

## EVIL

SAMUEL J. MIKOLASKI, in Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973).

Evil is among the most intractable of human problems, touching as it does the natural as well as the moral order. The distinction between surd evils and moral evil further raises the issue of their relationship. In the history of man we observe at least four forms of evil: ignorance (evil often results from even well-intentioned acts), ugliness (distortion of life and environment), suffering (due to disease, catastrophe and evil intent), and sin. Of these, Christians identify sin as the worst form of evil because it is the corruption of man's inner being. It is not curable by human progress, is an obstacle to man's dealing with other evils, and hinders faith in God the Creator.

As to the co-existence of good and evil in the world, five possibilities present themselves. (1) Only good is real and evil is illusory, as in certain types of Idealism (Christian Science is a modern religious form). Such idealism attempts to cure evil simply by thinking it away. (2) Only evil is real and good is illusory. Some contemporary forms of pessimism over life and the world order reflect this tendency to deify evil and satanic powers. (3) The very distinction between good and evil is illusory, as held by some monistic mystical systems. (4) Good and evil co-exist as eternal competing principles, as for example, in Manicheanism. (5) Only good is eternally and ultimately real, but evil is a present reality within the created universe. This last possibility expresses Christian belief as based upon the Biblical revelation. Evil for the Christian, like contingency and freedom, must be accepted as realities within the created order which cannot be explained away or dissolved into some more ultimate reality.

Reference to the created order points to the prior and crucial significance of cosmic models, in one's thinking about the problems of evil. Systems of Idealism since Plato and Oriental religions such as Hinduism see God as the Absolute and evil as nonbeing or illusion from which philosophy offers escape. Modern process philosophers like E. S. Brightman and A. N. Whitehead see evil as a built-in element of the natural order against which God as finite must struggle in quest of his own ultimate perfection.

Ancient forms of Materialism and modern naturalistic variants are also reductionist in expounding evil. If the world is a unilinear one-level process then no criterion exists by which to judge the better or worse. Reality is then ultimately a blind and meaningless surge of energy.

The problems of evil appears at its sharpest in Biblical teaching because Christians believe in the goodness, omniscience and omnipotence of God. Central to Christian understanding is the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Genesis 1-3 are not accidental first chapters of the Bible; rather, creation of the world by God is the key to all further understanding. In contrast to Idealism and Materialism, the Biblical creationist view in relation to evil is neither escapist nor reductionist.

The doctrine of creation implies that ultimate reality is of the nature of personal

life, mechanism is not the mode of the relation between God and the world, contingency and freedom are real, and grace is not illusion. The full implications of the doctrine of creation relieve Christians of any need to resort to notions that evil is non-being, privation of goodness, or illusion. Christians reject merely verbal solutions to the real problem.

If God is good, whence is evil? Christians rest their view ultimately upon the Biblical revelation of God's purpose. Of the various forms of evil, sin seems to be the primeval one. The doctrine of the Fall expresses the truth that evil has originated within creation through creaturely rebellion. While some (like N. P. Williams) have postulated the fall of a world-soul, the traditional doctrine of the pre-mundane angelic Fall coheres with the doctrine of creation because it makes of persons and personal relations the ultimate nature of reality (Matt. 25:41; John 8:44; II Peter 2:4; I John 3:8; Jude 6). Thus while evil has forms other than sin, the moral model of the universe which Christians hold in contrast to the illusionist and determinist models places the origin of evil in sin.

For Christians evil is cured by God's action alone, involving no solution short of the redemptive death of the Son of God. By the doctrine of creation Christians assign to God responsibility for creating the conditions in which evil and sin could arise. Yet our personal responsibility and guilt for evil choices, correlated with the fall of Adam (cf. *Fall of Man*) though they be, is vast and terrible. By the doctrine of the Atonement (q.v.) Christians acknowledge that God is dealing with evil and sin by himself bearing them in the incarnate Lord's perfect sacrifice. The moral relations between God and the world have been transformed by the triumph of Christ over sin and death (Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 2:14). This triumph constitutes the moral basis of the Christian life in its relations to evil in this world (Rom. 12:17; II Cor. 4:10; I Peter 4:12-13). The Christian's response to evil is taken up into Christ's own victory (Rom. 8:17). Through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ there is anticipated God's final triumph when the natural order and redeemed men together will be delivered from the bane of evil (Rom. 8:19-25; Rev. 21:1-8).

P. T. Forsyth, *The Justification of God*, Naperville, Ill., Allenson, 1957; John Hick, *Evil and the Love of God*, Brooklyn, Fontana, 1968; Leonard Hodgson, *For Faith and Freedom*, 1, Oxford, Blackwell, 1956; H. E. Hopkins, *The Mystery of Suffering*, Inter Varsity Press, 1959; C. E. M. Joad, *God and Evil*, London, Faber, 1943; C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, London, Macmillan, 1940; F. Petit, *The Problems of Evil*, 1959; Nelson Pike, ed., *God and Evil*, New York, Prentice-Hall, 1964; James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, 1897; J. S. Whale, *The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil*. SCM, 1957.

## **GOD, NATURALISM & CREATIVITY**

Notes on the current state of the dialogue  
Samuel J. Mikolaski, October 2001

**St. Paul: "Now I know in part..."**  
*(1 Corinthians 13:12)*

[I gratefully acknowledge the work of Frederick Crews. In what follows I analyze his two extended reviews on the topic, *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 4 and 18, 2001, with the addition of my own questions, references, and comments.]

### **Questions:**

1. Is creativity a metaphor or a reality?
2. If creativity is a reality, of what sort is it?
  - a) When was it put into play?
  - b) How does it continue to operate ?

## **I THE MODERN IDEALIST PARADIGM: PROCESS PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY**

### **Modern Roots:**

A. N. Whitehead  
Charles Hartshorne

### **Contemporary Example** of religiously oriented process philosophy:

Gordon Kaufmann, "On Thinking of God as Serendipitous Creativity," (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 69/2, June 2001).

- a) Discard anthropomorphic/anthropocentric image of creator, lord, father.
- b) Understand creativity as the descendant of the biblical concept of creation, but as directly implied in the idea of evolution.
- c) Creativity: the idea of the coming into being through time of the previously non-existent, the new, the novel.
- d) Good and evil are anthropocentric value judgments, which we must transcend by means of a theocentric faith that what God is doing (creative process) is what God wills.
- e) God is the creativity manifest in the ongoing evolution and development of this entire vast

cosmos. Maintain a decisive qualitative distinction between God and the created order, though not an ontological separation.

f) Conceive of humans as one of countless creative trajectories moving through the cosmos rather than the climax of all creation, and that the new, the novel, the awe-inspiring the unforeseeable will unfold.

g) That serendipitous creativity gives ground to hope that human life can, and will, go on and that we participate in the creative transformation of our existence.

*Comment:* this sidesteps the reality of radical evil, including sin, and the problem of the divine working in and through myriads of misadventures and cruelties in the formation of the cosmos.

## II THE MODERN MATERIALIST PARADIGM: EVOLUTIONARY NATURALISM

### Contemporary Proponents:

Robert T. Pennock, *Tower of Babel: The Evidence Against the New Creationism*, Bradford/MIT Press, 2000; and, *Intelligent Design, Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives*, 2001.

Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*. Cliff Street Books/Harper Collins,

### Contemporary Example:

Frederick Crews, "Saving Us From Darwin," *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 4 and 18, 2001:

a) Evolution is not a designer but a scavenger that makes do with jury-rigged solutions and then improves them as opportunities and emergencies present themselves. It is an undirected, reactive process.

b) Darwinism posits neither chance nor necessity as an absolute explainer of complex forms. Rather, it envisions a continual, novelty-generating disequilibrium between the two, with aleatory processes (mutation, sexual recombination, migratory mixing) and the elimination of the unfit operating in staggered tandem over time.

c) Modern naturalistic evolutionary hypothesis: natural selection as fortuitous, adaptive change.

d) Neo-Darwinian natural selection has explanatory advantages: it provides a naturalistic causal hypothesis; it is endlessly fruitful.

## III THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN (ID) PARADIGM

### Contemporary Proponents:

Philip E. Johnson, *The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism*. IVP, 2000.

Michael Denton, *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe*, 2000; and, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, 2000.

Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth? Why Much of What We Teach About Evolution Is Wrong*. Regenery, 2000.

Nancy Pearcey, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy (Turning Point Christian Worldview)*, 1994.

Stephen C. Meyer, *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe* (with William A. Dembski and Michael Behe), 2000.

### Contemporary Examples:

William A. Dembski (ed.), *Mere Creation: Science, Faith and Intelligent Design*. IVP, 1998.

William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology*. IVP, 1999.

Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. Touchstone, 1998.

a) Hypothesis: Natural causes can't have brought about the complex specified information characteristic of life forms. To attribute this to purely natural causes is statistically improbable. The not-yet-explained is attributed to divine intervention.

b) Question: When did the divine designer infuse complexity into the creation?

(i) Dembski: By discrete insertions over time. Continuous creation. The Creator feeds in information at various points rather than supplying it all in the initial conditions.

(ii) Behe: At the outset, programming the very first cells with the entire repertoire of genes needed for every successor species.

#### **Criticisms of Dembski:**

a) Crews: ID lacks any naturalistic causal hypotheses, and is devoid of explanation as to both the inception of creative variation and the process of creative variation.

b) Lucas: In the Big Bang model all the information is there at the beginning, which would suggest preference for a form of theistic evolution. Why not see evidence of ID in the overall process, not merely in specific bits of it? (Ernest Lucas, review of Dembski in *Science and Christian Belief*, 13/2, October 2001).

c) van Till: Dembski proposes a "punctuated naturalism," of episodes of intelligent design(form-imposing acts performed by some unidentified extra-natural agent). Rather, van Till proposes a universe capable of unfolding into its present complexity without the need for episodic interventions. God has built into the cosmos a formational capability which science uncovers. The evidence for God's creative activity is everywhere. (Howard van Till, as cited in the *Newsletter of the American Scientific Affiliation*, September-October, 2001)

### **IV AMERICA: DARWIN, NATURALISM , RELIGION AND THE "TWO CULTURES" THEORY. SECULAR VIEWS WHICH OPPOSE, COMPROMISE, OR ATTENUATE AUTHENTIC DARWINIAN NATURALISM**

#### **(A) AMERICAN NEO-CONSERVATISM**

##### **The "Two Cultures" Hypothesis of Neo-conservatism:**

a) That crime, licentiousness, blasphemy, unchecked greed, narcotic stupefaction, abortion, and the weakening of family bonds is due to militant secularism.

b) That the ideological base of secularism is Darwinian evolution, and that to leave Darwinism unchallenged sets the nation on the road to cultural decadence.

c) That unchallenged Darwinian biology courses need to be supplanted by teaching that the human race was planted here by God with instructions for proper conduct.

*and/or*

d) That some kind of intellectual accommodation or rapprochement needs to be made between science and religion which allows for valid pursuit of truth by both.

### **Contemporary Examples:**

1) Gertrude Himmelfarb (and her husband Irving Kristol, the editor of *Commentary*):

*Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution*, 1959 (Elephant paperback, 1996)

*On Looking Into The Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society*. Knopf, 1994

*The De-moralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values*. Knopf, 1995.

*One Nation, Two Cultures*. Knopf, 1999; and "Two Nations or Two Cultures?" *Commentary*, January 2001.

a) One culture is still guided by religious principles; the other has abandoned itself to the indulgences of "the Sixties," (ideologically secularist; morally relativist). There is a causal relationship between secularism and decadence.

b) Himmelfarb and Kristol question the legitimacy of natural selection. It is inherently defective, they say, and tampering with it cannot help it.

c) Science (including naturalistic evolution) cannot cope with the ultimate mystery of existence and life: the incommensurability of the scientific method with ultimate questions.

d) Thesis: recover the concept that God is creator and the source of moral and spiritual values.

2) Neo-conservative Journals

*First Things*, Richard John Neuhaus, editor

Has featured Philip Johnson, William Dembski, Paul Davies, and others.

*New Criterion*, Roger Kimball, editor

Has featured Philip Johnson, Paul Stove, and others

*Commentary*, Irving Kristol, editor (published by the American Jewish Committee).

Submerge religious differences in the interests of (biblical) theism, a society grounded in moral values not relativism, and heterosexual marriage and the family. Cooperate within sphere of "faith based initiatives" organizations against secularist monopoly. Features writers such as Normal Podhoretz, and has been not unfriendly to Pat Robertson.

*The Weekly Standard*, Bill Kristol, editor (son of Irving and Gertrude).

Washington journal featuring insider political, economic and social analysis from neo-conservative standpoint.

## **(B) THE AMERICAN SECULAR LEFT**

### **Contemporary Liberals and Radicals**

- 1) Who show evidence of anti-scientific bias:
  - a) The hypotheses that rival scientific paradigms are objectively incommensurable (some cite the views of Paul Feyerabend and Thomas Kuhn on the philosophy of science).
  - b) The real arbiter between theories is always sociopolitical power.
  - c) Western science has been an oppressor of dispossessed women, minorities. At best workers will be lukewarm toward Darwin.
  
- 2) Who oppose social Darwinism
  - a) Weigh theories (including the Darwinian hypothesis) in light of the attitudinal failings of their inventors, especially on questions of racial and social hierarchy, innate female characteristics. and homosexuality.
  - b) Evolutionary psychologists (sociobiologists) who speculate about the adaptive origins of traits and institutions that persist today.

## **(C) PROPONENTS OF ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

### **Questions:**

Who will stand up for evolutionary biology and insist that it be taught without censorship or dilution? Answer: people who employ Darwinian theory in their professional work.

But, there is waffling and confusion: Can we, and how can we, make room for God?

Most Americans profess faith in both science and a personal God. Can the conflict between these two be resolved?

What *kind* of God is consistent with evolutionary theory?

Do current accommodations:

- a) adulterate scientific doctrine and method?
- b) empty religious beliefs of their commonly accepted meaning?

### **Accommodations:**

#### 1. Theistic Evolution

- a) Does this remove God from the process: initiates, then withdraws?
- b) When did God initiate the process, and how is it maintained?
- c) Darwinists contend that no "whiff of divinity" is needed to reinforce the truth

of the theory of natural selection.

## 2. Feeling on a par with facts

Robert Pollack: Molecular biologist, Columbia University; Director, Center for the Study of Science and Religion; author, *The Faith of Biology and the Biology of Faith; Order, Meaning, and Free Will in Modern Medical Science*, Columbia University Press, 2000.

- a) Darwinism is too terrifying and depressing to be borne without the emotional buffer of religion.
- b) By cleaving to the Torah (as a Jew) he can lend an irrational certainty of meaning and purpose to data that otherwise show no sign of supporting any meaning to our lives on earth beyond that of being numbers in a cosmic lottery with no paymaster.
- c) Scientific insight comes from an intrinsically unknowable one, namely, God himself. Thus there is only a semantic difference between scientific insight and what in religious terms is called revelation.

