “during the transition from capitalism to Communism suppression is still necessary; but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the ‘state,’ is still necessary, but this is now a transitional state; it is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word; for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage slaves of yesterday is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that it will entail far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage labourers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a special machine of suppression will begin to disappear . . . the state will also wither away” (The State and Revolution [Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1973], p. 107f.). See further §1 “Marxist Communism and Socialism” in the Excursus on p. 212ff. infra.
as well as absolute terms than any previous era.”

The secular humanist State has been responsible for more deaths, both in war and as a result of the various secular humanist inquisitions and witch-hunts carried out in the twentieth century, than any other form of religious establishment in history. In 1957, only half way through the twentieth century, Denis de Rougemont stated that “The wars of this century killed more men than all the other wars of our history.” Even the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm acknowledged that the twentieth century was “an era of religious wars, though the most militant and bloodthirsty of its religions were secular ideologies of nineteenth century vintage, such as socialism and nationalism, whose god-equivalents were either abstractions or politicians venerated in the manner of divinities.” The modern secular State has proved to be the most brutal and murderous form of political rule that the world has ever seen. “Every idol, however exalted,” said Aldous Huxley “turns out, in the long run, to be a Moloch, hungry for human sacrifice.”

From the Christian perspective things are very different. Christianity teaches that the Creator is one God in three persons. There is therefore no contradiction between the one and the many in the Godhead. God is a tri-unity. The one and the many are equally ultimate in the being of God. The one does not take precedence over the many and vice versa. Only in the triune nature of God’s being can man find the answer to the conflict between liberty and authority that has plagued the politics of man throughout history. Without the triune God of the Christian faith the politics of man is doomed to a never ending conflict between the one and the many, authority and liberty. Only in Christ can man find true freedom, individual liberty, and at the same time the necessary

96 See also p. 38 supra.
97 Denis de Rougemont, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
100 See further note 82 on p. 87 supra.
legitimate authority to guarantee political order in society. Only in the politics of God is there an answer to this age-old conflict between political authority (the one) and individual liberty (the many). All other attempts to solve this conflict have failed or are failing, with untold human suffering as a consequence.

As the one in whom all authority and power in the created order is concentrated the Lord Jesus Christ delegates his authority in a limited way to subordinate institutions (Church, State and family) that have specific functions in his kingdom. No one other than Christ himself, and no subordinate institution, possesses ultimate authority and power. Christ alone has all power and authority. Only the politics of God recognises the rights of God and the responsibilities of man towards God and his fellow creatures while at the same time guaranteeing the individual’s true liberty under God and the necessary political authority to maintain order in society. Only by practising the politics of God can man reconcile individual freedom with political authority and thereby establish peace. Liberty and peace are the product of the politics of God. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Is. 9:6–7).

We have become so familiar with these words in one way or another that we miss their meaning. The government of the nations rests on Christ’s shoulder and all nations are under obligation to recognise this fact and bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 2). Those who refuse to do this and reject Christ’s government have perished and will continue to perish. British society will be no different. The writing is already on the wall.
§3
Politics as a Specific Form of Social Action

We come now to the second sense in which I am using the term politics. In what has been said above I have been referring to politics as a general—i.e. all-embracing—category for understanding human life. Politics in the specific sense refers to a particular form of social action in which men seek to establish and control the machinery of State as a means of ruling and influencing society. We have seen that in the politics of man the State becomes the object of man’s apostate desire to control his own life independently of God. The State is made to function as an unlimited authority that replaces God and his providential government of the world. In other words man idolises the State. Without God man seeks to control his own destiny. The means he uses to do this is the State. The State itself is not an illegitimate institution. It is a God-ordained institution with a specific and limited role in society. But under the apostate political order of man it takes on a greater meaning. That is to say, its role is expanded beyond its God-given function as a servant of God in the administration of public justice (Rom. 13:1–6) and it is made to function as the central institution by means of which man establishes his own kingdom independently of God. It becomes, as we have already seen, an idol, a God, to which men look for their salvation: “... the historical role of civil power is changed into its opposite: from being a bulwark against antichrist it becomes the very fortress of antichrist himself.”

Stauffer, New Testament Theology, p. 86. “The civitas terrena carries within itself a tendency to parekthesis, to reach beyond itself, a tendency which leads to self-transcendence. For the glory with which God has equipped the civil power is always accompanied by the temptation to self-glorification. All too quickly the earthly monarch forgets that he holds his office from the heavenly King (Sbar. 6ff.; 83; ParalJer. 2.7). But at that point he goes beyond the historical task which God has set him (AEn. 89ff.; PsSol. 2). He forgets that political weapons are impotent when it comes to the last and most specific dangers of men. But he appears as a deliverer and bringer of salvation, and calls himself a saviour (Acts 4.12). He forgets that he is a sinful fallen man in daily need of forgiveness for his political activity. He allows himself to be honoured like God (Jud. 6.2; Acts 12.19ff.). He forgets that he is a mortal being whose political life is, therefore, inevitably
This is not a new development in human history. It happened repeatedly in the ancient world and, as we have already seen, was manifested supremely in the cult of the Roman emperor, the biblical Antichrist. What is new in our age is the secularised form in which this development is taking place.102

But of course the Christian, as he engages in political action, may never look to the State in this way. Regardless of whether he belongs to a particular political party he is under an absolute obligation to honour Christ first in all things, and therefore he may not idolise the State in the way that the non-believer does nor engage in the politics of idolatry by compromising himself with the politics of man. In his politics the Christian politician must manifest the antithesis that exists between the politics of God and the politics of man, and his mission must always be to bring the political life of the nation into conformity with the politics of God as revealed in Scripture. Just as the Christians in ancient Rome had to renounce the official worships of the State and the cult of the emperor,103 so too Christians today must renounce the political idolatries of temporary, and he enthuses about the imperishability of his work (Dan. 4.30; Sbar. 82.2ff.). He forgets the glory of God and strives with him for his honour (MEEx. 15.11; PsSol. 2.29; II Mac. 9.8; Mark 13.14). Then the Church which gives glory to God alone is nothing but an offence to him, and he persecutes her with growing fury and makes himself into an enemy of God and an agent of the devil (TestJud. 217ff.; VitProph. 50; Rev. 11.7). But when in its fight with the demons of chaos, the civitas terrena succumbs to its own demon then the historical role of civil power is changed into its opposite: from being a bulwark against antichrist it becomes the very fortress of antichrist himself (Dan. 8.9ff.; 11.30ff.; Rev. 13.14ff.). The civitas terrena has become the civitas diaboli” (ibid., p. 85f. See also the quotation from Christopher Dawson at note 37 on p. 68 supra).

102 Although see the comment by Christopher Dawson at note 47 on p. 72 supra.

103 “The intending convert had to renounce the official worships of the State and of the municipality. He had therefore to renounce the public cult of the Emperor. He could not swear by the Emperor’s genius, the life-spirit of his family; he could not take part in the celebrations of the days of his birth and of his accession; he could not as a soldier or as a municipal magistrate take part in those acts of worship in which either would participate: he could not hold a municipal or provincial priesthood of the cult, although his wealth and social standing might make such a position appropriate for him or incumbent upon him” (A. D. Nock, op. cit., p. 227).
the secular humanist establishment. The Christian politician, therefore, must acknowledge the ultimate political authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and his own duty as a servant of Christ in the political sphere. And he must acknowledge that only in Christ and the practice of the politics of God can man find peace. This means that he may not adopt the idolatrous political idea of the State that governs the politics of man. The answer to society’s problems is not intervention by the State. It is always obedience to God, which will sometimes mean that the State must take action, and probably more often it will mean that the State should do nothing. For the Christian the goal of specific political action must always be to bring the politics of man into conformity with the politics of God.

Politics in this sense is, of course, a legitimate vocation governed by God’s law. Therefore there are some social problems that are rightfully solved by being referred to the civil government, the State. But the civil government must function within its own proper boundaries as established by God’s law if it is to practise the politics of God. This needs to be borne in mind because the politics of man dominates our society. Christians can and do fall victim to the temptation to legitimate government action even when this action falls outside the God-ordained boundaries of State competence. This error is the source of “Christian” socialism, which is a syncretistic religion, an accommodation to the politics of man by Christians that must be resisted and denounced by all who practise the politics of God.

§4
Practising the Politics of God

What is the consequence of all this for national politics? How does being a Christian make a difference? What does it mean to practise the politics of God?

Before answering this question we must deal with what it does not mean. It does not mean that our duty as Christians who must
engage in the politics of God is a matter of government lobbying. Christianity is not a political faith in the sense that it sees the answer to man’s problems as action by the State. To understand the Christian faith as being political in this sense would be to adopt the secular humanist agenda for politics. It is the politics of man that insists that the answer to the problems besetting society is government action, i.e. control and regulation of society by the State. The Christian faith teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is man’s Saviour, and he has given only a limited role to the State as a ministry of public justice. In our political action we must acknowledge this by denying the idolatry of the State that constitutes the politics of man. Government intervention as an answer for the ills that blight our society has no place in the politics of God. Why? Because God has ordained other institutions to govern society as well as the State, namely the Church, which has pastoral, cultic and secondary welfare responsibilities, and the family, which has primary welfare, economic and educational responsibilities. Ultimate and absolute power is in the hands of Christ alone. He delegates his sovereignty in a limited and specific form to each of these institutions. No one sphere or institution has total authority. The role of the State is the administration of public justice (Rom. 13:1–6). It may not encroach on the legitimate sphere of authority of the other institutions without overturning God’s revealed political order for society—i.e. without engaging in a parekbasis, an overstretching of itself that results in a corruption of its true calling under God.

The answer to man’s social problems, therefore, can never be totalitarianism—i.e. government of all spheres of life by the State. Obedience to Christ in the political realm means that we must observe the boundaries, functions and authority of each of the institutions that God has ordained for the government of human society. Whilst the politics of man is essentially monist in this sense, i.e. it absolutises the State, the politics of God (i.e. the Christian social order) is essentially pluralist in the sense that

104 I am using the term “pluralist” here in the sense that this term is used of Abraham Kuyper’s concept of sphere sovereignty. This usage has nothing in
there is in society a plurality of institutions that govern different spheres of life, all of which hold their authority in a delegated form from Christ, their head. No one of these institutions takes precedence over the others. Each has a legitimate delegated, but limited, sovereignty that the others may not usurp.

It is not being suggested here, therefore, that all Christians need to do to practise the politics of God is to establish Christian political parties or organise Christian lobbying groups. This point cannot be emphasised too strongly. The politics of God requires us to reject the politics of man, which sees State intervention as the answer to society’s problems. Such an attitude leads to the absolutising of the State, which is a form of idolatry. On the contrary the politics of God, the true politics, requires us to adhere to the social order revealed in Scripture, a social order in which Church and family have roles that are equally as important as that of the State and which may not be usurped by the State. Only as society adheres to this social order will individuals be free to pursue their vocations in life under God. This denunciation of the State as man’s saviour was also an aspect of the confession of the early Church. According to C. N. Cochrane the early Christians consistently and rigorously denounced the Graeco-Roman idea that it is possible to attain a condition of permanent security, peace and freedom by means of State action. “To the Christians” he says “the state, so far from being the supreme instrument of human emancipation and perfectibility, was a straight-jacket to be justified at best as ‘a remedy for sin’. To think of it otherwise they considered the grossest of superstitions.”105 The idea that society’s problems can


105 Cochrane, op. cit., p. vi.
be solved by means of State intervention is a denial of the true politics, the politics of God, in which Jesus Christ, as Lord over all, governs all aspects of human life by delegating specific functions of his supreme government to a plurality of social institutions that are not reducible to each other (sphere sovereignty).

So much for what it does not mean to practise the politics of God. What then does it mean to practise the politics of God? I shall try to answer this question first in a general sense and then in a specific sense, corresponding to the two senses in which I am using the term political.

(1) First, what does it mean for the Christian to practise the politics of God, i.e. to live out the political implications of the Christian faith, in a general sense as a member of the Christian Church?  

To practise the politics of God in a general sense means that as individuals and as a community of faith we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our sovereign Lord, our King, and his law as absolute and final. There is no court of appeal beyond God’s word, God’s law, to which men can turn, however such a court of appeal might be conceived, e.g. as natural law, the law of reason, the common good, or any other notion in which sinful men may think they can take refuge from the will of God as this has been revealed in his law. The Church has often resorted to such sophistry in an attempt to mitigate what sinful men have sought to construe as the harsh and unrealistic law of God for themselves and their societies. But the real world is the world that God created, the world that fell into sin, and that the Lord Jesus Christ came to redeem. All views of reality that deny the biblical doctrines of Creation, Fall and Redemption are the fantasies of sinners, and those who rely on such fantasies will be shipwrecked on the shores of the reality that is God’s Creation, which manifests not only his divine glory and wisdom, but the moral order of his law as well (Rom. 1:18–32).

106 I am speaking here of the Church as an organism, a society, not merely of the Church as an institution. This society, as a manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth, includes the institutional Church, but is not limited to it, and functions across the whole spectrum of human life.
As Christians we are to live in the constant awareness of this fact. As we do this, and as we seek to conform our lives, families and societies to God’s will, the Kingdom of God is realised in our midst and exercises a transforming influence on the world. As we pray and live out the plea to God that his kingdom would come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, the kingdoms of this world begin to be transformed by the gospel.

In this sense Christianity as a political religion is all-embracing, all-encompassing—i.e. it embraces all of life. We serve a King who claims the whole of our lives. The absolute nature of Christ’s kingship means that all aspects and spheres of life are to be subject to his sovereign will, that in the whole of our lives and every facet of our being, as individuals, families, Churches, as a community, a society, a nation, we are to glorify God by living in obedience to his will. He claims our marriage, our families, our children, our work life—which is to be pursued for his glory no matter who our employer is—our economic life, our art, our music, our civil governments, indeed the whole cultural life the nation, and he demands that in all these things we should put his kingdom first, which is a political order, an absolute sovereignty that recognises no area of religious or political neutrality and requires all other religious and political communities to surrender unconditionally to his rule.

The ancient Roman State, for all its evil, recognised this fact, which so many Christians today deny, and that is why it persecuted the early Christians. The Church was primarily a political threat to the political religion of Rome. All of life is political in this sense, i.e. not in the sense that Westminster or Brussels should control our lives—that is the politics of man, the religion of modern secular humanism—but in the sense that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and demands that Westminster and Brussels bow the knee to him and acknowledge his political sovereignty over them. Christ did not merely demand that the Christians in Rome cease from worshipping Caesar; he demanded that Caesar should worship him. Nor does he today merely demand of us that we should cease from worshipping the political idols of Westminster and Brussels; he
demands that Westminster and Brussels should worship him also. We have not preached the gospel properly until we have made this fact clear to Westminster and Brussels. Politicians have no special dispensation. Either Caesar, or Westminster, or Brussels is Lord, or Jesus Christ is Lord. And there can be no peace between Christ and Westminster until Westminster bows the knee to Christ. If it refuses Christ will break it with his rod of iron (Ps. 2:9). “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Ps. 2:10–12). We have only one political Lord, Jesus Christ. All others are pretenders, usurpers.

To be political is to be religious, i.e. to acknowledge a God as the ultimate source of authority over the nation. For Rome that God was Caesar. For Christians it is the Lord Jesus Christ, and he commands his people to engage in the ultimate political war, the conquest of the whole earth and its subjugation to his sovereign will. But the means that we are to use in this process are not the means that the world uses in its political conquests. The world seeks to conquer new territory by means of physical and military coercion. The Kingdom of God grows by means of the preaching of the gospel, the healing of the sick, the teaching of God’s law to the nations, and works of mercy and charity. Nonetheless, the object of this war is the conquest of all nations, as Christ made clear in the Great Commission.

In each sphere of life, then, the implications of Christ’s political sovereignty must be worked out. One of these areas of life is civil government, what I have called politics in the specific sense. Therefore we must now ask a second question.

(2) What does it mean to practise the politics of God specifically? How can Christians work out the political implications of Christ’s lordship in a society that does not acknowledge Christ as Lord, indeed that emphatically denies his lordship over the civil government, the State? How do Christians practise the politics of God in a society ruled by the politics of man?
First, we must seek to understand what Scripture has to say about this important sphere of life—and it has much to say. We must seek to understand what biblical principles are relevant and how these principles apply to human action in the political sphere. In other words, we must develop a comprehensive political theology. If the Church is to speak prophetically to the modern world and call it to repentance and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, she must understand what is going on at the heart of modern man’s insane rebellion against God; only then will she be able to address the apostasy that has overtaken the Western world and with God’s help overthrow modern man’s chief idol, the godless secular State, which has exalted itself above God and now usurps his authority in virtually every sphere of life. We can be of little use in bringing the influence of the Christian gospel to bear upon the political life of the nation if we do not understand in the first place how the gospel applies to the political sphere. The Holy Spirit does not use ignorance as a means of enabling Christians to bear effective witness to the gospel. It is the duty of Christians to understand Scripture so that they can give a credible defence of the faith to those who ask, thereby challenging the disobedience and apostasy of the nation (1 Pet. 3:15). We may not be able to achieve in a few decades or even in our own lifetime the transformation of society by means of the gospel. But we are able to make a start that future generations can build upon. This is impossible, however, if we have never come to a proper understanding of the Christian principles that apply to our lives and society. The Church, therefore, must address the political questions that dominate our society and develop a biblical understanding, a biblical world-view, on these issues, and a political theology consistent with that world-view. The Holy Spirit works through the renewing of the mind, not through ignorance (Rom. 12:2).

Second, we must start living as the Kingdom of God. The Church should be a prophetic society, an alternative Christian

107 I am again referring here to the Church as an organism, i.e. the body of Christ on earth, the Christian society or nation, not merely to the Church as an institution.
social order that functions across the whole spectrum of human life, and through the witness of this life in words and actions calls the world to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only as the Church incarnates the gospel in her life as a prophetic social order will the Great Commission be fulfilled. This means that we must start applying biblical principles to our own individual lives and to the Church as a living community of faith and begin living as a true society in terms of a Christian world-view in those areas of life in which we do have the freedom and authority to apply biblical norms and standards. And there is a great deal of opportunity for this. Biblical principles of justice may at present be difficult to apply in the secular courts, but they can be applied in our personal relationships, in our family lives, in our Church organisations and in our communities. They can also be applied where Churches and Christians are prepared to accept Christian arbitration services that use biblical principles of justice for resolving disputes. This was a practice of the early Church that has the specific sanction of Scripture. The apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthians for going before the pagan courts and for failing to establish competent law courts for settling disputes between believers (1 Cor. 6:1–8). It is necessary for the Church to re-establish such courts today since the secular courts of the land are now subject to ungodly legislation and justice cannot be expected from them. The functioning of such Church courts would also be likely to have an influence beyond the Church, as indeed was the case with the courts of the early Church. According to Augustus Neander: “The state allowed to the church a particular jurisdiction, when it recognised, in a legal form, what had already obtained in the church before. It was the rule, from the first, in the Christian communities, that disputes between their members should not be brought before heathen tribunals, but settled within their own body. This was befitting the mutual brotherly relation subsisting between Christians; and it had been the course adopted already in the Jewish synagogues. Paul had, in fact, expressly required this method of procedure . . . When the episcopal form of church government became matured, it was made part of the function of the episcopal office to decide
these disputes. Yet, hitherto, the sentence of the bishop stood valid only so far as both parties had voluntarily agreed to submit to it. Constantine made the sentence of the bishops legally binding whenever the two parties once agreed to repair to their tribunal, so that no further appeal could be made from it.”

Likewise, Joseph Bingham states that “Besides these [i.e. the offices of bishops that were established by divine and canon law—SCP] there was one office more, imposed upon them by custom and the laws of the state; which was the hearing and determining of secular causes, upon the continual applications and addresses that the people made to them. For such was the singular character and repute of bishops, and such the entire confidence men generally reposed in them for their integrity and justice, that they were commonly appealed to, as the best arbitrators of men’s differences, and the most impartial judges of the common disputes that happened among them . . . And it is to be observed, that though there be no express text in the New Testament, that commands bishops to be judges in secular causes; yet St. Austin was of opinion, that St. Paul, in prohibiting men to go to law before the unbelievers, did virtually lay this obligation upon them: for he says, once again, that it was the Apostle that instituted ecclesiastical judges, and laid the burthen [sic] of secular causes upon them. By which he means, that the Apostle gave a general direction to Christians to choose arbitrators among themselves. And that custom determined this office particularly to the bishops, as the best qualified by their wisdom and probity to discharge it.” As a consequence of this “the functions of the city magistrate as the representative and protector of the people passed to the magistrate of the new society—the Christian bishop. While the former had become a mere puppet in the hands of the bureaucracy, the latter was the one independent power in the society of the later Empire.”

110 Dawson, op. cit., p. 214f. According to Dawson “The Christian bishop was, in fact, the dominant figure in the life of the time. His position was something
While there are today neither biblical, logical nor practical reasons why this work should be the domain of the clergy—indeed there are good reason why it should not be the domain of the clergy, e.g. maintenance of sphere sovereignty\textsuperscript{111}—the establishment of such courts is a necessary and important part of the Church’s\textsuperscript{112} work in the modern world. Believers with vocations in the legal and political spheres of life should take this task seriously, since it will provide a valuable service to the Church and a potent witness to the world. It would also enable the Church to start working out the practical details of how biblical principles of public justice should apply in the modern world. This in itself is an important aspect of practising the politics of God.

Christian political principles must also be taught to future generations, which will, if we act now by providing our children with a Christian education, be in a position in the future to apply these principles more effectively to a wider sphere of life than we can. Provision of an education in terms of the Christian worldview is a fundamental responsibility of the family and essential in our Great Commission to disciple the nations. Education is the high ground in our battle with secular humanism. It is through the education system that secular humanists have been able to take control of what was once a Christian society. We must now

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 entirely new, for which no precedent can be found in the old religion of the city-state or in the priesthood of the oriental mystery religions. Not only did he possess enormous religious prestige as the head of the Christian Church, but he was the leader of the people in social matters also. He occupied the position of a popular tribune, whose duty it was to defend the poor and the oppressed and to see that the strong did not abuse their power. He alone stood between the people and the oppression of the bureaucracy. He was not afraid to withstand an unjust law or excommunicate an oppressive governor, and the life and correspondence of St. Ambrose or St. Basil or Synesius or St Augustine himself show how frequently a bishop was called upon to intervene between the government and the people, and how fearlessly he performed his duty.\textsuperscript{111} (ibid., p. 215f.).
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\textsuperscript{111} On sphere sovereignty see further pp. 119–134 infra. See also my book, \textit{A Defence of the Christian State}, pp. 141–162 et passim.

\textsuperscript{112} Again, I am using the word “Church” here to refer to the body of Christ on earth in the widest sense, i.e. the Christian nation, not merely to the Church as an institution.
wake up to this fact and act appropriately. We must establish a counter-revolution in education that does not rely on the secular State education system.\footnote{See further my book, *The Christian Philosophy of Education Explained* (Avant Books, 1992). See also pp. 276–289 *infra*.}

It will also be necessary to create an alternative Christian welfare system that can operate according to biblical work ethics. Strengthening the family so that it can fulfil its biblical role in society is an important part of this, but not the whole of it. An alternative medical system will also have to be created eventually. The modern healthcare system in Britain is not Christian. It is part of the apostate politics of man. The Church is commanded not only to preach the gospel but to heal the sick as well.\footnote{On the need for a Christian medical system see pp. 245–253 *infra*; see also my essay “Preach the Gospel and Heal the Sick” in *Common-Law Wives and Concubines*, pp. 73–90. On the emergence of the ideal of Christian health care in the context of the ancient world and its subsequent development throughout Western history see Hugh Flemming, *op. cit.*}

The purpose of these endeavours is not merely to provide for the Church’s own members, but also to provide these services as an essential aspect of the Church’s\footnote{I am again referring here to the Church in the wider sense as an *organism*, a community of faith, not merely to the Church as an institution.} mission to the world, so that as the Christian social order grows it will displace and eventually replace the secular humanist social order that now dominates Western society. As the secular social order collapses, as it inevitably will and is doing already, the nation must be able to see the Christian faith as the only real answer to man’s personal crisis and the Christian social order as the only answer man’s social crisis. Just as the Roman emperors eventually realised that Christianity was the only real alternative to the collapse of Rome, so too our rulers and people must come to realise that only in Christ can man find salvation and that the Christian social order is the only answer to the disintegration of our society.

By pursuing all these things we shall create an alternative religious and political society, a Christian counter-revolutionary social order, which with God’s help will gradually grow and supplant the
godless culture of secular humanism that now dominates our lives and society.\textsuperscript{116}

Third, we must, wherever possible, seek to influence the political process by means of the consistent application of Christian political norms. It would seem that there is little scope for this at the present time. Nevertheless, we must not shrink back from the attempt to influence the political process. Constitutionally, if not in practice, Britain is still a Christian nation, and Christian principles can be invoked. However, we must be careful here. What we must not do, under any circumstances, is to fall into the error of thinking that State intervention, on its own, will create a Christian society. It will not. As we have seen, the attempt to solve all of man’s social problems by means of government intervention is the definitive feature of the politics of man in the modern age of apostate secular humanism. The politics of God is based on completely different principles. In the politics of man society looks to the State as a political idol, as the source of the good. In the politics of God society is to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the source of the good, and the answer to man’s social problems is to be sought in obedience to the social order that he has revealed in his word. This means that the State must observe its God-ordained boundaries and that the other institutions that God has established for the government and well-being of the individual and society (Church and family) must fulfil their God-given roles in accordance with his word. This is the only way to achieve social harmony, justice and peace.

It will not be possible for Christians to exert the kind of influence necessary to take captive the political institutions of the nation (i.e. the State) for Christ without first creating a counter-revolutionary Christian social order with its own education, welfare, health care, and justice (arbitration) systems that has already begun to supplant significantly the godless culture of secular humanism that now dominates society. A Christian agenda for political action must, therefore, recognise the importance of the other institutions that

\textsuperscript{116} On the Church as a true society see further my essay “The Church as a Community of Faith” in \textit{Common-Law Wives and Concubines}, pp. 179–194. See also pp. 222–244 \textit{infra}. 
God has established for the godly government of society (Church and family) and it must aim at empowering these institutions so that they can function according to their God-given roles. The good ordering of society, the Christian ordering of society, requires this. When these institutions once again begin to function properly according to their divinely appointed roles much of the current burden of the State can be transferred to them, thereby enabling the State to pursue its God-given role as a ministry of public justice more obediently.

None of this is possible, however, unless Christians are prepared and willing to make the sacrifices necessary to establish local communities that enshrine and embody these ideals and practices in their daily life, in other words unless they are prepared to establish communities of faith that function as real societies with their own distinctive social order. Only in this way can the body of Christ express its existence in history as a concrete reality capable of transforming the world—that is to say, only by living as a true society, with its own distinctive social order, can the body of Christ truly manifest the Kingdom of God on earth.

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Conclusion

Christianity is a political faith, both in a general sense, in that it recognises that Jesus Christ is Lord and teaches that all power and authority in heaven and on earth, and therefore all government of men and nations, is given to him alone, and in a specific sense, in that it teaches that the civil government or State is commanded to recognise the rights of God and order its work according to the light of his word as his servant (Rom. 13:1–6). Apostate politics, the politics of man, is a form of idolatry. As Christians we must face this idolatry head on and oppose on every level and in every detail the politics of man with the politics of God. We cannot avoid the inevitable conflict that exists between the politics of God and the politics of man without abandoning our Great Commis-
sion to disciple the nations. Christians must stop running away from Goliath and take the political nature of the Christian faith seriously, as did the early Church. If the Church does not pose a political threat to the secular humanist State it is because she has already bowed the knee to Caesar. Unfortunately this is the situation today in Britain.

The modern secular State is the chief idol of our age. If we fail to challenge this idolatry we fail in our Great Commission to bring the nations under the discipline of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way to challenge the politics of man, the politics of apostasy and sin, is with the politics of God. In order to do this we need, first, to develop a comprehensive political theology that recognises the rights of God as sovereign Lord over the whole spectrum of human existence. Second, we must create and maintain a counter-revolutionary Christian social order based on this political theology. While we are not able to control Westminster and Brussels, we are able, if we are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices, to begin creating a true covenant society, an alternative Christian social order with its own education system, its own welfare system, its own health care system and its own justice system—in other words a State within a State. The influence of such a Christian social order would extend far wider than the Christian Church. Being dependent upon the godless secular State for these things is not an obedient alternative, and is a servile condition that the Bible rebukes (Ex. 23:32; 34:12; 1 Cor. 6:1–8; 2 Cor. 6:14–15). Third, we must seek to conquer the political institutions of the nation for Christ by the influence we exert upon society. Only where the first two of these goals have been achieved significantly shall we be able to accomplish the third. None of this is possible, however, without the manifestation of the body of Christ on earth as a true covenant society functioning across the full spectrum of human life—i.e. without the Church functioning as the true social order, thereby manifesting the Kingdom of God on earth.

Nothing of what has been put forward here is unrealistic

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117 I am of course referring to the Church here in the widest possible sense as an organism, not merely as an institution.
or fanciful. It is what actually happened in the first three centuries of the Christian era. The Church of the imperial age, said Christopher Dawson, “was to a great extent an alternative and a substitute for the communal life of the city-state.” Ethelbert Stauffer tells us that the early Church was the training ground of a new conception of the State, for which she should have received praise from the State, but instead was constantly accused of being the enemy of the State. “But among all the senseless political accusations [levelled against Christians—SCP] there was one charge which the first Christians took upon themselves, and which they had to take, because it accorded with the facts: the first Christians rejected any attempt to deify the State.” “Christianity” wrote C. N. Cochrane, “subverted the central idea of creative politics as this had been pursued throughout classical antiquity”—i.e. the idea of the polis, the State, as man’s saviour, indeed as man’s God, in other words what defines him and gives meaning to his life.

In his book Caesars and Saints: The Evolution of the Christian State 180–313 A.D., Stewart Perowne said that Christianity possessed three supreme advantages over its religious competitors in the ancient world. Christianity’s first advantage, according to Perowne, was its Jewish origin. Christians were “the heirs of by far the most sublime religious philosophy that had yet appeared. And not only philosophy . . . The Ten Commandments were unique: there is nothing like them in any of the competing religions. Far from it: the religions of Asia Minor and of Egypt, like certain of their Syrian competitors, not only countenanced but encouraged sexual excesses . . . Judaism was wholly different: its moral code was strict, implacable and permanent. Christianity took it over in its entirety. That was its first advantage. The second advantage was that, whereas no one had ever seen Isis, or Atargatis or Mithras or the rest, thousands had seen and known Jesus of Nazareth. He had lived in one of the most crowded regions of the whole empire: he was always on the move: he was famous. Men and women remembered his words, recited his deeds. It was possible for his

118 Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
120 Cochrane, *op. cit.*, p. 249.
first disciples to appeal to the memory of their auditors—and they did.” But it is the third advantage mentioned by Perowne that particularly concerns us here. This third advantage that Christianity possessed over its competitors, said Perowne “is one which has never been explained: its organization. From the very beginning, from the days of Peter and Paul, it had been governed by an efficient and adaptable system. Its first martyr, Stephen, was a member of the administrative branch. No other faith had anything remotely resembling this organization . . . nothing approaching the administrative unity of the Catholic Church had ever existed before—except in the Roman state . . . That was the problem. It was not a religious one at all: it was political. These Christians, this organized, international society, was it to be the rival, or the ally, of the state?”121

The Christian faith created a new society, an alternative social order that supplanted the society of late classical antiquity as the latter collapsed.122 “The vital centre of the society of the future” said Christopher Dawson “was to be found, not in the city-state, but in the Christian ecclesia.”123 Describing the persecution of Christians under the Emperor Valerian in the third century Perowne goes on to say: “Once again it was the Christian society, not the Christian faith, which was proscribed as illicit; the persecution was, as usual, based on political and economic, not religious or theological, grounds.”124 Likewise, speaking of the transition from the late classical to the early mediaeval world Dawson said that “Christianity was not abandoned passively to the influences of its social environment. It had its own principle of order, its own social organs and its own civic traditions. Christianity was not merely a doctrine and a life, it was, above all, a society, and it was the organic unity and continuity of the Christian society which preserved the spiritual identity of the Christian religion.”125

121 Perowne, op. cit., p. 57f.; my emphasis.
122 Cf. the quotation from Allen Brent at note 65 on p. 79 supra.
cultural mission of the Church created the spiritual and social foundations upon which Western civilisation was built. “During the long apprenticeship of the nations which followed the collapse of the Roman Empire—whilst the intellect of the lay community slumbered—the Church assumed, almost unaided, the intellectual and moral leadership of civilization.”

This is how the Church exerted her influence upon and began converting the nations. It is our calling to continue that mission in our own lifetime and to prepare our children to continue the same mission in their lifetimes. Just as the decisive issue that faced the early Church was the battle between Christ and Caesar, with the emperor as the embodiment and representative of the ideal of the State espoused by classical antiquity,—i.e. the biblical Anti-christ—so too the decisive issue facing the modern Church in the West is the battle between Christ and the apostate secular State, the modern Antichrist. Until the Church recognises this conflict and begins acting in terms of it she will continue to decline and the State will continue to exercise dominion over her. If she is to conquer her enemies and fulfil her Great Commission once more she must proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord (i.e. Ruler), not the secular State. Victory will not come instantly, and it will not come at all without a great deal of sacrifice and tribulation. But this is the mission to which we are called. We must pick up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

The time is ripe for a change of politics in Western society. The question is simply this: is the Church, the body of Christ on earth, prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to challenge the politics of man and replace it with the politics of God? God does not grant religious neutrality to the State. The State must kiss the

126 This is not to say that these social foundations were a pure or perfect expression of the Christian faith. There were problems with the working out of these Christian principles in the social life of both the Church and wider society. The calling and mission of the Church is an ongoing work requiring continual reformation in the Church’s own life as the true society and in the application of Christian principles to the wider issues of social order. See further my essay *The Christian Passover: Agape Feast or Ritual Abuse?* (Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, 2012), especially pp. 41–51.  
Son or perish by the way (Ps. 2:12). Christianity is the true politics. The Church must start living out this truth with every breath that she takes, and this means that Christians must once again constitute themselves an imperium in imperio, a State within a State, a kingdom that will transform the world by bringing all things into subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ. Only when she does will the world be delivered from the tyranny and idolatry of the politics of man.

**Exкурsus**

**The Grammar of the Great Commission**

It is a common misconception that the Great Commission is a command to make disciples of individuals from among or out of all the nations—i.e. to engage in personal evangelism or “soul saving.” It is not. Strictly speaking the English language has no verb to disciple. The nearest the *Oxford English Dictionary* comes to such a verb is to discipline. Consequently Tyndale, the Geneva Bible and the Authorised Version translate the first part of Mt. 28:19 as “Go [ye] therefore and teach all nations,” which preserves the grammar of the Greek original by using a transitive verb, *teach*, with the phrase “all the nations” as the direct object of this verb. However, the Revised Version’s translation of Mt. 28:19 reads “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.” There are two problems with this modern translation: first, it turns the Greek verb to disciple (μαθητεύω) into the English verb to make, and the direct object of this verb becomes the English noun *disciples* instead of *nations*. Second, it turns the direct object of the Greek verb into a genitive; i.e. it turns the word *nations*, which in the Greek is in the accusative case (the case of the direct object), into a genitive case governed by the preposition *of*, which is not in the Greek. This gives us an English phrase that is ambiguous in the place of a Greek phrase that is not ambiguous. Most modern translations have followed the Revised Version.128

128 A notable exception to this ambiguous translation is the New English Bible, which translates the phrase correctly as “Go forth therefore and make all nations
The difference between the Greek original and the various English translations of the phrase is set out in the chart on p. 114. Unfortunately, due to the ambiguity of the English language at this point the Revised Version’s translation can be taken, and has been taken, to mean “Go therefore and make disciples of people from among all the nations”—in other words it has been taken as a command to make individual disciples from among the nations, not a command to make the nations the disciples of Christ, which is precisely what the Greek text says. This erroneous interpretation of a badly translated phrase has unfortunately now become almost ubiquitous. But Mt. 28:19 does not say “Go therefore and make disciples of people from all nations . . .” It says “Go and disciple the nations . . .”—i.e. “Go and make all nations my disciples.” 

Μαθητεύσατε (aorist active imperative of μαθητεύω), which is usually translated as “make disciples of,” means be a disciple. The transitive use of the verb is not found in classical Greek.129 In the koine Greek of the New Testament, however, it is used transitively to mean make a disciple of;130 taking as its direct object in Mt. 28:19 πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, “all the nations.” The Great Commission is not a command to evangelise individuals therefore (though of course it is impossible to fulfil the Great Commission without making individual disciples), but rather a command (1) to disciple and (2) to baptise the nations, which means of course that they must be evangelised and brought to faith in Christ, and (3) to teach them (i.e. the nations) to obey God’s commandments.131 The object of the Great Commission is not the making of individual Christians,
**Greek**
πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη

**Literal**
Going therefore disciple all the nations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Tyndale</th>
<th>Geneva</th>
<th>AV</th>
<th>RSV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>NIV</th>
<th>JBP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You, then, are to go</td>
<td>πορευθέντες</td>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>you, then, are to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and make disciples of all the nations</td>
<td>μαθητεύσατε</td>
<td>disciple</td>
<td>disciple</td>
<td>disciple</td>
<td>disciple</td>
<td>disciple</td>
<td>disciple</td>
<td>disciple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all nations</td>
<td>πάντα τὰ ἔθνη</td>
<td>all the nations</td>
<td>all the nations</td>
<td>all the nations</td>
<td>all the nations</td>
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<td>all the nations</td>
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**Case of Direct Object**
- τὰ ἔθνη (nom. pl. masc. part.)
- μαθητεύσατε (aor. of μαθητεύω)
- πορευθέντες (nom. pl. masc. part.)

