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ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

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EDITORIAL

We were deeply sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Graham Leask
on October 9 1979.   He had been a warm supporter of the V.I. for
many years and for some years helped the present Editor with proof
correcting.   He was unmarried.

In this issue we publish the papers given at the 1979 V.I.
Symposium together with other papers and reviews by members of the
Ilkley Group.   Regrettably, Richard Russell's paper on The Cult
of Education has not been received.

ILKLEY GROUP

The Ilkley Group (whose name stems from the location of their
first meeting) comprises a number of evangelical Christians who
teach or research in sociology and related disciplines.   They meet
twice-a-year for a weekend discussion of papers they produce.
Several members have published one or more books in the area of
academic sociology, and on the relationship between sociology and
christian faith.

In 1975 they published a collection of articles under the
title: *Christian commitment and the Study of Sociology*, which is
now out of print.   In 1979 they co-operatively produced an
annotated bibliography entitled *Sociology and Christianity*.   It
is available from UCCFA, 38, De Montfort Street, LEICESTER,
LE1 7GP at 50p. (post free).

CONTENTS

J.A. WALTER

INTRODUCTION: IDOLS AND IDEOLOGIES

The papers which follow look at some of the dominant ideologies of
our society, and attempt to describe and evaluate them with the
aid of concepts that are both religious and sociological.   Of
these, the concept of *idolatry* is prominent.   In these
preliminary notes we shall seek to explain why some Christian
sociologists are now focussing on the notion of idolatry as a
tool for analysing modern society.

     The perhaps unenviable task of the Christian sociologist is
to find and use intellectual tools that are (a) religious and
recognisably compatible with Christian teaching; (b) sociological;
(c) likely to be taken seriously by lay Christians, and by (d)
academic sociologists (*c* does not necessarily follow from *a*, nor
d from *b*!).   The notion of idolatry seems to recur in Christian
thinking about society because arguably it meets all four
requirements:

(a) *A Religious concept*.   That human beings both need to and in
fact do worship something bigger and purer than themselves, is
central to biblical teaching.   This worship ought to be directed
toward the one God of whom the Bible speaks, but if this God is
rejected worship does not reach a full stop.   Those who refuse
to worship their Creator, soon take to worshipping some aspect of
the creation, or some product of their own making.   This is what
the OT prophets fulminated against as 'idolatry'.

(b) *A sociological concept*.   Idolatry is described in both Old
and New Testaments as socially, even politically, organised.   The
act of worship itself may be an action of the individual, but the
setting up of shrines at which to worship is something over which
the ordinary individual has little control.   This is organised by
priests or their equivalents (religious, secular, traditional or
modern) to suit the economic and political needs of society and its
rulers.   Even if the individual does have some choice of which
gods to worship, the choice is from a limited range offered by the
powers-that-be.   Who worships what tells us a lot about society.

(c) *Acceptability to Christians*.   Idolatry as a concept is central
to Judaism and Christianity in that it forces attention on whether
people orient their lives to their Creator or elsewhere.   Idolatry
can be spoken of meaningfully by evangelical and liberal,
Protestant and Catholic, sophisticated theologian and humble
churchgoer.   But this fact is of little value unless idolatry

makes sense also to the academic sociologist; otherwise we shall
lose the critical and creative edge that comes from dialogue with
the secular academic community.

(d) *Acceptability to sociologists.*   The notion of idolatry has
much in common with Marx's theory of *alienation*[1] and its
subsequent development by twentieth century humanists and
sociologists.   Alienation involves the social process whereby
human beings collectively mistake as the property of a higher
power things they themselves have made.   The product of human
labour becomes alien.   Thus the human being fails to recognise
his own inner worth and creativity: he imputes his own creations
to an alien being who is consequently venerated.   In his critique
of religion, Marx identified this alien being with God: in his
critique of capitalism, it was the capitalist class that
appropriated to itself the labour of mankind.   Both God and
Capital are thieves of human potential.

     This social critique is redolent of the language of the
prophets who castigated their contemporaries for carving gods out
of blocks of wood, setting them up and worshipping them; indeed,
some have suggested that Marx's own Judaic-Christian background
was influential for his theory of alienation.   Of course, there
are profound differences between the prophets and Marx concerning
what should be done about mankind's desire to worship, but they do
share the same basic idea of human beings as essentially
productive and creative yet not recognising their own creations
for what they are.