## 3. The finite, suffering, aspiring God

John F. Haught: Professor of Theology, Georgetown University; Director, Center for the Study of Science and Religion; author, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, Westview, 2001.

- a) Darwinian cruelty in nature should jar Christians to "humility theology" in which God is seen to participate fully in the world's struggle and pain.
- b) God desires for us "building of soul," which requires agony and death in the process. God is more interested in adventure (creating that which is new, novel) than in conserving the status quo.
- c) While the process in evolution appears to be drawn-out and impersonal, all the suffering and tragedy, the emergence of new life, the achievement of intense beauty, is saved by being taken eternally into God's own feeling of the world.

## 4. Arbitration and Concession

Michael Ruse: Professor, Florida State University; court witness against creationists; author, *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? The Relationship Between Science and Religion*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

- a) Tensions exist between evolutionary and Christian doctrine, but not absolute and ineradicable contradictions. Ease these by reciprocal compromise, but he fails to grapple with the canon of evidence as held by the naturalistic empirical tradition. He empties religious language of its ordinary meaning or retreats to mystery..
- b) For example:
  - (i) Consider original sin as part of the biological package: successful adaptations involve self-interest.
  - (ii) Both selfishness and altruism are found in nature and for the same amoral



reasons: they yield adaptive and reproductive advantage.

(iii) Miracles: stylized stories enhancing events of sharing, helping, joy, hope.

(iv) Emotional need to deal with guilt through forgiveness.

## 5. Ideological metamorphosis

Kenneth R. Miller: Biologist, Catholic apologist, author: *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*, Cliff Street Books/Harper Collins, 2000.

a) Begins with criticism of creationism, but swings to "God of the gaps" view of Philip Johnson and William Dembski.

b) Science can say nothing about miracle, because miracle is beyond explanation. Criticizes scientists who adopt an atheist perspective (such as Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, Edward O. Wilson, Richard Lewontin).

b) Unpredictability makes room for the ineffable. Quantum indeterminacy allows God to shape

evolution on the subatomic level with care and subtlety, allowing him to nudge matter toward his purpose of creating a creature who can know him, can know love, can investigate evolution (which fills the earth with life), and can contemplate the mystery of existence.

c) God finds ways of communicating directly with humans (revelation, the Incarnation) to

disclose his purposes for humanity and the world.

## 6. NOMA: non-overlapping magisteria

Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard paleontologist, prominent writer against creationism, opponent of religious interference with scientific research, author: *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*, Library of Contemporary Life/Ballantine, 1999.

a) Science and religion are two independent magisteria, two independent domains of authority, which will enjoy mutual respect if adherents refrain from any attempted synthesis.

b) Scientists investigate nature, and religious people investigate spiritual values and ethical rules. Each is a valuable task. Each should not trespass on the domain of the other.

*Criticisms:* but if Gould compliments papal statements which accept evolution as more than hypothesis (Pius XII and John Paul II), he fails to grapple with continuing Catholic teaching on the divine origin of the soul and the creation of man in the likeness and image of God, or with Catholic teaching that the mind is more than an epiphenomenon of matter. Gould appears to seek peace between the two camps by flattering the undertakings of Religion: "science gets the age of rocks, religion the rock of ages..." This amounts not to an unrestrained pursuit of truth, but of gratuitous restraint imposed on both sides.

## V ON-GOING LIVE ISSUES

### 1. Incommensurability

That science cannot answer questions of faith or how we ought to behave, and whether humans are unique in the cosmos or are merely one more of many disappearing species in the long line of evolutionary process

Example: Richard P. Feynman, physicist, Nobel Laureate, author: *The Meaning of it All*, Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1998; lectures first given in 1963: We don't know how to handle uncertainty. How does something move from being almost certainly false to being almost certainly true? All scientific knowledge is uncertain. Science gives us power to do things, but it does not give us instructions on how to use it. Religion has metaphysical, ethical and inspirational aspects. If the scientific pursuit (based on the uncertainty of our knowledge) at times conflicts with religious sentiments (certainties of faith), resolution can come only on grounds of some ultimate judgment. It is impossible to decide moral questions by the scientific technique. The two things are independent.

### 2. The Origin and Ontological Status of Core realities vs reductionism

The emergence and nature of intelligence (mind), foresight, freedom, truth, good, evil.

### 3. Teleology vs Naturalism

Is design inference ( a purpose-driven view of the cosmic process) warranted as against a purely naturalistic understanding?

## VI CONCLUDING COMMENTS

### 1. Acknowledgement and References

This analysis and comments follow from two extended reviews of recent literature on the subject by Frederick Crews, "Saving us From Darwin," *New York Review of Books*, October 4 and 18, 2001. Note also the following in my *Theological Sentences* (privately circulated, not yet published): chapter 1, "Method;" chapter 4, "Holy Spirit," on the relation of God's Spirit to the creation; chapter 6, "Creation."

### 2. Scientific Method and Naturalism

As to the logic of scientific method and the philosophy of science, I am Popperian in outlook. I regard Karl Popper as the greatest philosopher of science ever. My perspective is as follows:

a) As dogma, scientific theories become not only problematical but dangerous. This includes some recent advocacy of both creationism and naturalistic evolution.

b) Our theories or understanding of "laws of nature" amount to imposition of perspectives upon nature. They are not, and never can be, logical necessities. We must not force our mental creations upon nature. A theory better than another merely has, for the present, better explanatory power. But such generalizations can never be proven or verified. They are scientific in so far as they are testable, hence disprovable or falsifiable. But it is logically impossible to demonstrate the truth of any theory.

c) I am a realist and a transcendentalist, but am not sure how to balance the two, the relation between the phenomenal and the noumenal (Kant's overriding issue). Philosophically, I am both an empirical realist and a transcendental idealist, and (in the British tradition) try to be scrupulously careful about empirical data: I combine an empiricist ontology with a rationalist epistemology. But this does not deny the existence of the noumenal. It affirms merely that there is an empirical reality the truth about which we should strive to know, but about which we may or may not grasp approximately; nevertheless, never completely. We can never know the way things really are, but in our pursuit of knowledge over time we can move closer and closer to truths about it, bearing in mind that truth is a function of statements which purport to tell us that which is actually the case about something. Statements aiming at truth are always "about" something and even if near accurate are always approximate.

d) Thus verification, or slavish adherence to the Verification Principle, like dogmatic scientific theory, marks the death of science. Einstein was nearer to whatever the truth is about the nature of physical reality and its laws than was Newton, and we are currently debating post-Einsteinian theories. The problem with unrestricted general materialist, naturalist, or empiricist statements is that they can never be verified..

### **3. Idealism and Realism**

As to recent Idealist perspectives, notably those in current Process Theology which derive from the philosophy of Whitehead:

a) I honor insistence on the ontological status of eternal values which are seen to be divinely conserved and made available to the created order, the notion of free valuing actual entities such as we are, and insistence upon hope -- the movement from potentiality to actuality cosmically as a divinely inspired process which functions by attraction rather than by push, or survivalist or fortuitous adaptation.

b) Despite this, I believe that modern Process Theology has opted for a non-personal view of God and I don't know what their understanding of God's nature

being trans-personal means. This view appears to hold that the divine principle is the impersonal, immanent creative process and that the emerging actual entities are capable of knowing more about the divine nature than it knows of itself, if it is deemed to be impersonal or trans-personal.

c) They retreat (as Whitehead does in *Process and Reality* to unresolved antinomies as to the nature of God and the relation of the divine transcendence to the divine immanence. The Process Theology view of the divine immanence and finitude undercuts the divine transcendence and aseity.

d) Nevertheless, I respect the attempts by advocates of Process Theology to develop a rationale for divinely inspired creative change, versus naturalism, in the cosmic process.