**Act of Proposition**
- μαθητεύω (act. of μαθητεύω)
- πορεύομαι (aor. of πορεύομαι)

**Greek**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literal</th>
<th>Tyndale</th>
<th>Geneva</th>
<th>AV</th>
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<td>-going therefore disciple all the nations</td>
<td>Going therefore disciple all the nations</td>
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</table>
The Politics of God and the Politics of Man

but the making of Christian nations, and this understanding of the Great Commission is confirmed by the New Testament itself elsewhere: “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). Mt. 28:18–20 and Rev. 11:15 (cf. 21:24–26) constitute, therefore, the alpha and omega of Christian eschatology.
In Mt. 28:18–20 we are told that all power and authority have been committed to Jesus Christ. This is perhaps one of the most widely known yet least understood statements in Scripture. Most Christians will immediately recognise it and be able to find it in the Bible. Yet it is one of the most ignored teachings in Scripture. Whole theologies are built on the negation of this very teaching. For example, I heard some years ago a sermon preached at a Reformed church in which the preacher assured the congregation that the Christian warfare is a matter of the “spiritual” life, that it is in the “spiritual realm” that we engage with principalities and powers and seek to stand for Christ and overcome evil by means of the gospel. The congregation was sternly warned not to get involved with “organisations” and “things happening in the world” because the faith has no relevance to such things. Rather, the Christian warfare relates to a “spiritual” battle. Now, of course it is true that the Christian’s warfare is a spiritual battle, but this

1 The Greek word translated as “power” at Mt. 28:18b in the Authorised Version (ἐξουσία) means “1. power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases, leave or permission . . . 2. physical and mental power; the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possesses or exercises . . . 3. the power of authority (influence) and of right . . . 4. the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will must be submitted to by others and obeyed, [generally translated authority])” (J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901], p. 225a).
preacher had so defined what spirituality means that he had created a vast chasm between the world that we live in and a higher “spiritual” realm that has no bearing on the everyday issues of life. Another evangelical Reformed preacher I heard some years ago claimed that Christianity is primarily concerned not with this life but with the world to come, i.e. eternity. This kind of dualism is very common in the Church. Yet it is predicated on a complete contradiction of Christ’s words in Mt. 28:18–20, because here Christ says that all power in heaven and on earth has been given to him. “Christianity” said Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy “is the greatest hoax of history unless it tells us about the temporal.” Nothing in the whole of the created order lies beyond the authority and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, the nations of this world and their governments included, and in confirmation of this the Scriptures tell us, prophesying of Christ, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end . . .” (Is. 9:6–7). In the book of Revelation this is confirmed: “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). And Christ commanded us to pray that God’s kingdom would come on earth and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10).

These are not obscure Scriptures. They teach that the Lord Jesus Christ came to conquer the whole of the created order and redeem this lost world. Christ tells us plainly: “All authority has been given unto me.” Likewise Peter says that “Christ . . . is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him” (1 Pet. 3:22). The Lord Jesus Christ is the only point in the whole of the created order where all power and authority are concentrated. No one else possesses such absolute power in the created order, in heaven or on earth. This power is not limited to the heavenly or “spiritual” realm; it

is an authority that extends to everything and everyone on earth. It includes, therefore, all political authority.

Because Christ is the only one in whom all power and authority in the whole cosmos is concentrated, all other legitimate powers, including all political powers, derive their authority in a delegated form from him. The authority of governments comes from Christ alone. It has to because there is no other point in the created order where such authority could come from. Absolute power and authority in the created order has been given to Christ, and therefore any authority exercised by anyone else in the created order must ultimately come in a delegated form from Christ and from him alone. All authority of governments, therefore, comes from God through Christ. Political authority does not come from the people, though this is not to deny the validity of representative governments. But we must get our first principles right. All political authority comes from Christ. Who may fill the office of civil ruler may legitimately be decided by popular elections, but the authority of the political ruler comes from God through Christ, as the person in whom all authority in heaven and on earth is concentrated, and therefore such political authority must be exercised in accordance with his will as it is revealed in his law.

Given the fact that Scripture so plainly teaches that absolute authority is given to the Lord Jesus Christ it is a matter of wonder that so many in the Church should see Christ’s authority as limited to the realm of the “spiritual” and deem his commission to his disciples to bring all nations under his discipline as having little if any relevance to the world of human politics. Such an understanding of the Great Commission is in truth a negation of the Great Commission. However, the prosecution of Christ’s authority in the political realm is only one aspect of the Great Commission, by no means all of it. Before we look in more detail at the political

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4 I am using the term political here and throughout this essay in the narrow or specific sense to refer to the way civil governments (i.e. magistrates or States) exercise their rule over society (see definition §3 in the Excursus on p. 48f. supra).
implications of the Great Commission we need to look at how the
Great Commission applies generally to the nations.

§2

The Christian Doctrine of Social Order

Christ commands us in the Great Commission to make all nations his disciples. In this command the term “all the nations” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) is the direct object of the verb to disciple (μαθητεύσατε). What Jesus does not do here is to tell us to go and make disciples from among or out of all the nations. He does not refer to the discipling of individual souls. What he says is that we are to disciple the nations. It is the nations that are to be the disciples of Christ, not merely individual souls, brands snatched from the fire. Of course, this inevitably means that individual souls must be converted to the Christian faith. There can be no discipling of the nations without the salvation of individual souls. But there is a difference between a command to disciple individual souls and a command to disciple the nations. The latter includes the former, but the former does not include the latter. It is possible to disciple individual souls from all the nations without discipling the nations. It is not possible to disciple the nations without discipling individual souls. It is important to understand that Christ commanded us to disciple the nations, not merely to make disciples from among the nations. The discipling of the nations that Christ commands us to engage in involves the whole nation: individuals, communities and society at large, including all its institutions and forms of government. No sphere of life is left out. The whole nation must come under the discipline of the Lord Jesus Christ, must live under his

5 Μαθητεύσατε is the aorist active imperative of μαθητεύω and means be a disciple. In classical Greek this verb is not used in a transitive sense. In the koine Greek of the New Testament, however, it is used transitively to mean make a disciple of, taking as its direct object in Mt. 28:19 πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, “all the nations.” On the grammar of the Great Commission and its English translation see further the Excursus on p. 112ff. supra.

6 See my essay The Great Decommission, p. 7ff.
law and thereby conform to his will. If we are to fulfil the Great Commission we must understand that nothing less than this total transformation of society is necessary. The Great Commission is not merely a question of discipling individual souls to the Christian faith. And the faith that overcomes the world (1 Jn 5:4) is more than a private devotional mystery cult and Sunday services. The Great Commission requires the transformation of the whole nation, the whole of society, and indeed the whole world.

How is this to be achieved? What does a Christian social order look like? How is it structured and how is its structure maintained? We know that Christ has all authority over everything, over all powers and subsidiary authorities. But how does his authority structure society?

In the created order Christ’s authority is delegated in a limited form to several forms of government. But in none of these spheres or institutions is there a total delegation of Christ’s authority. Christ delegates authority to each of these institutions or spheres and the authority he delegates is specific to that sphere. i.e. appropriate to it and limited to its functions. No single sphere or institution is given total authority. If it were it would be equal in authority to Christ himself, i.e. it would possess an authority equal to God’s. Now, we shall see that in the modern world this is just what civil governments (States) are increasingly doing, i.e. assuming total authority over society. But this is a form of idolatry because it puts the State into the position of Christ, as the one in whom all authority is concentrated. The Christian must reject this and insist that all authority resides in Christ alone. He is the only point in the created order where all authority is concentrated. The Christian view of social order, therefore, must maintain that any delegated authority is limited, and that its limits are defined by the law of Christ, the word of God (the Bible). There is no single authority structure that possesses total authority over the nation. Only the Lord Jesus Christ possesses such authority. How does this doctrine work out in practice?

The diagram on page 132 sets out the basic structure of the Christian doctrine of social order and shows the relationship be-
between the various authority structures (or spheres) within society. The Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all authority in heaven and on earth is concentrated, delegates authority, via his word or law, to each individual main sphere of life. There are four spheres here. These are the three institutions that are established in the Bible as the main forms of societal government (family, Church⁷ and State), plus the sphere of individual liberty and self-government. Each of these institutions or spheres has a specific role or function and an authority appropriate to it. Each receives its authority from God’s word, not from any of the other spheres or institutions.

The spheres of family, Church and State are the main social institutions. The limit of the power and authority of the State is the sword, i.e. physical coercion up to and including, where appropriate, the death penalty. This authority it has from God. But it is, like all delegated authority, only used legitimately where it is exercised in accordance with God’s law. The limit of the power and authority of the family is the rod and the limit of the power and authority of the Church is excommunication. Again, this authority is only used legitimately where it is exercised in accordance with God’s law.

This does not mean that these powers define these institutions. But they show the limits of their authority. A family is much more than the parents’ authority to chastise a child, but the authority to use the rod of correction sets the limits of the parents’ authority. It shows how far the father’s authority extends, i.e. this far and no further. The family or the father does not have the authority of the sword, i.e. the father does not have the authority from God’s word to execute his criminal offspring. A father must hand a criminal son over to the civil magistrate (the State) to be prosecuted and punished for his crimes (Dt. 21:18–21). The father’s authority is permitted to go no further than the rod. This is in stark contrast to the Roman Laws of the Twelve Tables, for example, which

⁷ I am dealing here with the Church as an institution, not as an organism. As an organism the Church is much wider than the institution and functions in all aspects and spheres of life. As an institution the Church is more limited in function and authority.
permitted the father to exercise absolute authority over his family and slaves, granting him the right, as their judge, to kill those under his authority. The Bible denies this authority and power to the family. The family must hand a criminal son over to the State to be dealt with.

Likewise, the State may apply the death sentence in certain cases, but that is the limit of the State’s authority. The State does not have authority or power to excommunicate anyone. Nor may the State interfere with the family’s legitimate exercise of authority. It may only act where crime, as defined by God’s word, has been committed. The State may not, therefore, without illegitimately usurping the legitimate authority of the family, pass laws that ban the use of the rod in the physical punishment of children by their parents. In England the State has now banned the use of a rod in the punishment of children by parents. And there is an ongoing campaign to ban smacking in England also. Such law is illegitimate; it is unlawful law in the sense that English law traditionally has been based on the Christian doctrine of the rule of law, which stipulates that all man-made law must conform to the higher law of God and to reason (which of course amounts to the same thing). The State may act where a crime has been committed, and therefore if a parent commits grievous bodily harm against a child the State may act, and rightly so. But the law already covers this and there is no need for laws banning smacking and the use of the rod by parents. Such laws are a direct attack on the law of God and the social order it is meant to create and maintain.

The Church is also limited in her authority. She may not use coercion or physical punishment of any kind. The power of the Church is limited by the act of excommunication. If a member of

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8 “It would be a false idea to suppose that the father had an absolute right to kill his wife and children. He was their judge. If he put them to death, it was only by virtue of his right as judge. As the father of the family was alone subject to the judgement of the city, the wife and the son could have no other judge than him. Within his family he was the only magistrate” (Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study of the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* [Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006], p. 94).

9 See the discussion at note 25 on p. 135 and the diagram on p. 137 infra.
the Church apostatises from the faith and refuses to repent after
due admonition the maximum that the Church may do is excom-
municate the person, i.e. refuse to accept him into the community
of professing believers and deny him the privileges that belonging
to that community confers. If he has committed crimes the State
must punish him, not the Church. The Church is required to
excommunicate unrepentant sinners. If the criminal repents of
his crime the Church must accept him into the fold, even if the
State must execute him for his crimes. The mediaeval doctrine of
benefit of clergy is therefore contrary to the biblical order and an
abuse of the Church’s legitimate authority in which she usurps the
authority and functions of the State.

All such usurpation of authority, whether by the family, Church
or State leads to tyranny in which one institution with a limited
role in society and an authority appropriate to that role assumes
the powers and authority of other God-ordained institutions.
This inevitably means a loss of freedom. The modern State is
the institution that now claims total authority over society, and
in so doing it plays the tyrant and takes away our liberty. But the
Church has been as guilty in times past. The mediaeval Roman
Catholic doctrines of the two swords and the direct power claimed
that the Pope had been given both spiritual and temporal author-
ity by Christ and on the basis of this belief the papacy sought to
exercise dominion over the State. The doctrine of the two swords
was based on an allegorical reading of Lk. 22:38 and claimed that
the two swords mentioned in the text represent spiritual and tem-
poral authority, both of which have been entrusted to Peter and his
successors. According to St Bernard therefore: “We are instructed
by the words of the Gospel that two swords are in the power of
Peter, the spiritual and the temporal. In fact, when the Apostles
said: ‘There are two swords here,’ i.e. in the Church, the Lord did
not reply: ‘That is too much,’ but ‘That is enough.’ Certainly he
who denies that the temporal sword is in Peter’s power forgets the
Lord’s word: ‘Put back thy sword in its sheath.’ Both swords are
thus in the power of the Church, the material and the spiritual,
but the former is wielded on behalf of the Church, the latter by
the Church; the latter by the hand of the priest, the former by the hand of the king or knight, on the word, and with the consent, of the priest. It is in fact needful that one sword should be below the other and that the temporal authority should be subject to the spiritual power.”

According to Joseph Lecler “in the eyes of believers in the direct power, the spiritual power includes the temporal: the one is no more than an emanation of the other. Christ who is at once Priest and King has delegated to Peter and his successors the whole of His power. The Pope possesses, in principle, all jurisdiction in civil as well as in religious affairs. In feudal language, he has a direct right of ‘eminent domain’ over everything—and at the epoch, let us remember, ‘eminent domain’ meant real ownership.” The doctrines of the two swords and the direct power gave the Church an absolute authority that was beyond her legitimate role from the biblical perspective.

In the Christian doctrine of social order each sphere is limited in the kind and degree of its authority so that no single institution wields total authority. Christ alone reserves that right to himself. The Christian theory of social order maintains a balance or separation of powers that restricts the authority of any one institution.

In each of these spheres those who legitimately exercise power receive their authority from God through Christ via his word. This last qualification is important. These institutions do not have direct access to God for their power and authority. This authority comes ultimately from God of course, but it is mediated through Christ via his law, the Bible. Even the kings of Israel in the Hebrew theocracy were admonished to study the law so that they might do

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11 Ibid., p. 60.
12 The word theocracy means government by God. The means by which God governs society is his law. This was so in the Hebrew republic and monarchies no less than it is to be so in Christendom. There was, however, said Abraham Kuyper, a difference between theocratic government in the Hebrew nation and other nations in the role played by the Urim and Thummim, which gave the priests
justice according to God’s word. They were to look to God’s law
for their wisdom in executing justice, not to personal divine revelations from the Lord (Dt. 17:18–20). Such words came from God to
the prophets, not to the kings, and kings were expected to listen
to the words of the prophets, but they were required to know the
law of God and to test all prophetic claims against it, since even
the prophets were under the rule of God’s law (see Dt. 13:1–6).
Again this demonstrates a division and separation of powers so
that no one person possessed total power and authority. The Bible
does not support the doctrine of the divine right of kings or its
modern equivalent, the absolute right of elected governments with
“popular” mandates. In fact the Bible contradicts this doctrine in
the most forthright way. Authority, even the authority of the State
and the Church, is always limited and defined by God’s law.

Each sphere therefore receives an authority from God through
Christ via his word. Each has a limited function. The State does not
raise children and must not meddle with the family’s legitimate
role and authority in this sphere. Neither does the Church execute
public justice, though of course it does have a duty to proclaim the
word of God, which addresses the sphere of public justice. The
Church, therefore, has a role in calling the State and the family to
obey the word of God and in teaching God’s law to those who hold
office in the State and to members of families. But the Church does
not execute public justice on evil-doers. She proclaims the word of
God and also demonstrates God’s mercy in her care for the sick,
for orphans and widows etc. (secondary welfare functions). The
family raises children and provides for the welfare and education
of its members (primary welfare functions), not the State. Along
with a limited role in society each sphere receives an authority
direct access to the divine will, and by the prophets, who revealed God’s will
directly to the political rulers. This has led to the view that Israel was a uniquely
theocratic State (see for example Abraham Kuyper, Lectures on Calvinism [Grand
Nonetheless, Hebrew kings were commanded to study and know the law of God
and to govern the nation in terms of it, disregarding prophets who contradicted
the divine will as revealed in God’s law (Dt. 17:18–20 cf. 13:1–6). Cf. the discussion
on pp. 144–148 infra.
appropriate to it. This authority is limited in its nature by the
function of the particular institution to which its is granted.

All these institutions or spheres must function according to
God’s word. The authority they exercise is not autonomous or
sovereign, it is the authority of God delegated to each sphere via
his word and therefore each sphere is entirely dependent upon
God’s word for its legitimacy. Each sphere derives its functions
and authority from God’s word. For any one of these spheres or
institutions to claim a total authority, a total sovereignty, so that
it sets itself up above the others and seeks to control them, as
modern secular States do, is an act of rebellion against Christ, to
whom they owe an absolute obedience, and an attempt to usurp
his unique office as the one to whom all authority in heaven and
on earth has been committed by God the Father. All who do this
are setting themselves up as idols, rivals to the Lord Jesus Christ.
States that behave in this way will perish, as the Scriptures tell us
(Ps. 2).

Besides these three institutions or spheres, there is a fourth
sphere. This is the sphere of the individual and individual liberty.
This is the sphere where the other spheres or institutions have
no authority. Not only does no individual institution control the
whole of society, neither do all these institutions together control
the whole of society. Where the authority of family, Church and
State ceases there is individual liberty. This sphere of individual
liberty is a very extensive one. Neither the family, the Church nor
the State are responsible individually or together for enforcing the
whole of God’s law. Much of God’s law requires personal self-
government and falls into the sphere of individual responsibility.

Each individual sphere operates on the other spheres only in
accordance with its God-given function. A crime committed in
or by the Church is investigated by the State, not the Church, but
the State does not thereby interfere with the Church’s legitimate
freedom. If the Church refuses to let the State investigate crimes
committed by the Church she interferes with the proper function-
ing of the State. Likewise, the State has the duty to investigate
crimes committed by family members but it does not have the right
to interfere with the role and legitimate authority of the family or tell the family how to organise its affairs.

This view of social organisation is based on the doctrine of *sphere sovereignty*, which is associated with Abraham Kuyper and the Dutch neo-Calvinist school of thought that flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Holland under his leadership. But we must not think of these spheres as being sovereign in themselves; rather they are recipients of the sovereignty of God as this is delegated to and limited for each specific institution. Kuyper systematically set down this doctrine in a series of lectures given at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898, which were published as *Lectures on Calvinism*. This view, however, is a systematic statement of biblical principles.

A few points of clarification are needed at this point: first, although this model of social order is usually identified by the term *sphere sovereignty* it has been referred to as a form of *pluralism*, and also as a form of *political pluralism*, since it proposes a plurality of governments in society each relating to different social spheres, none of which derives its legitimacy or authority from any of the other forms of social government and none of which takes precedence over the others. The only person to possess sovereignty is Christ himself, who delegates his sovereignty in a restricted form only to specific and limited spheres. This model and the pluralistic terminology sometimes associated with it must not be confused with the modern concept of *principled pluralism* espoused by some Christian thinkers, which is a different notion altogether in which the State is understood to be a religiously *neutral* institution that guarantees civil liberty and equality for all religions, thereby creating a multicultural society.13 This latter notion is really no different from the modern secular humanist concept of the State and the complete antithesis of the idea of the State set forth by Abraham Kuyper and the school of thought associated with his name, which

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denies the possibility of religious neutrality in any sphere of life, including the political sphere.\(^{14}\) The terminology of political pluralism was used in the early twentieth century by political theorists to describe the alternative to political monism.\(^{15}\) However, the debate between political pluralism and political monism has now been eclipsed by the triumph of the modern monist State and the general acceptance of its claim to complete sovereignty. The terminology of pluralism is now associated with the modern concept of multiculturalism and a religiously neutral State. Old terms have been given new meanings and unfortunately it seems that this has led to confusion over Kuyper’s political views among some Christians seeking to justify modern pluralistic ideals. It has been claimed that the modern “Christian” notion of principled pluralism has its origin in Kuyper’s political ideals. This claim seems to be based on an inadequate understanding of Kuyper’s thought and ignorance of the nature of the debate regarding monist and pluralist political ideals in the early twentieth century (Kuyper died in 1920). A careful reading of Kuyper’s works that have been translated into English shows this to be a completely mistaken idea. In Kuyper’s model of social order (sphere sovereignty) the State no less than the Church and all other institutions is under obligation to honour God and submit obediently to his ordinances. In his Lectures on Calvinism Kuyper stated: “The magistrates are and remain—‘God’s servants.’ They have to recognize God as Supreme Ruler, from Whom they derive their power. They have to serve God, by ruling the people according to His ordinances. They have to restrain blasphemy, where it directly assumes the character of an affront to the Divine Majesty. And God’s supremacy is to be recognized by confessing His name in the Constitution as the Source of all political power, by maintaining the Sabbath, by proclaiming days of prayer and thanksgiving, and by invoking His Divine blessing. Therefore in order that they may govern, according to His holy ordinances, every magistrate is duty bound to investigate the rights of God,

\(^{14}\) See the quotation from H. Dooyeweerd at note 24 on p. 32 supra.

\(^{15}\) See for example Kung Chuan Hsiao, Political Pluralism: A Study in Contemporary Political Thought (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1927).
A Christian View of Social Order and the State

both in the natural life and in His Word. Not to subject himself to the decision of any Church, but in order that he himself may catch the light which he needs for the knowledge of the Divine will.”

Second, according to Abraham Kuyper, “The highest duty of the [civil] government remains therefore unchangeably that of justice, and in the second place it has to care for the people as a unit, partly at home, in order that its unity may grow ever deeper and may not be disturbed, and partly abroad, lest the national existence suffer harm.” I agree with this secondary role of civil government only in so far as it is pursued in order to maintain public justice, the primary role of civil government. It is not clear that Kuyper so restricted this secondary role of the State. Kuyper goes on to assert that the State possesses the right and duty “Whenever different spheres clash, to compel mutual regard for the boundary-lines of each.” He also speaks of the State as the “sphere of spheres, which encircles the whole extent of human life.”

This goes beyond what can be argued on the basis of Scripture in my opinion. The Bible does not assign such a role to the State but gives it a simple role of maintaining public justice. Of course, in many cases, indeed probably in the vast majority of cases, the maintenance of public justice, looked at from the perspective of sphere sovereignty, is precisely just such a matter of enforcing the boundary lines of each sphere; i.e. the enforcement of public justice in such cases results in the preservation of the spheres’ legitimate boundary-lines. But to assign this effect of the administration of public justice to the State as its proper purpose is a different matter. Not all cases in which the boundary-lines between the spheres are compromised necessitate State involvement. Only those cases in which crimes are committed fall within the jurisdiction of the State. Even in some cases involving principles of justice the State

16 Abraham Kuyper, op. cit., p. 103.
17 Ibid., p. 93. See also the quotation at note 22 on p. 131ff. infra.
18 Abraham Kuyper, op. cit., p. 97.
may be powerless to act since its remit does not extend to all cases of injustice. The Bible limits the jurisdiction of the State more strictly than this. The magistrate’s jurisdiction relates to crime, i.e. acts of injustice for which judicial penalties are prescribed.

Consequently, although I use the basic Kuyperian paradigm of *sphere sovereignty* I think it needs to be subjected to rigorous definition according to biblical criteria and modified where necessary. Not all sins are crimes. In other words, not all immoral actions of men against other men fall within the jurisdiction of the State. For this reason I define the role of the magistrate or State not simply as the ministry of justice but as the ministry of *public* justice, i.e. cases of injustice to which civil penalties are attached. Issues of *public* justice, for which the magistrate is obligated to provide a remedy, constitute, therefore, a more limited category within the wider sphere of justice.

The failure to observe this distinction will result, and has resulted, in a social ethic of “rights” that has serious consequences for the legal system. Positive discrimination laws are a good example. Undoubtedly, from a Christian point of view, racial discrimination in the labour market is immoral, and therefore unjust. But it would be difficult to justify positive discrimination laws biblically. In fact, such laws can only operate by distorting public justice, i.e. by creating a form of legally enforced racial discrimination, the very injustice that such legislation is intended to remedy. This kind of racial discrimination is usually but misleadingly referred to as “positive discrimination.” The same is true of gender discrimination laws. To take another example, a father may unjustly disinherit

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20 Abraham Kuyper’s concept of sphere sovereignty is set forth in “Calvinism and Politics,” the third in the series of lectures given at Princeton University in 1898 and subsequently published as *Lectures on Calvinism* and “Sphere Sovereignty” in James D. Bratt, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 461–490. The model of sphere sovereignty that I use does not follow Kuyper’s model in every detail but uses the basic Kuyperian paradigm. I assign more weight to the sphere of the individual than Kuyper does and subsume under it many of the human functions that Kuyper subsumes under the sphere of society. I also identify the *family* as one of the foundational social spheres whereas Kuyper has *society*, and I follow a stricter view of the function of the State than did Kuyper. See the diagram and related comments on p. 132f.
his children, but the magistrate is powerless to rectify this injustice under God’s law. Such disinheriting may be reprehensible morally, but this in itself does not justify the magistrate’s taking action against the father. Only God’s word can legitimately empower the magistrate to act.

The definition of the State as an institution that must “compel mutual regard for the boundary-lines of each” sphere opens the door for the State to act precisely in such a way that may compromise the concept of sphere sovereignty by giving the State a role that exceeds its biblically defined boundaries. It has been pointed out that “Kuyper did not develop clear criteria for determining when intervention into the economy was necessary or permissible. Consequently, some contemporary Kuyperians advocate large-scale state intervention in order to defend those who cannot care for themselves, despite the fact that Kuyper emphasized the first defense and cultivation of such persons must be undertaken by both the institutional church and individual Christians acting within society.”21 It should be remembered, however, that Kuyper was critical of such intervention in the economy by the State. Writing on the jurisdiction of the government he stated: “Or do the authorities overstep their bounds when they create labor or reduce competition, raise wages or shorten the work-week, and in general support manual labour by making it available only under such conditions which ensure that the manual laborer is also respected as a human being? We believe it beyond doubt that the government does not have this right, at least not in the absolute sense. State and society are not identical. The government is not the only sovereign in the country. Sovereignty exists in distinct spheres, and in each of these smaller circles this sovereignty is bound to primordial arrangements or ordinances that have been created not by the government but by the Creator of heaven and earth. Only in one instance can these sovereign entities tolerate, or even demand, government intervention: when two or more of these spheres collide at their common borders and a great imbal-

## Christian Doctrine of Social Order and Authority

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<th>Created Order</th>
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<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Triune God</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Individual</td>
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### Triune God

**The Lord Jesus Christ**  
Second Person of the Trinity  
And Word of God Incarnate  
*Lord of all things/possesses all authority in heaven and on earth*

### Word of God in Scripture  
Law of God over

### Main Social Institutions or Spheres

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Individual</th>
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<td>Great Commission; public ministry of the word; welfare responsibilities; healing of the sick and secondary education and</td>
<td>Marriage, raising of children, primary welfare and</td>
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<td>excommunication.</td>
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In Kuyper’s own schema the family is subsumed under the sphere of society (see Lectures on Calvinism, p. 79). However, society does not constitute an institution or authority structure in itself, but is rather the interrelationship of the spheres of family, Church, State and the individual. The family, however, does constitute an independent institution with its own authority structure established by divine mandate, along with the Church and the State. There are of course many other institutions, associations and organisations in society but these are not institutions in the sense that the State, Church and family are institutions, i.e. divinely established and necessary constituents of a Christian society that derive their authority directly from God’s word and are therefore not derivative of any of the other social spheres or institutions. By contrast, organisations such as voluntary and charitable associations, educational establishments and business enterprises, which derive their functions from the family and/or the individual spheres; the army and police force, which derive their functions from the State; and denominational missionary societies, denominational theological colleges, Church schools and Church hospitals, which derive their functions from the Church, possess their authority mediatelly from the particular spheres to which they owe their existence; i.e. they are not independent spheres in their own right and therefore they have no sphere sovereignty of their own, only an authority devolved from the particular spheres under which they are subsumed. This is not the case with the institutions of Church, family and State, which have an original independent authority derived not from any of the other spheres but directly from God’s word. These are primary institutions, established by God, from which other social organisations and associations derive their being, functions and authority.
This clearly demonstrates Kuyper’s opposition to socialist economic planning, contrary to the misinformed claim that he was a socialist.23 There is, nonetheless, an ambiguity in Kuyper’s definition of the State as the “sphere of spheres, which encircles the whole extent of human life.” This is why I do not think that in every respect Kuyper himself fully worked out the implications of his concept of sphere sovereignty.24 Nevertheless, the sphere sovereignty paradigm is a good one that needs to be developed, refined and applied consistently.

§3

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE STATE

In this essay we shall be looking specifically at the institution of the State, i.e. the civil magistrate, and its sphere of authority. What does the Bible tell us about the role and authority of the State or civil magistrate?

First, the State (civil magistrate) in the Bible is defined as the administration of public justice. Kings and rulers are charged by God’s law with the task of judgement, i.e. doing justice, punishing crime (Rom. 13:1–6). In pursuit of this office the State has a duty to protect those under its authority from crimes committed with-

in the nation by members of the society over which it exercises a
God-ordained rule in the political sphere, and also from crimes
committed against those under its protection or against the nation
as a whole by individuals outside the nation and by foreign organis-
sations and nations; and where such crime has been committed it
has a duty to bring to justice and punish those who have commit-
ted the crime. This definition of the State includes the executive,
legislative, judicial, diplomatic, military and law enforcement
agencies necessary for the State to carry out its task properly. In
doing this, however, the State must act according to law at all times,
and the law under which it must act must be framed according to the
Christian principle of the rule of law. The Christian doctrine
of the rule of law is that all man-made law should conform to the
higher law of God, and this basic principle was, for centuries, a
principle of both English common law and equity. This principle
is clearly stated in the following two propositions from Doctor and
Student, a legal treatise by Christopher St. Germain published in
1523 (in Latin) and 1531 (in English): (1) “When the law eternal or
the will of God is known to His creatures reasonable by the light
of natural understanding, or by the light of natural reason, that is
called the law of reason: and when it is showed of heavenly revelation . . . then it is called the law of God. And when it is showed unto
him by order of a Prince, or of any other secondary governor, that
hath power to set law upon his subjects, then it is called the law of
man, though originally it be made of God.” (2) “For if any law made
of men bind any person to anything that is against the said laws
(the law of reason or the law of God) it is no law but a corruption
and manifest error”25 (see the diagram on page 137).

This definition of the State as a ministry of public justice is based
on biblical principles, i.e. it is a systematic statement based on the
functions of rulers as described in Scripture. This is evident if we
look at the history of the development of the State throughout
the Bible.

25 Christopher St. Germain, Doctor and Student, Dialogue I, Chapters 1 and
19, cited in A. K. R. Kiralfy, Potter’s Historical Introduction to English Law (London:
Before the Fall, of course, there was no State since there was no sin. An ideal world in which there were no sin would not require a State. The function of the State is a negative one: to restrain certain kinds of evil and to bring to justice those who commit such evil acts.

We must reject, therefore, the teaching of Thomas Aquinas regarding the natural origin of the State and its validation by means of an appeal to natural law. Speaking of Aquinas’ political theology A. P. D’Entrèves says that “If political institutions are an aspect of ‘natural’ morality, this means that the justification of the State and the ground of political obligation must be sought in the very nature of man. This is precisely the leading idea which St. Thomas derives from Aristotle.” D’Entrèves goes on to say that for Aquinas “Man is a political animal because he is a social being. This means that the State must have its roots in social experience, that it cannot be, or cannot be solely, the creation of human will. The State is not a work of art, but a historical product. It is the highest expression of human fellowship. All that pertains to that fellowship is natural to man.”

Furthermore, according to Joseph Lecler, “Basing itself upon Aristotle’s *Politics*, on which he had written a commentary, St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out that, because of its purely human and natural origin, the government of pagan kings remained, even after the advent of Christ, perfectly lawful.” Consequently, Aquinas taught that “Infidelity is not in itself incompatible with political power, since the latter owes its origin to the law of nations which is a human law; the distinction between the faithful and infidels, which arises from Divine law, does not automatically cancel human law.” However this conflicts with Scripture, specifically Rom. 13:1–6, which teaches that all authority is derived from God and that rulers are *servants* of God. They have an absolute obligation, therefore, to bow the knee to Christ and submit to his law (Ps. 2:10–12). Furthermore, the State is not

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THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE RULE OF LAW
(based on Christopher Saint Germain’s, *Doctor and Student*, 1523)

![Diagram of the Christian Doctrine of the Rule of Law]

- **The Law of God** or **Law Eternal**
  - Known by
    - Light of natural reason
      - Is called
        - The Law of Reason
    - Heavenly revelation (e.g., Scripture)
      - Is called
        - The Law of God
    - Order of a prince or secondary governor (e.g., Parliament)
      - Is called
        - The Law of Man (though originally it is made by God)

All different ways of revealing the same Eternal Law of God

Any Law of Man that is contrary to the Law of God or the Law of Reason is no law, but corruption and error.
a natural institution for mankind but rather an institution established by divine revelation as a result of man’s fall into sin. “The fall has given rise to an historical situation so threatening” says Ethelbert Stauffer “as to call for emergency measures to prevent man’s world from being swamped by the powers of destruction . . . The emergency measures have been taken in the establishment of the civil power; for according to the N[ew] T[estament] the civil power is the divinely ordained means for the due ordering of life in a world where chaos is constantly threatening.”

Since man was created good, sin was not part of the original—i.e. the natural—order of Creation. The State is, therefore, an institution of God’s common grace the purpose of which is to restrain and mitigate specific evil consequences of the unnatural condition in which mankind now lives as a result of original sin. It is entirely incorrect, from the biblical perspective, to see the State as part of the natural order of things, indeed as that in which man realises his true end, as Plato and Aristotle had conceived it. Aquinas allowed himself to be led astray at this point—and many others—by his idolatry of pagan philosophy (Aristotle), with which he attempted to reconcile the doctrines of the Christian faith.

One of the consequences of Aquinas’ compromise with the pagan philosophy of Aristotle was an idolatrous and tyrannical doctrine of the State. According to E. L. Hebden Taylor: “This Thomist attempt to accommodate Aristotle’s theory that social institutions and political life are natural and therefore just with the Christian teaching that they are the result of human sinfulness may be seen in Thomas’s attempt to justify existing inequalities amongst men. According to Augustine, God had made the rational man to be the master of animals, not of his fellowmen, thus showing by visible signs what is the proper order of nature and what are the consequences of sin.”


30 See for example Aquinas’ teaching on the Fall, discussed on p. 160ff. infra.

these two opposing points of view in typical scholastic fashion. He admits that, had men remained in the state of innocence, the more jarring inequalities between them, such as the distinction between masters and slaves, would not have existed. Yet he claims even in the state of innocence the fundamental difference between man and man would have been apparent; for, as Aristotle points out, men are not equal, but unequal. Everything is clear if we distinguish between two different sorts of subjection. Slavery—the subiectio servilis in which man is degraded as a tool—is contrary to nature, and can therefore be explained as a consequence of sin. But political relationship—the subiectio civilis of man to man which is necessary for the common good—is not a consequence of sin, for it is founded upon the very nature of man. Authority and obedience would still have been required, even if the state of innocence had been preserved, because, as Aristotle said, man is a social and political animal. Society would not be possible without those who are more wise and righteous having command over the rest. Thus does Aquinas get over the difficulty posited by sin, confining it to narrow limits, merely to explain such hardships of social life as serfdom and the harsh character of the penal law with its attendant torture. Sin for Thomas can have no part in the rational justification of the State, because political obligation is inherent in man’s nature. Man is unthinkable without the State, because it is only in the State that he can fulfil himself.”

The State as conceived by Aquinas, however, should be subject to the spiritual authority of the Pope. Aquinas taught that “The temporal power is subject to the spiritual as the body to the soul.” Furthermore, according to Aquinas, “The ministry of this kingdom [i.e. the kingdom of Christ—SCP] is entrusted not to the rulers of this earth but to priests, so that temporal affairs may remain distinct from those spiritual: and, in particular, it is delegated to the High Priest, the successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ, the Roman Pontiff; to whom all kings in Christendom should be subject,

33 Summa Theologiae, 2a2ae.60.6, in A. P. D’Entrèves, op. cit., p. 167.
as to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. For those who are concerned with the subordinate ends of life must be subject to him who is concerned with the supreme end and be directed by his command . . . and under Christ’s Law, kings must be subject to priests.”

As a result of the influence of this mediaeval Roman Catholic dogma all authority, both spiritual and temporal, was believed ultimately to be concentrated into the hands of the papacy. “St. Thomas,” says A. P. D’Entrèves, “lays down with uncompromising clearness the principles which underlie the medieval conception of the State.”