     Apart from Marxism and humanism, sociologists (like
anthropologists) have shown a recurrent interest in *the sacred.*
While the sociology of religion (that specialist branch of
sociology that investigates formal religion) documents the demise
of belief in the supernatural, of churchgoing and of other
conventional manifestations of religion, other branches of
sociology have observed the renaissance of the sacred elsewhere.
(It was Emile Durkheim who first suggested that society itself is
a religious phenomenon[2].)

     Thus Shils and Young[3] analysed the coronation of Queen
Elizabeth II as a great religious event symbolising the values held
sacred by post-war British society; they were strongly (and in my
view, correctly) criticised by Birnbaum[4] for their assumption that
there exists a consensus within Britain over ultimate values, but
not because they used religious concepts in their analysis of
society.

     Ten years later, the influential German sociologist Thomas
Luckmann[5] argued that religion has been too narrowly conceived by
sociologists, and that *any* structure which integrates society and
provides an overarching framework of meaning may properly be

termed religious.   He pointed particularly to 'the individual'
as the religious integration point of modern society.   Others
might consider 'science' to perform some of the functions of the
medieval church, and certainly the word 'sacred' recurs with
almost monotonous regularity in supposedly secular sociological
analyses of the modern family.

More recently, an article on tourism[6] in the journal *Sociology*
analyses different modes of 'getting away from it all' in terms of
the tourist's personal response to whatever is the sacred centre
of his particular society.   Thus those who accept the orientation
of their society will go on holiday that they may return
recommitted to this 'centre', while others disillusioned with
whatever it is their society holds sacred may, for example, wander
the world in search of something else that will give meaning to
life.

Recognition of the sacred within society is not confined to
sociology among the human sciences.   The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan[7]
has published intriguing comparative and historical work on sacred
space — on how human beings sacralise particular places — while
Graber, a student of Tuan's[8], has analysed the contemporary
American cult of the wilderness as a search for sacred space.   In
economics, the late E.F. Schumacher[9] was concerned with what he
called *the centre*, "our most basic convictions, those ideas which
really have the power to move us".

Most of these authors have lost the critical stance both of
the prophets and of Marx toward the sacred: for some, the sacred
is just an important and interesting phenomenon, while for others
positively value adulation of the monarchy (Shils and Young) or
the wilderness (Graber).   But they all recognise that human
beings continue to worship, in perhaps the most unlikely places,
whether or not official religion is still flourishing.   The
Christian notion of idolatry must surely ring at least some
intellectual bells with them.

Problems. So much for the sociological acceptability of the
notion of idolatry.   But it is not a concept without problems.

Firstly, a sociological analysis which develops the theme of
communal idolatry, may become blindly linked with the questionable
idea that most people are agreed about what values are to be held
sacred.   Social scientists in the Durkheim tradition who develop
the notion of the sacred tend to be anthropologists or
sociologists of religion and to hold a rather static view of a
society cemented together by religion.   That there may be conflict
and change inherent in society, and that the sacred may have much
to do with precipitating, rather than inhibiting, conflict and
social unrest has been little appreciated by such sociologists,
though well understood by OT prophets.   Hopefully, Christian

sociologists will be reading their Amos as well as their Durkheim.

Secondly, it is tempting to label as an idol *anything* one wants to criticise or even just comment on.   That the word is in everyday use ("His idol is golf") enhances the sociologist's chance of communicating to the layman, but jeopardises the tightness of the term if it is to be intellectually rigorous. Theoretical work needs to be done here, which at the very least must take cognisance of work in comparative religion (classic texts being Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* and Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane.*

A form of this danger is to imagine that one's pet hate is the *only* or chief idol of the age.   However, the pluralism of modern society (discussed in Howard Davis' paper) ensures that there are a considerable number of modern gods (though their diversity does not mean they are unrelated).   Perhaps the situation is more reminiscent of the plural gods of Athens than of the single alternatives to Yahweh (such as Baal, or the golden calf) that threatened true religion in ancient Israel: this changed historical context must be borne in mind when considering the relevance of many Scriptural passages.