#### 4. Christian Realism and Creative Change

a) Those of us who confess traditional Christian beliefs about the nature of God, his creation of the world, and divine providence which embraces "ends-in-view" working, have not moved much beyond the ancient patristic understanding that the divine Logos creates, pervades and sustains the cosmos.

b) But we have not formulated a modern, credible statement as to *how* the Logos and the Holy Spirit as life-giver work creatively in an on-going way; a credible theory as to the *how* of the following: *Let the earth bring forth living creatures (Genesis 1:24); When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the ground (Psalm 104:30); ... Son ... through whom also he created the world ... upholding the universe by his word of power (Hebrews 1:2-3).* I am not convinced that the ID argument is as credible as its advocates believe.

c) When asked, Where is the evidence for the divine creativity?, we usually answer "everywhere," as a self-evident proposition. We fall back on the Psalmist's declaration (*Psalm 19:1*):

The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Dante artfully expressed this in the powerful words,

"Nature is the art of God."

# **Bible Truth for Today's World: MATERIALISM**

**SAMUEL J. MIKOLASKI**

*The Sunday School Builder*, July 1965

Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention

MATERIALISM has an ancient and consistent history in Western culture. Spiritually, materialism always has been the enemy of divine revelation and of man's commitment to the will of God. For the present purpose, materialism can be defined in three ways:

## **Classical Materialism**

Materialism is one of the old philosophies of classical Western thought. The idea goes back, at least, to Leucippus (500-430 B.c.) and Democritus (about 420 B.C.), who apparently originated the concept of the atom. By a rational insight, when no proof of it was possible, these men conceived that all reality consists of tiny bits of matter. They called these "atoms" or "uncuttables." The atoms were thought to be the basic building blocks of reality and not divisible into smaller particles.

This idea of all reality being matter in motion included not only such things as' rocks, trees, water, and air-which we have become accustomed to think of as made up of atoms-but also apparently nonmaterial things such as life, sensation, perception, and mind. In short, everything was thought to have a material base.

Crucial to the preservation of materialism was its incorporation into two famous systems of ethics, Epicureanism and Stoicism (note Acts 17:18).

The Stoics thought that all reality is made up of atoms, but they also thought that a cosmic mind pervades the atoms to bring about a predetermined harmony and end of all things. While the Stoics (they were divided into many schools over centuries) aimed for the good life, they believed that it could be achieved only by reconciling one's will to the determined course of the world. They said, for example, that a dog chained to a chariot must follow the chariot or be dragged, but come he must. So man can either square his life with the order of nature, or be dragged by nature. This concept is ethical determinism or fatalism.

The Epicureans also aimed for the good life; but, believing that the end of life and action is pleasure, they advocated the satisfaction of desire in order to be rid of it. They denied the reality of the soul and of the spiritual life. Death ends all, they claimed. While Epicurus was deferential to the gods, there was no real place for God in his system. The world and life have come into being by the chance concurrence of atoms, he said. No spiritual laws exist. All laws and standards are relative to time and place. This philosophy acknowledges no "good" nor "right" beyond what appeals to a man at the time.

## **Contemporary Naturalism**

During the past seventy-five years, the old conception that atoms are hard, indivisible bits of matter has been thrown out. Instead, scientists think of them as centers of energy that can be divided further. The activities of some of these parts are now thought to be so uncertain that many scientists believe they are impossible to predict. Because the old concept of matter has been jettisoned, the name "materialism" is now an embarrassment

to many people. While it is used in Europe, the word "humanism" is often preferred. In America, the term "naturalism" has been chosen.

Developing through the work of William James, John Dewey, and their disciples, naturalism has become the most powerful single philosophical perspective in the United States. In fact, it is a far stronger factor in higher education in this country than most Christians know. The writings of Dewey are commonly available: A widely read work edited by Y. H. Krikorian, *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* (Columbia University Press, 1944), presents this modern version of materialism to contemporary man. Other more recent books could be cited. Equally important is the fact that many higher disciplines are now taught from a naturalistic perspective.

Two principles are crucial to naturalism: (1) the claim that all phenomena are natural and that, therefore, there is no spiritual reality beyond nature; (2) the claim that all data can be handled by the scientific method. Both of these principles assume that all aspects of experience are amenable to certain kinds of observation, measurement, and control.

People today confront this attitude of life broadly in two ways: (1) whether to believe that the whole world functions by natural forces and principles inherent in it, or that God created and providentially sustains the world; (2) whether to believe that all moral standards are derived from social custom and habit, or that the revelation of the righteousness and love of God are the standards that judge human affairs. The Scriptures relate both of them to Jesus Christ as the Word of creative power (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2) and the norm of goodness (John 1:4; 3: 18-21; Eph. 4:13).

In this brief treatment, I should like to advance three points against naturalism:

(1) Naturalism advocates a determinist view of human behavior and fails to make an adequate accounting of the will. To say that all conduct is the product of conditioning factors fails to account for either human creativity or the socially detaching power of religion. Men like Luther acted against the stream of their times.

(2) If naturalists wish to redefine "good" and "right" to mean acts that augment self-interest, then the facts that the words denote remain. The "ought" at the base of human experience answers to a law that is higher than man.

(3) Naturalism exhibits an uneasy tension between egoism and altruism. If all my actions aim at my satisfaction, why should I be concerned about anyone else? Clearly, men like John Dewey did have a benevolent interest in others; but why should they, and how could they, on the basis of the naturalistic claim? Beyond this, naturalism fails to take into account the reality of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ as a fact of history.

### **Practical Materialism**

Materialism works itself into human life in very subtle ways, even where its principles are not clearly discerned. At the root of all materialism is the refusal to acknowledge God. A striking biblical example is that of the rich man in Luke, with the illuminating teachings of Christ that follow (Luke 12:16-34).

We all are acquainted with, and infected by, the supposition that possessions can satisfy the spiritual life of man. The tendency is to think of new cars, hi-fi sets, recreation, nice

homes, good clothing, abundant food, retirement security, and money in the bank as indispensable to happiness. On every hand are examples of how men have sought things but not God.

Jesus isolated the treachery of materialism when he spoke of "the deceitfulness of riches" (Mark 4: 19). The word "deceitful" is used here in the sense of a deceit, fraud, or hoax—that is, he who trusts in possessions has been swindled. The tragedy is that the victim can sustain a fatal spiritual loss. If a counterfeit ten-dollar bill is passed on to me and discovered, who takes the loss? I do. How much of the loss do I take? All of it! The person who trusts riches will suffer a total spiritual loss.

Just as a horse cannot thrive on sawdust, the soul cannot thrive on things. The proper food is God and his Word. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). (See also Psalm 49; Mark 8:34-37; Luke 18:18-30; 2 Cor. 8:9; 1 Tim. 6: 6-19; 1 John 3:16-17.)