J. M. Spier summarised the problem with this syncretisation of the Christian faith with pagan political philosophy in the following way: “The universalistic ideal of Plato and Aristotle is well known. They conceived of the state as a whole which includes all other societal relationships as dependent parts, in need of the whole in order to be complete. Society is thus thought of as a relation between a whole to its parts. The individual is preceded by the state. The state is the highest good and everything must serve it. The state has a metaphysical basis. It rests upon the rational essential nature of man who is a social being. This ancient universalistic conception of the state lacks any circumscription of structure. The state is a great Moloch. Everything else is sacrificed to it. This view overlooks the fact that the state is not a thing of nature. The state is grounded in the historical aspect. The ancient view was generally retained and modified in the Middle Ages. It was accommodated to Christian thought by means of the schema of nature and grace. The state was considered to be the highest relationship within the sphere of nature, and the church was considered the highest relationship in the sphere of grace. The church was above the state and the latter must serve the former. A church-state rather than a state-church was considered ideal. The state ruled by the grace of papal authority.”

34 De Regimine Principum, Bk I, Chapt. xiv, in A. P. D’Entrèves, op. cit., p. 77.
35 A. P. D’Entrèves, “Introduction” in ibid., p. xxiv; see also p. xxix.
Consequently, as E. L. Hebden Talyor points out, “The medi-
 eval pontiffs of the Church of Rome may thus claim the distinction
 of having revived those pagan conceptions of Oriental despotic
 monarchy which the German barbarians supposed they had dis-
 posed of once and for all when they overthrew the Roman Caesars.
 In the papal program for supremacy in the fullness of power we
 may therefore rightly detect the seed thoughts of the modern pagan
 totalitarian state. Totalitarian Communism thus merely marks the
 final stage in the process of the secularisation of the medieval papal
 program to bring in Utopia by brute force. In both its religious
 and political forms individual freedom is destroyed.37 38

 From the biblical perspective, however, the State is not a natural
 part of the created order. It is, therefore, not natural to the life
 of man. It is, rather, an institution established by divine mandate
to deal with certain of the social consequences of man’s fall into
 sin—namely, the administration of public justice. Abraham Kuy-
 per stated the biblical doctrine clearly: “Every State-formation,
every assertion of the power of the magistrate, every mechanical
 means of compelling order and of guaranteeing a safe course of
 life is therefore always something unnatural; something against
 which the deeper aspirations of our nature rebel; and which, on
 this very account, may become the source both of a dreadful abuse
 of power, on the part of those who exercise it, and of a contuma-
cious revolt on the part the multitude. Thus originated the battle of
 the ages between Authority and Liberty, and in this battle it was the
 very innate thirst for liberty, which proved itself the God-ordained
 means to bridle the authority wheresoever it degenerated into
despotism. And thus all true conception of the nature of the State
 and of the assumption of authority by the magistrate, and on the
 other hand all true conception of the right and duty of the people
to defend liberty, depends on what Calvinism has here placed in

37 There has been a long-standing historical link between certain heretical
Christian sects and extremist Roman Catholic ideology on the one hand and
violent revolutionary communism on the other that has continued well into
modern times. See further p. 222f. infra.

38 E. L. Hebden Taylor, op. cit., p. 178.
the foreground, as the primordial truth,—that God has instituted the magistrates, by reason of sin.”

The doctrine of the State and of natural law espoused by Aquinas was syncretistic, a deliberate conflation of Christianity with paganism as represented by Aristotle. There is no sphere of natural law—i.e. religiously neutral law—beyond the jurisdiction of God in Christ to which rulers, whether Christian or pagan, can appeal to justify their disobedience to God. In the pursuit of their duty to rule they owe an absolute obedience to God’s law. “True justice” said Augustine “has no existence save in that republic whose founder and ruler is Christ.” Again, Abraham Kuyper stated the biblical principle clearly: “Authority over men cannot arise from men. Just as little from a majority over against a minority, for history shows, almost on every page, that very often the minority was right. And thus to the first Calvinist thesis that sin alone has necessitated the institution of government, this second and no less momentous thesis is added that: all authority of governments on earth originates from the Sovereignty of God alone.” Without this rulers are no better than bands of robbers—which is precisely what, as a consequence of their extreme taxation policies, modern British governments increasingly resemble. The famous passage from Augustine sums the matter up poignantly: “Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit

39 Abraham Kuyper, Lectures on Calvinism, p. 80f.
40 Augustine, The City of God (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1872, trans. Marcus Dods), Vol. I, p. 77 [Bk II.21]. According to Christopher Dawson “The drastic realism of this definition has proved shocking to several modern writers on Augustine. Indeed, so distinguished a student of political thought as Dr. A. J. Carlyle is unwilling to admit that St. Augustine really meant what he said . . . In reality there is nothing inconsistent or morally discreditable about St. Augustine’s views. They follow necessarily from his doctrine of original sin; indeed, they are implicit in the whole Christian social tradition and they frequently find expression in later Christian literature” (Enquiries into Religion and Culture (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1933), p. 243f. Cf. for example the quotation from Abraham Kuyper at note 41 infra.
41 Abraham Kuyper, Lectures on Calvinism, p. 82.
together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by
the law agreed on. If, by the admittance of abandoned men, this
evil increases to such a degree that it holds places, fixes abodes,
takes possession of cities, and subdues peoples, it assumes the
more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now
manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness,
but by the addition of impunity. Indeed, that was an apt and true
reply which was given to Alexander the Great by a pirate who
had been seized. For when that king had asked the man what he
meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with
bold pride, ‘What thou meanest by seizing the whole earth; but
because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, whilst thou
who dost it with a great fleet art styled emperor.’”42

It seems also, however, that there was no State after the Fall
and prior to the Flood, even though sin had entered into the hu-
man race. In the cases of Cain and Lamech (Gen. 4:15 and 23–24)
there was no State to bring them to justice for their crimes, and
Scripture seems to suggest that no-one was authorised to do this
since we are told that “The Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any
finding him should kill him” (v. 15). It seems, further, that Lamech,
recognising this, used it as a precedent for his denial that anyone
should bring him to justice for his crimes. It is, therefore, reasonable
to conjecture that it was just this absence of institutional restraint
exercised by society on human sin that led to the dire state of
wickedness that preceded the Flood. God intervened in this situ-
ation and judged the antediluvian world, saving only Noah and his
family in the process. In the covenant that God then established
with Noah and all his posterity (i.e. the whole of humanity to the
end of time) God promised never to judge the whole world in this
way again, but instead required man himself to put to death those
who commit murder. Certainly, the death penalty is established
for the first time in the covenant made with Noah after the Flood
(Gen. 9:5–6). This seems to be, therefore, the beginning of the
institution of the State, i.e. the administration of public justice by
society itself. It is to be noted that the rationale for this, the reason

for the establishing of the State, was not welfare, education or the equal distribution of wealth in society, but quite simply the restraint of crime and the punishment of criminals, i.e. the administration of public justice (judgement).

Again, we see in this the divine origin of the office of the magistrate (i.e. the State). According to the Roman Catholic theologian Joseph Lecler “the view that the State is of purely secular and natural origin does not present any difficulty from the point of view of Catholic doctrine.”43 But according to Scripture the State does not have a secular or natural origin. Its origin is in the divine revelation given to Noah after the flood (Gen. 9:1–17). The State is a divinely ordained institution, not the product of the natural life of mankind, whether in the form of a social contract or as a natural development of the family, clan or tribe. Its function is to deal with specific social consequences of man’s fall into sin. It was instituted by divine revelation to replace the direct execution of God’s wrath upon mankind; in other words its function is to mediate the judgement of God on earth against specific kinds of sin. It must act, therefore, in all things according to God’s law. Rebellion against God and the complete abandonment of God’s law by the State constitutes the failure of the State’s divine vocation and consequently the failure of the divinely ordained mediating institution between mankind and the direct wrath of God upon society. A total breakdown in the mediation of divine justice in the work of the State, therefore, must always herald the most fearful and disastrous of consequences for society, since at this point the only way that justice can be done is by means of God’s wrath being revealed directly from heaven against the unrighteousness, i.e. the injustice, of men (Rom. 1:19–32).

This same principle regarding the State’s divine vocation as the minister of God’s wrath—God’s justice—is evident as we follow the historical development of the State as it is given in the biblical record. In the Mosaic period judges are appointed to deal with matters of justice, i.e. judgement, among the people (Ex. 18:13–27; Dt. 1:13–17; 16:18–20). When kings are anointed to lead the people

they are charged with the task of doing justice, i.e. judgement (1 Sam. 8:4–5; 2 Sam. 8:15; 1 Kg 3:7–12; 2 Chron. 19:5–11; Ps. 71:1–2; 82:1–4; Is. 1:10, 17). This is in sharp contrast to the kings of early Graeco-Roman culture, where the king was a sacral ruler, i.e. a high priest, whose sacred vocation was to ensure that the religious rites were duly observed.44 By contrast the Hebrew social order maintained a separation of powers between the priesthood and the monarchy. The Hebrew theocracy was not a hierocracy, and this was in contrast to nearly all of ancient culture.45 We owe our modern separation of the distinctive functions and powers of Church and State to this biblical model of government.46

After the Babylonian captivity, when the people returned to the land of Israel, their rulers were again charged with making sure that justice was done and that judgement was made according to God’s law (Ezra 7:25–26).

The clearest and fullest statement of this principle, however, is given by the apostle Paul in Romans 13:1–7. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear,

44 See Fustel de Coulanges, op. cit., p. 173ff.
45 Cf. note 12 on p. 124f. supra.
46 Though it is, unfortunately, common to find Christian no less than non-Christian scholars failing almost completely to make the necessary distinctions between theocracy and hierocracy, particularly in critical discussion of the establishment principle. See further pp. 27–33ff. supra.
honour to whom honour." This is the *locus classicus* of the Christian doctrine of the State. Here we are told that the magistrate (i.e. "rulers," the State) is a minister of God to execute justice (God's wrath, v. 4) upon those who do evil. It is for this purpose, says Paul, that the State bears the sword, i.e is authorised by God's law to use the power of coercion up to and including the death sentence. Paul drives his argument home by repeating himself: "for this cause [i.e. the administration of public justice] pay ye tribute: for they [i.e. rulers] are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing" (v. 6). What Paul says here, "attending continually on this very thing," defines the purpose of the State, namely the punishment of evil-doers. According to Blass and Debrunner’s *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* the term translated as “this very thing” (αὐτὸ τοῦτο) in the Authorised Version means “just this (and nothing else).”

This defines and severely limits the role of the State. It is not the duty of the State or magistrate to act as a ministry of welfare, education, trade and industry, health care, transport etc. The sole duty of the State is the administration of public justice, “just this and nothing else.” It could not be clearer. When the State exceeds the boundaries of its God-given role and authority and takes upon itself functions for which God has ordained other forms of government, e.g. the family, which has the duty to provide welfare and education for its members, it denies men their true liberty under God. In so doing it becomes a tyrant.

Second, the State is to execute justice—i.e. judgement—in terms of God’s law. The magistrate is the “servant of God,” a “minister of God,” Paul tells us (v. 4). He is a “revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” Whose wrath is this? The magistrate’s own? Of course not. The magistrate is one who executes God’s wrath upon evil-doers as God’s servant. The context of the passage is not some nebulous idea of natural law. The magistrate is not there to execute the will of the people or the will of the

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48 See further note 101 on p. 93f. *supra.*
majority of the people. The magistrate is the minister of God, the one who applies the judgement of God, as revealed in his law, to those who do evil. He is accountable to God and must execute judgement according to God's will (Dt. 17:18–20).

Third, in the pursuance of its legitimate function as a ministry of public justice the State has the right to collect taxes. But again, it is clear from what Paul says in Rom. 13:6 that the taxes collected may be used only for the purpose of enabling the State to perform its divinely ordained function as a ministry of public justice. “For this cause pay ye tribute” says Paul, i.e. the administration of public justice. The State is not authorised by God’s word to collect taxes for the purpose of redistributing wealth within society or for providing welfare, educational or other services unconnected with its duty to administer public justice. The collection of taxes by the State is legitimised by Scripture, but only for this specific purpose. For the State to collect taxes for purposes that lie outside this limited role is a transgression of the Eighth Commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” which the State is charged by God’s word with enforcing. In collecting taxes for other purposes the State acts outside its God-given authority. The fact that it does have a God-given role and that in the discharge of this role it has divine authority to collect taxes for this purpose does not justify the collection of taxes for anything else. Paul offers no support or warrant in this passage of Scripture to governments that act outside their God-given role as ministers of public justice.

Fourth, the Bible also restricts the State’s ability to amass the kind of power and wealth necessary to establish totalitarian government (Dt. 17:16–17). It is also clear from 1 Kings 21:1–24, the case of Naboth’s vineyard (cf. Lev. 25:23–28; Ezek. 46:18; Num. 36:7), that the State has no right of eminent domain, i.e. sovereignty over all land in the nation with the right of expropriation (e.g. compulsory purchase), which was the basis of mediaeval feudalism and still remains a basic feature of modern secular humanist and especially socialist political ideology.

It is clear from this that the State, i.e. the civil government of the land, is severely restricted in its functions and powers and may not encroach on the legitimate functions of other God-ordained institutions and governments (family, Church and individual) without rebelling against God and ultimately bringing itself under his judgement.\(^{50}\)

§4

Reforming the Modern State

Unfortunately, this is precisely what has happened in the modern world. The Christian concept of a limited State with a specific function, as one form of government among others, is not a widely accepted political ideal. Even among those who regard themselves as politically conservative the State is usually deemed to have a much wider function than that of impartially administering public justice. Christians must resist this and seek to reform society. The Great Commission demands the discipling of the whole nation, and this includes, though is by no means limited to, the function of the State.

Here we face a problem, particularly in Britain, although I suspect this problem is more widespread. And it is this: that very often Christians, seeing that society is turning away from God and being repaganised, have lobbied governments to reform society by using the machinery of State to correct the ills they see around them. The problem is that in requiring the State to act in this way they have lent credibility to the apostate State’s claims of total sovereignty—i.e. supreme and comprehensive authority over society—and have therefore helped to promote an idolatrous political ideal.

An example will help here. The primary responsibility for education lies with the family. But the State has usurped the role of the family and now provides State education services funded

\(^{50}\) On the exegesis of Rom. 13:1–7 see Appendix A in my book *A Defence of the Christian State*, pp. 180–188.
by taxation, at least for most families. This restricts the freedom of the family to provide for itself and forces it into dependence on the State. Even though private education is still available most families cannot afford it because of the high taxes they have to pay, which includes taxes that are levied to fund State education. Most families cannot easily afford to pay twice for the education of their children. Because of this situation home schooling is the only viable option for most Christian families in Britain. Therefore private schooling, i.e. sending children to public schools, tends to be restricted to the wealthier members of society. The same happens in other spheres, e.g. welfare and health care. Most individuals and families are taxed so heavily to pay for State welfare that their ability to fund private Christian alternatives is severely restricted. The greater part of society is therefore forced into some form of State dependence in terms of health care and welfare. Lobbying government to establish and fund Christian schools or to reform the current system to make it more Christian will not overcome this basic problem. Such reform would not be successful anyway (it has been tried repeatedly in Britain and has not yet worked—the whole system is now aggressively secular humanist in its philosophy and has no time for Christianity anyway), and even if it were successful it would still leave most people dependent upon the State.

The only answer to this situation that is consistent with a Christian view of social order is for the government to privatise the whole of the education and welfare systems. This would then put these social services back into their proper spheres of operation,—the family, the Church and the individual—leaving the State free


52 The Church has an important secondary role in the provision of welfare, health care and education, but this secondary role becomes more of a primary role in the context of the Church’s responsibility to poor believers and also in the context of her mission to the non-believing world, both on an individual and on a societal level. See my book, _The Christian Philosophy of Education Explained_ (Avant Books, 1992), pp. 117–130 and “Preach the Gospel and Heal the Sick” in my book _Common-Law Wives and Concubines: Essays on Covenantal Christianity and Contemporary Western Culture_ (Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, 2003), pp. 73–90. See also pp. 276–289 infra.
to pursue the administration of public justice in a more biblical and rational way. What Christians should not be doing therefore is lobbying government to provide services such as education according to Christian criteria, i.e. Christian schools. That is not the function of the State. If Christians are to engage in lobbying they should be lobbying government to restrict itself to pursuing the role that God has assigned to it in Scripture and limiting its collection of taxes to this specific role. This would vastly reduce the tax burden on everyone in society, enabling families to make provision for themselves and also enabling them to support Christian charities and Churches in making provision for the less fortunate in society, i.e. in providing a Christian safety net for the poor.

This will of course demand a great deal of sacrifice from Christians. But this is what Christ has called us to. We are to pick up our cross and follow Christ, and our commission is to disciple the nation, to bring it under the discipline of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this includes all the social functions of the various institutions that make up the nation. Unless Christians are willing and prepared to start providing Christian alternatives in these spheres of life the State will not be reduced in size and brought in line with its proper function as defined by Scripture and we shall continue to live as slaves of the modern secular State. Reforming the State is only one part of our task. Society consists of more than the State, and unless we are prepared to fulfil our responsibilities as families and Churches for ourselves the State will continue to grow in size, will continue to limit our freedom, and we shall continue to pay ever more taxes. Requiring the State to fulfil our responsibilities for us will not produce a Christian society; it will merely continue to lend credibility to an already idolatrous conception of the State under the rule of which society has become dysfunctional and is increasingly lurching towards disintegration.

There is an important role for the State but it is limited, and it must conform to the Christian ideals set forth in Scripture. Only then will the Church, the family and the individual be free and able to make their proper Christian contribution to society. The modern State plays God much of the time and Christians have
become complicit in this because they have not sought to pursue a rigorous Christian ideal of social order. But in neglecting this they have failed to see that they have neglected the Great Commission and that the inevitable effect of this has been the repaganisation of society. Along with this our freedom to preach the gospel and to live the Christian life in its fulness has been curtailed.

§5
Conclusion

In the correct ordering of society the function of the State is negative; its purpose is to restrain crime and punish criminals according to the principles of justice set forth in Scripture. In doing this the State creates a climate in which the family, the Church and the individual can be free to develop their vocations positively according to God’s word to the glory of God and the benefit of society. A Christian view of the State, therefore, requires a recognition of the proper functions of each of the social spheres and respect for their legitimate authority.

Reform of the modern State according to biblical principles requires: first, limitation of the State’s activity to its God-ordained function as a ministry of public justice; and second, that those spheres or institutions whose roles have been usurped by the State should stop abdicating their responsibilities to the State and start fulfilling their proper functions in society in obedience to God’s word. There is only one way that this can be achieved: Christians must constitute themselves as a true society, a prophetic social order that functions across the whole spectrum of human society and manifests the Kingdom of God in its life, thereby providing a true model of society for the world. This kind of reform will mean a significant upheaval in the way Christians think and live. This will involve a great deal of sacrifice as Christians begin making those changes to their family and Church lives that God’s word requires. But without this sacrifice of obedience neither our own nation nor the world as a whole will be won for Christ.
The terms Paul uses for tax in Rom. 13:6–7 are φόρος (tribute) and τέλος (tax). Some commentators understand the distinction between these words to refer to direct and indirect taxes. The word translated tribute in the Authorised Version (φόρος) means “that which is brought in by way of payment, tribute . . . properly payments made by subjects to a ruling state, as by islanders and other Greeks to Athens.” According to Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, however, “the word can sometimes be used for more general levies, services, or payments, Plat. Polit., 298a; Plut. Anton., 24 (I, 926b), including those which strictly fall under the concept of τέλη” (i.e. taxes—see below). According to Leon Morris, “Paul is probably using the word in a general sense for any kind of tax, but his choice of the word is interesting.” This opinion is confirmed by the fact that the New Testament seems to use the words φόρος, τέλος and κῆνσος (κῆνσος means census, assessment, tax) as synonyms (see Mt. 17:25; Mk 12:14; Lk. 20:22). The word translated custom (τέλος) in the Authorised Version means “that which is paid for state purposes, a toll, tax, duty.” In his list of New Testament synonyms G. R. Berry states that “φόρος indicates a direct tax which was levied annually on houses, lands, and persons, and paid usually in produce. τέλος is an indirect tax on merchandise, which was collected at piers, harbors, and gates of cities. It was similar to modern import duties. κῆνσος, originally an enrolment of property and

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53 See for example C. E. B. Cranfield and C. K. Barrett *ad loc.*
persons, came to mean a poll-tax, levied annually on individuals by the Roman government. The δίδραχμα mentioned in Mt. 17:24 was a double drachma, nearly equal in value to the Jewish half-shekel. According to Berry this was the coin used to pay the annual Temple tax levied by the religious leaders of Israel for the purpose of maintaining the Temple.

§2
THE TERMINOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

The terminology used to describe the English education system seems contradictory to people unfamiliar with its history. Before there were any State schools in England private schools that received some form of State funding, no matter how limited, were referred to as public schools. This terminology continued, as did the limited State funding, after the subsequent development of the State education system. Public schools were for the wealthy and privileged, and still tend to be for the most part, since the fees charged are beyond the means of the majority of families. There was, however, prior to the development of the State system, and running alongside the public school system, a well developed and successful private education system that received no State funding, which provided for the majority of people, including the working classes, who could not afford the fees charged by the public schools. The schools that constituted this private system included charitable and Church schools, but also many small private schools whose fees were within the financial means of the working classes. The standard of education provided to the working classes by these private schools in Victorian England prior to the 1870 Education

60 G. R. Berry, op. cit., p. 136.
Act has been shown to have been above the world average by late twentieth-century standards. Nevertheless, the myth that the working classes had no or very little access to education prior to the advent of State schooling has become one of the most sacred dogmas of the modern secular humanist establishment. Denis de Rougemont’s naïve statement that it took State schooling to make the invention of the printing press fully effective is as revealing of the religious dogmatism at the heart of the secular humanist establishment as it is factually incorrect. On the other hand, and giving the lie to de Rougemont’s statement, there are today in the United Kingdom a number of charities that exist solely to help solve the growing illiteracy problem among school children. Yet there has never been a time when more public money and political effort were expended on the State education system than the present.

A participant in a BBC Radio Four religious programme some years ago stated that the doctrine of total depravity no longer has any credence in the Church and that only a few religious sects now adhere to it. Her point is well taken. Indeed, we could go further than this. Few of those who do give assent to the doctrine understand it or recognise its implications either for soteriology or social theory. Yet the Christian doctrines of total depravity and salvation and the Christian doctrine of social order are closely linked.

Of course the doctrine of total depravity does not teach, despite popular misconceptions to the contrary, that the non-believer is incapable of thinking or doing anything that is in itself good or virtuous—though it is true that God is the source of all goodness and that without the grace of God man is incapable of any good (cf. Mt. 19:16–17); common grace is therefore the source of all virtuous thoughts and actions of non-believers. Rather, what the doctrine of total depravity teaches is that the Fall affected the whole of man’s nature, including his intellect or reason. It is this teaching that man’s reason or intellect is corrupted by the Fall that distinguishes the Reformed doctrine of total depravity from the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Fall, which by contrast holds that man’s reason is essentially uncorrupted by the Fall. The Reformers rejected the nature/grace dualism that underpinned the Roman Catholic doctrine, which limited the Fall to man’s “spiritual” condi-
tion while leaving his reason uncorrupted by sin. The Reformers, following the logic of Augustine’s doctrine of original sin, taught that the Fall affected the whole nature of man, including his reason. Total depravity, therefore, teaches that in all his thoughts and actions, the virtuous as well as the immoral, the non-believer thinks and acts in rebellion against God: “obligation to God covers all of every man’s being and actions. Even if the act be correct in outward form, which is done without any reference to his will, he will judge it a shortcoming. ‘The ploughing of the wicked is sin.’ The intentional end to which our action is directed determines its moral complexion supremely.” As the apostle Paul put it, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Those who do not live by faith in God live in denial of God, in rebellion against him. By their whole lives they deny the God who demands their submission in the whole of their lives. Their very acts of charity and virtue, which are good in themselves, are put to the service of the idols they choose to worship instead of the God of the Bible. In the whole tenor of their lives, in every faculty of their being and every sphere of their lives, they deny in all they think and do the God who demands that their lives be lived in his service and for his glory. Those thoughts and works that are good in themselves, therefore, are used by non-believers to deny God and glorify idols.

1 See further p. 158ff. infra.

2 See On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins and On the Baptism of Infants; City of God, XIII.14; Enchiridion, 26, 27; On Marriage and Concupiscence, II.57, 58; On Grace and Free Will, 33; On Rebuke and Grace, 42.

3 See for example Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, sect. cliv (trans. Henry Cole); Philip Melanchthon, “Sin” in Loci Communes Theologici; John Calvin, Institutes, II.1.8–9; The Decades of Henry Bullinger, Third Decade, Tenth Sermon; The Canons of the Synod of Dort, Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, Articles 1–4; Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 6–8; Belgic Confession, XIV–XV; The Thirty-Nine Articles, IX–X; The Irish Articles, XXII–XXVI; Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.


5 See also the argument regarding the idolatrous use of the concepts of rationality, meaning, order and purpose by atheists on p. 258ff. infra.
and charitable, but the disposition of the hearts of such people is one that is totally turned away from God, who is the author of all good (and the only one who is good, according to Jesus—Mt. 19:17). The non-believer is dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) and cannot without the grace of God exercise faith (Eph. 2:8) or please God (Heb. 11:6).

In other words, the desire to be as God (Gen. 3:5, 22), defining good and evil for oneself without reference to God and his revealed will for mankind, colours the whole of fallen man’s outlook, the whole of the way that he thinks about life and the world, and in everything he thinks and does he seeks to think and act independently of God. The whole orientation of his life is one of denial of God, and in all spheres of life this fallen orientation determines the way he lives. He sees the world and all things in it independently of God and seeks to think and live independently of God. His interpretation of the whole of life is a denial of God. It is not merely that the corruption of sin manifests itself in his morals and “spiritual” life; his will is in bondage to sin and therefore he uses his reason to deny God. His defection from God is total. It is in this sense that man is totally depraved.

The doctrine of total depravity, therefore, has profound implications for a Christian world-view. It affects not merely our view of man as an individual soul, his slavery to sin and inability to serve God, i.e. his lack of righteousness in God’s sight, but also, for example, our understanding of how we should raise and educate our children, how we should as a society provide welfare for the needy, how we should organise our society politically and how we should deal with criminals. In short, it affects how we understand the faith as applying to the whole of life. Total depravity is a foundational doctrine for the development of a consistently Christian world-view, which is a particular view of the origin, nature, meaning, value and purpose of life based on the biblical doctrines of Creation, Fall and Redemption. The biblical doctrine of the Fall presupposes the Creation, and a particular view of the Creation (it is not consistent, for example, with a theistic evolutionary perspective), and the Christian doctrine of salvation
presupposes the biblical doctrine of the Fall. Our understanding of the Fall, its extent and implications, will have a decisive role in shaping our understanding of salvation.

§2
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

Mediaeval Roman Catholic theologians, for example, made a distinction between the image of God in man, which they believed consisted of his natural ability to reason and exercise free will, and the likeness of God, which they believed consisted of his original righteousness in God’s sight. This original righteousness or likeness of God was not considered part of the natural condition of man but a supernatural gift of God’s grace, a *donum superadditum*, bestowed upon Adam in addition to his human nature. It was this *donum superadditum*, the supernatural gift of original righteousness, that was lost in the Fall according to this Roman Catholic doctrine.

As a consequence man’s communion with God was broken; but the image of God, consisting of man’s reason and free will, although weakened by the Fall, remained essentially uncorrupted by sin.

6 See Gen. 1:26. This faulty distinction can be found in the early patristic period. Tertullian, for example, considered the image of God as consisting in his *form*, and the likeness in his *eternity* (On Baptism, chapt. 5; cf. Augustus Neander, *Antignosticus* in History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church [London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852, trans. J. E. Ryland], Vol. II, p. 332). Roman Catholic theologians subjected the two different words used in Gen. 1:26 (*image* and *likeness*) to an Aristotelian analysis in which the image consists in the *substance* and the likeness in the *accidents* of anything. Calvin rejected any distinction between image and likeness (*Commentaries on Genesis*, ad loc.; *Institutes*, Lxv.3).


8 According to the Roman Catholic theologians Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler “The essence of original sin is the absence of grace, or of that supernatural elevation which was originally intended for man: this ‘state of privation’ really separates man from God and yet is not a personal sin of the individual, that is, only to be called ‘sin’ in an analogous sense; it leaves unchanged all that man himself is by nature, although the whole concrete man is ‘wounded’ by the consequences of original sin and ‘weakened’ in his natural powers” (“Original Sin” in Concise Theological Dictionary [London: Burns and Oates/Freiburg: Herder,
This split the life of mankind into two different realms, the realm of nature and the realm of grace. Redemption takes place in the realm of grace not the realm of nature, which is largely unaffected either by the Fall or Redemption.

This denial of man’s total depravity since the Fall means that human sin is not pervasive, that it does not affect the whole of man’s thoughts, words and actions outside of Christ. In such a perspective the salvation that Christ accomplished on the cross does not effect a total transformation of the natural life of man by the grace of God. Rather, it is a kind of restoration of the *donum superadditum,* i.e. a supplement, needed to complete man, to bridge the shortfall between man as he stands as the product of nature and man as one who is righteous in God’s sight. In this perspective man is able of his own will and abilities to accomplish much of what God requires of him, intellectually, morally, politically, culturally etc., but he is unable of his own abilities to achieve a state of supernatural righteousness in God’s sight. God’s grace is needed, therefore, in order for man’s communion with God to be restored and in order for man to be able to understand those things supernaturally revealed in the book of Scripture. But the book of nature is open to all men, who, through the use of their natural abilities, are able to come to a proper understanding of it.

1965, trans. Richard Strachan], p. 330f.). This view of the Fall has its origin in the Semi-Pelagianism of the fifth century, which eventually came to dominate the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation ([James Orr, The Progress of Dogma [London: James Clarke, 1901], p. 143]. “Semi-Pelagianism denotes a view which sought to steer clear of difficulty by giving a place in conversion to both divine grace and human will as co-ordinate factors; and by basing predestination, as Augustine did earlier [in his life—SCP], on foreseen faith and obedience. It did not deny human corruption, but regarded man’s nature as weakened, or diseased, rather than as fatally injured, by the fall. Fallen human nature retains an element of freedom in virtue of which it can co-operate with divine grace, and conversion is the joint-product of the two factors” (ibid., p. 160f.). Compare this with the Reformed doctrine of the Fall as stated by Abraham Kuyper at note 17 on p. 162 infra.

9 “[T]he Fall was the loss of an inherent perfecting power of supernatural life, but this power is restored in Holy Baptism” (“Councils of Perfection” in John Henry Blunt, ed., Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology [London, Oxford and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1871], p. 165a).
In this perspective man is not totally depraved, i.e. completely fallen, but only partially fallen. He is able by his natural abilities to achieve much, but needs the grace of God to bring him to perfection. This perspective is associated with Roman Catholicism and particularly with Thomas Aquinas and those who have followed him.\textsuperscript{10} According to Aquinas: “The constitution of human nature is neither destroyed nor diminished by sin. The gift of original righteousness [i.e. the \textit{donum superadditum}—SCP] was totally lost through the sin of our first parent. The natural inclination to virtue, finally, is diminished by sin.”\textsuperscript{11} For Aquinas original sin consists in desire that is not subject to reason,\textsuperscript{12} and “to sin is nothing other than to fall short of the good which befits one according to one’s nature.” Furthermore, man’s “nature is impaired by sin more in the desire for good than in the knowledge of truth.”\textsuperscript{13} Nonetheless, “Human nature is not so entirely corrupted by sin . . . as to be deprived of natural good altogether.”\textsuperscript{14} Consequently, for Aquinas “. . . grace does not abolish nature but perfects it . . .”\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{10} Alan Richardson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 99a, 202a ff.


\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, 1a2æ.109.2 in A. M. Fairweather, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{13} “Human nature is not so entirely corrupted by sin, however, as to be deprived of natural good altogether. Consequently, even in the state of corrupt nature a man can do some particular good by the power of his own nature, such as build houses, plant vineyards, and things of this kind. But he cannot achieve the whole good natural to him, as if he lacked nothing. One who is infirm, similarly, can make some movements by himself, but cannot move himself naturally like a man in health, unless cured by the help of medicine” (\textit{Summa Theologiae}, 1a2æ.109.2 in A. M. Fairweather, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 140f.). This analogy with a sick man reveals the problem with Aquinas’ understanding of the Fall, since Scripture teaches that man is \textit{dead} in his trespasses and sins, not merely ill, i.e. impaired or hindered by sin, and therefore incapable of any movement of his own ability towards reconciliation with God (Eph. 2:1–10). The building of houses and planting of vineyards of the wicked is sin. See the quotation at note 4 on p. 156 \textit{supra}. See also the quotation from Rahner and Vorgrimler in note 8 on p. 158 \textit{supra}.

therefore, does not totally transform man’s life and culture but merely perfects it. Man’s natural life and culture are not deemed to be in need of complete transformation by the grace of God. And this is because they are not perceived as being completely fallen. The curse of sin has not corrupted them. Man needs saving from his sin, his rebellion against God and his unbelief, but this is seen as having a narrow application relating to the realms of faith and morals. The Fall is seen in narrowly “religious” terms and those areas of life considered to be part of nature are deemed to be religiously neutral areas of life. In this perspective the Christian faith consists of a synthesis of nature and grace, with the latter completing the former.

Except in those areas perceived as “religious” in the narrow sense of the word, salvation in such a world-view will not affect the social order of society. Since man is not totally depraved or totally fallen in every aspect of his life, and retains his natural abilities intact (e.g. the intellect or reason and free will), his culture and social order will not be transformed completely by the grace of God in Christ. It is only man’s “spiritual” condition that needs to be corrected.

From this we see that our understanding of the nature and extent of the Fall limits and shapes our understanding of the nature and extent of Redemption. If the Fall is total and affects every aspect of the life of man, then Redemption must be total; it must redeem the whole life of man. There can be no area or sphere of human life or thought that must not be redeemed and therefore completely transformed by Christ. If the Fall is partial, if it affects man’s moral inclinations and his faith in God but not his intellect, his ability to reason correctly, then the natural life of man is not corrupted in the whole of its orientation and Redemption is only partial. It does not transform the whole of man’s life and culture, it merely perfects nature.

16 See further the discussion regarding Aquinas’ political theology on p. 136ff. supra.
The view of the Fall mentioned above—i.e. that Adam’s original righteousness was not an aspect of his human nature but a *donum superadditum*, a supernatural gift of grace in addition to man’s essential nature—is a distinctively Roman Catholic doctrine. The Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic view of the Fall and taught what came to be known as the doctrine of total depravity. Abraham Kuyper stated the Reformed doctrine in the following way: “We have been taught by the word of God that sin not only spoiled the will and misdirected the mind but also *darkened the intellect*; conversely that palingenesia [regeneration] not only converts the will and transforms the mind but also uniquely illumines our consciousness. Those who believe receive not only another impression of *life* but are also reoriented in the world of *thought*.”

Nevertheless, it is clear that a perspective very similar to the Roman Catholic understanding of the nature of man and his fall into sin is adhered to by Protestants today. Most Christians in the West today are dualists. They see life as split into two different orders: spiritual life, which corresponds to the sphere of grace, and secular life, which corresponds to the sphere of nature. Nature does not need redeeming because it is not fallen. Conversion affects a transformation in the spiritual realm. But it does not essentially affect the realm of nature (secular life). One can carry on living life pretty much as one did before conversion in the realm of nature. The concern of the Church is with the realm of the supernatural (grace). And therefore congregations are often warned not to get tied up with cultural concerns, with things happening in the world and with organisations. Their duty is to be at church as much as possible attending to the spiritual realm.

The consequence of this dualistic world-view is pietism, which

has now triumphed as the dominant form of spirituality among Protestants. Even among those who consider themselves to be Reformed and therefore who accept the strictly theological dimension of the doctrine of total depravity the implications of this doctrine for the whole life of man in those areas that fall outside soteriology and ecclesiology are practically neglected. When it comes to the education of their children, politics, social order, economics, art and culture generally the faith is largely seen as having no relevance. It is certainly not deemed to require a total transformation of these areas, which are seen as neutral from the religious point of view. Practically, Reformed believers on the whole today have adopted a world-view similar to that of Roman Catholicism. The Fall is not seen as having affected the whole of man’s nature. His natural life remains largely unaffected by his fall into sin. Grace does not transform nature therefore, it merely completes it, and the natural life of man,—his family life, political life, economic life, the upbringing and education of his children etc.—remains unchanged, unaffected, untransformed by the word of God, since grace is seen as being relevant only to the spiritual and supernatural aspects of life, e.g. faith, Church life, spiritual gifts. In spite of the retention of the verbiage of the doctrine of total depravity in the Reformed Churches, the truth really is that the doctrine is no longer understood nor its implications appreciated. It is confined to the realm of the spiritual and is seen as having no relation to the realm of the secular.

§4

The Arminian Doctrine

Arminianism is the dominant theology among Protestants today of course, and Arminianism, like the Roman Catholic view of the Fall, denies man’s total depravity since the Fall. This denial is

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18 This pietism is also an effeminate spirituality. See my essay “The Church Effeminate” in Common-Law Wives and Concubines: Essays on Covenantal Christianity and Contemporary Western Culture (Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, 2003), pp. 113–119.
sometimes implicit rather than explicit. Some committed Arminians will pay lip service to the doctrine of total depravity, but the nature of the Arminian system of doctrine, particularly the Arminian doctrines of prevenient grace and free will, effectively nullifies the doctrine of total depravity. According to Nicolaas Grevinchovius, “Adam after his fall retained a power of believing; and so did all reprobates in him.”19 The Arminians at the Synod of Dordt taught that “Adam did not lose the power of performing that obedience, which is required by the new covenant, namely, as it is considered formally, that is, as it has been required by the new covenant. That is to say, he did not lose the ability of believing in Christ, or of rising again from sin through repentance.”20

But why have Reformed Churches embraced pietism with such enthusiasm? I suggest it is because they have, unwittingly, embraced a basic premiss of both the Roman Catholic and Arminian world-views, namely, that man is not completely fallen away from God, that outside of the saving grace of God in Christ man is not totally depraved. The Christian faith, therefore, relates only to a narrowly defined “spiritual” realm; it ceases to be a religion to live by and becomes instead little more than a syncretistic mystery cult comprised of elements of a Christian soteriology, a view of spirituality that is basically a modern version of Gnostic dualism, and a secular humanist world-view.