Thirdly, it is easier to discern idolatry in attitudes to ideas than institutions.   Thus when we talk of idolising science, we usually refer to scientism — the absolutising of the scientific — rather than of the actual social, economic and political organisation of science.   Or my own writings on the idolatry of the modern family have tended to refer to the *idea* of the family (for example, expectations of marital bliss) rather than to family structure.   It is not surprising then that the papers in this volume were presented at a symposium entitled "*Ideology* and Idolatry in British Society" rather than "*Institutions* and Idolatry in British Society".   It is encouraging, though, that in his paper David Lyon looked at welfare as an institution as well as as an ideology: also that Richard Russell examined education as an institution.

                              *   *   *   *

Finally, we may ask Can a Christian viewpoint influence the current state of sociological theory concerning *ideology*? Ideology, for the sociologist, is not just 'ideas'; an ideology (at least according to one viewpoint) is an interlocking set of ideas which express the material interests of a particular social group and which is conditioned by the socio-economic position of that group.   Thus one can talk of the medical profession having an ideology.   Marxists would add that the function of ideologies is to maintain the status quo — they are a smoke-screen that hides oppression and justifies the authority of the ruling class; for the Marxist, ideologies contain an element of illusion.   The

sociologist tries to understand how ideas arise out of a socio-
economic-political context, and the Marxist sociologist tries to
show how ideas are used to maintain that context (which he
considers faulty and wishes to change).

The Christian sociologist adds that the contexts out of which
ideologies are formed are religious as well as material; ideologies
express religious as well as material interests.   Thus human
beings produce ideologies in order to make sense of the fallen
world in which they live, and to justify their own chosen way of
attempting to mitigate their fallenness[10].   Ideologies act as a
smokescreen shutting out the light of God's truth, obscuring the
true gravity of the human situation.   It is no aim of the
Christian sociologist to *replace* the conventional sociological
notion of a socio-economic-political world with that of a fallen
world, but rather to *inform* and refine the socio-economic-political
analysis and to place it within a broader framework.   The notion
of idolatry helps us to realise just how serious the smokescreen
function of ideology is, and just how deeply rooted human ideas
are in the total human condition.

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HOWARD H. DAVIS

HOMELESS MINDS?

Dr. Howard Davis, of the
Faculty of Social Sciences
in the University of Kent,
Canterbury, discusses
secularisation and social
consciousness in industrial
society. Dr. Davis was
Chairman at the V.I.
Symposium on 19 May, 1979.

'Homelessness', according to one major school of contemporary
sociological thought, is the characteristic condition of late
twentieth century industrial man and the fate of all those who
are caught up in the processes of industrialisation,
urbanisation and modernisation.   The metaphor comes from the
title of a book by Peter Berger, who is probably the most
important exponent of this view, and it describes the social-
psychological state of persons who are subject to the highly
differentiated processes of complex industrial societies such as
their highly fragmented division of labour, their extensive
bureaucratic organisation and their unprecedented diversity of
life-styles.   Because of this differentiation, people are said
to experience difficulty in finding a stable or unified personal
and social identity.[1]

     The categories which Berger and his associates developed for
understanding these processes are derived partly from the
classical sociologies of religion and organisation (especially
those of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, and their concepts of
institution, authority, and bureaucracy) and partly from a
phenomenology which takes it to be axiomatic that society is a
'socially constructed reality'.   As anyone who is familiar with
Berger's work will know, this has interesting consequences for
the study of religious phenomena, for instead of being
compartmentalized and treated as a separate object of theory and
research, religious institutions and ideas take their place
alongside other institutions and symbol systems which are not
overtly religious in the processes of meaning-creation and
reality-construction.[2]

     This is by no means a completely new departure, of course.
Arguably, the most persuasive sociological theories of religion
have always tended to subordinate the category 'religion' in its

specific, institutional sense and assume that religious and other
cultural institutions are analytically equivalent. This is
certainly true of the sociologies of religion found in Marx,
Durkheim and Weber as well as of contemporary theories, including
Berger's.