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## NOTE ON A. N. WHITEHEAD'S METAPHYSICS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

1958

For Whitehead, reality consists of an organized system of what he designates *actual entities* or *actual occasions*, which, he says, are subjects or selves; they are "the final real things of which the world is made up" (*Process and Reality*. New York: Social Science Gook Store, 1941, p. 27). There are also what he calls "eternal objects" which are the ideals, values, or abstract ideas of objects which are realized by the actual entities. He defines an eternal object as *any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world* (p.70). As subjects or selves, actual entities experience data or materials drawn from other actual entities at their demise by means of a process of prehension or feeling (p.35). The prehension of an eternal object he calls a conceptual prehension and constitutes the mental pole of an actual entity; whereas, the prehension of the concrete data of another actual entity is known as a physical prehension and constitutes the physical pole of the actual entity. As guiding ideals the eternal objects govern the selection and absorption of a datum. Thus guided, the actual entity may prehend a datum positively or negatively (reject it) in accordance with a subjective aim that it has fashioned for itself from its prehension of particular eternal objects. This subjective aim is the ideal which the actual entity has selected for itself from the world of eternal objects, for it is a *causa sui* in this process. Its choice will determine its own nature, development, and character at the point of satisfaction. All actual entities endure for a finite period and at their death they *give out* concrete data for ingression into other actual entities.

However, there is an important difference between the being of God as an actual entity and other actual entities, Whitehead says. While it is in their passing away that actual entities provide concrete data for prehension by other actual entities, God abides. He does not pass away. As the store of values he provides from himself data for prehension by other actual entities. This aspect of God's nature in virtue of which He provides data for others is called by Whitehead God's Superject Nature. But, God also has a conceptual and a physical pole like other actual entities, which Whitehead calls the primordial and consequent natures of God (p. 521, 523). Viewed as primordial, *God is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality; He is the lure for feeling, the eternal urge of desire*. That is, in His primordial nature God provides in Himself the order or arrangement of eternal objects as ideal possibilities for prehension by actual entities. God arranges the eternal objects in ideal patterns and he desires that they be received by actual entities to perfect their possibilities; but He does not coerce, He persuades. However, God's consequent nature is his prehension physically of the concrete data of the evolving universe. Implied is that God is immanent and is continually developing. This is a core feature of the 'finite God theory.' Because of creative advance in the universe, the consequent nature of God is not complete (p.523-524).



Important for our use here is: (1) the concept of teleological, valuing, free, actual entities; (2) the eternal objects as objects of value to actual entities; (3) the fact that God conserves the eternal objects in the arrangement of ideal possibilities for actual entities in himself; and (4) that God acts not coercively but persuasively. This is where Christ as the eternal ideal fits into Whitehead's system: *the life of Christ is not an exhibition of over-ruling power. Its glory is for those who can discern it, and not for the world. Its power lies in its absence of force. It has the decisiveness of a supreme ideal, and that is why the history of the world divides at this point of time* (*Religion in the Making*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1930, p.56-57).

**NOTE ON FREEDOM**  
Samuel J. Mikolaski (1974)

Freedom is a function or capacity of spiritual beings. Persons are spiritual beings. To be a person is to be a self-conscious spiritual reality with the power of rational thought and capable of purposeful activity which is morally qualified. Freedom involves the reality of contingency in the world order: that things may go this way or that depending upon the choice of a spiritual being.

Persons as spiritual beings are free in contrast to matter or that which is acted upon. This is the fundamental distinction between Spirit and Matter, i.e., the difference between that which is active and that which is passive; that which is self-moved as against that which is moved upon (such as being programmed or conditioned).

Spiritual beings are more or less free; that is they are more or less spiritual. Christians are called upon to spiritualize their bodily life; to act in terms of moral and other ideals which have their norm in the will of God.

There is thus a further meaning of freedom: the difference between spiritual bondage and spiritual liberty. As spiritual beings, persons in the image of God are intended to utilize the elements of a dependable world (control, including conditioning) to increase freedom. A scientifically dependable world and the reality of persons and their freedom are the truth of the way things are to the Christian. The increase of control can lead to the increase of freedom, whether it is control of one's own life or of the environment.

Actions and goals are to be qualified morally by the will of God. God's purposes have at their center the creation of free good persons who share his life and work. The Christian sees it as a moral ideal to relate to and to treat others as persons, in love, altruistically, for their full development and freedom.

**THE AMERICAN IDEAL, RELIGION  
AND  
THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL CRISIS**

an address by  
Professor Samuel J. Mikolaski  
World Affairs Council of San Diego/North County, June 6, 2002

Why in the world has a contemporary Marxist historian been interested in the work of a seventeenth century imprisoned Baptist preacher? I refer to Christopher Hill\*, Master of Balliol College, Oxford (1965-78), specialist in 16th -17th century English History; and to John Bunyan (1628 - 1688), "Mr. Badman," author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, to the authorities a pestiferous Baptist preacher.

The answer: Modern concepts of liberty and the separation of the powers of the state from the exercise of religion have much more to do with the genius of the underground movements during the turbulent times of 17th century England than with the emerging political liberalism of the era. And this fed directly into the principles of the American Constitution - especially into the First Amendment as a founding principle of the Bill of Rights.

The sedition of the 17th century radicals entailed opposition to the ancient principles and state powers of a sacral society, and was held to be injurious, even fatal, to the well-being of society. But this sedition has contributed to core principles of American life and continues to be, I believe, a standard for the world. Bunyan's sedition remains today the enemy of closed societies, and today's closed societies have declared themselves to be mortal enemies of the open society. Current mushiness of thought in the American media and among the American public about the meaning of a plural society obscures the true significance of what was deemed to be a radical social concept.

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[\*Note Hill's two studies: *John Bunyan and his Church: A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People*, 1988; and *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, 1967. Other British scholars who have addressed this subject include: N. H. Keeble, Gordon Campbell, Valentine Cunningham, Richard Greaves, Milo Kaufman, J. Knott, B. R. White, J. Forrest, R. Charrock. Studies commemorating the 300th anniversary of Bunyan's death (1988) prompted an exhibition on Bunyan at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.]

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Let us retrace our steps historically.

## I - THE CONCEPT OF A SACRAL SOCIETY

Our modern conception of society is drawn more from our Roman than from our Greek heritage. Greek understanding of the nature of reality balanced interests in nature (*phusis*) with the process of history, the causal principle of which is seen to be human drive (divine urging?), which results in an endless dialectic of

opposites, the cyclical rise and fall of interests: "whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad." Social stability was a watchword, though it became a cover for protecting party interests, witness the execution of Socrates on charges of misleading the youth of Athens by his "fly on the nose" questions.

Stoic theory, especially the concepts of justice (*dike*), fate, and destiny, fed into Roman thought (such as the *Meditations* of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius), including the trans-national concept of the citizen of the world (*polites kosmou*) as reflecting the grand design of the immanent cosmic divine principle, the Logos.

Roman thought concentrated upon the theory and functions of society, the *polis*, whether of an individual city or the Empire, as the expression of a divinely given and sanctioned order, an order which is reflected annually in the life-cycle of nature. History serves a practical social, political and, at times, ethical purpose as memory of events and of biography, the witness of the ages. To achieve this, history may be carefully factual (as in Cicero) or a lively, embellished account which, as an art form, inspires and motivates the reader or listener (note Livy's 'the noble lie,' which is not unlike some deconstructionist theory today).

A form of Platonic Idealism legitimized the Roman State. The State was regarded as the concrete manifestation of an ideal form. Cosmic justice is embodied in the justice of the State. The consolidation of power in the hands of the Caesars (first century B.C. - first century C.E.) was justified on the grounds of the need to conserve society and its values in the face of threatening social and political chaos. This was mythicized in the Imperial Cult, the deification of the Emperor. Enrollment of the Emperor in the pantheon of the gods served the purpose of acknowledging the divine source of the republican ideal, conceived as embodied in him. Men were "intended" to live the civilized life which he represented. The Emperor fulfilled what the gods gave and intended. The Roman Empire was therefore the gift of the gods.