20 “Adamus non amisit vires eam odedientiam præstandi, quæ novo fœdere exigitur prout puta ea consideratur formaliter, hoc est, prout novo fœdere exacta est. Potentiam scilicet in Christum credédi non amisit, sive ex peccato per resipiscentiam resurgendi” (Defensio Sententie Remonstrantium Circa Quartum de Modo Operationis Gratiae Articulum in Articulus Tertius et Quartus de Gratia Dei in Conversione Hominis, p. 107 in Acta et Scripta Synodalia Dordracena Ministrorum Remonstrantium in Foederato Belgio [Ex Officina Typographi Synodalis, 1620]). Cf. John Owen op. cit., p. 123 n.2. See also ibid. chapters VII, XII, XIII [pp. 68–82, 114–129]). The debate between Arminianism and Calvinism “is in principle a revival of the old dispute between Augustine and, if not the Pelagian, at least the semi-Pelagian, section of his opponents” (James Orr, op. cit., p. 298). On semi-Pelagianism see note 8 on p. 158f. supra. See also the Canons of the Synod of Dordt, 1618–1819, Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, Rejection of Errors.
Of course Reformed Churches, especially those that subscribe to the TULIP formula, will deny this. They hold to the doctrines of grace. Perish the thought that they should have adopted a basic premiss of Arminianism and Roman Catholicism! But as Jesus said, “Wisdom is justified of [i.e. vindicated by] her children” (Mt. 11:19, Lk. 7:35). Why do so many Reformed Churches deny the connection between faith and culture? And why are we to flee from the world that Christ redeemed and commissioned us to claim in his name into an irrelevant ghetto that denies any duty of the Christian to reform or transform the culture in which he lives? Why was the Great Commission separated from the Cultural Mandate by Reformed believers in the twentieth century when historically they have gone together and been seen as inseparably linked, two sides of the same coin? By denying the necessary link between religion and culture Reformed believers have opened to door to the Arminian world-view. They still adhere to the terminology of total depravity, but the doctrine is a dead letter in practice; they do not believe that man’s fallen nature, his defection from God, manifests itself in the totality of his life, i.e. in every aspect and sphere of his life and culture. If they did they would not send their children to be educated by non-believers, to be taught according to the basic premiss of secular humanism, namely that the world and everything in it exists and can be understood independently of the God who created it and whose creative will gives it its meaning and purpose. Man’s depravity does not in their eyes manifest itself in the spheres of education, medicine, science, art, politics. In these spheres the natural life of man is sufficient. It does not need redeeming. Grace not does transform man and his culture completely, it merely perfects nature. In this sense most modern Reformed believers are practical Arminians; their life and witness to the faith of the Reformers, which they claim to espouse, is in practice the antithesis of that proclaimed by the Reformers.

Yet when culture is abandoned by Christians and man’s natural life outside of God is allowed to develop consistently according to its own principle, i.e. the principle of original sin in which man determines for himself what constitutes good and evil without
reference to God’s word, Christians throw up their hands in horror and bewail the terrible state of the world. But why? Culture is largely the external form or incarnation of religion.21 If we accept that people can be educated properly without reference to God by those who deny God and seek to live consistently in term of such a denial of God, the result will be that God is eliminated from our culture. The denial of God by the scientist and the triumph of evolution as the explanation of our existence is merely a symptom of man’s desire to live consistently in term of his own fallen nature. The deplorable state of immorality in our culture is merely a symptom of the same desire. Likewise, if we eliminate God from our understanding of welfare and medicine the result will be massive welfare abuse and abortion on demand.

Is it really so difficult to see the connection between religion and culture? By their denial of the necessity of a Christian culture Christians have opened the door to multiculturalism22 and the repaganisation of society. And their answer to this problem has too often been to retreat from the world rather than to preach the whole gospel to the whole Creation and thereby bring the redeeming grace of God to bear upon the cultural life of the nation. But in adopting the same pietistic perspective those who claim to be Reformed but deny the link between faith and culture have become implicit Arminians, promoting an Arminian social theory that has helped to open the door to a world without God for the next generation, i.e. a culture in which God is relegated to a narrow sphere of life revolving round church meetings and personal piety and in which the gospel is seen as having no bearing on the greater part of man’s life. Education, art, economics, welfare, medicine, law and order, vocational life are all seen as religiously neutral spheres of life. The result of this world-view has been the decline of our society from a culture that acknowledged and honoured God, however imperfectly, to a society that blasphemes

22 On the meaning of the term multiculturalism see further definition §5 in the Excursus on p. 50ff. supra.
Total Depravity and Social Order

and dishonours God with virtually every breath that it takes. This
decline has now entered the exponential phase of the curve and
as a result our nation stands on the brink of Gehenna.

§5

The Biblical Doctrine

Our understanding of the Fall will affect our understanding of
redemption. If man is totally depraved by the Fall, his sin, his
denial of God and his insistence that he will determine what good
and evil are for himself, will manifest itself in the totality of his
life and works, in every sphere of his life and culture. In this case
man’s redemption must be equally total; it must embrace not only
his individual spiritual life but his culture as well. If man is not
totally depraved by sin, if the Fall is only partial, his sin will not
manifest itself in the totality of his life and works. In this case the
natural life of man will not need to be transformed totally by the
grace of God, but only perfected. The gospel will be considered
a “spiritual” addition to the natural life of man, a donum superad-
ditum, and, to use the words of one pietistic preacher, “primarily
concerned with the world to come.”

But the Bible does not teach this. Rather, it teaches that man’s
tfall into sin is total, that without the grace of God every imagi-
nation of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually (Gen.
6:5; 8:21 cf. Rom. 1:18–32; 3:10–18; 8:6–8; Eph. 4:17–19; Titus
1:15–16). Man’s natural life in the state of sin, therefore, does not
need to be merely perfected. Redemption is not a spiritual addi-
tion to the natural life of man. The natural life of man needs
to be transformed totally by the grace of God. Redemption is a
complete recreation of man in the image of Christ: “If any man be
in Christ,” says the apostle Paul, “he is a new creature: old things
are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).
And if the believer in Christ is a new creature, this new creation
must manifest itself in the totality of his life, and in his culture,
which is the external outworking of his religion.
We forget this important doctrine at our peril, and when we do our society must suffer the awful consequences of our neglect of the gospel and of our Cultural Mandate to bring all things into subjection to Jesus Christ (Gen. 1:28 cf. 2 Cor. 10:5). Of course, it is often not until the next generation and those that follow it that the full implications of this neglect become apparent, and this to some extent helps to explain the terrible consequences of the transgression of the Second Commandment, in which the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations (Ex. 20:5).

Man’s fall into sin is total. No area of his life is unaffected by his sin. Because man in the totality of his life is a sinner he seeks to deny God and suppress the knowledge of God in all spheres of life (Rom. 1:18–19). His sin, therefore, works itself out in the totality of his culture. Likewise, the salvation that Christ accomplished for his people by his life, death and resurrection is a completely new creation. It must, therefore, work itself out in the totality of man’s life and culture. This fact has profound implications for our view of social order. Our society will produce either a culture that is moving towards the new creation in Christ, or a culture that is moving away from this, a culture of death (Pr. 8:36). A society that is moving towards the new creation in Christ will seek to order its life according to the standards of righteousness revealed in God’s law. It will produce a culture that honours Christ and a social order that conforms to God’s law because it recognises the comprehensively fallen nature of man’s natural life (i.e. man’s total depravity outside of Christ), God’s grace in Christ as the only remedy for this condition, and God’s law as the only foundation for social order and peace in a fallen world. Where this is rejected society will deteriorate into a culture of depravity and death, which is what Western society today is becoming.
This declension of our society into a culture of depravity will not be halted until the Church once again recognises the full extent of man’s fall into sin and therefore the full and complete nature of the redemption that Christ has accomplished for the world, and until the Church once again starts living in the light of this by seeking to transform the culture in which she lives by applying the light of God’s word to every sphere of human thought and activity. We must preach a total salvation to a totally fallen world.

The nature/grace schema of the Roman Catholic Church, which is so popular today even among Protestants, will not help us here. Rather it will hinder our work for the Kingdom of God because it is a compromise with the philosophy of the world. The work of Thomas Aquinas was a self-conscious compromise with the philosophy of ancient paganism as represented by Aristotle. According to Professor David Estrada, “Thomas [Aquinas] attempted to reconcile Aristotelianism and Christianity. He believed that Aristotelian philosophy was, in the main, true. Key Aristotelian concepts, such as the idea of substance and accident, are used in defining Christian doctrines—including the doctrine of the Eucharist. Among other things, Thomas accepted the entire Greek position with regard to the soul. On the other hand he correctly affirms that the knowledge of faith is supernatural and cannot be demonstrated by human reason; yet according to Thomas, theology is to refute the opponents of faith and elucidate and make probable the articles of belief by the aid of philosophical thought. For the Reformers, the Ockhamists successfully wrecked this synthesis of Thomas Aquinas whereby nature and reason lead through unbroken stages to grace and revelation.”

23 I am using the word Church here to refer to the body of Christ as an organism, which includes but is not limited to the Church as an institution.

Aquinas’ theology was a hybrid, a syncretistic form of belief that stood in opposition to the biblical world-view grounded in the doctrines of Creation, Fall and Redemption. These doctrines form the foundation of a Christian world-view. Each of these doctrines was a scandal to the world of ancient philosophy, and they are still a scandal to the world of modern secular humanist philosophy and science. But they are inextricably linked. The abandonment of the biblical doctrines of Creation or Fall will alter our understanding of the nature of Redemption. The result will be a truncated gospel devoid of the ability to transform the whole life of man. Christ came to save the world, not merely to pluck brands from the fire. The redemption he accomplished on the cross was for the whole life of men and nations, and therefore his Great Commission to his disciples was and is to bring all nations into obedience to his word.

The Church must abandon the dualistic nature/grace schema and pursue a biblical understanding of the nature of Creation, Fall and Redemption. God’s grace does not merely perfect a largely unfallen nature. It transforms completely the natural life of man, which is totally depraved and in need of the grace of God in each and every sphere of life. The grace of God in Christ is a grace that claims the whole of man’s life, including his family, his politics, his art, his business. No area of man’s life or culture is religiously neutral. It either serves Christ or it denies him (Mt. 12:30).

25 “Thomas took over the Augustinian pronouncement that philosophy was the ancilla theologiae [the handmaid of theology], however, he gave it an entirely different meaning. For he considered that philosophy belonged to the sphere ruled by the natural light of reason, and ascribed to it independence of revealed theology. This would have been a gain for Christian philosophy, if Thomas had not withdrawn ‘natural thought’ from the central ground-motive of the Christian religion. The latter was now replaced by the form-matter-motive in its Aristotelian conception, but not without an accommodation of this pagan religious motive to the ecclesiastical doctrine of creation. In this scholastic way of accommodation, required by the Roman-Catholic ground-motive of nature and grace, the form-matter motive lost its original religious sense. But at the same time the Biblical creation-motive was deprived of its original integral and radical character” (Herman Dooyeweerd, A New Critique of Theoretical Thought [Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969], Vol. I., p. 179f.).
In a newspaper article from *The Catholic Times* dated 9 November 2003 Robert Doyle related how Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tegucigalpa in Honduras, Central America, who had apparently been tipped as a future pope, had attacked capitalism as “savage” and called for a return to the principles of socialism. According to the report in *The Catholic Times* the Archbishop said: “The historic achievements of the welfare state are being dismantled and, as a result, the differences between the rich and the poor are growing.” The Archbishop said further that “whereas states won a protagonist role on the economic terrain in the twentieth century, today their power is decreasing more and more.”

I do not intend to comment on the size of the State in Honduras. But the Cardinal was speaking of the world situation and his talk addressed the issue of globalisation. It seems astonishing that anyone should make the claim that the power and influence of the modern State is decreasing. The situation in Europe is completely the reverse, with an ever growing European super-State that seeks to regulate and control just about every aspect of people’s lives and society,—and this European super-State is thoroughly socialist.

But what is more astonishing is that, given the track record of socialist States from Hitler’s Third Reich and Stalin’s Soviet
regime, through to the tin-pot imitators of these oppressive States in the Third World, clergymen should see the socialist State as a liberator of the poor and a defender of the oppressed. More than any other form of State power it has been socialist States that have oppressed the poor and tyrannised their peoples—and it should not be forgotten that the Soviet regime never claimed to have realised the communist ideal of society, but rather a socialist society. The unlearned Cardinal stated, according to The Catholic Times report, that “a savage capitalism is returning which history has already judged harshly in view of the conditions to which it subjected the proletariat in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”

This has increasingly been shown to be a biased and incorrect view of both capitalism and socialism. According to Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy: “Neither Russian practice nor the later writings of Rosa Luxemburg, the only real successor to Marx, bear out this theory of exploitation. The Class-War between Capital and Labour is as true and as untrue as the sex-war between man and wife, the age-war between old and young, the border-war between neighbouring groups. But the whole process is as complicated as the other conflicts mentioned above. In the struggle between the sexes the man can exploit the woman, and the woman can exploit the man; but there can also exist, after all, a happy marriage. In the Class-War, Capital can exploit Labour, but Labour can also exploit Capital, or there can be real peace as there was in England between 1850 and 1882, to the great disappointment of Marx. English workers exploited the world in peaceful co-operation with English capitalists from 1846 to 1914. German workers exploited the capital-owning class, together with the employers, during the inflation of 1918–1923. During these years the workers improved

3 “It could probably be said that the majority of states in the history of mankind have been ‘socialist.’ But it is also true that these were in no sense periods or places of human happiness or creativity” (Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Forword” in Igor Shafarevich, The Socialist Phenomenon [New York: Harper and Row, 1980], p. ix).
4 See further §1 “Marxist Communism and Socialism” in the Excursus on p. 212ff. infra.
or at least kept up their standards. The people of means lowered theirs to little more than zero, because the inflation did not abolish wages, but capital.”

The Industrial Revolution did not worsen the conditions of the working classes; it improved them greatly. And socialism did not improve the conditions of the working classes; it created worse conditions and led to their harsher treatment. The implementation of socialist economics in Russia following the Revolution led to a decrease in standards of living for the masses. As a result workers in Soviet Russia did not achieve the standard of living they had enjoyed under tsarist rule immediately prior to the Revolution until the early 1950s. By contrast the masses who voted with their feet to leave the land on which they were starving and work in the factories during the Industrial Revolution did not do so because they were forced by State decree to do this. This development was the result of progress in a free society. Ludwig von Mises stated the matter clearly: “The truth is that economic conditions were highly unsatisfactory on the eve of the Industrial Revolution. The traditional social system was not elastic enough to provide for the needs of the rapidly increasing population. Neither farming nor the guilds had any use for the additional hands. Business was imbued

7 According to Carol Quigley industrial production in Soviet Russia in 1920 was only 13 percent of the 1913 figure (op. cit. p. 387). See also Janet G. Chapman, Real Wages in Soviet Russia Since 1928 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 142–164, especially 148f. Chapman’s study deals only with non-agricultural wage earners and salaried employees, not peasants and collective farmers (p. 4f.). Cf. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy’s comment, written in 1938, that “[i]n Russia industrial labour exploits both peasantry and capital, because the few millions of ‘productive’ workers are constantly overpaid. Only since 1933 has the Russian bureaucracy tried to correct this. In Russia the wrong application of the wage-fixing principle has starved the rest of the population, the standard of the peasant being 70 and that of the industrial worker 135 compared to the norm of 1914” (op. cit., p. 79f., cf. Chapman, op. cit., p. 168ff.).
with the inherited spirit of privilege and exclusive monopoly; its institutional foundations were licenses and the grant of a patent of monopoly; its philosophy was restriction and the prohibition of competition both domestic and foreign. The number of people for whom there was no room left in the rigid system of paternalism and government tutelage of business grew rapidly. They were virtually outcasts. The apathetic majority of these wretched people lived from the crumbs that fell from the tables of the established castes. In the harvest season they earned a trifle by occasional help on farms; for the rest they depended upon private charity and communal poor relief.

“. . . The factories freed the authorities and the ruling landed aristocracy from an embarrassing problem that had grown too large for them. They provided sustenance for the masses of paupers. They emptied the poor houses, the workhouses, and the prisons. They converted starving beggars into self-supporting breadwinners.

“The factory owners did not have the power to compel anybody to take a factory job. They could only hire people who were ready to work for the wages offered to them. Low as these wage rates were, they were nonetheless much more than these paupers could earn in any other field open to them. It is a distortion of the

8 The choice of the word “castes” here is unfortunate and misleading since England has never had a caste system in the strict sense of the term, i.e. a social system based on rigid hereditary social status from which it is not possible for an individual or family to migrate. On the contrary, there has always been a high degree of social and economic mobility in England. It has always been possible in England for a family to go from rags to riches and from the lowest to the highest of social classes, and vice versa, in three generations. It is true that England has always been a class-conscious and indeed to a very large extent a class-bound society, but the classes were never defined by caste, despite popular misconceptions to the contrary among members of all classes. Cf. the following statement by Denis de Rougemont: “In the East, India codified castes, and even added one more, made numerous sub-castes, and kept the system going for nearly thirty centuries, notwithstanding all the efforts exerted by religious reformers, by Buddha, by Islam, and by the English. In the West, on the other hand, the rise of Europe coincided with the success of a permanent struggle against caste” (Man’s Western Quest: The Principles of Civilization [London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1957], p. 5).
facts to say that the factories carried off the housewives from the nurseries and the kitchens and the children from their play. These women had nothing to cook with and to feed their children. These children were destitute and starving. Their only refuge was the factory. It saved them, in the strict sense of the term, from death by starvation.

“It is deplorable that such conditions existed. But if one wants to blame those responsible, one must not blame the factory owners who—driven by selfishness, of course, and not by ‘altruism’—did all they could to eradicate the evils. What had caused these evils was the economic order of the precapitalistic era, the ‘good old days.’”

Despite von Mises’ comment above that the factory owners were driven by selfishness, not altruism, many factory owners did in fact engage in altruistic activities, and it is simply not true, as Rosenstock-Huessy claims, that capitalism contributed nothing to “the reproduction of man,” an argument that takes no account of the dire conditions in which the masses found themselves on the eve of the Industrial Revolution. Denis de Rougemont is similarly mistaken when he claims that “capitalism created nothing; it financed ‘Progress’ without paying royalties to its authors and to the detriment of its workmen.” As von Mises points out:


10 Though in fact von Mises also manages to define altruism in a characteristically libertarian way as a form of selfishness; i.e. as a means of alleviating the altruist’s own present state of dissatisfaction with the conditions that others have to endure (ibid., p. 499). It is this kind of amoral reasoning, with its reduction of man to nothing more than an economic actor, that vitiates the ideology of libertarianism and puts it ultimately on a par with socialism as a form of intellectual idolatry—i.e. an attempt to explain the meaning of life in terms of an aspect of the created order itself: economics. See further §4 “Marxism, Libertarianism and Idolatry” in the Excurus on p. 219f. infra.


12 Denis de Rougemont, *op. cit.*, p. 141 (cf. p. 179ff.), although he does go on to say that “Today the progress of technics restores the country to townspeople, manual and office and professional workers mixed. Technics have done more to draw men near to nature than have the back-to-nature theories which condemn
“The history of capitalism in Great Britain as well as in all other capitalist countries is a record of an unceasing tendency toward the improvement in the wage earners’ standard of living.”\(^{13}\) Doubtless, this on its own does not constitute the reproduction of man; but it did not appear on its own and given the historical conditions neither was the reproduction of man possible without it, except for the privileged elite of society. The Industrial Revolution made possible for the many what was previously possible only for the few. It is a romantic fable to imagine that the pre-industrial economy of Great Britain could provide the necessary social foundations for the reproduction of man given the conditions prevailing for the masses immediately prior to the Industrial Revolution.

The same romanticisation of the pre-industrial agrarian economy of England is to be found in Christopher Dawson’s essay “The Passing of Industrialism.” According to Dawson: “The last age [the industrial age—SCP] was an age of exploitation and therefore its duration was limited; it was not simply a case of the exploitation of the weak by the strong as in the last age of the Roman Republic; it was the exploitation of the world and of its resources by man. The natural riches lying unused for ages were spent recklessly for the sake of immediate advantage without thought of the future. It was the case of a pigmy, with the mind and aims of a pigmy, suddenly endowed with the power of a giant. In England the whole powers of the nation were thrown recklessly into the struggle

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\(^{13}\) V. Mises, op. cit., p. 622.
Socialism

for exploitation. The welfare of the people, the moral law, were thrown aside in order that the newly discovered riches could be made profitable; that the iron and coal and cotton could be put on the world market, and the riches of the exploiters increased. Thus there was not only no spiritual purpose in the process—there was not even a worthy human end. On the immense suffering and labour of the people was built up the hideous edifice of Victorian industrial society.”¹⁴

Dawson went on to predict¹⁵ that post-World War One society¹⁶ would return to an agrarian economy.¹⁷ But this analysis fails to take account not only of the real nature of the situation prevailing on the land prior to industrialisation of the economy and the effects of the latter on the standard of living of the labouring masses,


¹⁵ Incorrectly, as he later admitted (*Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, p. 63).

¹⁶ The essay was written during World War One and first published in 1920.

¹⁷ “The vacant spaces of the earth are not yet filled, but they are already limited, and the end of the process is in sight. The new world of five continents is becoming a closed and settled area like the old world of Southern Europe and Southern Asia; and once again there begins the severe pressure of the great nations on the territory and food supply. The limitation of the future is not one of industrial skill and capital, but one of raw materials. As population advances, the price of raw materials must increase, while, owing to the growing perfection of organisation and machinery, there is practically no limit to the reduction in costs of manufacture. In the long run the valuable capital will not be machinery or the labour which can work it, for these can be found everywhere, thanks to the spread of industrialism, but the produce of the soil, the amount of which is essentially limited. Thus there will be a tendency for agriculture to recover the place that it lost in the nineteenth century and to become once more the basis of national prosperity. The need for intensive cultivation will involve the concentration of more money, more labour and more thought on agriculture. The peasant, who was in nineteenth-century England an unimportant and neglected member of society, will tend to become influential, and will demand a larger share in the produce of his labour. No land will be poor enough to be neglected, or rich enough to be cultivated wastefully. The aim of the agriculture of the future will be the maximum produce rather than the maximum net profit, and every productive possibility will have to be developed to the full. This will involve the increase of the agricultural population in all the regions of the New and Old World where intensive cultivation is not already the rule, and points ultimately to the growth of a new territorial self-sufficiency” (*ibid.*, p. 50ff.).
but also the very nature of the capitalist economic process itself. Dawson speaks as if the results of capitalism benefited only the few (entrepreneurs and industrialists) at the expense of the many (workers). This is, of course, the Marxist communist perspective, but it is also a common attitude found among Roman Catholic intellectuals. But this kind of zero sum characterisation of the capitalist process is a misconception founded on economic ignorance. Capitalist entrepreneurs cannot make their profits unless the relative standard of living of society as a whole is increased by their activities. The growth of the industrial economies since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the general social and economic amelioration of all classes in society that has accompanied it stand testimony against this misconception. The lot of the labouring masses in England during the Industrial Revolution contrasted starkly with the treatment meted out to the peasants and working classes in Soviet Russia and other socialist States. In 1958 the German economist Wilhelm Röpke made the following comments on the contrast between the British Industrial Revolution and the implementation of enforced Communist industrialisation in Russia: “What is the misery of early British capitalism in comparison with the immense sacrifices of the Soviet experiment? The British had to wait a little while for the increase in mass prosperity and an improvement in labor conditions—but what is this in comparison with the long and still continuing sufferings of the masses in the Communist state? Nor should we forget that Moscow’s autarkic and collectivist method made the solution of another development problem much harder, namely, the problem of feeding the growing industrial and urban population. In England and in the other Western countries, development was accompanied by a steady and considerable increase in agricultural yields, and at the same time, the free world economy enabled the produce of the vast new cultivated areas of the New World to be used for feeding the industrial countries; but in Soviet Russia, Communist

economic methods led to a decline in agriculture which even now does not seem to have been made good, if we are to judge by Russian statistics and the observations of Moscow’s rulers.”

Everything that makes modern life in the West superior on the material level to the drudgery of poverty that countless masses have had to endure throughout history is the result of the economic organisation of society on the capitalist model operating in a free society underpinned by a Christian world-view. This was the context in which economic progress changed the fate of the people of Britain and other the Western nations. Modris Eksteins, writing about England in the Victoria era, said that “perhaps the most important influence in the development of a vision of social order based on commonly accepted values was the growth of Protestantism and of Bible reading, especially in the wake of the great revival in the early nineteenth century. By the end of that century a shared vision of social order was widely in place. This vision and its accompanying values were not imposed through social imperialism but grew out of the religious environment and, where this did not suffice, out of improved economic and social conditions. It is generally accepted that by the end of the Victorian era, most of the British population no longer had to struggle simply to subsist. A measure of comfort, however small, had been achieved in most cases. Consumption of meat instead of bread, of milk and eggs instead of just potatoes, was rising. In recent years, before the turn of the century, there had been a steady rise in real wages, a decline in family size, a drop in the consumption of alcohol, and the beginnings of social welfare provisions. Archdeacon Wilson, headmaster of Clifton College, remarked in a speech to the Working Men’s Club of St. Agnes in 1893: ‘Possibly a future historian writing the history of the English people in this period will think much less of the legislative and even of the commercial and scientific progress of the period than of the remarkable social movement by which there has been an effort made, by a thousand

agencies, to bring about unity of feeling between different classes, and to wage war against conditions of life which earlier generations seem to have tolerated.20

The real social problem caused by the Industrial Revolution was not economic exploitation of the “proletariat” (to use the Cardinal’s Marxist terminology) by capitalists, but rather the loss of meaning to work and the dislocation of the natural and social rhythms of man’s life as a consequence of the mechanisation of production.21 According to Jacques Ellul the growth of the technical civilisation that began with the Industrial Revolution “dissociates the sociological forms, destroys the moral framework, desacralizes men and things, explodes social and religious taboos, and reduces the body social to a collection of individuals.”22 Nevertheless, the Industrial Revolution produced real progress over the long term for the masses, both economically and in terms of general social amelioration. But the solution to the loss of meaning to work and the dislocation of the natural and social rhythms of life caused by the mechanisation of production could not be solved by Marxism,23 which failed to understand man’s true condi-

23 Nor by Fascism. According to E. G. Veith this dislocation or alienation from the natural rhythms of life brought about by the Industrial Revolution was one of the causes of the rise to popularity of Fascism in the first half of the twentieth century, since Fascism stresses man’s mythological unity with nature, the land, the people and the nation—i.e. it is a social ideology that stresses immanence rather than transcendence (*Modern Fascism: The Threat to the Judeo-Christian Worldview* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993], p. 28ff.). Again, however, no consideration is given to the alternative to industrialisation—i.e. life on the land,—which produced worse, not better, social conditions for the masses and was, moreover, unsustainable. A better assessment is given by Eksteins: “The rural pre-industrial setting had been replete with its own social problems and indignities, but it is undeniable that industrialization, particularly the rapid industrialization undergone by Germany, brought with it a disturbing measure of depersonalisation that material well-being could not expunge or rectify. The so-called new middle classes—this enormous army of semiskilled white-collar workers involved
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tion and therefore prescribed the wrong remedy. The masses who provided the labour necessary for large-scale industrialisation could not and did not want to go back to the land on which they had previously starved. According to Ellul, speaking of England not France, “The new agricultural techniques were plainly so superior that it was not possible to preserve the old ‘open field’ system—the commons, the pastures, and the forests; thus the final blow was dealt to the old, organic, peasant society. The peasant could not survive as such, and with him, the whole of society entered into a state of flux. The plasticity we refer to came about in England as a result of this evolution in the use of land, which furnished the technical movement with the necessary manpower: apathetic, vacant, and uprooted.” The problems posed by mechanisation of the economy were unavoidable if society was to experience economic and social progress. Marxism did not solve these problems of industrialisation for society; it made them incalculably worse. Only where capitalism was able to flourish have these problems been overcome on the material level to any degree. The alternative to this painful process is not a better life for all on the land but rather the economic and social stagnation of modern Africa.

primarily in management and service—was a sudden and direct offshoot of the later phases of industrialization and was perhaps even more prone to a sense of isolation and hence vulnerability, than the labouring classes. The concentration of industry and of commerce meant that this social group was particularly large in Germany (op. cit., p. 69).

24 Ellul, op. cit., p. 57.
25 See for example Rosenstock-Huessy’s comments on the Soviet calendar in Out of Revolution, p. 121ff.
26 It is the realisation of this fact that seems to elude Jacques Ellul in his profound and astonishing critique of technique (op. cit., passim). According to Ellul “I know that the uprooting of human beings counts for little in respect to economic law and that where economic necessity exists (for example, in the struggle against unemployment) all other human needs are unimportant and must vanish. I am, moreover, cognizant of the seeming truth that where there is nothing to eat there is no longer a stable milieu. This new version of the primum vivere in a materialist form is only an apparent truth. But even if it were true, we would have to say then that the human being is constrained by economic necessity, and that this is the exact opposite of democracy. This method presupposes the destruction of our social structures and, in reality, deprives a civilization of any chance to give itself
Capitalism, i.e. the free market economic order, has been the most effective and successful means of achieving relative economic equality in society—though not absolute economic equality, which exists only at the level of abject poverty (e.g. subsistence living). Socialism, left to its logical conclusions, is, as history has shown, the most effective and successful means of achieving economic equality at the level of poverty, at least for the majority of people in society (the “proletariat”), although it is to be noted that at least in the developed world socialism is seldom left to run its course to the bitter end and black markets (i.e. illegal free markets), which were encouraged by the authorities in some Soviet States, usually appear, enabling the economy to survive above the level of abject poverty. Socialism is able to achieve economic equality only at the level of poverty. In socialist societies the benefits of a higher standard of living are for the most part enjoyed by a relative few who operate or co-operate with the political system. Far from being a distinctive characteristic of capitalist societies, exploitation of the masses by the privileged managerial classes is rather a characteristic feature of socialist societies. This was the case in Soviet Russia. According to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, writing in the late 1960s and quoting Andrei Sakharov, “There is ‘great material inequality between town and country,’ ‘40 percent of our country’s population finds itself in a very difficult economic situation’ (the context hints at, demands the word ‘poverty,’ but when one’s own country is in question it sticks in the throat); whereas the 5 percent in the ‘boss class’ are as highly privileged as ‘the corresponding groups in the USA.’ ‘No, more so!’ we feel like retorting, but the author forestalls us with his explanations: the privileges of our form. The primary element in any civilization is a stable relation between man and his environment. When man becomes the plaything of abstract decisions, a civilization can no longer be created. Here we have, on the economic plane, the same effect of technique which we previously studied in a more general way. Man indeed participates in the economy, but technique causes him to participate not as a man but as a thing” (ibid., p. 215f).

country’s managerial group are secret, not open and aboveboard, it is a matter of purchasing loyal service to the existing system by bribes, previously in the form of ‘salaries in envelopes,’ now by ‘closed distribution of everything in short supply—foodstuffs, goods, and services—and privileged access to resorts.’”

The exploitation of the masses by the ruling class is common in socialist societies, ancient and modern. Despite the claims of socialist propaganda the inevitable effect of socialism is to share out the poverty, not the wealth. Except at this level of poverty capitalist economies—i.e. free market economies—achieve much greater levels of economic equality than socialist economies achieve. Socialism has conspicuously failed at the very point of its proudest boast: its promise of economic equality and the eradication of poverty. As Igor Shafarevich pointed out in 1975, “the main achievements in social justice of the last century in the West—the reduction of the working day, social insurance, an extraordinary rise in the living standard of the workers—were accomplished with very little participation on the part of socialist


29 See for example the description of Inca society in South America and ancient oriental society in Igor Shafarevich, op. cit., pp. 132–142 and 152–192.

30 In the United Kingdom modern socialist governments have greatly exacerbated poverty—or rather what socialist politicians define as poverty—among the working classes by creating a large underclass of welfare dependants. This has happened because the benefit system encourages the very attitudes and behaviour that create the conditions the benefit system is ostensibly aimed at eradicating—i.e. irresponsibility and indolence, evidence of which can be seen, for example, in the high rate of unmarried mothers, who get preferential housing and other benefits, and in the number of people who do not work because the benefit system enables them to live well enough without doing so. But irresponsible and indolent individuals and families do not become responsible and industrious overnight simply because they suddenly get access to unearned money, whether by means of lottery winnings, theft or the receipt of State benefit payments, and it is this irresponsibility and indolence (i.e. profligacy) that is the cause of the social conditions that are for the most part described as poverty in the United Kingdom by socialists.

31 See further §4 “Marxism, Libertarianism and Idolatry” in the Excursus on p. 219f. infra.
movements.”32 Capitalist societies are not only invariably wealthier societies in absolute terms, they also produce much greater levels of economic equality within society. In Third World socialist societies economic inequality is far greater than in First World societies. Furthermore, it is a mistake to characterise Third World societies merely as societies that are poor in economic terms. In most Third World societies extreme poverty and extreme wealth exist in the closest proximity. It is this juxtaposition of extreme wealth with extreme poverty that characterises Third World economies and contrasts so sharply with First World economies. If the Third World is to experience a greater degree of absolute wealth and relative economic equality the only way that this can be achieved is through free market capitalism, which has proved its ability to raise standards of living for everyone in society and to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor that is so evident in the socialist States of the Third World. But of course this kind of capitalist economy was only made possible in the West in the context of the Christian—and specifically the Protestant—culture that dominated Western society after the Reformation. Without a Christian worldview underpinning the economy society may experience economic piracy masquerading as free markets (something that we are now seeing increasingly in the post-Christian West), but not the kind of growth and social amelioration for the population as a whole that has characterised modern Western economies over the past two centuries.

§2

SOCIALISM AND REVOLUTION

Yet despite these facts Christians have become obsessed with socialism. And judging from the report in *The Catholic Times* the Cardinal seemed quite oblivious of socialism’s ugly and ungodly beginnings. The report stated that Cardinal Rodriguez “went on to call the concept of globalisation a ‘myth’ that masked the

exploitation of the poor and added that only a new solidarity based on the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity could save the world from ruin.” Well, this kind of rhetoric has been heard many times before. It is the rhetoric of the French Revolution. E. L. Hebden Taylor made the following comments on the religious idolatry underpinning this rhetoric and the inevitable implication of its implementation: “By accepting this Romantic teaching”—i.e. that the root of man’s problems is not sin, but rather his social conditions, and that therefore the solution to his problems lies not in his redemption from sin but in science and the establishment of a utopian State that will create the necessary social conditions for man to overcome all evil—“Western humanists, both liberal and conservative, have not only suppressed their own sense of sin but they have also set idolatrous objectives for their politics. ‘Freedom,’ ‘Equality,’ and ‘Brotherhood’ are essentially religious ideals. To set political machinery at work to realize them is to make failure certain; and the more wholeheartedly a government devotes itself to their pursuits the more likely it is to achieve their opposites. By what laws can men be constrained to love one another? What political compulsion will make us lay aside self-interest and suspicion and treat one another as equals? A state with such religious objectives is a totalitarian state.”

Predictably, there was no mention in the report of the Cardinal’s commenting on Robespierre’s reign of terror and Marx’s call for it to be repeated, nor of the many actual repeats of the

34 “We have no compassion and we ask no compassion from you. When our turn comes, we shall not make excuses for the terror” (Neue Rheinische Zeitung [New Rhine Newspaper], No. 301, 18 May 1849 (trans. Marx-Engels Institute). See also Shafarevich, op. cit., pp. 275–285. Shafarevich refers to the elements of socialism in Cathar teaching and notes the Cathars’ ultimate goal of freedom from the material world (i.e. death) and the subsequent return of the latter to primeval chaos. De Rougement argued that the heretical ideas of the Cathars passed into Western culture in a corrupted form via the notion of romantic or courtly love (chivalry) that the troubadours popularised. The Cathar obsession with death passed into Western culture via this route (Dennis de Rougement, Love in the Western World [New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1956, trans. Montgomery Belgion], passim cf. Steven Runciman, The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy
terror that have followed revolutions based on these lofty ideals both in Europe and the Third World. What’s sauce for the goose is certainly not sauce for the gander in the Cardinal’s book. But there again, capitalism was never that popular among Roman Catholic theologians and intellectuals\textsuperscript{35} and economic progress for society as a whole was not a feature of societies dominated by the Roman Catholic social ethos. The economic progress experienced by Protestant nations following the Reformation typically lagged behind in Roman Catholic countries, where the Roman Catholic religion ensured that the masses were kept in their place by superstition and ignorance. It is truly ironic, therefore, that Roman Catholics who are eager to be seen as champions and advocates of the poverty-stricken masses in the Third World should bewail and point the finger so much at capitalism, a form of economic organisation of society that was, in its origin if not now, part of a Christian world-view, namely Protestantism, that liberated the masses from the superstition and ignorance that had oppressed them for so long and gave them material progress and wealth hitherto undreamed of. The reason for this inconsistency, however, is not hard to discern. Liberation from the tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church was an essential precursor to the economic and social progress experienced by the Protestant nations of Northern

\textsuperscript{35} See for example the views of Christopher Dawson discussed on p. 176ff. \textit{supra}, whose economic and social perspective was basically backward looking and fairly typical for a Roman Catholic intellectual.
Europe following the Reformation and later throughout the West generally. This was in contrast to the economic stagnation and backwardness experienced by Roman Catholic nations after the Reformation despite the great influx of gold and silver into these societies from the New World.36

The irony does not end here however. The very values that the Cardinal was reported as championing, “liberty, equality, fraternity” were the shibboleth of a revolution that erupted largely as a violent reaction against that very oppression of the masses in which the Roman Catholic Church was so complicit. The Roman Catholic Church persecuted and murdered the Huguenot (i.e. Protestant) Church in France, and yet it was Protestantism that gave Britain a religious and ethical value system that enabled it to avoid a revolution of the kind that occurred in France.37 Had the Huguenots survived and flourished in France, as Protestantism did in Britain, it is questionable whether there would have been a French Revolution of the type that actually did occur. It seems rather hypocritical for Roman Catholics to turn round now and accuse the capitalist form of economic organisation of being oppressive, especially in view of the fact that capitalism has been the source of virtually all the economic progress that has enabled modern societies to improve the material and social conditions of the masses, thereby alleviating oppressive poverty.