         Contemporary empirical studies of religion are bound in the
same direction *via* a somewhat different route. As social science
developed as a discipline in higher education, there naturally
developed the empirical study of practices, institutions and
beliefs which by their own definition could be called 'religious'.
This tradition is still alive and flourishing, particularly on
the continent of Europe. However, interest has turned more
recently towards what Towler calls 'common religion', or those
beliefs and practices which, having some religious content, are
outside the control of 'official religion' and whose significance
will not usually be recognised by the churches.[3]   He would
include a whole variety of (usually non-systematic) beliefs about
God, the supernatural, the meaning of suffering, the efficacy of
prayer, and so on. And indeed there is evidence that this
religious undergrowth is active, perhaps increasingly so, despite
the decline of institutional religion. Luckmann takes this
approach a stage further, which brings back the empirical study
of religion in an almost full circle to the idea that to study
culture in general is to study religion and *vice versa*. Instead
of contrasting 'official' with 'unofficial' religion, he
contrasts *all* church-orientated religion with 'natural' or
'invisible' religion which need not necessarily contain any
element or belief in the supernatural. In a rather similar way,
Mol equates religion with the construction of meaning and
identity and describes religion as the 'sacralization of
identity'.[4]

         At first sight, it might seem that such approaches make the
idea of 'secularization' redundant. If there are no theoretical
grounds for distinguishing between the sacred and the secular,
between religious and non-religious, the category of secularity
is hard to justify except perhaps in the description of the
historically limited process of transfer of land and property
from Church to State. On a closer view, however, there are
signs that the theme of secularization has affinities with
'homelessness' or the differentiation theme, and that when they
are brought together they help to clarify each other. The
purpose of this paper is to map out some of these connections and
their consequences in four stages. The first section shows how
'secularization' as conventionally described can be interpreted
within the more general framework of differentiation or
pluralization, and how the persistence as well as the decline of
religion can be understood. In the second section, I draw
attention to the parallels which seem to exist between the
traditional categories of *sacred/profane* and the newer categories

of *private/public* as they occur in discussions of differentiation
and identity.   There then follows a section which describes some
of the general consequences which the multiplication of modes of
personal existence might have for personal and social identity
in advanced industrial societies.   The final section includes
some speculation on the projections which have been made by
authors such as Daniel Bell as to the future of religion (in the
conventional sense) in the late 20th century.   Bell, a leading
American sociologist, predicts a widespread revival and the re-
emergence of religion as a cornerstone of cultural legitimation.
Others of course predict the continued decline of traditional
values and the major religious symbol systems, especially in the
industrialized countries of North America and Western Europe.

Secularization and Social Differentiation

There are probably few who would disagree with the
proposition that in the development of industrial societies
there has been a broad tendency for the church to become at
least partly differentiated from other institutional spheres to
which it was once more closely related, such as the state, social
control, education, welfare, etc.   Whether or not as a
consequence, it is also generally accepted that there has been a
process of institutional differentiation within the church and a
parallel diversification of roles, allegiances and beliefs at the
personal level.   Even if it were possible, it is not my task
here to provide a general account of these processes (a recent
book by David Martin[5] shows what an extensive project that would
be).   My objective is more limited: to try and illustrate how
the 'sacred canopy' of religious legitimation can be replaced
by other sources of meaning or identity and how this process is
both limited and self-contradictory because it is rooted in
social processes which necessarily consist of disharmonious
elements.   It would be quite appropriate to use the term
secularization in this context to describe one element in
society's neglect of or movement away from principles of order
and interaction which are transcendental or at least 'extra-
social'.   But it would not adequately describe the complex
totality of the processes whereby meanings, values and
identities are formed, lost and re-formed.

I take 'identity' to be an active construction, not simply a
mirror image of social structure or role as some social theorists
would like it to be.   Typically, it consists of ideas or themes
which, although they may not provide a comprehensive or fully
consistent framework for understanding self and society, still
provide a means to understand the fragments of personal
experience and collate them in meaningful ways.   It is simple
enough to illustrate the point.   For instance, only a very small
number of voters could give anything like a full account of the

social forces, the theories and the policies which divide the
Labour, Liberal and Conservative parties; but a majority of
voters have no difficulty in placing themselves (i.e.
articulating a social identity) in the party political spectrum.
Religion supplies another example.   In a National Opinion Poll
Survey in 1970 asking people which denomination they were
associated with, only 4% either claimed to be non-religious or
did not know.[6]   Obviously, only a very small fraction of the
remaining 96% were actually involved in the activities of the
denominations to which they claimed allegiance.   For results
like this to be intelligible, there have to be routine identity-
forming processes which operate outside the 'official' channels
of socialization and education.   As Roland Robertson declares,
"in modern circumstances of great individuation it seems entirely
unrealistic to speak positively of individuals assimilating large
chunks of traditional values in a relatively unreflective manner".[7]
But the fact is that social identities are somehow still
maintained.   The question therefore remains: how do people still
seem to arrive at reasonably stable modes of individual and
collective existence even when monolithic values and symbols have
been eroded (I take it that for all the talk of crisis we are not
yet witnessing the breakdown of civilized society)?