Early Christians strongly resisted this deification and identification. While we may deem the pouring out of a libation to the honor of the Emperor as little more than today's singing of the National Anthem or reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, early Christians held that deification of the Emperor entailed public expression of belief in the pagan gods.

Justin Martyr, mid-second century Christian, wrote to the Emperor Titus that what may appear to him as strange religious views do not make of Christians enemies:

And if these things seem to you to be reasonable and true, honor them; but if they seem nonsensical, despise them as nonsense, and do not decree death against those who have done no wrong, as you would against enemies (*First Apology*, 68).

And Athenagoras, the late second century Athenian Christian lawyer argued that

Christians could be loyal citizens without the mandating of religion by the State. Athenagoras concludes his *Plea* to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius with:

For we pray for your authority, asking that you may, as is most just, continue the royal succession, son from father, and receive such increase and extension of your realm that all men will eventually be your subjects. This is to our interest too, "so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life," and be ready to do all we are commanded (*Plea*, 37).

Nevertheless, thousands of Christians were done to death over many generations because they confessed faith in one true God, not the Roman Pantheon, and refused to worship the genius of the Empire embodied in the Emperor as *Pontifex Maximus*. They rejected realm religion.

## II - MEDIEVAL SACRAL SOCIETY

Following the conversion of Constantine to Christian faith and his granting of full toleration to Christians in 313 C.E., the Christian faith spread rapidly and the churches gradually gained prestige and power in the ancient world. The Roman Emperor had in principle controlled all religion in the Empire as *Pontifex Maximus*, i.e., the chief priest of all cults officially recognized within the Empire. Gradually, religious authority shifted to regional sees and to bishops and finally, not without protest, to the Roman Pontiff who assumed the role of *Pontifex Maximus*.

Christian chroniclers of the 4th century C.E. recount the unjust persecution of Christians, the irrationalities of paganism, the granting of toleration under Lucinius and Constantine, and full recognition of Christianity by Constantine. They understood this to be the handiwork of God. The Augustan ideal of prince and the divine purpose were combined in the Imperial beneficent implementor (Eusebius, *Church History*, 9.6-9, 10.4).

The Augustan ideal was reinterpreted in relation to the Scriptural purposes and providence of God: the Empire and the Christian Emperor are God's instruments, just as kings were in the past. The Empire ideal achieved theological significance among Christians: God, not the gods, grants the blessings of life in the Empire. The Emperor is a Christian. The divine *politeia* has arrived. Christians became triumphalist. If wrong-headed, at bottom this was a view of unfolding history under the providence of God.

Then crisis struck, which forced a re-thinking of the then current Christian understanding of history.

Late in the fourth century Christian imperialist sentiment came under intense pressure because of attacks against the Empire by surrounding nations. In 410 C.

E. Alaric sacked Rome. The fall of Rome and worsening instability powerfully rejuvenated pagan sentiment and undermined the Christian view of God's providentially favoring the Empire following Constantine's conversion. Dissolution of Roman power lent credence to the pagan charge that abandoning the gods for Christianity had brought disaster. The concept of the Christian divine *politea* -- of the Kingdom of God as arriving -- was in jeopardy.

This is the issue which Augustine addressed in the *City of God*. His conclusion was fundamentally at variance with popular Christian opinion of the fourth century.

Augustine discerns two kingdoms in the making: First, the City created by humanity, Babylon, the *Pax Terrana*, the *Pax Romana*. This is the city of human bondage due to sin. Second, the heavenly city, the City of God, the Jerusalem which is on high, the *Pax Caelestis*. Augustine concludes that all human societies are flawed and that the Christian cannot pin his hope on any earthly kingdom, *including a Kingdom created by Christians*. Earthly kingdoms serve self-interest because human nature is flawed by pride and error. Rome itself was built on greed and conquest, he said, upon the myths of the gods and upon the political myth of the divine Caesar. Ultimately it is impossible to sanctify paganism. Like all human societies the Empire was founded upon an illusion and continued to be an illusion. No earthly kingdom can be the City of God.

Christianity displaced paganism as the soul and spirit of the Empire. Nevertheless, despite Augustine's warnings, the ideal of a sacral society refused to die. The pagan model was simply replaced with a Christian one. Gradually what we call Medieval Society emerged.

The Medieval Church ideal was remarkable for its coherence and instinct for universality, reflecting as it did in a religious form the coherence and universality (the civilized world) of the Roman Empire. As the Empire fragmented, the church emerged as the *Corpus Christianum* which survived political fragmentation and extended its ministry and message to the non-Christian nations at the edges of the Empire.

The concept of the *Corpus Christianum* evolved, the concept of a Christian civil society, of the state and the church comprising complementary and necessary aspects of a civilized society. 'Realm Religion' or 'State Religion' was born which, in the nature of the case, quickly raised questions as to the true nature of the church. This happened not only in regard to the status of Christians who had lapsed because of persecution, but also in regard to the growing formalization and ritualization of worship. What is the church spiritually in relation to its claims to universality?

What were the characteristics of the remarkable medieval ideal which gradually reached its zenith in the late Middle Ages? Chiefly five: 1. The Church became

the bulwark of a stable society; the custodian and fountain of institutional, theological and social continuity. 2. It promoted organizational coherence and stability. 3. It became keeper and dispenser of the sacraments, which is a powerful instrument to hold over a society. 4. It gradually encompassed a society; 5. becoming socially inclusive and providing political approval. Inevitably, spirituality became ritualized, formalized. It need not be added that all the while various renewal movements haunted society and the church, until the Renaissance. Wycliffe and, later, the Reformers challenged and transformed much of European thinking.

### III - MODERN DEMOCRATIC, POST-SACRAL SOCIETY

Modern American society, which separates religion from the power of the state, derives neither from the churches of the Episcopal tradition (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, American Episcopal) nor the churches of the Reformation tradition (Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian), but from the principles of the Radical Reformation.

These include:

In Europe: John Hus in Bohemia (pre-Reformation), followed by the *Unitas Fratrum*, the Mennonites, the Hutterites, the Swiss Brethren, and others. Recent studies such as that of Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* (1964) exhibit the principle of separating religion from state power which characterized such groups; and that, viewed by governments as disruptive of societal cohesion, they were persecuted severely by Protestant as well as by Roman Catholic authorities.

The British radical reform tradition is more important as part of the genius behind the American Revolution and constitutional development. This goes back to Wycliffe almost a century and a half before the Protestant Reformation, then during Reformation and post-Reformation times chiefly to Baptists and Congregationalists. This marks the importance of radicals like Bunyan. In the United States the most significant influence was that of the Baptists and Methodists, along with those Congregationalists and Presbyterians who moved away from the Church-State symbiosis which characterized religious establishments in England and Scotland.

The British radical reform tradition is more important in American history than its European counterpart partly because the British never were detached from loyalty to government (the Crown) nor detached from participation in civil affairs and government, while the Europeans, in their pietist tradition (such as the Mennonites) tended not to participate in civil government until this past century. Thus Americans of the European traditions were less influential in the early years of American constitutional development.