The French Revolution was a reaction against a system of Roman Catholic mediaevalism that had passed its sell-by date.

36 “The gold and silver from America, after the discovery [of the New World—SCP], flowed in the first place to Spain; but in that country a recession of capitalistic development took place parallel with the importation. There followed, on the one hand, the suppression of the communeros and the destruction of the commercial interests of the Spanish grandees, and, on the other hand, the employment of the money for military ends. Consequently, the stream of precious metal flowed through Spain, scarcely touching it, and fertilized other countries, which in the fifteenth century were already undergoing a process of transformation in labor relations which was favorable to capitalism” (Max Weber, *General Economic History* [New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1984], p. 353). See also Appendix F, “Max Weber and the Protestant Doctrine of the Calling” in my book *The Political Economy of A Christian Society*, pp. 328–336.

37 Cf. the quotation from Modris Eksteins at note 20 on p. 179f. supra.
two hundred and fifty years previously\textsuperscript{38} but which had been used to oppress the masses, who were denied not only the economic progress experienced in the Protestant nations largely as a result of the Reformation, but also the spiritual and ethical guidance, i.e. a Protestant world-view, necessary to control the burgeoning economic aspirations of society in a humane way. The result was the ungodly social explosion we call the French Revolution,\textsuperscript{39} the principles of which have remained with us to this day and continue to cause untold suffering for people the world over. Even Groen Van Prinsterer, who argued that the blame for the Revolution could not be laid at the door of the \textit{ancien régime}, but that it was the inevitable consequence of the advancing tide of unbelief, nevertheless acknowledged the deleterious role played by the Roman Catholic Church in preparing the ground for revolutionary ideas. Speaking of the Reformation he says: “This beneficial impact [of the Reformation—SCP] came to an end as the Evangelical spirit began to decline. The salt of the Gospel was cast out by the Catholics and lost its savour with the Protestants. The general corruption that followed paved the way for revolutionary unbelief. Consider France, the country where the strength of the Revolution has been overwhelming. Here, too, the Reformation had a positive influence on the Roman church . . . Unfortunately, dragonnades came to be preferred to arguments and Protestants were either chased across the border or else silenced. Still, there remained the Jansenists, loyal Catholics who defended free grace.

\textsuperscript{38} “The French nation, having lost its international reputation at Luther’s hands, had to wait until 1789 to end its Middle Ages, or what the French called ‘ancien régime.’ Situated in the middle of Europe, they had two neighbours who had long since radically modernized their institutions: Germany and England. This backwardness made the French restless; their revolutionary energy was bottled up for 250 years” (Rosenstock-Huessy, \textit{op. cit.}, 164.).

\textsuperscript{39} “The expulsion of the Huguenots could not be expiated by the simple restoration of Protestantism in France. Interwoven as it was with the fate of the oldest University in Christendom, that is, Paris, it could only be avenged by a more general restoration of nature, by a total revolution in the relations between individual will and natural law . . . a hundred and four years elapsed between the crime against the Huguenots and the full revenge of 1789” (Rosenstock-Huessy, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 138, 272).
Their influence, however, was suppressed—a second triumph over the Reformation that debilitated the French church. In the course of time the Jesuits came to be hated; only politics remained as a legitimate topic of public debate; morals continued to decline in the absence of admonition and example, and learning turned to unbelief once it lacked the pious counterpoise in Port Royal. Only the outward form of religion survived, supported nonetheless—from political calculation—by compulsion and persecution. A church of this kind proved powerless against the rising tide of unbelief. Likewise, in Spain, Italy, and the Roman Catholic part of Germany, the Protestants were either expelled or suppressed. In England, a Romanizing tendency was co-responsible for civil war under Charles I, was heavily patronized under Charles II, and was finally resisted by the Anglican clergy less from religious zeal than from fear of losing power; on so poisonous a soil there arose the wretched harvest of deist writings that have contributed so much to the spread of unbelief.40

The consequences of this revolutionary tide of unbelief, which has now swept through the whole world, were summed up by Abraham Kuyper in terms that are all too familiar to our own generation: “The revolution in Paris proved to be not just a change in regime but a change of system, of political organization, of general human theory. In place of the worship of the most high God came, courtesy of Humanism, the worship of man. Human destiny was shifted from heaven to earth. The Scriptures were unraveled and the Word of God shamefully repudiated in order to pay homage to

40 Port-Royal was a Cistercian convent in the Vallée de Chevreuse south-west of Paris, which became the educational centre of Jansenism under the leadership of Jean du Vergier de Hauranne in the mid-seventeenth century. The Jansenists were Roman Catholics who held to the Augustinian doctrines of absolute predestination, total depravity and free grace. Jansenism was condemned as heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and hated both by the Jesuits and by the French government of Louis XIV. The convent of Port-Royal was abolished by Pope Clement XI in 1708 and the buildings were destroyed in 1710.

the majesty of Reason. The institution of the church was twisted into an instrument for undermining the faith and later for destroying it. The public school had to wean the rising generation away from the piety of our fathers. Universities have been refashioned into institutions at which Darwinism violates the spiritual nobility of humanity by denying its creation in the image of God. Hedonism replaced heaven-mindedness. And emancipation become [sic] the watchword by which people tampered with the bond of marriage, with the respect children owe to their parents, with the moral seriousness of our national manners. This went on until first Philosophy, then Socialism raised its voice. The former replaced certainty in our hearts with doubt; the latter, logically developing upper-class liberal theory, applied to the money and goods of the owners what the liberal already had the audacity to do against God and his anointed King.”

§3
SOCIALISM AND SLAVERY

In the same year that The Catholic Times reported Cardinal Rodriguez’s ill-informed views on the nature and history of capitalism the British publisher Continuum re-issued a book on ethics by someone described as an “outstanding Catholic intellectual.” The blurb on the back of the book stated that the author “took Christianity to be deeply subversive of capitalism since it [i.e. Christianity] declares as possible the (to us) improbable prospect that people might live together without war or domination or antagonism but by unity in love.” The author comments on the Eighth Commandment: “You shall not steal. Certainly the most misunderstood of all the commandments. It has nothing to do with property and its so-called rights. What it refers to is stealing men.

Taking away their freedom to enslave them. It is a curious irony that in the name of this commandment we have built up a whole theory of the sacredness of possessions, of objects, a theory that has led to the wholesale enslavement of men—the very thing the commandment in fact denounces.  

This is truly astonishing. One wonders whether this “outstanding Catholic intellectual” ever read a word of twentieth-century history. Was it the ideology of capitalism that enslaved and slaughtered millions in the concentration camps of Hitler and Stalin? When and where has capitalism led to the wholesale enslavement of men? And since when has socialism ever accomplished the prospect of men living together without war and domination? Socialism was responsible for the worst atrocities of the twentieth century. Millions died in Hitler’s and Stalin’s pogroms and persecutions, and the record of their disciples in the Third World is equally bad. Least of all do socialists have any right to speak of their beliefs ending war and oppression. Socialism, whether it has been the national socialism of Hitler, the international socialism of Stalin or the cultural revolution of Mao Tse-Tung, has been responsible for the worst wars and campaigns of oppression, enslavement and mass murder that the world has ever seen. Igor Shafarevich, an internationally renowned mathematician and Russian dissident under the Soviet regime, argued that inequality and slavery are at the heart of the socialist ideal—and not merely the unforeseen consequences of its imperfect practical outworking—despite socialism’s appeal to equality and freedom: “Proceeding from a critique of a given society, accusing it of injustice, inequality and lack of freedom, socialism proclaims—in the systems where it is expressed with the greatest consistency—a far greater injustice, inequality and slavery!” Yet here we are again with so-called Christians...
and clergymen promoting socialism as a Christian ideal. These “outstanding intellectuals” seem to be living on a different planet from the rest of mankind.

The ideology behind Hitler’s Third Reich and Stalin’s Soviet Russia was not capitalism, it was socialism. Which mass murdering political regimes of the twentieth century (or any other century for that matter) were motivated by the ideology of capitalism? The Christian concept of intellectual honesty and integrity, indeed the very concept of truth, seems to be entirely foreign to the prophets of socialism, “Christian” or otherwise. And we should not expect anything else. Truth has always been the first victim of socialist propaganda and socialist politics. Socialist Utopias have always been pursued by means of lies, deceit, persecution, oppression, enslavement of the people and mass murder. Are we to expect anything else from people who believe that God’s law can be set aside so easily? If the Eighth Commandment can be set aside so easily by socialists it should not surprise us that the others, including the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” can be cast aside as well. But what are we to make of “Christians” who say that the Eighth Commandment refers to slavery and “has nothing to do with property and its so-called rights”? Is slavery really the handmaid of capitalism? Such an argument may make for good rhetoric but it is difficult to substantiate historically. Was it not the industrialised Western capitalist countries that abolished slavery? And was it not the most advanced industrial—i.e. capitalist—country, Britain, that first abolished and outlawed slavery?

The same kind of anti-capitalist mentality colours Ronald Segal’s analysis of the contrast between the Atlantic slave trade and

demand everything from the State, without reflecting that the State consists of those very individuals who make the demands. The logical development of this tendency leads to Communism, where each individual enslaves the community and the latter is represented by a dictator, the slave-owner. All primitive tribes characterized by a communistic order of society also have a chieftain over them with unlimited powers. The Communist State is nothing other than an absolute monarchy in which there are no subjects, but only serfs” (The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious in The Collected Works of C. G. Jung [Princeton University Press, (1959) 1968, trans. R. F. C. Hull], Vol. 9, Part I, p. 127).
Islamic slavery. While acknowledging that in fact Islamic slavery was no more compassionate in its treatment of slaves than the Atlantic slave trade he still claims that Islamic slavery was “overall more benign, in part because the values and attitudes promoted by religion” inhibited the very development of a Western-style capitalism, with its effective subjugation of people to the priority of profit.” Of course, Segal does not tell us what purpose the Islamic slave trade served if it was not profit, nor does he say what other influences played a part in inhibiting the development of a Western-style capitalism in Islamic societies. He does say that in the Islamic empire of the ninth century “the urban rich bought up large tracts of land for investment or prestige, from minor landowners ruined by taxes and debt, and evicted the peasants employed on them. Slaves and hired workers from among the landless would have supplied the necessary labor” and that “slaves were at the bottom of the social order, inferior to all who at least had their freedom.” Nevertheless, Segal does not hesitate to claim that the condition of Muslim slaves was more benign than that of slaves in the Western colonies because, at least in part, Islamic religion inhibits the development of Western-style capitalism. Capitalism, apparently, is evil per se, and no one benefits from it except the entrepreneurs and the industrialists. Yet the populations of Western nations enjoy higher standards of living and general welfare than those of non-capitalist and anti-capitalist nations, including those of the fabulously wealthy modern Islamic oil States. The blindingly obvious facts of economic life for the

47 Presumably Segal is referring here to Islam, though it is not clear in what sense precisely he is using the term “religion.”
50 See the United Nations Development Programme’s 2007/2008 *Human Development Report* index at http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics. The Human Development Index looks beyond GDP to a broader definition of human well-being including health and life expectancy, education (adult literacy and primary, secondary and tertiary level enrolment), and standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity income). The top twenty States on the Index are all Western States with the exception of Japan. The top ranking States are Iceland (1) and Norway (2).
great mass of mankind both in the modern world and throughout history demonstrate the superiority of the capitalist economic system, which produces greater economic and social benefits for all in society compared with other forms of economic organisation, which tend to share out the poverty for the vast majority whilst allocating greater wealth to a relatively few rich exploiters.\textsuperscript{51} Despite these facts capitalism is regularly vilified as the epitome of an evil system of economic exploitation of the poor by the rich. But if this is so, we must ask why it is that the ordinary people of Western capitalist nations flourish, with higher standards of living and welfare and greater levels of economic equality than people in non- and anti-capitalist societies, which have the poorest, most downtrodden and exploited populations in the world. Of course the influence of Christian values on Western societies accounts for the much greater concern for the poor and downtrodden and the value placed on the individual in these societies. My point is not that capitalism has produced these values, but that Christian values underpinned both the greater respect for human life evident in Western societies and the development of the Western capitalist economic system.\textsuperscript{52} The popular anti-capitalist mythologies of socialism bear no relation to the real world. It was the Christian capitalist nations that abandoned and then outlawed slavery, not the Islamic world, where slavery is still practised, i.e. where people are still bought and sold for profit, notwithstanding any supposed benign influence of Islamic religion on this practice. And among Christian nations it is the Protestant and ex-Protestant nations that have the higher standards of living and welfare compared with Roman Catholic and ex-Roman Catholic countries.

It is of course widely recognised that it was for religious reasons, i.e. the values and attitudes promoted by the Christian religion, that slavery was brought to an end in the Christian capitalist nations of the West. If the influence of religion in Islamic countries was so
favourable to slaves in comparison to the harsh treatment meted out to them in Western societies, as Segal argues, we must wonder why it is that this did not lead to the abolition of slavery by Islamic countries. The reality, however, is that it was in the Christian West that slavery was outlawed. Islam still practises slavery.

But there are also economic reasons for the rejection of slavery in a capitalist society. Slavery is an economically irrational and ineffective means of producing wealth. Max Weber defined capitalism of the distinctively Western kind as “the rational capitalistic organisation of (formally) free labour.” According to Weber “only suggestions of this were found outside Western economies.” By comparison, the reintroduction of forced labour—i.e. slavery—was part and parcel of Marxist communist economic theory and practice. According to Nikolai Bukharin: “proletarian compulsion in all its forms, from execution by shooting to labor conscription, is—no matter how paradoxical this sounds—a method for the elaboration [sic] of Communist humanity from the human material of the capitalist epoch.” Although Marxist communist theory acknowledged that under the capitalist economic organisation of society forced labour (slavery) was economically inefficient and unproductive, it maintained that such slavery became necessary and productive in the communist society.

§

SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The obsession with socialism by Christians is not confined to Roman Catholics however. In the twentieth century Protestants also became enamoured of socialist ideology—at least in Britain and


55 See further Shafarevich, op. cit., p. 241ff.
Europe. This can be seen at many levels, both officially and unofficially. For example, a former Anglican Archbishop of Liverpool, David Sheppard, argued in his book *Bias to the Poor* that justice should be biased to the poor. Yet Scripture specifically *forbids* those whose office it is to administer public justice from exercising such a bias (Ex. 23:3; Lev. 19:15). Sheppard acknowledged that such a bias involves more than the biblical injunction that the wealthy in society should help those who are genuinely poor by exercising charity. He says “The call for justice jars on many ears. To those who broadly believed the status quo to be a just one it seems more wounding than a demand for charity or welfare . . . But I want to press the points about justice and about more equal opportunities for all to make real choices about their destiny. That will mean the shift of powers and resources.”

But any *shift of resources*—i.e. redistribution of wealth from one class to another in society—that is not the result of voluntary decisions on the part of those from whom the resources are redistributed, e.g. through trade or charity, in other words any *shift of resources* that is achieved by force, is called theft in the Bible, even when such force is exercised by the State (cf. Lev. 25:23, Num. 36:7, and Ezek. 46:18 with 1 Kings 21:1–19). Such theft is not excused by the needs of the thief (Pr. 6:30–31); though neither does this fact relieve the wealthy of their responsibility to help the genuine poor


*57* The term “genuine poor” is not liked in our modern politically correct culture, since it implies moral responsibility as a criterion for determining who is poor and therefore who should receive help, what kind of help, and how that help should be delivered. But there are many people in society who are apparently poor, but whose poverty is the result of deliberate lifestyle choices, i.e. the desire to spend money in ways that are irresponsible and profligate. Those who are poor because of gambling and drug abuse, for example, or general irresponsibility with money, may often have incomes as high as and in excess of many people with whom by comparison they appear much less wealthy, but this is not genuine poverty. It is rather poverty resulting from conscious lifestyle choices. Those who provide help for the poor must be able to make distinctions based on such moral criterion if they are to be effective in the help they give, since the mere funding of an irresponsible lifestyle ultimately helps no one, least of all those whose lives and families are destroyed by irresponsible attitudes to money and whose real need is behavioural reformation not handouts.
Another, and rather extreme, example of this attitude was the case of the Anglican priest who claimed that shoplifting from large supermarkets is not theft and that such activity helps to effect a badly needed redistribution of economic resources in society. *The Times* reported the priest as stating that supermarkets are “places of evil and temptation.”58 This was not the first time that a clergyman had decided that the way to deal with temptation is to give in to it, nor will it be the last, but the reasons given by this clergyman for his views on shoplifting were more ideological, involving a religious perspective that is socialist, not Christian. The Bible forbids theft and requires a thief to make restitution to his victim plus compensation of between a fifth and five times the values of the goods stolen, depending on the nature of the theft (Ex. 22:1, 4; Lev. 6:2–5; Num. 5:6–8). If socialism is a biblical ideal what is the Eighth Commandment for? For socialists of all types and in all ages it is private property that is seen as the cause of human misery and its abolition as the only means of eradicating injustice in society. According to Karl Marx and Friederich Engels “the theory of the communists may be summed up in a single sentence: Abolition of private property” ([Communist Manifesto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Manifesto)). Dom Léger Marie Deschamps, an eighteenth-century French Benedictine monk and utopian socialist thinker who had an influence on Diderot and Rousseau, and is considered in some respects to be a precursor of Hegel, Feuerbach, Engels and Marx, is another good example. But for Deschamps the very idea of God is, says Igor Shafarevich, a “product of definite social relations based on private property. Religion did not exist before these relations took shape, and it will no longer exist when they are destroyed.”59 According to Deschamps, however, not only will all land and property come under common ownership in the utopian socialist State of the future, but all women as well.60 Sexual communism is a common

theme in socialist ideology, whether it is the communism of the ancient world (e.g. Plato’s *Republic*), the mediaeval heretical sects or modern Marxist communism.\(^{61}\)

Despite the claims of the kleptomaniac Anglican priest mentioned above, the belief that private property is evil in principle and the real cause of mankind’s misfortune and suffering is in stark contrast to the moral teaching of the Bible, which condemns theft (Ex. 20:15). Private property is not only sanctioned by the law of God, its preservation is a fundamental principle of biblical justice, as is the right of private and privileged transfer of wealth to others, e.g. inheritance. Though not limited to it, the biblical prohibition on theft applies also to the form of private ownership most abominated by socialists: ownership of land. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels called for the “Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.” According to Jean Jacques Rousseau: “The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling in the ditch, and crying to his fellows, ‘Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.’”\(^{62}\) The biblical laws on land tenure contradict this immoral socialist principle in the most direct manner: “Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour’s landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it” (Dt. 19:14). “Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark.” The people were required to accept and abide by this principle: “And all the people shall say Amen” (Dt. 27:17). King

\(^{61}\) See further §2 “Marxism and Sexual Communism” in the Excursus on p. 214ff. infra.

Ahab’s State-authorised confiscation of Naboth’s property, his inheritance, was severely punished by God (1 Kg. 21). “Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel” complained Jezebel, the queen (v. 7). In other words, “as king do you not have the right of eminent domain?”—i.e. sovereignty over all property in the kingdom with the right of expropriation. Scripture condemns this doctrine, which rulers and States from antiquity to modern times have considered so essential, so sacred, and which reveals so clearly their idolatry of political power. The practice of eminent domain is contrary to God’s law, and therefore immoral, and condemned as oppression by Scripture: “Moreover the prince shall not take of the people’s inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession” (Ezek. 46:18). The cause of man’s misery, according to the Bible, is not private property, but sin, the transgression of God’s law, which requires man to respect and preserve the private property of his neighbour.

Of course, it is true that the Bible also teaches that wealth is a gift of God and that we are the stewards of what we own. It is our duty to use the wealth that God has given us stewardship over in a way that conforms to the ethical standards revealed in Scripture, and this includes the showing of mercy and charity to those in need. But this is just the point. God has made me the steward of the resources he has put at my disposal, not someone else, and certainly not the State. For someone else to usurp my responsibility under God to exercise stewardship over the resources God has given me is a crime not only against me, but against God himself because it is a transgression of his law and a denial of the social order that he has established for mankind in his word. This is no less the case when it is the State that usurps my God-given responsibility. It is this point that “Christian” socialists seem to miss altogether. Their idolatry of State power blinds them to the obvious. God has not granted the State stewardship over society’s economic resources. The State has a legitimate but limited social function as a ministry of public justice, and it is authorised by Scripture to collect taxes
in order to enable it to fulfil this specific function, and this alone (Rom. 13:1–6). It is not authorised by Scripture to collect taxes for any other purpose.\textsuperscript{63}

Furthermore, socialism has always shown itself hostile to Christian values. What socialist government has ever upheld the rights of God, defended institutions like the Christian family,\textsuperscript{64} preserved Christian ethics in medicine and sexuality,\textsuperscript{65} passed legislation that enables a man to leave an inheritance to his children (Pr. 13:22) rather than confiscating his children’s inheritance? Socialist governments have been inimical to all these values from the beginning. Least of all do socialist governments uphold righteousness. Socialism is an engine of social revolution that seeks to overturn everything that Christianity stands for. True, many socialist politicians claim to be Christian. But the Lord Jesus Christ taught us that it is by the fruit that they bear—i.e. by their \textit{works}—that we shall recognise his disciples, not by their profession (Mt. 7:16). Politicians who proclaim themselves Christians yet who stand against Christian values and deny the ethics of God’s law should not be accepted as believers. Rather they should be seen for what they are, social revolutionaries who are in rebellion against God and his kingdom.

\textbf{§5}

\textbf{Capitalism and Christianity}

Of course it would be absurd to argue that free market capitalism is the answer to man’s problems, that poverty itself can be eradicated completely by adopting the capitalist form of economic organisation. The \textit{complete} eradication of poverty is an impossible


\textsuperscript{64} On the communist view of the family see §3 “Marxist Communism and the Family” in the Excursus on p. 216ff. \textit{infra}.

\textsuperscript{65} See p. 197f. \textit{supra}; see also §2 “Marxism and Sexual Communism” in the Excursus on p. 214ff. \textit{infra}.
goal *to achieve*, and even Jesus recognised this fact *(Mt. 25:11; Mk 14:7)*. The reason for this is that ultimately poverty has a spiritual cause; it is part of the curse for sin under which mankind labours (though this does not *necessarily* mean that poverty in individual cases is the result of specific sins committed by the individuals involved—cf. *Jn* 9:1–3). Under these conditions it is unrealistic, and moreover idolatrous, to expect the capitalist form of economic organisation to eradicate poverty completely. Such an expectation implies that capitalism is a means of social salvation. But this does not mean that society should not adopt a capitalist form of economic organisation, merely that its adoption, *per se*, would not solve all the problems of poverty. The fact that capitalism does not solve all the problems of poverty does not mean that capitalism is “savage” any more than the fact that socialism has not solved the problem of poverty means that socialism is savage—although of course socialism is savage, as the history of virtually all socialist States has demonstrated, and is morally unacceptable for this and other reasons. The issue of poverty is much more complex than that. However, it must be recognised that where capitalism has been underpinned by a Christian world-view and ethic in society far greater progress practically *towards* the eradication of poverty has been achieved than under any other system of economic organisation, and as already mentioned this is the case both in absolute terms and relatively; i.e. capitalism, when underpinned by a Christian world-view and ethic, not only tends to raise the lowest classes out of absolute poverty but also produces much greater levels of economic equality within society than any other form of economic organisation. This is no accident. Ultimately capitalism only works properly when it is underpinned by a Christian moral ethic and world-view. The capitalist method

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66 We should really speak here of *relative* poverty, since capitalism does deal effectively with *absolute* poverty where it is allowed to thrive in a culture underpinned by Christian moral values. Consequently, as noted above, capitalist economies tend to produce greater levels of economic equality than economies operating under any other form of economic organisation.

67 This is true also of representative government, as is clear from the failure of Western States to plant democratic ideals in societies where the cultural
of production can be imitated for sure, but eventually without a Christian foundation the distinctive kind of rational economic activity that led to economic growth and greater wealth for all in First World societies—which is what the term *capitalism* usually describes historically—will eventually deteriorate into the kind of economic activity that Max Weber described as “predominantly of an irrational and speculative character, or directed to acquisition by force, above all acquisition of booty, whether directly in war or in the form of continuous fiscal booty by exploitation of subjects,” a description that unfortunately increasingly rings true for much of the economy of modern Britain as a consequence of the abandonment of Christian ethics both by the private sector and government. Nevertheless, it was only in the religious context of a Christian, and in particular a Protestant, society that modern capitalism first developed. It should not come as a surprise to learn, therefore, that globally capitalist societies are much wealthier (both in absolute terms and per capita), produce much greater levels of economic equality, have much greater individual freedom, and are more likely to have representative governments than socialist societies.

Nevertheless, we must insist that the free market is not a theory of everything and that to treat it as such is to reduce the whole of life to the economic aspect, to seek the meaning of life in the soil is so inimical to its growth and well-being. Furthermore, as Christianity is increasingly abandoned in the Western nations representative government will inevitably decline as a flourishing and healthy political system, as can already be seen in the United Kingdom from the falling percentage of the electorate that turns out to vote at elections, the increasing abuse of the electoral system by some social groups, the increasingly totalitarian nature of political ideology and the political system, the widening gap between the rulers and the people they represent and decreasing access to political careers for the non-privileged classes brought about, ironically, by socialist policies. On this last point see the film by Andrew Neil, *Posh and Posher: Why Public School Boys Run Britain*, broadcast 27 January 2011, BBC Two (www.bbc.co.uk). See also Peter Oborne, *The Triumph of the Political Class* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2007).

69 Ibid., p. 20.
Socialism

created order itself, and therefore a form of idolatry, and this is the problem with the godless libertarianism that has flourished in recent years—and to which the term capitalism has been quite misleadingly applied. But the choice is not between capitalism as a theory of everything and capitalism as the source of man’s problems. Capitalism relates to one aspect of life, the economic, and therefore finds its proper function and purpose alongside other forms of human activity, all of which find their ultimate meaning in God’s creative purpose for mankind. Free market capitalism, therefore, is a valid and correct way of organising society economically, but it can only function properly when due consideration is given to the other functions of man’s life and when it is not used to define human life in its totality. Historically modern capitalism arose in societies where economics was not the defining feature of life, where the economy was only one aspect of human activity and where a Christian world-view provided ultimate meaning and purpose for society as a whole. If free market economics has been divorced from this social context in the modern world, thereby distorting the true meaning of man’s life, this does not mean that the capitalist form of economic organisation is evil per se; it means merely that sinful men have abused and idolised it. We must resist all such idolatry. But we must not throw out the baby with the bath water. The capitalistic organisation of economic activity is the correct approach to one aspect of human life, and therefore part of the answer to man’s needs, but it can only function effectively and properly as part of the whole that God intends human society to be when it finds its context in relation to the other functions of human life as God has ordered it by his word. Capitalism, therefore, is not in principle evil, even if it can be perverted for evil ends by sinful men, as is often the case.

71 See §4 “Marxism, Libertarianism and Idolatry” in the Excursus on p. 219f. infra.
Socialism, by contrast, is evil in principle because it is predicated on the rejection of God’s order for man’s life, even if it is adopted as an ideal by men with good intentions. It is really a religion, not merely a form of economic organisation, because it functions as an all-embracing world-view. Speaking of the revolutionary attitude Christopher Dawson said that the desire for “the complete remodelling of society according to some ideal of social perfection . . . belongs to the order of religion . . . It finds its only parallel in the past in movements of the most extreme religious type, like that of the Anabaptists in sixteenth-century Germany, and the Levellers and Fifth-Monarchy Men of Puritan England. And when we study the lives of the founders of modern socialism, the great Anarchists and even some of the apostles of nationalist Liberalism like Mazzini, we feel at once that we are in the presence of religious leaders, whether prophets or heresiarchs, saints or fanatics. Behind the hard rational surface of Karl Marx’s materialist and socialist interpretation of history there burns the flame of an apocalyptic vision. For what was the social revolution in which he put his hope but a nineteenth-century version of the Day of the Lord, in which the rich and the powerful of the earth should be consumed, and the princes of the Gentiles brought low, and the poor and disinherited should reign in a regenerated universe? So, too, Marx, in spite of

72 See definition §2 in the Excursus on p. 46f. supra.
73 “The Party is a dictatorship. It dictates to each what he should do, and hence the figure he is to cut and his morals. It liquidates, centralizes, and tyrannizes. It fights personal taste, which might be the origin of unproductive struggles, and even possibly of sabotage. It can be seen restoring castes and creating over again a synthetic idea of the holy which, for want of tradition, is inflicted upon people by terror: Diocletian’s Invincible Sun was the forerunner of Hitler’s Swastika, even as Robespierre’s Goddess Reason heralded that Dialectical Necessity which ‘the Father of Peoples’ invoked the better to decimate his children” (Denis de Rougemont, Man’s Western Quest, p. 48f).
74 On the Anabaptist communist revolution in the city of Münster in Westphalia, Germany in 1534–1535 see further p. 222f. infra.
his professed atheism, looked for the realisation of this hope, not, like St. Simon and his fellow-idealist Socialists, to the conversion of the individual and to human efforts towards the attainment of a new social ideal, but to the ‘arm of the Lord,’ the necessary, ineluctable working-out of the Eternal Law, which human will and human effort are alike powerless to change or stay. But the religious impulse behind these social movements is not a constructive one. It is as absolute in its demands as that of the old religions, and it admits of no compromise with reality.”

According to Sergei Bulgakov “socialism nowadays emerges not only as a natural area of social policy but usually also as a religion, one based on atheism and the deification of man and man’s labor and on recognition of the elemental forces of Nature and social life and as the only meaningful principle of history.”

Socialism reduces life to the economic aspect; it is, said Semyon Frank, the “religion of service to material interests” and therefore idolatrous in principle.

§

SOCIALISM, MAMMON AND PATRONAGE

An inevitable consequence of socialist logic is the belief that Mammon is the answer to man’s problems. This fact can be seen in the way socialist governments seek to solve virtually every kind of social problem. If only more money were available, if only there

77 Semyon Frank, “Etika nigilizma” [“The Ethics of Nihilism”] in *Vekhi [Landmarks]* (Moscow, 1909), p. 192, cited in *Shafarevich, op. cit.*, p. 226. Although Shafarevich denies that socialism is a religion his definition of religion is a fairly narrow one, and he does concede that “while socialism is certainly connected with the loss of religious feeling, it can hardly be reduced to it. The place formerly occupied by religion does not remain vacant; a new lodger appeared. This is the only true source of the active principle of socialism, and the aspect which determines the historical role of this phenomenon” (*ibid.*, p. 235).
were more economic equality, we could solve all our problems. But money does not solve man’s problems. There are more funds available to the State now than at any other period of our history (due to the success, ironically, of capitalist enterprise), and we now have more economic equality than at any other time in our history (due again to the success of capitalistic enterprise), but this has not solved our problems. Socialism has palpably failed to deliver the goods and benefits for mankind that it has promised; indeed it has failed even to deliver the narrow economic benefits it promised to the masses. On the material level the extent to which modern Western society has these economic advantages is due entirely to the success of capitalism, not socialism.

Furthermore, the cultural progress experienced by the Western nations since the Reformation has not been the fruit of socialism, but rather the fruit of a Christian way of life in which individuals have been free to use their wealth in accordance with their own consciences. It has been well said that “Were it not for the right of man to do what he liked with his property little would exist in religion, art, science, social and medical work today.” It was the work of the Church, Christian charities, private donations and endowments, and voluntary giving motivated by a Christian conscience that created the educational and medical services that so revolutionised the life of the ordinary people in modern Western society. The State did not create these institutions; it merely hijacked them once they had been created by the Christian society of previous centuries. And once it had taken over, the secular State systematically set about stripping these institutions of the Christian values and ideals that brought them into being in the first place. For example, under the control of the British secular State’s National Health Service, hospitals originally created for the saving of life have been turned into death factories by the practice of abortion, and the grim reality of modern medical practice under the guidance of secular ideals seems likely to get only worse as a result of the constant attempts of politicians to legalise euthanasia.79

78 Rosenstock-Huessy, Out of Revolution, p. 29.
79 It is important to recognise that the ideology that legitimised the medical
Requiring the State to fulfil our responsibilities for us has not solved society’s problems. Far from solving our problems the socialist State has exacerbated them. For example, the modern State, which seeks to control so much of our lives, is one of the worst vandals that history has known. It squanders vast millions of taxpayers’ money on useless and destructive projects that contribute nothing to the betterment of human society and culture, quite apart from the millions spent on unnecessary wars.80 Nor is this the case only with the tin-pot socialist dictatorships that seem to be endemic in the Third World and that seem only to reduce their societies to ever greater poverty in what appears to be their mission

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80 According to Mikhail Agursky, writing in the early 1970s, “Western countries, the United States especially, are said to use up natural resources like a ‘drunken sailor,’ but this applies even more so to the USSR, where vast resources are pointless expended as a result of our reigning improvidence. For example, quantities of smelted metals are either thrown into the streets to rust or used in structures that are far heavier than necessary. Large quantities of agricultural produce are left to rot every year. Vast amounts of fuel are pointless burned. The senseless waste of Soviet resources not only continues but is increasing all the time; it has become a national habit” (“Contemporary Socioeconomic Systems and Their Future Prospects” in A. Solzhenitsyn, *From Under the Rubble*, p. 72).
to spread human misery as widely as possible. Western States are
equally guilty of waste and vandalism at all levels, whether it is
funding the above mentioned dictatorships, spending millions of
taxpayers’ money on computer systems that do not work or giving
grants to students to enable them to engage in idiotic perform-
ance art. I am thinking here, for example, of an arts grant given
to some students in the United Kingdom a number of years ago
for a performance art project in which two hard hats were yoked
together on the top by a short plank of wood. The performance
of the art, for which the arts grant was awarded, consisted of two
students walking around the streets of the city wearing these hard
hats yoked together by the plank of wood. A local television news
programme carried the story. Similar examples of idiotic activities
and installations masquerading as “art” and regularly sponsored
by the State with taxpayers’ money could be multiplied. Well of
course, art is a necessary element of human life. In the most des-
perate of conditions men have shown themselves to be artists. Art
is vital to culture. Of this there is no doubt. Of course mankind is
created in God’s image and therefore creativity is at the heart of
what it means to be human. But does the taxpayer really have to
foot the bill for this kind of thing? Where art is not funded by the
State this is unlikely to happen. Stupidity is not an art form. Where
people are allowed to retain responsibility for the stewardship of the
resources that God has given them they can choose not to subsidise
stupidity and they can subsidise excellence instead. The socialist
State, ever ready to regulate society in accordance with the wishes
of those lobbying groups that can gain the ear of politicians and
promise votes at elections, has been a poor and wasteful sponsor
of the arts, and consequently has engaged in cultural as well as
economic and military vandalism. The modern State is anything
but responsible in its attitude to taxpayers’ money. Its record as a
steward of society’s resources is one of the worst.

The Bible gives stewardship of the economic resources of society
to the family and to the individual, not to the State. To insist

\[\text{\footnotesize{See further the discussion of modernist art and avant-garde music on p. 261ff. infra.}}\]
that the State should usurp the role of the family and abridge the liberty of the individual by calling for the socialist organisation of society is rebellion against God.

It is, of course, our duty as individuals, as families, as communities and particularly as the Christian community of faith, the Church, to help the needy and to care for the genuinely poor. But it is not the duty of the State to usurp our responsibility to do this by providing welfare that is funded by taxation, which confiscates the very funds necessary for individuals, families and Churches to fulfil their God-ordained responsibility to care for the needy and help the poor. The State has no authority, no mandate in God’s word, to take these responsibilities away from us. When it does so it distorts the humane social order that God has ordained for society in Scripture and creates in its place a dysfunctional society; this is because under such circumstances the other institutions responsible for these things (family and Church) are not able to function according to their divinely-ordained roles—and neither does the State itself function according to its divinely-ordained role in such circumstances. As a result, justice itself, which it is the proper function of the State to uphold, is compromised. Neither does the usurpation of the roles of these other institutions by the State create a caring society, as socialist propaganda would have us believe. Rather, it creates an uncaring society, a society in which individuals, families and communities—and alas even the Church—abdicate their responsibilities to the anonymous State. The State is then expected to shoulder all of man’s social responsibilities, a role for which it was never intended and that it is not competent to fulfil. The consequence of the State’s attempts to fulfil this expectation is the near total control and regulation of life by the State—i.e. totalitarianism, the abolition of freedom. And this is the moral that naïve socialists have never understood—“Christian” no less than atheist: if men will not shoulder their responsibilities they will inevitably lose their freedom. This is a lesson that has been demonstrated time and again in those countries that have embraced socialism. It will be no different in the United Kingdom, since our freedom has already been abolished in principle and replaced by
the fraudulent secular humanist ideal known as “human rights.”