An answer to this rhetorical question requires some
understanding of the background to the theory of differentiation
or pluralism as it is sometimes called.   The theory as expounded
by Berger rests on an assumption about the relative homogenity of
institutions in traditional society compared with the institutions
of modern society.   Quite simply, it starts from the idea that
modern industrial societies are made up of various institutionally
isolated sectors, whereas in traditional societies the various
sectors (e.g. family, work, religion, art, government, etc.) could
all be seen as aspects of a single, integrated whole.   In a
tribal society, for example, a place in the kinship system
automatically gave you a place in the others.

In a highly differentiated, urban industrial society it
clearly does not follow that one role is automatically linked to
other roles in different institutions — so I may have an identity
based on my occupational role as a bus-conductor which has no
bearing on my role as a voter, father, or consumer.   Or so the
theory goes.   The various isolated sectors of society require
the individual to play disparate roles, thus imposing disparate
identities.   Most importantly, there is no single, coherent
system of meaning in such a society to compare with the religious
meaning systems of traditional societies.   In other words, the
family, church, education, the army, political parties and the
media are all said to be less interwoven and interdependent, so
that they fail to provide a coherent design or definition of
reality.

Several things follow from this general analytical approach, including major consequences for the understanding of personal and social identity — how we define ourselves and how we relate to the rest of society.

Differentiation and Identity

Historically, one of the expressions of the differentiation process has been a distinction between public life and private life.   This has become the primary framework in which the perennial problems of identity have to be resolved.   It is the context for the identity crises and personal dilemmas which seem to characterise the 'homeless mind'.   Not least, it is the battlefield in the struggle for a religious culture.[8]

The increasing divergence of institutional spheres gives each institution a large measure of autonomy.   Social institutions, which generally have the form of bureaucratic organizations, seem to grow, develop and operate as it were according to rules which they write themselves.   There is a strong sense, therefore, in which bureaucracies and institutions of the public sphere seem to set over against the individual as alien and immovable objects.   This is what Berger calls the objective autonomy of social institutions.

What then of the individual?   Is he merely the alienated object of this external objective reality which presses down on him in the forms of bureaucratic control?   Obviously not entirely.   The analysis of differentiation makes room for a different kind of social institution — private rather than public ones.   What our society defines as the private sphere (especially marriage, family and friendship) can be seen as those institutions which provide for the subjective autonomy of the individual. Emotionally, intellectually and physically, the individual tends to invest a great deal in this sphere, which he can claim as being uniquely his or her own.

The general significance of this private/public distinction lies in the disharmony between them in a differentiated or pluralistic society.   Since there is no single, overarching source of meaning in a pluralistic society, people have to search for significance in the various institutions in which they participate.   In theory, any kind of institution or corporate experience can be the object of this search, but in practice, this search for meaning typically ends up in the private worlds of the home, marriage, family and friends.   This is literally the process of the construction of a 'home world', a shelter from the chaos of meanings and identities in the public sphere.   It is, or at least appears to be, less subject to arbitrary and uncontrollable outside influences.   There is a sense in which

this 'private' sphere in modern society has characteristics of
'sacredness' analogous to the sphere of the sacred in pre-
industrial societies.   In particular, the distinction between
'private' and 'public' is so comprehensive that it allows almost
any aspect of meaning and behaviour to be classified — and the
absoluteness of the classification is precisely what persuaded
Durkheim to use the sacred/profane distinction as the foundation
for his theory of religion.

But, this construction of a home world, given the
vulnerability of the 'private' sphere to misunderstanding,
disruption and emotional overloading, is a hazardous and
precarious business.   Its very subjectivity makes it a doubtful
candidate for elevation to sacred status.

Continuing with this general description, it is possible to
state some of the implications for personal identity of a society
organised (or disorganized) along these lines.