Significant aspects of American Republicanism derive from the Radical Reform, shaped as well by 17th - 18th century Liberalism, and by the secular Enlightenment. Nevertheless, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were gradually moved not only to toleration but to separation of religion and the church from the power and authority of the state by the evolution of religious liberty advocated by Baptists. Madison, educated at Princeton, knew well the force of anti-establishment Protestant arguments.

Roger Williams (1603 - 1683) had written not only against the pernicious evil of persecuting anyone 'for cause of conscience;' as well he opposed those who, like the Puritans, sought to establish the Kingdom of God on American soil. For Williams, the church could not, indeed must not, be identified with any nation. He was banished from the Puritan colony in Massachusetts when he challenged them to acknowledge that they had in fact separated from the Church of England, and he proceeded to establish what became Rhode Island. And it is this perspective that was ultimately written into the American Constitution.

For the first time in history the ideals of Radical Reform, as embodied in the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights, became the model for the creation of a society. The ancient concept of a sacral society was jettisoned in one fell swoop. It happened first in Virginia in the period 1776 -1786 under the leadership of Jefferson and Madison. Article 16 of Virginia's Declaration of Rights (1776) says: *All men are equally entitled to the full and free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience.* This simple and direct sentence anticipated everything that later developed in matters of religion and the state in America. It had been written by Jefferson seven years earlier and Madison finally was able to get it passed on January 16, 1786. This was the first bill in history to outlaw religious persecution, to relieve citizens from being compelled to support a religious establishment, and to remove personal beliefs as barriers to public office. Five years later, in drafting the First Amendment, Madison made the ideas of the Virginia statute the law of America.

It had been a criminal offense to deny the validity of the Trinity. Free-thinkers might have their children taken away from them. Baptist and Methodist preachers had been persecuted and imprisoned. Later, Jefferson reflected on what had happened in Virginia and reminded the legislators that religious establishments are always oppressive. He argued that the state had no right to adopt an opinion in matters of religion. He wrote:

*The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no god. It neither picks my pocket, nor breaks my leg ... That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or beliefs*



...

Jefferson regarded this statute as one of the crowning achievements of his life. There were found among his papers handwritten instructions about his burial, which read:

*On the faces of the obelisk the following inscription, and not a word more. 'Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and father of the University of Virginia.' by these, as testimonials that I have lived, I wish to be remembered.*

I have no doubt that this is among the most important of principles which inform development of the American Constitution. It freed the state and it freed religion.

A beautiful parable survives from Roger Williams which illustrates the social and political model which was incorporated into the Virginia Constitution and later into the American Constitution, made specific and reinforced in the 1st Amendment. It parallels views Baptists had espoused in England (such as the views of John Bunyan) on freedom of conscience and religious liberty within a pluralist society. Williams wrote,

*There goes many a ship at sea with many hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or human combination of society. It hath fallen out some times that both Papists and Protestants, Jews and Turks may be embarked in one ship; upon which supposal I affirm, that all the liberty of conscience that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges - that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews or Turks be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship nor compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they have any. I further add that I never denied, that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also command that justice, peace, and sobriety, be kept and practiced, both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any of the seamen refuse to perform their services, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help in person or purse toward the common charges or defense; if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship concerning their common peace or preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders and officers; if any should preach that there ought to be no commander or officers, no laws, nor orders, nor corrections, nor punishments; - I say, I never denied but in each cases, whatever is pretended, the commander, or commanders may judge, resist, compel and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits.*

This historical unfolding puts into perspective the nature and function of religious denominations. While a denomination may represent an ethnic or cultural group,

fundamentally a denomination represents an ideology as to faith and polity. In principle, there is no such thing as a church of no denomination because there is no such thing as a church without an ideology. In a pluralist society denominations are a necessity. Only in a sacral, optionless society can they in principle be prohibited and even there, for example in Islamic societies, there are often competing Islamic religious ideologies and loyalties. Wherever freedom of conscience and religious liberty are allowed denominations are a necessity because finite human beings will always find grounds for disagreement, including whether freedom of conscience and religious liberty should be allowed. But that battle has been won, at least in Western democratic countries, and there is no going back. Denominations have had a vital and honorable, indeed, an indispensable role in Western societies. Denominations are the only way we have found as the means by which a society can be pluralist and allow freedom of religion without interference from the state or coercion from high-handed religious authority. There does not appear to be any other conceivable way, short of human perfection.

#### **IV - WHERE WE ARE AND THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE**

##### **1. Tolerance for Intolerance**

The U.S. media now lead the way in tolerating intolerance, and significant aspects of U.S. foreign policy, especially of the Clinton era, have done the same. By default we are again legitimizing the principles and practices of closed, sacral societies because of a muddled conception of pluralism which tends to vitiate the principles of freedom for which Western societies fought for so long. Consider:

a) The jeopardy of non-Muslims who live and work in closed, repressive Islamic societies, such as Saudi Arabia. Note the case of the two Filipino Christians who three weeks ago were deported from Saudi Arabia after a month in jail for having a Bible in their apartment, though they were spared the threatened 150 lashes. Such instances, and worse, can be multiplied endlessly from public records, from many Islamic societies.

b) The terror unleashed on the world by the new wave of militant Islam, of which the Trade Tower, Pentagon, and Pennsylvania attacks are but the most recent major examples. The development of this threat has been well-documented for a long time. Who pays any attention to the destruction and desecration of over 100 Christian churches, monasteries, and graveyards in Kosovo, under the noses of the NATO and U.S. authorities? Who reports on the activities of the radical *mujahedin* in Bosnia, who have created a reign of terror against non-Muslims and continue to operate the largest drug cartel (with large imports of cocaine and opium from Afghanistan, from which many of them came with the connivance of our own government)? Why do the media not report on, and Congressional

Committees not discuss, the thrust of Izetbegovic's *Islamic Declaration*, a contemporary *Mein Kampf*, which calls for a Jihad against the West, which has never been retracted and whose repressive edicts are now being imposed on Bosnia under our umbrella? Such niceties as no private property and no freedom of conscience to be allowed in an Islamic society stand under the rubric of the following principles:

*A Moslem as a rule does not exist as an individual entity. If he wants to live and survive as a Moslem, he must create a milieu, a community, an order. He must change the world or else undergo change himself. History knows no genuine Islamic movement that was not a political movement at the same time ... The first and most important of these conclusions is definitely the one about the incompatibility of Islam and non-Islamic systems. There can be no peace nor co-existence between the "Islamic faith" and "non-Islamic" social and political institutions, p.20, 23).*

c) The obscenity of Franjo Tudjman being invited to the dedication of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, which was an offense against all decency and against the sacred memory of all victims of the Holocaust. In his memoirs Tudjman defended the Holocaust, was sympathetic to the Ustasha of Croatia who perpetrated (next to Hitler's extermination of Jews) the worst genocide (Jasenovac) in Europe during WWII against Serbs, Jews, Romanies and others, and the largest ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Croatia of the 1990s wars - with the help of U.S. mercenaries. That there is now a memorial to the Jasenovac victims of terror in the Holocaust Museum only heightens disgust over the invitation to Tudjman. What justice has there been for these forgotten victims, and what objections are heard for the re-imposition of Ustasha political power in today's Croatia?

d) Current ignorance over the implications of, either legally or by a wink and a nod, accepting a distinction between canon and civil law in regard to the current scandal of criminal pedophile priests. Two weeks ago (perhaps as a trial balloon seeking reaction) a Vatican official issued a statement urging that U.S. Roman Catholic authorities not cooperate with civil authorities in their efforts to prosecute criminal behavior.