Furthermore, there are insufficient funds available to enable the State to fulfil the role that socialists conceive for it. How is this problem to be solved? The answer of just about every socialist I have ever known is that his neighbour does not pay enough taxes and should be taxed more. But not our socialist comrade. Of course, he pays his fair share already, if not too much. It would be unreasonable to expect him to pay more taxes. (“Christian” socialists should here take note of the biblical commandment to love one’s neighbour as oneself.) I have yet to see a wealthy socialist calling for more taxes—and there are plenty of them doing this, particularly in the world of entertainment and the media—who is willing to donate some of his wealth to the State, which is not the same thing as donating it to charity, and socialism requires the State to provide for man’s welfare, not charity, which is often treated with contempt by socialists.

In the perspective of the socialist, you see, private property is wrong, except for the private property in his pocket. Socialism is the politics of envy, and as even the unlearned, tipped-to-be-Pope Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez should have known, envy is sin. As another religion, an alternative to Christianity, which is what it is,—and therefore an idolatrous philosophy of life—socialism rejects God’s law in principle. It is no wonder then that the fruit produced by the tree of socialism in the twentieth century, the century of socialism, was so inimical to Christian values at all levels—e.g. health care (witness abortion and euthanasia); sexual ethics (witness the permissive society and homosexual liberation); education

82 “The actual historic role of the twentieth century, as it turned out, was to put large parts of mankind in thrall to an ideology that pursued the maximum suppression of the individual. Socialism, which had existed for centuries as a theory, started to materialize in the form of socialist states. This process has continued in fits and starts throughout the twentieth century, expanding with almost monotonous regularity, and there is no reason to suppose it has ended yet” (Shafarevich, “Separation or Reconciliation?” in Solzhenitsyn, From Under the Rubble, p. 90). Likewise, Solzhenitsyn writes that “The twentieth century marks one of the greatest upsurges in the success of socialism, and concomitantly of its repulsive practical manifestations” (A. Solzhenitsyn, “Forward” in Shafarevich, The Socialist Phenomenon, p. viii).
Socialism

(witness indoctrination of the religion of secular humanism in the State education system and the abolition of Clause 28); law (witness the overturning of justice due to the victims of crime and the indulgence with which criminals are treated); economics (witness legalised theft on a grand scale by the State and State-licensed institutions83); the family (witness the welfare State in combination with permissive legislation on divorce, which has virtually destroyed the Christian ideal of family life). Where, and in what principles, policies and practices does socialism conform to Christian ideals? Nowhere! “In no socialist doctrine” said Alexander Solzhenitsyn “are moral demands seen as the essence of socialism—there is merely a promise that morality will fall like manna from heaven after the socialization of property. Accordingly, nowhere on earth have we been shown ethical socialism in being.”84

§8

Conclusion

Socialism is a world-view—a religion—that is diametrically opposed to the Christian religion in its view of God, its code of ethics and its teaching on social and political order. “The term ‘atheism’ is inappropriate for the description of people in the grip of socialist doctrines” said Igor Shafarevich. “It would be more correct to speak here not of ‘atheists’ but of ‘God-haters,’ not of ‘atheism’ but of ‘theophobia.’”85 According to Shafarevich, “The socialist ideal, that basic complex of ideas which for many thousands of years has lain at the foundation of socialist ideology, can now be formulated: (1) equality and the destruction of hierarchy; (2) the destruction of private property; (3) the destruction of religion86; (4)

86 The term “religion” must be understood here in the narrow sense, in particular as theism; see further definition §2 in the Excursus on p. 46f. supra.
the destruction of the family.” To this Shafarevich then adds the complete annihilation of human individuality. His startling conclusion is that “socialism aims at the destruction of those aspects of life which form the true basis of human existence. That is why we think that the death of mankind is the inescapable logical consequence of socialist ideology and simultaneously a real possibility, hinted at in every socialist movement and state with a degree of clarity which depends on its fidelity to the socialist ideal.”

Christians must see the socialist agenda for what it is: revolution against God’s will for man’s life. The Church is called to speak the prophetic word of God to society and call the nations to repentance, i.e. back to obedience to God’s law. If she is to do this faithfully she must resolutely stand against socialism in all its forms.

Excursus

Some Neglected Aspects of Marxist Ideology

§1

Marxist Communism and Socialism

The social and political regime realised in Soviet Russia was not communism, but rather socialism, and this fact was acknowledged by the Soviet regime itself. In an interview with Joseph Stalin on 1 March 1936, Roy Howard, President of Scripps-Howard Newspapers, put it to Stalin that “Admittedly communism has not been achieved in Russia.” In his answer Stalin said to Howard: “Our Soviet society is socialist society, because the private ownership of the factories, works, the land, the banks and the transport system has been abolished and public ownership put in its place. The social organisation which we have created may be called a Soviet

88 Ibid., p. 61. Cf. note 34 on p. 185f. supra.
socialist organisation, not entirely completed, but fundamentally, a socialist organisation of society. The foundation of this society is public property: state, i.e., national, and also co-operative, collective farm property... Yes, you are right, we have not yet built communist society. It is not so easy to build such a society. You are probably aware of the difference between socialist society and communist society. In socialist society certain inequalities in property still exist."

In Marxist communist ideology socialism is a temporary phenomenon, a stage in society’s transition from capitalism to communism. Socialism requires a strong centralised State since the realisation of communist ideals necessitates the oppressive enforcement of a radical programme of social engineering. This is because the kind of society envisioned by communist ideology involves the overturning of the God-ordained and therefore the natural order of society, which is a family based order that requires and encourages personal freedom and responsibility, ideals that inevitably lead to social inequalities and that are therefore inimical to communist ideology. But the ideology of Marxist communism requires the eventual abolition or “withering away” of the State. Only when the State has withered away and ceased to exist is society considered to have achieved a state of communism in Marxist ideology. According to Friedrich Engels: “As soon as there is no longer any social class to be kept in suppression, and as soon as class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the hitherto existing anarchy of production [i.e. capitalism—SCP] are removed, along with the conflicts and excesses which arise from them, then there will be nothing more to repress and nothing that would make necessary a special repressive power, a state. The first act in which the State really appears as representative of the whole society—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is simultaneously its last independent act as a state. The intervention of state power in social affairs becomes superfluous in one field after another until at last it falls asleep.

of its own accord.”90 Likewise, Lenin stated that “the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, i.e., a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away.”91

Prior to the realisation of this golden age of communism, however, society must, according to Marxist ideology, experience a period of political transition in which the State can be nothing other than the “revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”92 This is the socialist State. In fact, however, the period of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat (socialism) has turned out historically to be a permanent revolution of the most oppressive kind in which the State, far from withering away, achieves a condition of virtual apotheosis; indeed, Hegel, upon whose philosophy of history the ideology of Marxism is built, refers to the State, following Kant, as Irdisch-Göttliches, i.e. “Earthly-Godly.”93

§2
Marxism and Sexual Communism

The eradication of marriage and the abolition of family life based upon it in favour of “free love”—i.e. sexual communism as well as economic and political communism—has also been one of the goals of Marxist communism.94 According to Denis de Rougemont

“Revolutionary Russia was the scene of a youthful ‘outburst’ of sex which it is tempting to regard as unprecedented in European annals. As for marriage, theoretically it was swept away during the early stages of the Soviets. Nihilist or romantic intellectuals had inspired the young Bolshevik leaders with a doctrine that found expression in unmarried cohabitation, abortion, and the desertion of babies—in short, in whatever was imagined to defy reactionary prejudices mistakenly thought to have been fostered by bourgeois capitalism.”

This ideal of free love proved impossible to sustain even in communist Russia and its deleterious social consequences were subsequently reversed by Stalin for pragmatic reasons. “Experience taught the Government” says M. C. D’Arcy “that lawless love endangered the good of society, that there were fundamental laws that could not be infringed without peril; and so new legislation corrected the excessive liberties permitted at first.” Likewise, Denis de Rougemont states that “Stalin’s immediate aim was to rebuild the framework of his nation. For in the absence of a framework economic life was in danger of collapse, and ‘national defence’ could not be organised without constant appeal to the passion of the early revolutionaries, and it was precisely this passion that Stalin had determined to get rid of. To lay down new social foundations, and especially that most stable and stabilizing of units: the family, became therefore a vital necessity. The nature of the mechanism of productivist dictatorship compelled the so-called Socialist State to decree a series of laws against divorce—which was made more burdensome—and against abortion and the deserting of babies born out of wedlock. The sudden severity of these laws, the psychological shock which they inflicted, propaganda, and measures enabling the police to keep a watch on private life, transformed the moral atmosphere of Russia round about the year 1936. Marriage was instituted again on strictly utilitarian, collectivist, and eugenic principles; and there was promoted a spirit in which individual

95 Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, p. 288f.
problems tended to lose all their dignity, legitimacy, and lawless virulence”

§3

**Marxist Communism and the Family**

Marxist communist ideology, like virtually all other forms of communism throughout history, also predicted the abolition or “withering away” of the family, since the family, like Christianity, constitutes a serious obstacle to the consistent realisation of communist principles. According to the Russian communist diplomat and radical feminist Alexandra Kollontai: “The old form of the family is passing away; the communist society has no use for it. The bourgeois world celebrated the isolation, the cutting off of the married pair from the collective weal; in the scattered and disjointed bourgeois society full of struggle and destruction, the family was the sole anchor of hope in the storm of life, the peaceful haven in the ocean of hostilities and competitions between persons. The family represented an individual class in the social unit. There can be no such thing in the communist society. For communist society as a whole represents such a fortress of the collective life, precluding any possibility of the existence of an isolated class of family bodies, existing by itself, with its ties of birth, its love of family honour, its absolute segregation.” Likewise, Friedrich Engels says that “With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the individual family ceases to be an economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of children become a public affair; society looks after all children equally, whether they are born in or out of wedlock.”

97 Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, p. 289.

98 “Prostitution and ways of fighting it,” speech to the third all-Russian conference of heads of the Regional Women’s Departments, 1921, cited in Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, p. 262.

The family is one of the principal opponents of socialism; it stands for everything that is iminical to the realisation of a socialist society. If socialism is to be established, therefore, the family must be destroyed. Igor Shafarevich spells out for us just what this will mean: “In socialist society . . . the family will lose all its social functions, which from the Marxist point of view means it will die out. *The Communist Manifesto* proclaims the disappearance of the ‘bourgeois family.’ But by the twenties they were already managing without this epithet. Professor S. Y. Volfson, in his lengthy work *The Sociology of Marriage and the Family* (1929), foresaw that the family would lose the following characteristics: its productive function (which it was already losing under capitalism), its joint household (people would take their meals communally), its child-rearing function (they would be reared in state nurseries and kindergartens), its role in the care of the aged, and the cohabitation of parents with children and of married couples. ‘The family will be purged of its social content, it will wither away . . .’”

Most of these predictions are in varying degrees now well-advanced realities for a great many families in the United Kingdom as a result of the implementation by successive governments over the second half of the twentieth century of social engineering policies inspired by socialist political ideology. The State has taken over much of the traditional role of the family. Although in many families both parents work the family has lost its productive function; the increasing provision of breakfast clubs and after school activities for children in schools means that many families spend much less time together and eat fewer meals together; nursery provision for infants and the encouraging of mothers back into the workforce shortly after childbirth means that children are increasingly being brought up not by their parents but by the State schools (and society as a whole increasingly sees this situation as normal); increasingly care of the aged in old people’s homes, although not primarily run by the State, is nevertheless funded and regulated by the State on a large scale; and although cohabitation of parents

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and children together is still common the loss of Christian ethics with regard to the liberalisation of divorce laws, acceptance of extramarital sexual relationships and the redefinition of the family consequent upon these developments means that many parents do not stay together and many children do not live with both of their parents, do not have a stable family environment in which to grow up, no adequate father figure (an essential aspect of normal family life that cannot be provided by a series of the mother’s live-in boyfriends), and indeed often may not even know who their fathers are. The consequent breakdown of the family as the basic social unit in society has a traumatic effect on the lives of the individuals involved, and especially on children, and has produced an increasingly dysfunctional society. The pace at which these developments are progressing shows no sign of slowing down, as the first decade of the twenty-first century demonstrated, and the increases in taxes needed to fund the State’s provision in all these areas weakens the family even further, forcing it into greater dependence on the State.

Although Marxist communism has not been successful in achieving its goal of eradicating family life altogether, therefore, the rise of socialism has been one of the main causes of the decline of marriage and stable family life in those countries where it has had any influence, either as an individual ideology or as a form of economic and social organisation. According to Shafarevich, speaking of socialism as a phenomenon spanning the entire history of mankind: “in socialist states we observe the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, state control of everyday life, and the subordination of the individual to the power of the bureaucracy; in socialist doctrines we observe the destruction of private property, of religion, of the family and of marriage, and the introduction of wife sharing.”101

The antithesis that exists between socialist ideology and family life means that it is impossible for a truly socialist society to be at the same time a strongly family-based society. This fact is borne out not only by former socialist States such as those of the Soviet Union and communistic societies such as monasteries and religious

101 Ibid., p. 44 (italics in original).
Socialism communes, but also by modern Western societies such as Britain and other European States. The degree to which socialism has been, is being, or can be realised in any society is commensurate with the decline of the family in that society. Socialist ideology as well as communist ideology is fundamentally inimical to the family and to the values and virtues presupposed and reinforced by the family. The implementation of socialist ideals politically and religiously has always been highly detrimental to the institution of marriage and to family life based upon it, yet without the acceptance, preservation and support of this institution, politically and religiously, society becomes dysfunctional, a fact demonstrated not only by our own socialist era, but by the socialist and communist experiments of previous ages and cultures.

§4 Marxism, Libertarianism and Idolatry

Marxism reduces human life to the economic aspect. The result is a form of idolatry in which the economic aspect provides meaning and purpose to human life and society. According to Leon Trotsky “the task of socialism is to create a classless society based upon solidarity and the harmonious satisfaction of all needs.” Ultimately a classless society necessitates, among other things, economic equality, and leaving aside the vexed question of definition the harmonious satisfaction of all economic needs requires a general level of economic prosperity that has proved illusive in socialist societies. Granted, capitalism has not achieved these goals either, but society has advanced much nearer to these goals under the capitalist organisation of production than under any

102 On communist ideology as a component of specific religious communities see pp. 222–244 infra.
103 Cf. the comments of Christopher Dawson on the rise of modern theories of the evolution of marriage and the family and their acceptance by socialists in Enquiries into Religion and Culture, p. 269f.
other form of economic organisation. Nevertheless such goals are utopian and imply far more than the mere reorganisation of economic production and distribution. This latter fact is evident both in the ideology of socialism and in the practical outworking of socialist ideals. Socialism is a false religion in which the whole life of man and society is made to function around and derive its meaning from the economic aspect of life. Everything, therefore, is subordinated to this. Socialism is Mammonism writ large.

Unfortunately, this idolatry of the economic aspect of life has passed into Western society more generally and has become a dominant feature of the world-view of many who reject Marxism. For many libertarians, including Ludwig von Mises, the meaning of life is effectively reduced to the economic aspect. In the same way the Protestant work ethic has been secularised, drained of its spiritual meaning, and turned into a form of idolatry, and even used as a form of slavery rather than as a tool of man’s freedom and dominion under God. According to Jacques Ellul: “The bourgeois morality was and is primarily a morality of work and of métier. Work purifies, ennobles; it is a virtue and a remedy. Work is the only thing that makes life worthwhile; it replaces God and the life of the spirit. More precisely, it identifies God with work: success becomes blessing. God expresses his satisfaction by distributing money to those who have worked well. Before this first of all virtues, the others fade into obscurity. If laziness was the mother of all vices, work was the father of all virtues. This attitude was carried so far that bourgeois civilization neglected every virtue but work.” However, this reduction of man to the economic aspect was, says Ellul, completed under the reign of the triumphant bourgeoisie and therefore predates the rise of the revolutionary myth and Marxist communism.

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§5

MARXISM, FASCISM AND SOCIALISM

It needs to be remembered that fascism is a form of socialism and
has nothing in common ideologically with capitalism. Unfortu-
nately, popular misunderstanding and misuse of the terms fascism
and capitalism has obscured this fact. National Socialism, i.e. Hitler’s
version of fascism, was the policy of the German National Socialist
Labour Party. (The term Nazi is an abbreviation of the German
word Nationalsozialistische). According to Ludwig von Mises the
confusion of these terms originated in communist propaganda.
“It is important to realize that Fascism and Nazism were socialist
dictatorships. The communists, both the registered members of the
communist parties and the fellow-travellers, stigmatize Fascism and
Nazism as the highest and last and most depraved stage of capital-
ism. This is in perfect agreement with their habit of calling every
party which does not unconditionally surrender to the dictates of Marxism—even the German Social Democrats, the classical
party of Marxism—hirelings of capitalism. It is of much greater
consequence that the communists have succeeded in changing the
semantic connotation of the term Fascism.” 108 Similarly, the use
of the term right-wing to describe capitalism, which is very com-
mon today, is misleading and completely fails to describe the true
nature of capitalism and the kind of society that it presupposes
and helps to maintain. Capitalism is not a right-wing phenomenon,
since it refers to a system of economic organisation of society that
has nothing in common with fascism, namely private ownership,
both legal and economic, of the means of production. The term
right-wing refers to fascism, and fascism is a form of socialism. 109

108 Ludwig von Mises, Planned Chaos (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: The
Foundation for Economic Education, 1947), p. 68; see also p. 75ff. See further F.
109 On the meaning of the terms capitalism and fascism from the economic point
Christians usually look back to the early Church of New Testament times as an example that the Church should emulate in succeeding ages, even in the modern world of the twenty-first century. Indeed, it is sometimes argued that the best examples given us in Scripture should be drawn into rules for the Christian life. Consequently the community of goods described in Acts chapters 2:44–45; 4:32–37 and 5:1–11 has often been held up as an example that the Church should follow. It has also been claimed, often with alarming social and political consequences, that this example should be taken as indicating how society should be organised politically; i.e. it is sometimes taken not merely as an example of voluntary communism, which is in fact all that it was, but also as an example of how States should organise the economic life of society, by force if necessary.

Perhaps the most notorious example of the outworking of this “Christian” communist ideology is the Anabaptist revolution that overtook Münster, the capital city of Westphalia, Germany, in 1534. “Taking advantage of the struggle going on between Catholics and Lutherans, the Anabaptists gained control in the municipal council and then completely subjugated the town. All who refused to accept a second baptism were expelled after being stripped of all their possessions. Thereafter all property in the city was appropriated
for the common lot, everyone being obliged to deliver his possessions under the supervision of special deacons. Next polygamy was introduced, and women of a certain age were forbidden to stay unmarried.”¹ This was not an isolated example however. There is a long tradition of violent revolutionary “Christian” communism stretching from the heresies of the Free Spirit and the Apostolic Brethren in the thirteenth century through to the Taborites of the Hussite Wars in the fifteenth century, the heretical teachings of the Zwickau prophets and Thomas Müntzer, the Anabaptist revolution itself in Münster in the sixteenth century,² and on to the Marxist communist ideology of the modern Liberation Theology movements.

According to the Mexican Liberation Theologian José Porfirio Miranda, “Jesus himself was a communist . . . communism is obligatory for all Christians . . . The Ananias episode . . . means: pain of death for whoever betrays communism, Christianity’s indispensable condition . . . No one can take the Bible seriously without concluding that according to it, the rich, for being rich, should be punished. Not to let them into the kingdom when the whole point is to establish the kingdom is clearly punishment. To commit them to torment, as the parable teaches, is punishment. To deprive them of all their goods and send them off with nothing is also punishment—for the simple crime of being rich.”³ In the last few pages of his book *Communism in the Bible* Miranda provides a defence of mob violence against private property based on John 2:15 in which Jesus is represented as the leader of a pogrom against the Temple.⁴ Not surprisingly, therefore, Miranda describes Jesus as “a hardened revolutionary.”⁵ According to Miranda “The sacred authors know that all differentiating wealth is ill-gotten, that it has necessarily been obtained by despoiling and oppressing the rest of

the population, and that therefore to be rich is to be unjust. They sigh for Yahweh to intervene and re-establish justice by despoiling the despoilers. For the sacred authors, the problem of evil is a social problem.”

The bizarre conclusion that Miranda comes to is that even God himself is obliged to support the communist revolution because it is his creative act that is responsible for the existence of the poor in the first place and the denial of their strict rights: “To the extent that one does not participate in this [communist] revolutionary struggle, one participates in the benefits of a society which lives essentially by exploiting and oppressing the poor. Merely abstaining from the struggle constitutes complicity. The situation of the poor is injustice in the most strict, and commutative, sense of the word . . . in the sense that obliges restitution. Even God is under obligation in this matter, for it is God who set in motion the machinery of creation which has resulted in tearing to bits the strict rights of the poor, who did not ask to come into the world in the first place.”

Although Miranda’s views are on the very extreme of the socialist ideological continuum, the basic principles that underpin his perspective and revolutionary conclusions are not essentially

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6 Ibid., p. 32. Miranda’s claim that all differentiating wealth is condemned in Scripture takes no account of the fact that some of the greatest saints of the Old Testament, e.g. the Patriarchs, were fabulously wealthy men by comparison with the greater part of the people among whom they lived. Even in the New Testament differentiating wealth is nowhere seen as in itself being inconsistent or incompatible with Christian discipleship, as the case of Joseph of Arimathea demonstrates (Mt. 27:57). The acceptance of Joseph of Arimathea as a disciple by Christ also demonstrates that in the case of the rich young ruler (Mk 10:17–27; Lk. 18:18–27) what is being considered is not wealth or even differentiating wealth *per se*, but rather the *idolatry* of wealth. The command to sell *everything* and give it to the poor is not a universal command to all of Jesus’ disciples, therefore, but Jesus’ calling to this particular young ruler, whose sin, i.e. his idolatry of riches, was manifested by his disobedience to Christ’s command. This fact is further confirmed by the case of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1–9), who gave away only half his riches to the poor (v. 8), an act that brought forth no criticism or rebuke from the Lord Jesus Christ, and which was accepted as just, the Lord Jesus declaring that salvation had that day come to the house of Zacchaeus (v. 9).

7 Ibid., p. 69.
dissimilar to those espoused by more moderate “Christian” socialists. That is to say, many Christians have extrapolated from the practice of the Jerusalem Church in the early chapters of the book of Acts to the idea that the State should enforce communism, or at least to the idea that Scripture supports the organisation of society on a socialistic model. Of course this begs the question of how we determine what the best examples in Scripture are. There are plenty of bad examples in Scripture that we are to learn from. They teach us to do the opposite. But there are also examples in Scripture of good people doing very bad things, and we are to learn from these also. King David’s example of adultery and murder is hardly to be imitated, though in other respects he is held up as a model of faith, and rightly so. We must be careful, therefore, about how we determine what examples in Scripture we are to follow. It may be argued, of course, that Scripture elsewhere condemns adultery and murder. Before following the example of those whose lives are described in Scripture, therefore, we must look carefully at what else the Bible has to say about these people and their actions. Likewise, we must look carefully at what else the Bible has to say about wealth, ownership of property, the family, and social order, all of which have an important bearing on the issues surrounding the community of goods in the Jerusalem Church of Acts chapters 2 to 5, before we draw the conclusion that the latter is an example that we should follow.

But there is one practice of the early Church of the New Testament that the Church throughout subsequent history has not followed; nor has it ever been argued, to my knowledge, that the modern Church should follow this practice. And yet it is no more directly condemned in Scripture than the community of goods in the Jerusalem Church is directly condemned in Scripture. Nevertheless, the Church has not considered this to be a good practice to follow, and with good reason. The issue here is the funding of missions. The primitive Church of the New Testament, the Church in Jerusalem, became, within a few years of the inauguration of the Great Commission, financially dependent on her mission Churches, i.e. the Churches of the Gentile world (Acts 24:17; Rom.
Are we right not to follow this example? Is the practice of the Jerusalem Church a good example? Yes, we are right not to follow this example, because no, the practice of the Jerusalem Church was not a good example. Paul’s statement in 2 Cor. 12:14, “I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children,” may well be an indirect criticism of the Jerusalem Church’s experiment with the community of goods because of its consequences for the Gentile missions. And here lies a cautionary tale for those who would use the Church of Jerusalem as their model for the modern Church and society at large, and indeed for all primitivist thinking about ecclesial and social theory. The Jerusalem Church could not provide for herself economically. The community of believers at Jerusalem was too poor to survive when times were difficult without aid from the Gentile Churches. And yet this was the Church that practised the community of goods. Why was the Church in Jerusalem so poor that Paul had to provide financial relief from the Gentile Churches of Macedonia and Achaia, which did not practice communism?

§2

COMMUNISM, THE FAMILY AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY

Throughout history communistic societies and communities, of whatever nature, voluntary or State-enforced, have not been economically viable except under certain abnormal conditions. Where societies that practise a community of goods are economi-

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8 It has been suggested by Hans von Campenhausen that the primitive Church at Jerusalem may have seen this contribution from the Gentile Churches as implying a formal payment of dues (cf. Rom. 15:26–27), but von Campenhausen emphatically denies that this was how Paul himself saw it (*Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* [London: Adam and Charles Black, (1953) 1969], p. 34).
cally viable they are not usually *family* based societies. In fact, the *rejection* of the biblical model of the family is usually to be found in such communities in some form. For example, monasteries are often economically viable communities, but they are not family based communities. They are single sex communities that require the rejection or suppression of a fundamental aspect of human nature. They are therefore abnormal societies. Furthermore, although they are often economically viable in the narrow sense, i.e. they produce enough to enable the community to live from year to year, and even a surplus beyond this that can be used to generate successful business enterprises, they are dependent upon the outside world for new members, since reproduction is denied as a means of securing the long-term future of the community. In other words, the continued existence of the community requires the existence of a world that does not share the ideals of the community, and indeed that lives in a way that contradicts the ideals of the community, from which it must recruit new members. If everyone were to adopt the ideals of monastic living the community would not so much cease to be viable economically as cease altogether. In that sense it is a sterile community that contradicts one of the most basic and fundamental purposes of God’s creative will for mankind, the command to multiply (Gen. 1:28).

There are other economically viable communistic communities that do not share this ideology of sterility or infertility. The Hutterite Anabaptists, for example, whose ideals are derived from the

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9 Despite the ideal of poverty espoused by the monastic orders, property was not forbidden to most monastic communities. It was *private* property that was forbidden. Property was owned by the community not the individual. The Rule of St Augustine, for example, requires the surrender of private property to the monastic order — i.e. *common* ownership. Likewise the Rule of St Benedict. The Rule of St Francis, by contrast, requires not common ownership of property but *poverty*, i.e. the rejection of all ownership by both the individual and the community. This requirement was founded on the reputed poverty of Christ. The doctrine of the absolute poverty of Christ, however, was declared heretical by Pope John XXII in 1323 (Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent c. 1250–c. 1450* [Manchester University Press, 1967], Vol. I, p. 238; see *ibid.*, pp. 51–255 for a full discussion of the Franciscan problem and its history).
Radical Reformation, live in societies that practise a community of goods and that are economically viable, but retain marriage and procreation. Nevertheless, these societies do not usually practise normal family life. The family is communised as well as man’s goods. Children are not brought up in family units but by the whole community.¹⁰ In this sense the ideal of the commune goes much further than the community of goods. The children are not really treated as the children of particular families but as the children of the commune and they are brought up in a way that is consistent with this belief. Normal family life is abandoned. In Hutterite society, says John A. Hostetler, “The function of the family is to produce new souls and to care for them until the colony takes over the major responsibility of training [i.e. educating—SCP] the children. The family performs those functions that cannot easily or efficiently be performed by the colony. Child-rearing is not thought of as a private enterprise; children are not extensions of the parents’ egos but gifts of God who belong to the colony, and potentially to the church.”¹¹ This amounts to much more than the existence of a mere extended family. It is rather an ideology that structures the community.

In communes that are economically viable there is inevitably a price to be paid in this way. The social theory and practice of the commune is abnormal from the biblical point of view. That is to say, it involves the setting aside of the biblical pattern of family life, and this usually involves the denial of some aspect of man’s created nature. The family does not function as the basic unit of

¹⁰ According to Peter Rideman, one of the founders of the Hutterite movement, “God from the beginning ordained naught private for man, but all things to be common” (Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith, given by Peter Rideman of the Brothers whom men call Hutterians [Hodder and Stoughton/The Plough Publishing House, (1565) 1950], p. 88). For Rideman’s views on marriage see ibid., p. 97f., and on the education of children ibid., p. 130f. Rideman’s Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith etc., originally written in 1540, has remained the fundamental confession of the Hutterian Brethren up to the present day.

society. Rather, the community takes over this function. The basic building block of normal society, the family, is either dispensed with altogether or restricted virtually to a mere biological function. The community replaces the family. In the more extreme mediaeval European heretical communistic sects and also in the socialism of many Enlightenment philosophers and intellectuals the communisation of sexual relationships was also an article of faith. Another example of this is the communistic community established by the Oneida Perfectionists in Madison County, New York, between 1848 and 1880 under the leadership of John Humphrey Noyes. Although commercially successful as a communistic community sexual communism and the abandonment of normal family life was a central doctrine of the community.

The family and communism are mutually exclusive social ideals. They cannot exist together for long. One must give way to the other. To say that it is God’s purpose for mankind to have common ownership of property is to say, whether one realises it or not, that it is not God’s purpose for mankind to live in families. To say that it is God’s will for mankind to live in families is to say, wittingly or unwittingly, that it is not God’s will for mankind to live in communist communities. The two cannot co-exist in the same society without the one seeking to attack and destroy the other since they are conflicting social ideals, conflicting social orders that militate against each other.

In societies practising a community of goods, whether voluntary or State-enforced, where the family does remain the basic unit of society, economic viability is compromised, although where there is a sudden change to communism from a previously highly capitalised non-communistic organisation of society it may take considerable time, possibly even a generation or more, for this fact to become evident. Such communistic societies, whether voluntary

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12 See Shafarevich, op. cit., pp. 18–130; see also ibid. p. 197f. and §2 “Marxism and Sexual Communism” in the Excursus on p. 214ff supra.


14 See also §3 “Marxist Communism and the Family” in the Excursus on p. 216ff. supra.
or State-enforced, are not economically viable societies. This is why there were shortages of food and other basic necessities of life in Soviet Russia. It is also why the Church at Jerusalem ended up in the situation in which she could not provide for her own members. History has shown this to be the case time and again. And it would seem that it is this same lesson that the Bible teaches with regard to the Jerusalem Church when all the biblical evidence is considered. The Christian community in Jerusalem had become unable to support itself economically and needed help from the Gentile Church. Therefore Paul had to take collections from the Gentile Churches, which did not practice the community of goods as described in Acts chapters 4 and 5, to help the poverty stricken Church at Jerusalem.

It has been claimed that the poverty of the Jerusalem Church was occasioned by a famine that particularly affected Jerusalem and the surrounding country. This famine is believed by many to have been the one predicted by the prophet Agabus in Acts 11:27–30. However, what Agabus predicted was a famine throughout the world, not a local famine, and by the time Paul had taken aid from the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem many parts of the Roman empire had experienced famine, though not all at the same time. Paul himself bears witness to the extreme poverty of the Churches in Macedonia. Yet these Churches still sent aid to the Jerusalem Church (2 Cor. 8:1–4). Poverty was not the exclusive experience of Christians in the Church of Jerusalem. What was the exclusive experience of Christians in the Church of Jerusalem was the community of goods, which made them so ill-equipped to deal with their poverty that other poor believers from the Gentile Churches had to provide them with financial aid.
How are we to understand the community of goods practised by the Church in Jerusalem in the light of what the Bible has to say about this practice and what it has to say about other issues bearing upon it?

First, the community of goods practised by the Church at Jerusalem is nowhere in the Scriptures commanded, nor even commended. In fact the practice of the Jerusalem Church is not even commended in the Book of Acts; it is merely described. What then, it may be asked, does the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), who failed to enter into the spirit of this experiment and were struck dead for their sin, teach us? It teaches us precisely that they were under no obligation to participate in the community of goods and that failure to do so brought no disapprobation. This is clear from Peter’s rebuke of Ananias: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou has not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:3–4). Sapphira’s offence was that she was complicit with her husband in this lie (Acts 5:7–10). Their sin was lying to the Holy Spirit about what they had given to the community, not their holding back part of the proceeds of the sale of the land. Peter acknowledged that the property was their own, that they had the freedom to dispose of it according to their own will, and that they were under no obligation to give the land or the proceeds of its sale to the community. Scripture makes no further direct comment on this incident nor on the experiment in the community of goods as practised in Jerusalem, nor does it give any further direct teaching on this issue other than what can be deduced from the condition of poverty into which the Church subsequently fell, evidenced by the need of the Gentile Churches to support the community of believers in Jerusalem financially.
Nowhere in the Bible is the community of goods advocated as a social theory or an advisable way to live.

Second, however, the teachings of the Bible on the use of wealth and the kind of economic system advocated in the Bible are incompatible with the community of goods. For example, the Bible teaches that “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children” (Pr. 13:22). Leaving an inheritance to one’s children and grandchildren is a godly ideal in Scripture. The expropriation of a man’s inheritance is condemned in Scripture (1 Kg. 21). The inheritance of the Israelites was jealously guarded by the laws of the Torah. The social and economic system of ancient Israel as laid down in the law of Moses was aimed at protecting the inheritance of the Israelites and ensuring that a family’s inheritance could not be permanently alienated either by force or choice. Furthermore, the eighth commandment (Ex. 20:15) and the command not to move the boundary mark of another man’s land (Dt. 19:14; 27:17; Pr. 22:28; 23:10f.) are meaningless in a communistic society. The Jubilee was instituted precisely to ensure that the people were not permanently dispossessed of their inheritance. Inheritance is a significant theme in the history of Israel and an important concept in Scripture both economically and eschatologically. Such an economic and social order is not compatible with the ideal of communism.

Third, the community of goods practised in the Jerusalem Church runs contrary to the principle taught by the apostle Paul to Gentile believers, namely that they should work to provide for their own needs and produce a surplus (i.e. a profit, to use the economic term) so that they would be able to help those in need (see for example Acts 20:33–35; Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11–12 and 2 Thess. 3:8–12 taken together). The community of believers in the Jerusalem Church was not able to provide for its own members, let alone provide help for others, and this is why Paul had to secure financial help from the Gentile Churches.

Does all this mean that the experiment in the community of goods in Jerusalem was sinful? It may be difficult to maintain such an argument without some qualification, but it is clear, first, that for those participating in it such an experiment could only be entered into voluntarily\(^\text{16}\) and second, that one would need to ensure that such a lifestyle did not lead to the disinheriting of legitimate heirs (Dt. 21:15–17; Pr. 13:22) or to the neglect of one’s duty to provide for one’s dependants (1 Tim. 5:8–16).\(^\text{17}\) Failure to abide by these two principles would have involved participating members of the Jerusalem Church’s experiment with communism in sin. It is clear from the case of Ananias and Sapphira that communism was not mandatory for individual believers in the Jerusalem Church, even though it appears to have been practised by the community as a whole. Third, subsequent teaching by the apostle Paul makes it clear that the Jerusalem Church did fall short of the Christian ideal with regard to the provision of welfare: “But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God . . . if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel . . . If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:4, 8, 16).\(^\text{18}\) The communism of the Jerusalem Church produced a lifestyle that Paul here condemns in no uncertain terms as worse than that of non-believers and a practical denial of the faith—i.e. an ongoing situation in which neither the participating believers nor the Church as a whole could provide for their own dependants. Surely, if the community

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\(^{16}\) Cf. the “Christian” communist ideology of José Porfirio Miranda discussed on p. 223ff. supra, which insists that communism is Christianity’s indispensable condition.


\(^{18}\) See further Rushdoony, op. cit., p. 770ff.
of goods practised by the Jerusalem Church is God’s will for his Church, and indeed for society as a whole, we must ask why the apostle Paul never teaches this himself in his epistles nor requires its practice in the Gentile Churches he founded. He does not even so much as hint at such an arrangement. Indeed, he teaches the precise opposite, namely that believers should provide for their own dependants and that Church welfare should be available only when the family is not able to provide. It is as if the Jerusalem Church’s experiment with communism was an embarrassing failure that is not spoken about, but rather avoided. It may even conceivably have been the failure of the Jerusalem Church’s experiment with communism that prompted Paul to give these strongly worded instructions to Timothy. In the light of this subsequent apostolic teaching, therefore, it is questionable whether such an experiment in communism as that undertaken by the Jerusalem Church could now be repeated without sin, i.e. without the flagrant disregard of subsequent apostolic teaching, which, Scripture tells us, is part of the foundation of the Church and of the life of faith (Eph. 2:19–20). At the very least we can say that even in the best scenario (i.e. where no sin is involved) such a way of living is not advisable in the light of biblical teaching. The community of goods is not a biblical ideal. The Jerusalem commune failed miserably to live up to the ideals given us in Scripture about the use of wealth and charitable provision for those in need. Charity necessitates the production of a surplus—i.e. a profit. Subsistence living is incompatible with the ideal of charitable aid to the poor because such aid requires the accumulation of wealth that can be transferred to those in need. But the Jerusalem Church did not last very long before the community of goods failed even to produce enough to meet the needs of her own members. Instead of providing for their missions in the Gentile world the Christians in Jerusalem became dependent upon their mission Churches financially.