If one thinks of identity as an answer to the questions 'who
am I'?, 'where did I come from?', 'where am I going to?' then the
sense of identity is a bringing togther of the answers to these
questions in a general plan which makes some sort of sense of the
vast range of actual experiences — past, present and future.
According to Berger's analysis modern identity has four
characteristic features.[9]   In the first place it is relatively
undetermined, complex and uncertain in its formation.   That is,
it is not something given but something which individuals plan
for themselves.   One way to think of this is to compare the
rather predictable biography of the average person in traditional
society with the modern person's, whose career or biography is
like a migration through a whole series of different and detached
social worlds (e.g. family, school, college, unemployment, variety
of jobs, retirement).   Berger says that this open-endedness of
modern identity creates psychological strains and makes the modern
individual peculiarly 'conversion-prone' because he is anxious to
grasp at any plausible ready-made identity.   A second feature,
which follows from the importance of the private sphere in a
highly differentiated society, is that the 'search for reality'
is most likely to be in the subjective realm; the individual
seeks a foothold in reality in himself rather than outside
himself.   It follows that modern man is more likely than
traditional man to be afflicted by what might be called 'identity
crisis' and relativistic values.   However, it does not
necessarily follow that modern identity is random and unreflective.
In fact the third feature Berger notes is that it is reflective to
a high degree.   A 'plural' world, unlike a highly integrated
world, forces an individual to make decisions and plans, to
interpret the complexity rather than taking it for granted.   We
are very busy 'rationalizing', finding explanations and excuses
for the way things are and the way we act.   Finally, the

individual is the reference point in the search for meaning and
coherence, and therefore the individual has first place in the
hierarchy of values.   Advanced industrial societies are
overwhelmingly legitimated by the ideology of individualism:
individual autonomy and individual rights.   This phenomenon
extends to religion, which has become the expression of private
meaning par excellence.

A difficulty with this view which relies so heavily on the
ideas of individualism and 'privatization' is that it begs the
question of how society can possibly hang together.   The
classical sociological 'problem of order' reappears in a new
form.   In fact, trying to explain the cohesiveness of modern
society is much harder than explaining its conflicts or its
tendency to disintegrate.   But order is undoubtedly maintained
somehow.

The classical pluralist assumption is that order is
maintained by the checks and balances which are built into the
system, such that all the different actions and reactions tend
to cancel out, thus preserving stability.   However, this account
is hardly satisfying.   It manages to conjure order out of
disorder, without proposing any real explanation.   The
alternative, which has been suggested by a number of people who
would otherwise describe modern society as 'differentiated', is
that there is a general coercive force in such a society which
keeps it together as an integrated whole.   Some would describe
this force as bureaucracy, others may be as the state; Marxists
would describe it as the dominant culture or ideology.   For the
moment, how it is described is less important than the actual
existence of such a force.   In fact what it implies is that
social control in modern society is very strong and pervasive
precisely because of the privatization of the modern individual.
That is to say, the separation of the private from the public
sphere puts institutions beyond the control of any individual
and as often as not even beyond the power of organized groups
to change or challenge.   And it makes the private, individual
sphere particularly vulnerable to manipulation and direction by
powerful interests.

This particular observation anticipates a subsequent stage
in the argument.   Its merit is to guard against placing too much
stress on the forces of differentiation and to draw attention to
the countervailing forces which help to conserve order and
identity.   The immediate problem is: what evidence can be found
empirically of the theoretically-postulated 'privatisation',
'individualism', 'crisis of identity' and so on — the retreat
from totality views of society and comprehensive beliefs or
ideologies?

Trends in Social Consciousness in Industrial Society

In this section I will avoid specific references to religious consciousness because the general discussion of meaning construction and identity formation must appeal to empirical research which makes reference to general self and social images which do not necessarily have a religious content.   Nearly all of the studies referred to below sample on an occupational basis rather than any other because they assume that occupational experience or 'labour' in its most abstract sense is the key to social identity and consciousness.   This is a sound assumption because industrial society by definition subordinates or harnesses religious, ethnic, class and other sectional interests to industrial production and accumulation — although I would not deny that religious commitment, national feeling, or class consciousness for example, may become salient under certain circumstances or that these may transcend the boundaries of the social division of labour.