## **2. Unbalanced and Shallow Media Influences**

At present, the most widely used and influential spokespersons in the U.S. media on the side of moral values are Roman Catholic, though the current clerical pedophilia and child abuse scandal has blunted this a little. The number of national news presenters and commentators of Roman Catholic persuasion is significant, including Michael Novack, Peggy Noonan, Bill O'Reilly, Richard John Neuhaus, Tony Snow, Sean Hannity, Alan Keyes, William Bennett, George Will, Gary Wills, Cokie Roberts, John McLaughlin. This is a remarkable turnaround for Roman Catholic oriented media personalities since the Kennedy era

began. Americans of Jewish background are also prominent, including Irving Kristol and his son Bill, Charles Krauthamer, Alan Colmes, Bill Handel, Matt Drudge, Laura Schlessinger, Ann Landers and her sister who writes the column "Dear Abby." Evangelicals are virtually voiceless. On national TV only Cal Thomas remains; and, at times, John Kasich is heard. To the present, the Eastern Orthodox are almost never represented (George Stephanopoulos is silent so far as Christian values are concerned). The U.S. media need to cultivate a more balanced presenter profile; and, equally important, our news coverage needs presenters who exhibit depth of historical knowledge and critical judgment, and objectivity, which is evident only rarely, as in the case of Brit Hume.

### **3. Attrition of Freedom**

A major factor in the attrition of freedom is the power of money in politics and in actions intended to influence public policy or to lobby. The solution I see is to maintain the right of donors to control its use, to criticize its use, and sunlight. I believe all contributions to all political causes including those that purport to be purely humanitarian but are really political lobbies should be open to public scrutiny, expeditiously; and that no one should be compelled to contribute to any political party, or political action, or social engineering enterprise, or lobbying activity against his or her will.

Finally, the mark of a free society, and the true heritage of the founders of America who moved us away from the tradition of the closed, sacral societal model, is the freedom to proselytize: the freedom to evangelize, to persuade, to argue, to convince. Isaiah Berlin wrote that freedom is the essence of man -- it is the nature of humans to seek freedom. But freedom is fragile and its enemies are legion. Utopian ideologies, whether secular or religious, are a snare and inevitably lead to procrustean tyranny. As Karl Popper argued, among civilized human beings there is no substitute for an open society.

## *The Christian Manifesto*

SAMUEL J. MIKOLASKI, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*

*Christian Economics*, 19.7, April 4, 1967

New York: Christian Freedom Foundation

Also, published in:

*Baptist Standard*, Texas Baptist Convention, March 15, 1967

**KARL MARX** learned well what Christianity first gave -- the power of a gospel to move men. But in contrast to Christian teaching, what a spectre of terror his doctrine and methods have created during the past 120 years!

At the conclusion of the famous Communist Manifesto, which was written and proclaimed by Marx and Engels in 1848, Marx said: "The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all lands, unite!"

The genius of Marx was to create a new world view. To be sure, its elements were, not new, but the way he joined and developed them was novel. Communism has swept the world like a red scourge.

*(Baptist Standard omitted the following paragraph)*

Marxism is based upon the doctrine of materialistic determinism. Materialism has a significant and highly consistent history in Western thought. It derives from the atomism of Leucippus, Democritus, and Epicurus. All of reality is interpreted in the terms of matter and motion; or, in modern times as energy in a one-way, non-reversible process. Everything is explained in these terms: material things, casually; biological realities via the mechanism of heredity and behavioural conditioning, and all social, esthetic and ethical phenomena similarly. In principle, there is no difference between the metaphysical base of Marxism and the base of American Naturalism. Both see reality purely in terms of the natural and as one-way necessary process.

The uniqueness of Marx's doctrine was to create out of traditional materialist categories an economic and social theory. The inconsistency of predicating a teleological view of history (it has for him a beneficent goal) out of neutral matter and economic forces has often been pointed out, but consistency has never been an important factor in the impact of an ideology. He interpreted history as a class struggle where an economic system (thesis) by the seeds of its own decay (antithesis) generates a new economic system (synthesis). All human relationships hinge on economic relationships, said Marx, not, as Christianity has taught, upon essential moral realities which derive from the will of God, and upon the spiritual nature of man.

The Communist Manifesto was intended to be a "gospel." It aimed to win the allegiance of men. The opportunity of Marxism was the state of oppressed and disenfranchised people of the Western World. It offered a coherent view of history and economics coupled with a claim to an inevitable, utopian future. It is

important to remember that Marxism grasped opportunities which were created by traditional alliances between dictatorial governments and corrupt religious systems. This was true in Russia, eastern Europe, and Cuba. Similar conditions exist in other parts of the world today. It is instructive to note that the strongest Communist Party in Europe exists today in Italy under the shadow of the Vatican.

Where Marxism has won, it has done so by its appeal to a cause. It has worked with the power of a manifesto alleging to liberate men, and with the zeal of religious passion. It amounts to a theology in reverse. Its method has been to grasp power through a small body of convinced, and ruthless individuals, who then impose their wills upon the helpless majority once political power, the military, and the media of communication are controlled. The most devastating critique of contemporary communism is the book by the Communist theorist, Milovan Djilas (*The New Class*), who was recently released from prison in Yugoslavia. The texture of communism is no longer unbroken. Disenchantment with it is well on the way.

**The antidote to Marxism** is the Christian Manifesto, of which Marxism is a counterfeit by claiming to offer economic heaven on earth. In place of economic determinism (the interpretation of human relationships as essentially economic) the Christian Gospel declares the spiritual nature of man, the spiritual value of human relationships, the reality of the Creator God Who declares himself, and the ultimate value of persons redeemed by grace to a new dimension of life. Marxism advocates economic determinism; Christianity proclaims the essential value of persons and the responsibilities of man's stewardship of the world order under God. Marxism advocates that a self-appointed elite, a body of convinced men, take over power by ruthless means; Christianity began and continues by small groups of men, convinced and zealous, but who are moved by love and who enjoy freedom *at every stage* of the spiritual victory they claim from their Lord.

The Christian Manifesto is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a spiritual manifesto. It brings to men a new view of life and the world. Only by means of a Manifesto centered in the Cross of Christ can the forces of evil be turned back, men be saved from destruction, and the creation finally rescued.

The Christian view centers on three important points: First, the nature of reality derives from the creative act of God. It is essentially moral and spiritual in nature, fashioned for persons and interpersonal relations. The whole world is the object of God's love and concern. Its genius is not the behavioristically conditioned ant-heap, but the creation of free men in Christ who will know and serve God righteously.

Second, the Christian view stands for the Lordship of God in history. God rules in the heavens, and He will ultimately accomplish His will on earth. The Christian is committed to justice and equity for all. History moves from the creation to a righteous consummation under the providence of God.

Third, the Christian view emphasizes the vitality of the Gospel of Christ. The Christian claim is a claim to uniqueness. God has revealed himself historically to Jesus Christ. God has vindicated His righteousness in the Cross by the judgment of sin and evil. Nothing transcends the converting power of the Cross for good in the lives of men (*Christian Economics omitted the following: who can say, "Jesus died for me."*)

*Through the preaching of the cross countless men have been saved to new life. The Christian is committed to Christ's cause and is assured that the victory is already behind him. The Christian lives in hope of the glory of the coming King who will reign in righteousness.)*

**The Christian Manifesto** is the answer to Karl Marx. (*Added by Christian Economics, but not in my original text.*)

(Note: At times editors change an author's writing without his or her consent; changes which have nothing to do with spelling or grammar.)