Although the Bible does not explicitly condemn the Jerusalem Church’s experiment with voluntary communism as sinful per se, therefore, it seems clear from what Scripture says elsewhere about the use of wealth and the organisation of society economically that
it was a mistake that produced long-term adverse consequences for the Jerusalem Church and her mission Churches in the Gentile world, which had to support the believers in Jerusalem financially. And although it cannot be argued directly from Scripture, this may well have weakened the Jerusalem Church’s ability to function as an example to the growing Church throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, thereby weakening the moral and spiritual authority of the Church at Jerusalem. Already, within the time span covered by the Book of Acts, Antioch takes on a much more important role as a centre of missionary activity than Jerusalem, which quickly seems to lose authority and credibility as the geographical centre of the Christian faith.

If this is the case it may well be asked how the Church over which the apostles presided could have made such a significant mistake. But of course this was not the only mistake made by the early Church and the apostles that the Bible records for our instruction. The apostolic Church was not infallible, nor were the apostles infallible. There are two other incidents that illustrate the fallibility of the apostles and caution us against treating their actions as examples to be followed and drawn into rules for the Christian life without further confirmation from the broader teaching of Scripture.

First, Acts 2:12–26 records the decision of the Church following the Ascension to fill the apostolic ministry left vacant by Judas Iscariot, thereby bringing the number of the apostles back up to twelve. The criterion that the apostles laid down as being essential for anyone who was to fulfil the role of an apostle was that he should have been a fellow companion with themselves and Jesus from the beginning. They therefore chose two men who fulfilled this criterion and selected one of them, Matthias, by casting lots. This whole process of choosing another apostle to replace Judas was carried out in direct disobedience to the explicit command of the Lord Jesus Christ himself that the apostles should remain in Jerusalem and wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4f.). Instead of waiting for the outpouring of the Spirit, whom Christ had promised would lead them into all truth (Jn 16:13), Peter decided to set
himself up effectively as the archbishop of the whole Church and establish the first code of ecclesiastical law to govern the future ministry of the Church. But this led to a problem, because God then chose Saul of Tarsus to be his apostle to the Gentiles, a man who not only had not been with the apostles and Jesus from the beginning, but who had been a fierce persecutor of the Church up to the point of his conversion to the faith. Furthermore, he was sent out as an apostle from Antioch, not Jerusalem, and the apostles in Jerusalem had no part in his being chosen and ordained as an apostle to the Gentiles. After his first mission to the Gentile world, therefore, Paul had to defend his apostleship before the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. When Paul appeared before the apostles and reported to them all that had taken place in his mission to the Gentiles the apostles accepted Paul and Barnabas into the company of the apostles (Acts 15:1–35; Gal. 2:1–10). In doing so they overturned their previous criterion for accepting anyone into the company of the apostles. The criterion initially used to determine suitability for apostleship by the apostles themselves was clearly erroneous, and the recognition that this rule was worthless was only brought about when the issue was forced upon the apostles by subsequent events. Indeed, in 2 Cor. 5:16 Paul attacks the very principle upon which the apostles’ original ruling was based, i.e. knowledge of Christ according to the flesh, which for Paul had no bearing whatsoever on apostolic authority. With the conversion of Paul and his calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles it became clear that the man-made and self-serving rules laid down by Peter and the apostles in Jerusalem were detrimental to the mission of the Church and that the spread of the gospel could not be dependent on the authority, direction and example of the Jerusalem Church. Centralised international control of the Church by clergymen and ecclesiastical law-making had no part in God’s plan for the apostolic age—and if the apostles themselves could not be trusted with such power, much less are the lesser men of the papacy and large centralised denominations to be trusted with it. The divine calling of Paul took no account whatsoever of

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Communism in the New Testament

Second, when the apostle Peter visited Antioch he at first joined in fellowship with the Gentiles, who had been accepted into the Church without having to convert to Judaism. The acceptance of the Gentiles in this way was a principle that Peter believed and practised as a result of being shown by the Lord Jesus in a revelation that the Gentiles were to be accepted into the Church without having to be circumcised first. But later when certain Judaisers, who had come from James, arrived in Antioch Peter, fearing the party of those who insisted that Gentile believers should be circumcised, stopped mixing with the Gentiles and stood aloof from them, with the result that the rest of the Jews joined him and even Barnabas was led astray by Peter’s hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11–21). Paul therefore opposed Peter and rebuked him for his hypocrisy and the bad example that he had set.

It is clear from these incidents that the apostolic Church was not infallible, that the apostles were not infallible, that they made mistakes and committed sins, and that the Scriptures, which are the inspired and infallible word of God, record these errors for our instruction, i.e. so that we might understand what happened and learn from the mistakes of the early Church.

Despite the clear testimony of Scripture regarding these matters it is common to find theologians arguing to the contrary on the presumed authority of Scripture—i.e. claiming scriptural authority for dogmatic statements that contradict Scripture. According to Charles Hodge, for example, “the apostles were inspired, and as religious teachers infallible.”21 Similarly, Edward J. Carnell tells

20 See the Excursus on p. 242ff. infra.
us that “The marks of an apostle were to be with Jesus from the beginning, to be appointed by Jesus, and to perform signs and wonders.” According to Carnell, “Orthodoxy is that branch of Christendom which limits the ground of religious authority to the Bible.” On this basis Carnell’s own statement about the marks of apostleship is unorthodox. Peter claimed that a mark of an apostle was to have been with Jesus from the beginning. Subsequent events proved him and all who follow him in this claim to be wrong. These events are recorded in Scripture for our instruction. Furthermore, at one point even the apostle Paul himself in his first epistle to the Corinthians warns his readers that what he has to say on a particular question about which he had been asked for guidance is his own opinion and not to be considered the infallible word of God (1 Cor. 7: 6, 12, 25). It is of course true that orthodoxy limits the ultimate ground of religious authority to the Scriptures; but it limits it to the Scriptures as a whole, not to texts taken out of context or interpreted contrary to the genre of the literature in which they are found or contrary to reason, though of course what is to be considered reasonable must also be determined in subjection to the teaching of Scripture. In other words, Scripture must be allowed to interpret itself: “The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture, (which is not manifold, but one,) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” To read the Bible in any other way is to reduce it to a mere collection of unrelated proof texts at best, and therefore unorthodox and unfaithful to Scripture as a whole.

In neither of the incidents discussed above can the initial actions of the apostles be held up as examples to be followed, let alone drawn into rules for the Church to follow in all ages. In just the same way, the community of goods practised by the apostolic Church in Jerusalem is not an ideal to be followed. As with the criterion for

23 Ibid., p. 13.
24 Westminster Confession of Faith, I.x.
apostleship and Peter’s hypocrisy in Antioch, subsequent events and the wider teaching of Scripture must be taken into account when assessing the meaning and value of the Jerusalem Church’s experiment with communism. These events are recorded in Scripture to teach us something. Of that there can be no doubt. But it is not that the community of goods is an ideal to follow. Rather, it is that the community of goods is an example that we should not follow and that such practices end in the economic and social impoverishment of the communities that adopt them. What is held up in the Bible as the ideal of a just economic system is incompatible with the community of goods: i.e. private ownership of property, private stewardship of the economic resources of society and the inviolability of legitimate inheritance.

The communist model is nowhere repeated in the Bible, nor is it held up as an example to be followed. If it were a good example to be followed we should expect it to be referred to in other passages where the Bible gives teaching on wealth, work and helping others. But there are no such references. Paul does not refer to it in giving advice to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:8–12; 2 Thess. 3:8–12) or to the Ephesians (Eph. 4:28), where we should expect it if it were good advice and where helping the poor is commended—something that is only possible if we produce wealth in greater abundance than we consume it. On the contrary, in these Scriptures Paul gives alternative advice that is incompatible with the community of goods. Neither does he refer to it when writing to the Corinthians regarding the support of his own ministry while among them (2 Cor. 11:7–9). In this respect it is significant that the great model of welfare provision for the needy was pioneered by the Gentile Churches of the Roman empire and was one of the great testimonies to the Christian faith in the ancient world. This led the apostate emperor Julian (361–363 A.D.) to comment that “the impious Galilaeans support not only their own poor but ours as well.” But this was not the practice of the Jerusalem Church, which was a recipient of welfare not a provider.

What this experiment in the community of goods in the Jerusalem Church clearly demonstrates, therefore, is that if communism did not work in the New Testament Church under the guidance of the apostles of Christ, it has little chance of working anywhere. The end product of communism is universal poverty, and this was just as much the case with the New Testament Church as with any other society that has practised it. The only exceptions to this general rule historically are communities that have abolished the Christian ideal of family life and either denied procreation altogether or separated it from the normal family context of raising children—in other words marriage and procreation are practised but the family unit is replaced by the broader community.

However, the Bible does show us that the Church is to be a real society, i.e. a social order that functions effectively as a model for the nations. The goal of apostolic labour in the New Testament period is the Christian community, which stands in Christ as a work of God’s redemptive power manifested in history. This work of God’s power is not a commune, but it is a community, a social order that should grow and increase until it displaces and ultimately supplants the godless society of non-belief that surrounds it. This is our calling in the Great Commission to disciple the nations (Mt. 28:18–20). The Jerusalem Church was a failure in this respect.


26 I am using the word Church here to refer to the body of Christ, the community of believers, in other words the Church as an organism, not an institution, much less a denominational structure.


29 According to Christopher Dawson, for Augustine “the Church is actually the new humanity in process of formation, and its earthly history is that of the building of the City of God which has its completion in eternity . . . Hence, in spite of all the imperfections of the earthly Church, it is nevertheless the most
There is nothing about the economically debilitated condition of the Church in Jerusalem that commends itself as an example to the world. The example, rather, is the practice of the Gentile Church, which did not follow the ideal of communism and was able to provide financial assistance to those in need. Both the mission and the influence of the Gentile Church were therefore much greater than the mission and influence of the Jerusalem Church.

§4
Conclusion

We must not confuse the ideal of the commune with the ideal of the Church living as a real society, a social order that functions across the whole spectrum of human life. When the Church functions as a true society, a manifestation of the Kingdom of God as a social order, meeting the needs of human society in a Christian way of life, she provides light to the world. This of course involves helping and caring for each other and for those in need. But the Jerusalem Church fell at this very point, as do all communistic societies, with the exception of those that reject the family as the basic unit of society. Helping those in need is an important part of living as the Church. But in order to do this we need to provide an example to the world of how society should function. This necessitates the rejection of the social ideal of the commune and the adoption of the Christian community as our social ideal—i.e. a true society with its own social order founded on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to his law.

perfect society that this world can know. Indeed, it is the only true society. Because it is the only society which has its source in a spiritual will. The kingdoms of the earth seek after the goods of the earth; the Church, and the Church alone, seeks spiritual goods and a peace which is eternal" (Enquiries into Religion and Culture [London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1933], p. 256f.).
Although Paul was accepted into the company of the apostles in Jerusalem, and was therefore recognised as an apostle by the Church, he was never formally ordained as an apostle by the apostles in Jerusalem. Furthermore, Paul never recognises or acknowledges the necessity of such an ordination and always refers his own calling as an apostle to the will of God (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1). However, in his epistle to the Galatians, among whom his apostleship seems to have been in question and to whom he had to defend it, he goes much further than this and specifically denies any such ordination, insisting instead that his calling as an apostle was neither by man nor through man (Gal. 1:1) but through Jesus Christ (cf. vv. 15–17). Even in Acts 13:2 where Paul and Barnabas are chosen for the work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles it is the Holy Spirit, not the Church at Antioch, who calls and appoints them to this ministry.

It is very doubtful, therefore, whether Paul himself could in any sense be described as an office bearer in the New Testament Church, since apostleship is a ministry not an office, and the former is never inextricably tied to the latter in the apostolic and sub-apostolic age. It was the tying of ministry to office at a later period that produced clergymen, i.e. a special class of professional Christians who reduced the faith to a set of liturgical rituals that were under their exclusive control. These rituals then took the place of the life of faith in the Christian community, and the clergymen, as the community’s professional Christian,—a sort of virtuoso spiritual performer—effectively took on the role of performing the faith, in the form of these liturgical rituals, on behalf of the congregation, which became passive. The agape feast, for example, which in the apostolic age had been, as the Christian Passover meal, indistinguishable from the Lord’s Supper, was discontinued, eventually
banned in Church buildings and replaced by a liturgical ritual performed by clergymen.\textsuperscript{30} This corruption of the Christian faith, i.e. its reduction to what amounts to little more than a ritualistic mystery cult, has continued in various forms up to the present time\textsuperscript{31} and has had disastrous consequences for the mission of the Church as a social order (one of the definitions of the Church given by \textit{The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English} is the \textit{clergy} or \textit{clerical profession}).

Peter makes it clear that he is an elder \textit{as well as} an apostle, but not \textit{because} he is an apostle (1 Pet. 5:1); and the fact that a man may have a ministry as well as hold an office in the Church does not mean that either cannot exist without the other. All that is \textit{required} of an elder in terms of ministry is that he is \textit{apt} to teach, i.e. that he is \textit{able} to teach when it is necessary that he do so (1 Tim. 3:2\textsuperscript{32}). Elders in the Church are ordained, i.e. chosen and appointed, by \textit{men} (cf. Acts 14:23); ministers are \textit{given}, i.e. called and sent, by \textit{God} (Eph. 4:8, 11–13). Eldership is a human calling, which is why the qualifications for office are so clearly set out in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Tit. 1:6–9). Ministry is a divine calling. Ministry and eldership are distinct categories; appointment to the office of elder in the Church by men does not in itself confer any ability to fulfil the ministries mentioned in Eph. 4:8, 11–13, which are given to men by Christ. And it has been only too clear from the history of the Church up to and including our own time that many who manage to obtain office in the Church are not called by God and have not been equipped by God with the gifts and abilities necessary for exercising the ministries mentioned in Ephesians, and are therefore \textit{incapable} of exercising such ministries, which are necessary for the

\textsuperscript{30} See further my essay \textit{The Christian Passover: Agape Feast or Ritual Abuse?} (Taunton: The Kuyper Foundation, 2012).

\textsuperscript{31} Anyone who doubts this need only consider that in most mainline Christian denominations only duly ordained clergymen, elders anddeacons are licensed to administer the Lord’s Supper, a form of sacerdotalism that is as characteristic of the Protestant denominations generally as it is of the Episcopal denominations.

\textsuperscript{32} The same term is used 2 Tim. 2:24. See Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “διδακτικός” in Gerhard Kittel, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, p. 165.
building up and equipment of the Church for her mission. It is also clear that many who have held no office in the Church are called to and equipped by God with the gifts necessary for the exercise of these ministries. Yet the Church on the whole continues to tie ministry to office with disastrous consequences. The resulting concept of clergymen and their reductionist misrule of the Church as a community and as a social order has seriously misdirected the Church and severely weakened her mission in the world.

There is only one way to solve these problems: eradicate clergymen from the Church once and for all by disentangling office from ministry in the Church. It is the tying of ministry to office that has created clergymen, and the immense problems for the life and mission of the Church that this has caused will never be solved until the whole concept and theology of clergymen has been eradicated completely from the Christian faith. Of course, this will not solve all the problems facing the Church; nevertheless, it seems impossible to solve the Church’s problems, and in particular the present failure of the Church to pursue her God-given mission to the world, without getting rid of what has been throughout history and continues to be the greatest single obstacle to the effective fulfilment of the Great Commission: clergymen.
There are many things that the individual Christian and the Christian family can do in their lives to bear witness to the Christian 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 revealed in Scripture, 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, the household of God, must start living as a community of faith that impacts on the whole life of the nation, and not only by challenging the dominant secular culture, but also by offering, through its corporate life of faith, a realistic alternative to secular

1 See definition §1 in the Excursus on p. 43ff. supra.
humanism’s culture of death, namely, a comprehensive culture of life in Christ, a Christian society. 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 discipled to Christ until the Church, i.e. the 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, the body of Christ on earth, a living community of those who believe in the Lord Jesus 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 the life of the nation by creating a counter-revolutionary prophetic social order that models to the world what true society should be, thereby displacing and ultimately replacing the godless social order of secular humanism with a Christian social order.

§2

Christianity and Health Care

For example, some general 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 the patient’s 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 GPs (general medical practitioners) 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 GPs 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 history has seen the provision of medical care as one of her primary mission fields. But she does so no longer, except perhaps in terms of overseas missions to Third World nations. Yet in previous centuries the Church has not seen this important area of mission in such narrow terms. 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 area of work as an important part of the Church’s 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 (the same has happened with education, which the modern Church has largely abandoned as a mission field). At the very least, given the radically secular and neo-pagan nature of modern British society, the whole area of medical and health services should again been seen as an important mission field for the Church. Part of the Church’s calling is to show people that they must look to God for their healing and welfare, because in truth he is the author of both. 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 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 the world to salvation, not follow the latest fads of the world. (The word “salvation” comes from the Latin verb salveo, meaning

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to be well, in good health, and while not limited to this meaning the biblical concept of salvation certainly includes this idea.)

Of course, it would be very difficult in the present circumstances to establish such medical practices within the National Health Service (NHS). 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 such a project would probably necessitate a more regional initiative and backing from the Churches to be effective from a legal and political point of view because the modern British political establishment is not sympathetic to such initiatives. Pressure would need to be applied at the national and local levels to the political 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 part of the National Health Service this would involve a great deal of financial sacrifice as well.

But why, it may be asked, should the Church pay out money (i.e. why should Christians use their tithes) 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 because the Church has an important secondary role in the provision of welfare and education. And the results of such missions were effective and far reaching because the Church’s secondary role in the provision of welfare and education takes on a much greater importance in the context of her mission. The modern 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 and conquered for Christ. We need to provide an 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 because we are called to preach the gospel and heal the sick (Mt. 10:7–8; Lk. 9:2; 10:19; Mk 3:14–15).³

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-organized. The Church—i.e. the whole community of 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 the modern world. 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.

§3 ORTHODOXY AND APOTASY

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 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 National Health Service when

it came into existence, but were established prior to the creation of
the State-run NHS 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 a Christian
civilisation. 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 systemati-
cally 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.

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 (nei-
ther limited to nor excluding the institutional Church) acts with
vision, conviction and determination, and is prepared to make the
sacrifices that such a mission necessitates by living as a true social
order. God will bless all such efforts in ways beyond our imagina-
tion. 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 a mystical
or purely “spiritual” victory. It is a practical triumph over evil in
this present age as well as in the next. 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, as a true social order, and by so doing will transform society.
Challenging Goliath

The Church of previous ages did this with remarkable success. On the social role of the Church in the late classical period, for example, Christopher Dawson writes that “Every church had its matriculum, or list of persons in receipt of regular relief, and enormous sums were spent in every kind of charitable work. All over the Empire, hospitals, orphanages and hostels for travellers were being built and endowed; so that the basilica was often the centre of a whole quarter which lived by and for the Church. Thus the Church stands out in this dark age as the one hope of humanity both spiritually and materially. It saved the individual from being entirely crushed under the pressure of the servile state, and it opened to him a new world of social and spiritual activity in which the free personality had room to develop itself.”

Today the situation has been reversed. The world has overcome the Church and her 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. For example, according to Richard Holloway, who was the Anglican bishop of Edinburgh from 1986 to 2000: “God is dead. Even the confident religions know this . . . So what are we to do, those of us who know that God is dead? The first thing is to celebrate the fact that we have been delivered from idols, and are now on our own . . . In spite of our ancient and dangerous longing for them, we should accept that there are no absolutes. The only thing we can be certain of is that there is no certainty. Committed to being uncommitted, we should relish the irony of our position.” This is by no means an unusual attitude among theologians and clergymen today.

6 See for example “UK vicars who don’t believe in God,” *BBC Online Network*
§4
Conclusion

It is time the Church cast out these hirelings and did her previous works. The Lord Jesus 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, the Christian community, working together as an alternative society, a social order, 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 it. Is not this just what has happened in Britain? Oh yes, people are converted. God will always save his elect. But the nation will decline further, 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 Christian social order 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

(news.bbc.co.uk: Tuesday, 13 July, 1999). See also Sea of Faith in the Churches (cofn-sofic.blogspot.co.uk).
ecclesiastical principalities. 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 historical 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 sentimental 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 to look forward to but another forty years in the wilderness. There is an alternative to this miserable 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).
The gospel, we are told in Scripture, is a mystery to non-believers (1 Cor. 2:6–16). This does not mean that non-believers cannot understand intellectually the propositions in terms of which the gospel is predicated. Nor is it that non-believers do not have access to the gospel, that they have not heard it. In most Western societies the majority of people will have heard the gospel preached or explained in some form. The gospel is not a mystery in the Gnostic sense, i.e. a doctrine revealed only to the initiated few and kept secret from those who are not initiated into the sect. The gospel is not a mystery in the sense that nobody or very few people know what it teaches. Christians do not come along to non-believers and say “I cannot reveal the mysteries of the gospel to you until you have agreed to join our sect and have gone through the initiation ceremonies,” which was the process by which the Gnostic sects and mystery cults in the ancient world propagated their teachings and gained new converts. Rather, the gospel is a revealed mystery that is to be preached to all men everywhere. The non-believers who criticise Christianity are not seeking to expose some esoteric doctrine that has been kept secret by the Church. The doctrines of the Christian faith are preached throughout the whole world and with the exception of people living in a few closed Muslim countries and communist States those who want to know or examine what the Bible and the Church teach about the faith have no difficulty in getting access to it. It is public knowledge that the
Christian faith teaches that God created the world, that mankind fell into sin, and that the second person of the Trinity became incarnate in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who lived, died and rose again for the redemption of the world. The gospel is not a mystery in the sense that non-believers cannot understand the gospel propositionally, i.e. understand formally or intellectually what it teaches. They can. The gospel is a mystery to them in the sense that they do not accept it as the truth and believe it because it is foolishness to them.

This is what Paul says in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:18); and again in chapter two: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). The non-believer does not understand the gospel in the sense that his mind has not been opened by the Holy Spirit and therefore although he can understand intellectually the meaning of the propositions in terms of which the gospel is explained, he does not accept it, does not submit to it as God’s word and acknowledge it as the truth. The non-believer’s whole life is built on the denial of what the gospel teaches and therefore it is foolishness to him, a contradiction of what he believes gives meaning to his life. Anything that contradicts what a person believes gives meaning to life, to his understanding of reality, will appear as foolishness to him, because it contradicts his whole world-view, which is the basis of his understanding of all things.

Before the non-believer will accept the truth of the gospel and acknowledge Christ as his Saviour the whole basis of his life, of his understanding of the meaning and purpose of life, must be turned upside down. Therefore the gospel is a mystery to him in the sense that it does not make sense in terms of his own understanding of life, his own world-view. It is foolishness to him. His mind is veiled by sin; he cannot see the gospel as the wisdom of God because sin blinds him to its truth. Therefore it is a mystery to him until his mind is enlightened, renewed by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:2).

But to those who believe, the gospel is wisdom, the wisdom of
God (1 Cor. 2:7). It is the only rational and meaningful explanation of the whole of reality, the only rational and meaningful explanation of the human condition, and the only hope for mankind.

Here, therefore, we have an antithesis, a complete contrast or polarisation between two different world-views, two different approaches to the whole of life. On the one hand there is the non-believer, who can understand the gospel propositionally, but who rejects it as foolishness and refuses to submit to its teachings because for him it does not make any sense of or give meaning to his life. On the other hand we have the Christian, who says that the gospel is the only thing that makes sense of reality, the only thing that gives meaning and purpose to life. Only by believing that the gospel is true can the Christian make sense of the world and of his own life. The non-believer makes sense of the world and of his own life by denying the gospel and seeking the meaning of life in something else—which, of course, is what idolatry is.

The nature of the antithesis that exists in principle between the believer and the non-believer, therefore, is absolute. The principles of understanding and wisdom espoused by the world are the polar opposites of the principles of understanding and wisdom upon which the Christian faith is based. It is not just that the believer and the non-believer disagree about a few things such as whether Jesus was an historical character, whether he is actually the Son of God or whether the resurrection was an historical event. The antithesis between belief and unbelief is much deeper than this; it is an antithesis that exists at a much more profound level. If the believer and the non-believer were to be absolutely consistent with their beliefs there would be nothing upon which they could agree. Abraham Kuyper made this point clearly in his lecture on “Calvinism and Science” in his Lectures on Calvinism: “Not faith and science therefore, but two scientific systems or if you choose, two scientific elaborations, are opposed to each other, each having its own faith. Nor may it be said that it is here science which opposes theology, for we have to do with two absolute forms of science, both of which claim the whole domain of human knowledge, and both of which have a suggestion about the supreme Being of their own as the point
of departure for their world-view . . . These two . . . systems . . . are not relative opponents, walking together half way, and, further on, peaceably suffering one another to choose different paths, but they are both in earnest, disputing with one another the whole domain of life, and they cannot desist from the constant endeavor to pull down to the ground the entire edifice of their respective controverted assertions, all the supports included, upon which their assertions rest. If they did not try this, they would thereby show on both sides that they did not honestly believe in their point of departure, that they were no serious combatants, and that they did not understand the primordial demand of science, which of course claims unity of conception.”

There is an antithesis, a complete divide, a total contrast or opposition, between Christianity and non-belief in principle at all levels and in all things, starting with the very foundations of our understanding of all things.

§2

ORDER, REASON AND PURPOSE IN A MEANINGLESS UNIVERSE

For example, if it is asserted that there is no God and that the universe is merely the product of evolution, we could not, if we were to be totally consistent with this idea, say anything intelligible about anything in the universe. Nothing in such a universe would make sense because there is nothing there to give it any sense. Everything would be the product of a blind evolutionary process that is without purpose and meaning. In other words everything would be a mere chance occurrence and there are no meaningful connections between events or things that are the product of chance. Meaning and purpose do not play any role in such a universe. Random evolutionary occurrences have no real meaning. The ideas of purpose and meaning are foreign to the evolutionary cosmos. If the evolutionary atheist were to be completely consistent with

his beliefs about the origin and nature of the universe he would have to admit that life has no ultimate or inherent meaning and purpose. Reality is unordered and random. The only order and meaning there is in such a universe, therefore, is what man himself imposes upon reality by his own mental efforts, i.e. his own ideas, and in such a universe there is no necessity that, or reason why, the personal ideas of individual men should have any meaningful relation to each other or to the world outside their own minds. Accordingly, Arthur Schopenhauer declared that “The world is my idea.”

The problem is that people are not totally consistent with their principles. The atheist cannot think and live in a way that is ultimately consistent with the principles of atheism and evolution. To do so would be to deny all meaning and purpose to his own life, and man always seeks for meaning and purpose in life. Just because a man denies that life finds its meaning and purpose in terms of the creative act of the God of Scripture does not mean that he no longer seeks to understand the meaning of life and no longer seeks purpose to his existence. He still seeks these things but he seeks them in some aspect of the created order itself; that is to say, he puts something else in the place of God as an ultimate explanation of life. The Bible calls this idolatry. Belief in evolution, therefore, is a form of idolatry. But in order to commit this idolatry the evolutionist has to posit the ideas of intelligibility, meaning and purpose. Such ideas are inconsistent with the idea of evolution, but man cannot live without seeking for purpose and meaning, without trying to make sense of his life and the world around him. The atheistic evolutionist therefore is inconsistent

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3 This is true not only of atheists but also of Christians. For example, if Christians were to be totally consistent with their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and with the Bible as the inspired word of God they would not send their children to secular schools to be educated in terms of a secular humanist world-view. Yet Christians do this, with the result that their children grow up with a secular humanist view of the faith that reduces the practice of Christianity to little more than a syncretistic mystery cult. See further pp. 276–289 *infra*. 
with his own beliefs about evolution. Evolutionists who use words and concepts like “meaning,” “purpose” and “reason” are being inconsistent with their evolutionary principles. And it is interesting to note just how often evolutionists do use words like “purpose,” “meaning” and “reason”; indeed the words “belief” and “believe” are also very common in the vocabulary of evolutionary science. The use of such words and concepts, however, reveals not only the schizophrenic nature of the evolutionary position; it reveals also the religious nature of the evolutionary world-view. But the evolutionist never thinks and acts consistently in terms of his belief in the process of evolution. Why?

The evolutionist is made in God’s image just as the Christian is. He is made to function in the world that God made, a world that is rational and meaningful, a world that makes sense to man because he has been put here with the purpose of understanding and developing it. Man has a purpose, and that purpose is explained in the Bible in what Christians call the Cultural Mandate (Gen. 1:28). Man’s denial of God does not render that purpose null and void; rather, it corrupts the way in which man goes about fulfilling it. But in order to fulfil it man must assume a world of rationality, meaning, order and purpose in some form, no matter how corrupt these ideas become due to man’s sin and rejection of God. Therefore men find it impossible to be totally consistent with their denial of God. This is why we say that there is in principle a complete and absolute antithesis between belief and non-belief. The operative words are “in principle.” Men find it well-nigh impossible to be totally consistent with their atheism. They deny the God who made the world but they want to keep hold of the world he made. They want a world of logic, order, rationality, meaning and purpose, but not the God whose creative act gave the world all these things and in terms of which alone such concepts have validity.

But if there is no God and everything exists as a result of blind evolutionary processes—chance—then nothing has any meaning and we cannot say anything intelligible about anything in the universe. As we have already seen, atheists cannot live consistently
in terms of such a philosophy, so they smuggle the world God made back into their world-view dressed up as something else. They presuppose the concepts of order, meaning and rationality but insist that these things come from some aspect of the cosmos itself, not from the creative will of God, who is not part of the cosmos. In other words they make some aspect of the created order, some idea, person or thing, the ultimate principle of explanation for life. This principle of explanation takes the place of God in their system of belief and they attribute to it all that belongs by right to God, i.e. the attributes of God. This is what idolatry is, whether it exists in a highly cultic form as with ancient idolatry, or in a secularised form as with modern intellectual idols such as evolution and socialism.

The non-believer therefore lives intellectually and spiritually on borrowed capital that he puts to bad use. This is the wisdom of the world. It is idolatry and it comes in the end to nothing, as the apostle Paul says (1 Cor. 1:2). Even the good things of this world, including the very ideas of rationality, meaning, order and purpose, are perverted by the non-believer and put to the service of idols. Why? Because in principle, at the very foundation of the non-believer’s world-view, his understanding is corrupted by sin, by the rejection of God’s word as the definitive and authoritative interpretation of reality. In principle there is an absolute dichotomy, an absolute antithesis, between the whole world of faith in Christ and the whole world of non-belief. But as we have seen, men do not think and live in a way that is entirely consistent with their stated beliefs and principles; yet even those things that they accept as valid and meaningful are put to use in the service of idols. So the evolutionist uses his reason, a God-given ability, to deny God. He uses the concepts of order and purpose to deny that the universe has order or purpose because a universe of order and purpose points to God and by denying that the universe has order and purpose he denies the God who created it. He perverts even the good things that he inconsistently borrows from the world God created to deny that God created it and to deny God’s rights.

\[4\] See further pp. 155–170 supra.
You will find therefore, as you argue with the non-believer about his views and about the Christian faith, that it is difficult to get him to be consistent with his atheistic and evolutionary principles. The non-believer will advance one argument against the Christian faith and then when challenged about the validity of this argument he will jump off onto some other argument that is based on preconceptions and presuppositions that are fundamentally inconsistent with and that therefore ultimately contradict the first argument. This is because the whole understanding of the non-believer is radically split between what he says are the principles in which he believes and the fact that he cannot consistently think, argue and ultimately live in terms of these principles. The non-believer wants a world of order, rationality, purpose and meaning, but he does not want the God whose creative will is necessary for the existence of such a world. He uses the good things of God’s Creation to deny that God created it. Cornelius Van Til said that this is like a child who has to sit on his father’s lap in order to slap him in the face.5

§3

The Religious Foundations of Art and Music

Interestingly, this principle of non-belief does sometimes work itself out more consistently in art. Hans Rookmaaker said as much when he pointed out that “the spirit of anti-Christianity, of de-humanization, of despair is strongest in the avant-garde tradition of the arts.”6 In the world of art we often see more clearly where atheism leads, the kind of ultimate conclusions that are involved in the denial of God. The denial of God ultimately implies the denial of all meaning. And whereas in their everyday lives men


find it difficult to live in terms of this principle, in art sometimes this principle is worked out more consistently, though usually unselfconsciously. If one looks at much of modern art there is a bewildering meaninglessness to it. This can be seen in the visual arts where paintings seem to have no logic. One part of the painting might have absolutely no relation to another part; indeed the whole painting might seem utterly meaningless, a conglomeration of colours and shapes that appear to have no purpose. The world represented by such art is radically shattered, broken, disjointed, dysfunctional, meaningless. The various parts of the picture may seem to have no meaningful relationship to each other in the way that items on a rubbish tip have no meaningful relationship to each other. And indeed the casual lay observer may well describe such pictures as rubbish, a description that is often not unreasonable given this lack of meaningful integration in the overall scheme of the work because it is precisely the lack of meaningful relationships between individual things that defines a rubbish tip. It is often said that such art is not meant to be representational and therefore that such criticism is not valid, but I doubt this is a valid argument. Such art is not representational in the sense that we normally use the term “representational” in reference to the visual arts. But in another sense such art is representational, only what it represents is the utter meaninglessness and randomness of a world without God, a world without order, reason, meaning or purpose.

The same is true of much modern atonal music. The sounds produced by the musical instruments do not have any meaningful relationship to each other. They represent a random, unordered and meaningless universe, a universe without God, who alone gives order and meaning to the universe by his creative will.

The serialism of Arnold Schoenberg, although similarly atonal in effect, does not exactly fit this description in terms of theoretical intention. Nevertheless, Schoenberg stated that “Once we are cured of the delusion that the artist’s aim is to create beauty, and once we have recognised that only the necessity to produce compels him to bring forth what will perhaps afterwards be designated as beauty, then we will also understand that comprehensibility and clarity are
not the conditions that the artist is obliged to impose on his work, but conditions that the observer wishes to find fulfilled . . . [Order, clarity] are there by chance, not by law, not by necessity; and what we claim to perceive as laws [defining order and clarity] may perhaps only be laws governing our perception, without therefore being the laws a work of art must obey.\footnote{Arnold Schoenberg, \textit{Theory of Harmony} (London: Faber and Faber, [1911] 1978, trans. Roy E. Carter), p. 30. The words in square brackets are in the original text. In a lecture delivered at the University of California in Los Angeles in 1941 Schoenberg went on to contradict this assertion from his earlier \textit{Theory of Harmony} by stating that “artistic value demands comprehensibility, not only for intellectual, but also for emotional satisfaction . . . Composition with twelve tones has no other aim than comprehensibility” (“Composition with Twelve Tones” in Arnold Schoenberg, \textit{Style and Idea} [London: Williams and Norgate Ltd, 1951], p. 103). In this we see again the inability of men to be consistent with their own principles when those principles depart from the meaning inherent in the divine order of Creation, particularly when it comes to thinking and reasoning, i.e. rational discourse. Schoenberg himself was not able even to maintain \textit{artistic} consistency with this artistic philosophy since he continued to write tonal music alongside his serial works.\textsuperscript{8} Schoenberg, \textit{Theory of Harmony}, p. 432.\textsuperscript{9} See “Composition with Twelve Tones” in Schoenberg, \textit{Style and Idea}, pp. 102–143.\textsuperscript{10} See the quotation at note 13 on p. 264 \textit{infra}.\textsuperscript{11} See the discussion at note 2 on p. 258 \textit{supra}.} Although he rejected the term \textit{atonal} as a description of his own serial music\footnote{8 Schoenberg, \textit{Theory of Harmony}, p. 432.} Schoenberg abandoned the tonalism of the Western musical tradition and invented a completely new set of rules to govern the composition of a completely new type of music.\footnote{9 See “Composition with Twelve Tones” in Schoenberg, \textit{Style and Idea}, pp. 102–143.} His intention seems to have been to do away with the musical world that he had inherited and to re-create the musical world in his own image by means of this new music.\footnote{10 See the quotation at note 13 on p. 264 \textit{infra}.} In his serial music Schoenberg effectively proclaimed himself the God and creator of his own musical world. Serialism is (after Schopenhauer) the new musical world that is Schoenberg’s idea.\footnote{11 See the discussion at note 2 on p. 258 \textit{supra}.} As with all other forms of idolatry, the result is not merely spiritual and moral corruption, but also cultural ugliness. Although this adoption of meaninglessness—or, as with Schoenberg, the rejection of order and comprehensibility, which to all intents and purposes amounts to the same thing—as a means of artistic expression may often be, perhaps usually is, unselfconscious,
it is nevertheless a significant component of many modern artists’ world-view. But sometimes it is self-conscious and deliberate, and expressed openly as an ideological principle, as is clear from the words of Schoenberg cited above. Likewise, the atonal composer Pierre Boulez stated in a talk in the 1960s that “A composer should never move by step melodically for more than two notes because if you do the ear will connect them and make meaning out of them.”\textsuperscript{12} Compare this with Schoenberg’s statement that “To double is to emphasize, and an emphasized tone could be interpreted as a root, or even a tonic; the consequences of such an interpretation must be avoided. Even a slight reminiscence of the former tonal harmony would be disturbing, because it would create false expectations of consequences and continuations.”\textsuperscript{13} By contrast Leonard Bernstein addressed this issue more perceptively when he said that “One cannot ‘abstract’ musical tones; on the contrary they have to be given their reality through form: up-and-down, long-and-short, loud-and-soft. And so to the inescapable conclusion. All forms that we have ever known . . . have always been conceived in tonality, that is, in the sense of a tonal magnetic center, with subsidiary tonal relationships. This sense, I believe, is built into the human organism; we cannot hear two isolated tones, even devoid of any context, without immediately imputing a tonal meaning to them. We may differ from one another in the tonal meaning we infer, but we infer it nonetheless. We are stuck with this, and always will be. And the moment a composer tries to ‘abstract’ musical tones by denying them their tonal implications, he has left the world of communication. In fact, it is all but impossible to do (although Heaven knows how hard composers have been trying for fifty years)—as witness the increasingly desperate means being resorted to—chance-music, electronic sounds, noteless ‘instructions,’ the manipulation of noise, whatnot.”\textsuperscript{14} But there is something more to this pursuit of atonality than an ideological

commitment to meaninglessness as an artistic principle, something of greater significance for our understanding of man’s spiritual condition.

In his television series *Leaving Home: Orchestral Music in the Twentieth Century* the conductor Simon Rattle spoke about the development of this modern music in the twentieth century. He said that Richard Strauss, one of the most progressive composers of his time when he was young, walked up to and looked over the precipice of this new development in music when he wrote his opera *Elektra* (1909), an opera that seemed to foreshadow these developments in atonality, but shrunk back from the precipice and returned to traditional tonal music in his opera *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911). “Strauss, in his brilliant, instinctive way,” said Rattle, “had blazed a path for a whole new school of music. Almost without thinking, he’d shown how far music could go if it went away from its home of tonality. *Electra* must have seemed very radical at the time. And maybe it was obvious to Strauss what a frightening and lonely place this outer space of free tonality was. He was never again to return to it, and it was left to Arnold Schoenberg, the reluctant revolutionary, to go even further, to be even more radical, but also to give some sense of order and foundation to this strange new world.”

The book based on the television series makes the same claim: “Strauss was one of the first to make use of bitonality, but he was too committed to Romanticism to make any further contribution to the development of the ideas unfolding during the radical years before the First World War. The next opera he and Hofmannsthal produced, *Der Rosenkavalier*, turned away from the problems raised in *Electra* and found refuge again in the past.” But this is to miss the point of *Elektra* altogether. Strauss’s musical language was always tonal. One of his greatest talents as a composer was his ability to depict the world around him musically. He was able to conjure up a musical impression of just about anything, from a teaspoon to

a thunderstorm. What he depicted in *Elektra* was a woman who is deranged, *insane*. The atonal music in *Elektra*, therefore, is the music of insanity.\(^{17}\) This was entirely consistent with Strauss’s musical genius. What Rattle missed—and it seems to me that this can only be explained by the dominating atheistic world-view of the age—is that the modern music of atonality is the music of insanity, just as the paintings and sculptures of modern art so often exhibit the same spirit of insanity, the insanity of a world where nothing has any meaningful relationship to anything else and everything happens randomly. This point was understood intuitively by artists and composers of previous generations. Charles Villiers Stanford said that “The palette of a painter is a beautiful study of colour, both simple and complex; but he would not exhibit it as a picture unless he was qualifying for Bedlam.”\(^ {18}\) Later on in the programme Rattle seems to glimpse this vaguely when he says “The logic of complete freedom leads to the madhouse.” But he then argues that Schoenberg’s serialism saved music from this fate. He goes on to describe serialism as a kind of musical democracy of tones.\(^ {19}\) In his book, based on the television series, Michael Hall also seems almost to recognise this point when he describes Elektra as “afflicted with the classic symptoms of hysteria” and goes on to say that *Elektra* “is undoubtedly Strauss’s most radical and dissonant work, and, as in Schoenberg’s quartet, there are passages that are virtually atonal. The most extreme occur in the scene between Elektra and Clytemnestra, notably when Clytemnestra tells her daughter about the monsters that haunt her dreams. The episode concludes with a tonal cadence . . . but before this the discords are as harsh and the harmony as rootless as the images Clytemnestra conjures up.”\(^ {20}\)

\(^{17}\) For the same reason atonal music works well as a sound track in horror movies, in movie scenes depicting characters with psychological derangements and in scenes with an inhuman context or a context that is inhospitable to human beings, e.g. science fiction movies depicting an alien environment.


\(^{19}\) Cf. the quotation from Leonard Bernstein at note 14 on p. 264 supra.

This is the godless and insane world of meaninglessness on which the theory of evolution is based. It is no accident that the modern age of godless secularism has been supremely the age of “mental illness” compared with other periods of Western history.21 Such art and music demonstrate more consistently the principle of the antithesis—the gulf that exists between the godless and meaningless world-view of atheism and the ordered, rational and meaningful world-view of the Christian faith—than do philosophy and science because in these latter disciplines men find it so much more difficult to abandon the concepts of reason, meaning, order and purpose. Of course it is certainly not the case that all non-believers listen to the music of Pierre Boulez, Harrison Birtwistle et al. while Christians listen to Bach and Richard Strauss. The non-believer finds it virtually impossible to live consistently in terms of his principle of non-belief.

The wisdom of the world is the polar opposite of the wisdom of God. Therefore the two belief systems produce completely different world-views, different cultures, different art, different political philosophies, different educational goals, different social aspirations, different societies, different social orders. We should not let the fact that in the West we are currently living in a period of transition from one culture to another deceive us. In a period of transition it is easy to think that these two world-views are not totally incompatible because the long established practice of the Christian faith leaves an intellectual and cultural legacy that takes time to disappear and the non-believer makes use of the residue of Christian intellectual and cultural capital while it is available. But this capital will not be available indefinitely and the Christian heritage will disappear eventually unless there is a resurgence of Christian faith in society and unless the Church under the influence of such a resurgent faith engages culturally and politically with the nation, i.e. unless there is a commitment to converting the nation to the Christian faith, not merely soul winning, which is

sadly what characterised the Church’s understanding of the Great Commission during the second half of the twentieth century. The philosophy of the non-believing world is a never-ending quest for truth because it has denied at the outset the foundation upon which the truth rests (Pr. 1:7; 9:10). The wisdom of this world dooms its practitioners and followers to an endless frustration with false “truth”—i.e. idolatry. In the end the “wisdom” of the world produces death. False gods always fail their devotees.

§

HEART AND MIND in
the Biblical Perspective

For the Christian, however, things are very different. The Christian does not know everything, nor is his understanding perfect in every respect. He makes mistakes in his thinking and understanding; often he is, like the non-believer, inconsistent with his first principles. He lacks knowledge, especially knowledge of details—no man is omniscient. Nevertheless, in principle, the Christian has a foundation for his understanding that makes complete sense of the whole of reality. For the Christian the world makes ultimate sense and is imbued with meaning. He has already found the truth, and has acknowledged it and submitted his mind to it, so that his whole philosophy of life is in principle based on the truth.

The words mind and submitted are important here. The Christian is one whose mind is submitted to God and therefore to the truth in principle. He is one whose mind has been renewed by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22–23, cf. Mt. 22:37; Phil. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 8:10; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2 Pet. 3:1). He has the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). In other words his mind is conformed to the truth.

It is important that we recognise the importance of the mind in the Christian life. Scripture does not tell us that the Christian is one whose emotions or feelings have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, but rather one whose mind has been renewed by the Holy Spirit. He is described as having the mind of Christ. According to Scripture
the Holy Spirit works through the renewing of the mind. Of course this does not mean that the emotions are excluded from the life of faith. According to the biblical view of man the heart and the mind form a unity. Heart and mind should not be abstracted from each other. The heart, biblically speaking, includes the intellectual function as well as the emotional. According to R. C. Dentan, “the Bible is the product of the Hebraic mind, which had no real interest in psychological analysis and no conception of the division of the human personality into separate organs or faculties, each governing some particular phase of man’s psychic activity. Feeling, thinking, planning, and willing were all conceived to be functions of the entire personality, so that the conception of ‘the mind’ as the special seat or organ of reflective thinking as distinguished, e.g., from the heart as the seat of the emotions would have been, for the Hebrews, almost unintelligible.”

In the Old Testament thought, reasoning, understanding, will, judgement, design, affection, love, hatred, courage, fear, joy and sorrow are all ascribed to the heart. “Scripture,” says Franz Delitzsch “without excluding head and brain . . . from the psycho-spiritual activities and affections, attributes the central agency of these to the heart.” Indeed, if anything the Hebrew terms for heart have a stronger connotation with intellectual and volitional activity than with emotional states, which have a stronger connotation with the term soul (nephesh). According to H. Wheeler Robinson, the Hebrew words for heart, leb and lebab, occur 851 times in the Old Testament. Of these 257 refer to the personality or inner life generally; 204 refer to intellectual activity such as attention, reflection, memory, understanding and technical skills; 195 refer to volition or purpose, which is one of the most characteristic

usages; only 166 of the 851 refer to emotional states of consciousness, including intoxication, joy, sorrow, courage and fear; and in 29 cases there is a physical or figurative (e.g. “midst”) reference.\(^{26}\) It seems clear from this that the Old Testament uses the word heart in a way that is quite different from the modern English usage. It does not refer to the feelings or emotions as opposed to the intellect or head, but rather to the whole of man’s thought life, including his intellect or understanding and volition, though with a greater emphasis on these latter. The Greek word for heart, \(καρδία\), was used in the Septuagint mainly to translate the Hebrew words \(leb\) and \(lehab\);\(^{27}\) and in the New Testament with broadly the same meaning.\(^{28}\) In the New Testament, however, the Greek words \(νοῦς\) (mind, understanding, reason) and \(διάνοια\) (mind, understanding) take over some of the specific connotations of intellect and understanding denoted by the Hebrew terms \(leb\) and \(lehab\) (cf. Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:16).\(^{29}\) Accordingly, the Old Testament injunction to “love the Lord thy God with all thine heart [\(lehab\)], and with all thy soul [\(nephesh\)], and with all thy might” (Dt. 6:5) becomes in the New Testament “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart [\(καρδία\)], and with all thy soul [\(ψυχή\), literally breath], and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind [\(διάνοια\)]”\(^{30}\) (Lk. 10:27 cf. Mt. 22:37; Mk 12:30, 33). Biblical religion, therefore, is not a religion of the heart in the modern sense of the term; it is a religion of the whole man. Nothing of what it means to be human is excluded from the life of faith.

In the biblical perspective man is a unity. “The Hebrew idea of personality is that of an animated body, not (like the Greeks) that of an incarnated soul.”\(^{31}\) There is, therefore, a good deal of


\(^{27}\) But see further note 32 on p. 271 infra.


\(^{29}\) See further Wheeler Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 23n., 105ff.

\(^{30}\) The Septuagint, however, translates the Hebrew word \(lehab\) in Dt. 6:5 as \(διάνοια, mind\). See further note 32 infra.

\(^{31}\) Wheeler Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
overlap in the meaning of the Hebrew terms for heart and soul. Nonetheless, “the unity of personality, as conceived by the Hebrew, found its emotional expression chiefly under the name of the nephesh [the soul, literally breath—SCP] whilst intellectual and volitional activity centred in the heart as its organ.”32 It is the mind that is renewed by the Holy Spirit. Our service of worship therefore should be rational, as Paul makes clear when he writes: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1–2). The word translated here as “reasonable” (λογικός) is the word from which we derive our English words logic and logical. John Murray makes the following interesting comments on this verse: “The service here in view is worshipful service and the apostle characterizes it as ‘rational’ because it is worship that derives its character as acceptable to God from the fact that it enlists our mind, our reason, our intellect. It is rational in contrast with what is mechanical and automatic. A great many of our bodily functions do not enlist volition on our part. But the worshipful service here enjoined must constrain intelligent volition. The lesson to be derived from the term ‘rational’ is that we are not ‘Spiritual’ in the biblical sense except as the use of our bodies is characterized by conscious, intelligent, consecrated devotion to the service of God.”33 Our lives are to be a rational sacrifice of service to God.


Faith as the Foundation of Knowledge

However, it is important that we do not misunderstand what is being said here. The Christian understands the wisdom of God not because he has made a rational enquiry into the evidence and has come to a balanced judgement about the veracity of the gospel. He does not believe because he has subjected the claims of the gospel to be the truth to his own autonomous judgement. Often that is how the gospel is presented. If only men would consider the evidence impartially and rationally they would have to accept the gospel as true. But this is not how the gospel is presented in Scripture. Rather, understanding is the fruit of faith, not the ground of faith. St Augustine stated the matter in this way: “If thou hast not understood, said I, believe. For understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand.”

We believe in order that we might understand. Men will never understand the gospel, the truth, until they submit their minds to God. It is belief that drives understanding, not understanding that drives belief.

This is the case for the non-believer as well. The atheist starts from a position of belief, a faith commitment, namely the belief that there is no God and that the universe exists and can be understood and explained completely in terms of itself without reference to God or his creative will. This is a universal negative religious presupposition that underpins and drives the atheist’s world-view, i.e. his understanding of all things. This belief directs his reasoning about the origin, nature, meaning, value and purpose of life. In his understanding the atheist starts with disbelief, or rather with a belief that God does not exist, and his reasoning endorses his disbelief. As a result he uses his intellectual powers, his reason, to deny the

veracity of the gospel. His belief that there is no God and that the universe explains itself drives and guides his understanding. The only way for this cycle of disbelief to be broken is by means of the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the non-believer.

The Bible teaches this truth, i.e. that faith drives understanding, in the most categorical terms: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3, cf. Ps. 111:10; Pr. 1:7; 9:10). We do not understand that the universe was created by God because the evidence points to this, i.e. because the facts speak for themselves. We understand that God created all things from nothing because we believe and it is in terms of the world-view generated by this faith that we then go on to interpret the evidence. The same is true for the atheist. The atheist does not deny the existence of God because the evidence points to this conclusion. He starts with a faith position, a belief that there is no God and that the universe can be explained merely in terms of itself, and it is in terms of the world-view generated by this faith commitment that he then goes on to interpret the evidence. Faith always drives understanding; understanding does not drive faith. Therefore Paul says “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:13–14).

The antithesis is absolute and complete. We believe that we might understand, and it is faith that enables us to judge all things rightly (1 Cor. 2:15), i.e. understand the truth. The believer, by faith, is liberated in principle from the false judgements of the world; he is no longer a slave to the faulty judgements of the “wisdom” of this world—i.e. the idolatry of the world. Therefore he must not subject himself to the idolatrous “wisdom” of the world. He is not
to be under the controlling influence of the world’s philosophy. This is why it is so tragic to see believers prostrating themselves before and prostituting themselves with the idols of the world, e.g. submitting to the false reasoning of doctrines such as evolution and socialism. These are the idols of a false religion. And what do Christians who put themselves into the service of these idols gain? A little of the world’s intellectual respectability perhaps. It is even more tragic to see Christians sending their children to be educated in the schools of such an idolatrous religion. Christians who believe and do such things are denying their Lord, even though they may not be fully aware of what they are doing.

§6
Conclusion

We must maintain the antithesis. It is the principle as foundation that is so important. If you wait until you understand before you believe, you will never believe, and you will never understand the gospel. If you believe, submit your mind to God’s word, you will understand because belief drives understanding. Belief, therefore, determines culture, the whole way we understand and live our lives as individuals and as a society.

The Christian is not to be under the controlling influence of the world’s philosophy of life. Again I stress the antithesis. The principle upon which the believer is to base his thought, work and life is the antithesis of that upon which the non-believer bases his thought, work and life. These two antithetical world-views must produce, therefore, radically different cultures, and if the Church does not produce a culture that is different from that of the world, but instead one that merely follows the cultural developments of the world, something is seriously wrong. The Christian culture cannot compromise itself with the non-Christian culture but must be forever at war with it, seeking, as Abraham Kuyper said, to pull

35 I am referring here to the Church as organism, i.e. as a community, a people, not merely to the Church as an institution.
down to the ground its whole edifice, including all its supports. If Christians do not seek to do this they only show by their compro-
mise that they do not honestly believe in their point of departure and that they are not serious combatants in the spiritual warfare to which God calls his Church. The task to which the Christian is called is one that can only end in complete victory, in the total overthrow of the kingdoms of this world and the subjection of the nations to the discipline of Jesus Christ. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ has called us to in the Great Commission. There will be no Parousia until this happens because, as the Bible clearly states, on that day it will be declared in heaven that “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).
Modern Britain faces a serious cultural crisis. The Christian world-view that once characterised our society has collapsed. This is not merely a matter of declining church attendance. Something has happened at a much more profound level in the psyche of the nation that declining church attendance and many other modern trends are merely symptoms of. Christianity has ceased to function as public truth, i.e. as the religion that underpins and gives meaning to our way of life. The nation has converted to a new religion, and it is in terms of this new religion that people make sense of life. The nation has been de-Christianised. The world-view that governs our society is no longer a Christian world-view. The world-view that governs the nation is secular humanism. It is the world-view of secular humanism that now functions as public truth in our society. And as the religion of secular humanism grows stronger the Christian values that underpinned and shaped our civilisation for over a thousand years are being relentlessly stripped away from the consciousness and life of the nation. The education system, the health care system, the family, the institutions of government, and strangely even the institutional Church, were all de-Christianised in the twentieth century. In education there is a strong ethos of secularism that deprecates the nation’s Christian cultural heritage, emphasises a multi-faith approach to religion and promotes the acceptance of sexual immorality, for example sexually permissive
Education and the Great Commission

lifestyles and homosexual marriage, as morally on a par with heterosexual marriage. In the health system abortion is now accepted and practised virtually on demand and euthanasia is in the process of being legitimised. In the realm of politics the nation’s freedom has been abolished and replaced by fraudulent “human rights” that are meaningless to the individual, the real purpose of which seems to be to disguise the increasingly totalitarian nature of the State. The married heterosexual two-parent family (the Christian view of the family) has declined drastically over recent decades, and continues to decline, with disastrous social consequences. And there is even an ongoing and relentless drive in the main-line Christian denominations to legitimise homosexual lifestyles as morally acceptable. The orthodox faith of the Church once received and expressed in the Thirty-Nine Articles, the doctrinal confession of the Church, has virtually disappeared in the excessively liberal gospel that has been preached from church pulpits for decades. Within evangelical Churches on the whole things are not much better; evangelical liberalism is a little out of date perhaps but it is liberalism nonetheless.

There is in Britain now a settled and institutionalised antipathy to the Christian faith and its system of moral values. At times this attitude manifests itself almost as belligerence as the State uses

1 See for example Steve Doughty, “Top doctor’s chilling claim: The NHS kills off 130,000 elderly patients every year” in the Mail Online (www.dailymail.co.uk), published 20 June 2012 (updated 26 October 2012), in which it was reported that a top doctor claimed the NHS is effectively pursuing euthanasia for elderly patients under the guise of a programme called LCP (Liverpool Care Pathway). According to the article “Professor [Patrick] Pullicino claimed that far too often elderly patients who could live longer are placed on the LCP and it had now become an ‘assisted death pathway rather than a care pathway.’”

2 In 2009 forty-six per cent of Children born in England and Wales were born out of wedlock according to data produced by the Office for National Statistics (Kate Devlin, “Proportion of births outside marriage ‘has risen to its highest ever level,’” The Telegraph, 24 September 2009 [www.telegraph.co.uk]; the BBC reported the same figures on the following day). In the USA in 2009 forty-one per cent of children were born out of wedlock (Elizabeth Wildsmith, Nicole R. Steward-Streng and Jennifer Manlove, “Childbearing Outside of Marriage: Estimates and Trends in the United States,” Child Trends Research Brief, publication no. 2011–29 [Washington: Child Trends, 2011]).
the police force to enforce its secular humanist doctrines of political correctness on society. For example, the public expression of certain Christian values and attitudes to morality is now likely to result in police visits and warnings to individuals that they should abstain from expressing such opinions publicly in future. Several such incidents have been reported in the media and even a bishop of the Church of England has been questioned by the police for expressing his opinions on certain moral values in public—though this latter incident was perhaps more significant for the fact that an Anglican bishop was prepared to make a stand in terms of orthodox Christian moral values than that the police tried to suppress the public expression of such values. Nevertheless, the fact that the police are increasingly taking it upon themselves to enforce this politically correct code of immorality demonstrates the reality of secular humanism as a religion that is willing and able to use the full machinery of the State to enforce its own form of religious dogma on society, namely political correctness. This is the secular humanist inquisition.

In short, Britain is in the process of being de-commissioned as a Christian nation, and the hard-won freedoms that the nation cherished for so long, which were the fruit of a Christian worldview and way of life, are fast disappearing as society rejects the Christian religion. This cultural decline, however, is not confined to the United Kingdom. This is a problem that affects the West generally, though to varying degrees in different countries. We are in the middle of a Great De-commission. And the irony is that the Churches themselves have not only been complicit in this, but have often been in the vanguard of the process. For example feminism, one of the most deleterious trends in modern Western society, was pioneered by the Church. The effeminate spirituality—i.e. the primarily emotional and sentimental understanding of the Christian faith—that has now come to dominate virtually all branches of

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3 “Christians accused of homophobia,” BBC News, 23 December 2005 (news.bbc.co.uk); see also “No charges for bishop in gay row,” BBC News, 9 November 2003 (news.bbc.co.uk); “Police quiz bishop over gay comments,” Mail Online (www.dailymail.co.uk).

4 See further “The Church Effeminate” in my book Common-Law Wives and
the Western Church was in the vanguard of the feminist move-
ment. After nearly two thousand years of the Great Commission
the nations of the once Christian West have gone into reverse and
started de-civilising themselves. And we should not forget that the
virtues and ideals that Western civilisation has traditionally valued
and espoused as essential for the creation and preservation of a
civilised society have been the fruit of a Christian way of life and
a Christian culture.

§2
The Problem of Lobbying

The answer proposed by many Christians in the United Kingdom
to this situation, this deterioration of Christian civilisation, has
been lobbying, i.e. the organisation of protests aimed at inducing
the government to stop passing liberal and permissive legislation
and begin passing laws requiring Christian values to be upheld.
There has been a great deal of money spent by Christians on the
lobbying process and a great many protests have been organised.
Attention has even been given to this lobbying activity in the media,
though seldom from a positive viewpoint.

The problem with this response to the collapse of Christian
civilisation is that there is no Christian consensus in British society
to underpin it and give it any significant meaning for the secular
humanist establishment at which it is aimed. The Christian
consensus, the Christian world-view, has collapsed, even among Christians,\(^7\) and without a Christian world-view underpinning society such lobbying is simply ineffective. There is insufficient support in society for the Christian view of moral order to make lobbying an effective way for Christians to influence government policy. Even the good results sometimes gained by this approach, e.g. stopping the government from introducing a bad law or from abolishing a good law, are quickly overturned. This is what has happened with Clause 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, the regulation forbidding the promotion of homosexuality in State schools, and what is now happening with euthanasia legislation. Initial success has eventually been overturned by the relentless onslaught of secular humanist ideology on the life of the nation, and as part of that on the actions of the civil government. Consequently Clause 28, despite a furious campaign waged by several Christian lobbying groups, was eventually abolished and attempts to introduce euthanasia continue, chipping away little by little at an out-dated Christian morality. In this ineffective process of lobbying large amounts of money are wasted by Christians who seem to think that their duty has been done if they are able to induce politicians into making other people take on their responsibilities for them.

Even those successes that ostensibly seem to be permanent, at least for the time being, are often made irrelevant by the fact that the Christian consensus—the Christian world-view—has collap-

\(^7\) As public truth religion structures life, both individually and societally. Christianity has ceased to do this in Western culture. The religion of secular humanism is now public truth, what structures life and society, for the British people, and this is so for the most part among Christians no less than non-believers. The Christian faith has been reduced to little more than a syncretistic mystery cult, a private salvation cult that does not relate to the whole of life or the wider world, but merely to a narrowly defined idea of “spiritual life.” For many pastors and priests the religious and political aspects of life are two separate and mutually exclusive spheres of life that must at all costs be kept hermetically sealed off from each other—the only exception to this being when a bishop or priest wants to speak out on some public issue in order to promote socialism as the answer to man’s problems. But we look in vain for any distinctively biblical witness from the Church authorities of our age.
sed. For example, it was established a few years ago that Religious Education lessons and assemblies in State schools in the United Kingdom should be primarily Christian in character. But this has had little effect because religious education is often taught by people who are not Christians and do not understand the Christian faith. Christianity is taught therefore, but from a secular humanist perspective, not from a Christian perspective. This is arguably worse than no Religious Education lessons at all. For example, I know of one case in which the head teacher of a State primary school told the whole school in a supposedly Christian assembly meeting that Christians believe Jesus Christ is born again every Christmas. This lack of understanding of the Christian faith, i.e. of the particular doctrines of the faith, is reinforced by a world-view that is anti-Christian in principle and in effect. Therefore, even where there is a commitment to the idea that Religious Education in secular schools should reflect the Christian heritage of the nation this may well often translate into a nominalism that is meaningless, misleading or even worse.

But the Religious Education lesson is not the problem in any case. What gets taught or mistaught to the children of Christians in such classes can be easily corrected by Christian parents at home and is not likely to have any significant effect on non-Christian households. The real damage is not done in the Religious Education lesson, or even in the sex lesson for that matter, but rather in the history lesson, the English lesson, the maths lesson, the geography lesson, the biology lesson, the science lesson, the social studies lesson, the art lesson,—that is to say across the whole curriculum and in the whole ethos and world-view promoted by the school, because in these subjects the secular humanist theory of knowledge underpins everything that is taught and the child learns to see the world and all things in it in terms of the secular humanist worldview. Therefore the child’s understanding of science, for example, is based on the secular humanist presupposition of the neutrality of the scientific method, i.e. that it is possible to come to a proper understanding of the facts without reference to the creative will of the God who created the facts. The pupil may well go home to
Christian parents who will teach him that if he repents of his sins and exercises faith in the Lord Jesus Christ he will be saved from eternal punishment on the Day of Judgement. But if he imbibes at school the secular understanding of science, i.e. the supposed neutrality of the scientific method as conceived by the secular humanist establishment, he will probably never see the relevance of the Christian faith for the scientific task. In other words when it comes to science he will think like a secular humanist; the religion of secular humanism will govern his understanding of science. If he becomes a scientist as an adult this problem will be magnified. The same principle holds true in every other subject taught in the school. The secular humanist theory of knowledge will underpin the student’s understanding of the subject. Only in the narrow realm of “spiritual things” will the child learn, possibly, to think in

8 Of course a Christian world-view is not a sufficient condition of good science, but it is a necessary condition of good science. In other words having a Christian world-view will not guarantee that one does good science, but it is not possible to do good science without a Christian world-view, which is why scientific progress has arisen historically in the context of a specifically Christian cultural matrix. According to E. L. Hebden Taylor “The biblical revelation of creation out of nothing in actual historical fact provided the intellectual as well as religious conditions for the birth of modern science in Western civilisation alone. The Reverend Dr Stanley L. Jaki in Science and Creation has provided a detailed analysis of ancient Hindu, Chinese, Mayan, Egyptian, Babylonian and Greek cultures, all of which, especially the Greek, could boast a valuable start in science. Yet in all of these civilizations science suffered a stillbirth. They all failed, Jaki argues, to muster in a sufficient measure faith in progress, confidence in the lawfulness and rationality of the universe, appreciation of the quantitative method, and a depersonalized view of the process of motion in the universe, all qualities which are the main features of the scientific quest . . . According to Dr Jaki, because the Koran overemphasized the will of the Creator, Muslim scholars fell prey to mistrust in the validity of rational laws, and as a result science came to a standstill among the Arabs as well. Quite different was the case in the Christian medieval West, where the biblical faith in the Creator permeated for the first time a whole culture and effectively produced the qualities and conditions necessary for the rise of modern science described above. The ultimate result was the rise of classical physics” (“The Reconstruction of Modern Science in Terms of the Biblical Life- and World-View” in Calvinism Today, Vol. iii, No. 1 [January 1993], p. 7b).


9 See further my essay Baal Worship Ancient and Modern (Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, 2010), p. 17ff.
a Christian way, although even here there is no certainty that what his parents and the Church teach him will be orthodox. In all the other subjects the student will learn to think in a non-Christian way, i.e. in a sinful, rebellious way, though he will not be aware of this, not aware even that the faith applies to these other areas and therefore that there is an obedient way to do science, history, maths, art etc. In these areas the Christian parents of children in such schools will have little success in undoing the indoctrination that their children get in secular schools even if they are aware of the problem and wish to do something about it because the school forms the context of the whole learning process and it is impossible to undo five days of systematic secular humanist indoctrination each week with one hour of Sunday school teaching or a few talks with the child in the evening. But sadly, most Christian parents will not be aware of the problem at all. They will most likely have been indoctrinated into the same world-view that their children are imbibing and therefore the next generation gets no further than their parents while secular humanism pushes forward, aggressively conquering more ground in our society, controlling more institutions and shaping more and more the way people think about all things.

At the same time as all this lobbying is taking place there is little emphasis on the creation of Christian schools or the promotion of Christian home schooling in terms of a self-conscious Christian world-view and curriculum. Christian education, both in terms of Christian schools and home schooling, has been criticised strongly by many in the Church, including leaders and clergymen, and looked at with indifference and suspicion by lobbying groups. And there has been nowhere near the amount of money spent on this vital area as that spent on lobbying. The vast majority of Christians send their children to secular schools and yet many are willing to support lobbying organisations financially. Even many of those who are most vociferous about lobbying government and protesting against government education policy in public will do so while refusing to take their children out of the secular schools and give them a Christian education.
This is astonishing, since lobbying government can only be effective where there is a Christian consensus that will underpin such lobbying and give it meaning. There is only one way in which we can create that kind of consensus, namely by educating the next generation in terms of a Christian world-view. On the one hand, by sending their children to secular schools Christian lobbyists are actually helping to create the very problem—a secular society—that on the other hand they are ostensibly trying to solve by means of lobbying. If this seems absurd it is because it is absurd. Before such lobbying can be effective we must create a Christian consensus in society. This can only be done by changing the world-view that underpins our society. This in turn can only be achieved by bringing up a new generation of children who see life differently, who see life from a Christian perspective. This Christian perspective must be imbibed from youth. The generation of those who will form the consensus necessary to change society must be educated and generally brought up in terms of such a world-view. This is how secular humanists were able to capture our society. They captured the education system and as a result were able to change the religion of the nation by inculcating the new religion of secular humanism in the next generation in the schools. Christians must therefore withdraw their children from these schools and start educating them in terms of the Christian religion; and the Churches, as an essential part of their mission to the world, must start creating Christians schools that will ultimately replace the State schools if they are to win back the nation to Christ. Lobbying cannot achieve this and is ineffective where a Christian consensus does not exist. It is impossible to create this Christian consensus in a generation without Christian education.
§3
THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Christian education, therefore, is the high ground, the vanguard, in our battle with secular humanism for the soul of the nation. Unless we are willing to bring up the next generation in terms of a Christian world-view, a Christian understanding of the whole of life, we will not win our nation for Christ. We may gain individual converts of course. God will always save his elect. But we will not win our society, our culture, our nation for Christ. And it is the discipling of the *nation* that the Lord Jesus Christ commands us to pursue in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18–20), not the snatching of brands from the fire—i.e. mere soul saving.

In the secular school the child gets a complete world-view. The State schooling system in Britain requires teachers to provide for the intellectual, physical, moral and *spiritual* development of the child. In other words it requires teachers to provide a complete world-view. Christian schools and home schools must do the same. The education provided by Christian schools and homes must not be a narrowly religious one, but rather a complete world-view.

By educating our children in this way we shall achieve far more than lobbying government can achieve. We shall create a generation of Christians that thinks, acts and *votes* differently. When we start educating the next generation of Christians in this way we shall not need to worry about lobbying. We do not need lobbyists; rather we need Christian politicians, i.e. politicians who think *politically* in a Christian way, and this is only possible where their thinking is done in terms of a Christian world-view. We need Christian educators; not educators who merely happen to be Christians—there are plenty of them, indeed the British State education system is awash with Christians, but this has had little effect on the system. Rather, we need educators who think about education in terms of a Christian world-view. We need Christian doctors and health workers, i.e. not doctors and health workers who merely have saved souls, but doctors and health workers who
think about medicine in terms of a Christian world-view. We need Christian film-makers and media people, not merely film-makers and media people with saved souls, but film-makers and media people who think about film and the media in terms of a Christian world-view. And likewise in all other walks of life. And sad as it is to say this today, we need Christian ministers, pastors and elders who will think about their work in a Christian way, in terms of a Christian world-view, because very often today clergymen do not think in a Christian way, they are often just as indoctrinated with the secular humanist world-view as their congregations are, sometimes more so. The Church and the work of the ministry today are infected with all sorts of influences that come from the secular world-view that dominates our society.¹⁰

This is a strategy that will win back our nations for Christ. Lobbying will not achieve this. The future of Western society and the world is now dependent on how we educate our children. The task of providing Christian education, therefore, is absolutely vital to the future of our culture and civilisation.

Christians must understand that sending their children to secular schools is a practice that will help atheists to take over our society and is in fact the best way to repaganise society, i.e. to de-Christianise the nation, and not only to de-Christianise the nation, but the Church as well, as is now only too clear from the state of the modern Church as a result of the secularisation of the education system. Christians need to understand that faithfulness to the Lord necessitates that their children should be educated in the Lord, i.e. in terms of a Christian world-view. Christian education is not an option for the enthusiastic Christian. It is a vital act of faithfulness to the Lord. To send one’s children to be educated in secular schools is treason against the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian education, therefore, is where the money needs to be spent and the time and resources concentrated if we are to win the battle with secularism, not lobbying.

But such education needs to be more than providing institutions where teachers are Christians. The ethos of the school must

¹⁰ See for example the discussion at note 5 on p. 251 supra.
be Christian; the *curriculum* of the school must be Christian; and the *theory of knowledge* that underpins every lesson in every subject taught must be Christian because it is this Christian theory of knowledge that should determine the world-view that governs the student’s understanding of all things.

Therefore the difference between a secular school and a Christian school is not in the type and number of subjects taught. It is rather in the *theory of knowledge* in terms of which the teaching is done. This is what will shape the world-view of the teacher and therefore the understanding of the pupil in every area of study. Teaching is never a religiously neutral enterprise. One never teaches merely the facts, but always at the same time a particular way of understanding or interpreting the facts. This may be quite unselfconscious in the teacher as well as the pupil, but it is always the case.

Nevertheless, in a world that is dominated by secular humanism and its reputedly neutral theory of knowledge, we need to be self-conscious about the Christian theory of knowledge because if we are not operating self-consciously from a Christian theory of knowledge we shall most likely be operating, e.g. teaching, from a secular humanist theory of knowledge, even though we may be teaching in a Christian school. Of course the secular humanist theory of knowledge is not religiously neutral. It is a religious perspective. Religious neutrality is impossible. The illusion of religious neutrality is possible, but not the reality of it.

The point I want to stress here is the *vital* nature of the task that Christian schools and home schoolers are involved in. But it is not sufficient to set up a school that is run by Christians, with good Religious Education lessons, good discipline, no drugs, no sex lessons, and think that these things on their own will make a Christian education. They are part of it of course. But the philosophy on which the teaching is based must be Christian as well. This means that the theory of knowledge in terms of which the teaching takes place in every subject must also be Christian. Religious Education lessons, a lack of sex lessons and the discipline

\[11\] See definition §2 in the Excursus on p. 46f. *supra*.
policy of the school are not the only Christian elements that make up a Christian school. The history lesson, maths lesson, geography lesson, Latin lesson, art, music and English lessons, and every other subject in the curriculum must proceed from the Christian theory of knowledge; that is, from the assumption that the world exists and can be understood properly only in the light of the creative will of God—that only by presupposing (1) the creation of the whole cosmos by the God of Scripture, (2) the fall of mankind into sin, rebellion against God, and (3) the redemption of the world in the sacrificial and substitutionary life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, can we truly understand the world and all things in it. It is this philosophy that I want to stress as being so important because it must underpin and inform every subject in the curriculum and shape the world-view of the school, the teachers and the pupils.

§

CONCLUSION

There was a time when this Christian world-view was dominant in the West. Even non-believers in the Western nations predominantly thought and often acted as if they were Christians, and in a sense they were culturally Christian, if not regenerate. Today the situation is reversed. The secular world-view is dominant because the secularists took control of the education of the nation while Christians failed to respond adequately to the challenge. As a consequence Christians today, despite being regenerate and having a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour of their souls, often think and live like secular humanists. And sending their children to secular schools only compounds the problem for the next generation. We have, therefore, a Church full of increasingly worldly Christians with each new generation that comes along, a Church that is of the world but not in it. This leads to a spiral downwards to the de-commissioning of the nation and to disaster, and not only for the Church, but for society as a whole.
We must reverse this if we are to win the nations for Christ. The Christian world-view must be dominant in society if we are to fulfil the Great Commission. Without the consistent and dedicated practice of Christian education the accomplishment of the Great Commission is impossible. The Great Commission commands us to teach all nations, not snatch brands from the fire. Christian education is on the cutting edge of the Great Commission. Nothing is more important in this task than the education of our children. Wherever Christian missions have gone in the world they have taught people, educated them, and educated their children. Education, along with the provision of medicine and the preaching of the gospel, has been one of the most important aspects of the Great Commission. And yet it has been abandoned in the homelands of the West. The preaching of the gospel and subsequent conversion of the nations to Christ has not been accomplished independently of education and medicine, and this is because teaching and healing are necessarily connected with the preaching of the gospel, as the Lord Jesus Christ himself made clear (Mt. 28:18–20; 10:7–8; Lk. 9:2; 10:9). The divorce of education from the mission of the gospel, which is what has happened in modern Western cultures, has been an unmitigated disaster that has led to the Great De-Commission, the overturning of Christ’s last command on earth to his disciples. There will be no progress in the Great Commission in the future without the reinstatement of Christian education in its fulness.

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