Numerous empirical studies have been carried out in Britain and Europe since the 1950's to try and establish the varieties of social consciousness, 'images of society' or social identities which exist among the different social strata, and especially among the manual working class.   One major study from Germany, in the late 1950's showed beyond doubt that within a single occupational group in fact, there may exist wide differences of social imagery which can neither be dismissed as the products of personality structure nor accounted for by contrasts in the work situation and in skill.[10]   However, although there were found to be differences in the number of strata or classes the workers chose to identify and differences in the ways in which these were evaluated there was an important common denominator in the diversity of attitudes and opinions; namely, an image of society as a *dichotomy* — 'us and them' or more precisely an awareness of the collective fate of the working class (i.e. those who do physical, value-creating work).   Subsequent studies all confirmed this finding, at least for the next decade or so.   And other evidence consistently pointed to a prevailing *hierarchical* image of society among white collar workers.

In these various studies, 'image of society' or 'social self-image' had the appearance of a comprehensive framework for interpreting complex social situations.   Workers used it as a scanning device for locating and clarifying individual experiences in their social context.   Whether the evidence pointed to a dichotomy or a hierarchy of social groups, the idea of a more or less cohesive society provided a reference point and a basis for identity.

    More recent evidence shows that there has been some decline
in the coherence of these 'images of society' as organising
frameworks.   It suggests that the influence of the dichotomous,
us/them scheme has diminished and that individual experience is
replacing collectivity as the dominant reference point in the
social consciousness of workers.   It is here that the link with
the broad themes of differentiation, modernisation and 'abstraction'
(to use Zijderveld's term) are to be seen most clearly.[11]   In an
increasingly differentiated world of work, consciousness of shared
goals and collective achievement are found to have declined,
leaving very little in the way of uniform structures of social
thought.   Particularly important seems to be the reduced
significance of the physical aspects of work.   Other factors are
the changing role of the trade unions (which have ceased to be
the chief mediators of marxist-socialist theory) and an
increasingly uniform commodity consciousness.   The attributes
which are now appealed to by workers for their self interpretation
are individualistic attributes which are just as likely to be
based on roles in consumption as on performance at work.

    The other side of this coin seems to be a resigned or
sceptical attitude towards society and uncertainty and
inconsistency in judgements about social questions.[12]   These
findings are plausibly an accurate reflection of the fragmentary
and contradictory nature of individual's experience.   Without a
common occupational consciousness (pride in work) or a sense of
the solidarity of all working people, the only significant
remaining common factor of experience is the uncertainty itself.
This, above all, is the factor which relativises individual
experiences and fosters an identity based on private rather than
public or occupational attributes.   In short, the 'image of
society' has all but disappeared because private experience on
its own contains no principle by which to relate to society.
These are the conclusions of certain recent studies, at least.

    The result of my own research into images of society are not
quite as negative as this.   They fall somewhere between the two
types: the definitely structured and fairly comprehensive view of
the social world, albeit with a great number of minor variations;
and the destructured awareness of social relationships, governed
by indeterminacy and individualistic variation.[13]

    The recurring theme in the images of society tradition of
research is the problem of the fragmentary, even confused, nature
of social imagery among those social groups who have been studied
in detail.   It appears that consistent, unambiguous and all-
inclusive 'images of society' are increasingly harder to find and
that interpretations of class inequality, for example, typically
combine attitudes and beliefs about status, occupational attributes
and income which together cannot provide a single, coherent action
orientation.   I referred earlier to evidence that judgements

about social questions are increasingly uncertain and
inconsistent. It may be that this is simply a result of more
sophisticated research techniques but in my view this is unlikely.
The method of extended interviewing and observation remains the
most appropriate in spite of its limitations. It is more likely
that inconsistencies within and between people's accounts of
their experience and social relationships is evidence of the
increasingly difficulty of constructing a coherent social
consciousness in a world of work in which the technical and
social division of labour has become unimaginably complex. If
this is so, the most important consequence for social
consciousness is that awareness of collectivity (either
occupational awareness or identification with a class) will be
diminished. Only at times of crisis like large-scale redundancy
or a major strike may the awareness of the collective fate of the
working class be regained. There is, however, one further
possibility which must be considered: the possibility that
'normative' values are 'handed down' by the dominant cultural
institutions, including the media, education, and of course the
church (unfortunately none of the studies referred to above have
incorporated any systematic analysis of these processes).[14]

     In recent historical perspective there have been two important
trends in class and social consciousness which the majority of
observers agree are beyond dispute, although their interpretation
is a matter for debate. Firstly, there is the trend towards
greater differentiation, towards social and cultural diversity
which can be seen in the decline of bi-partisan politics, the
rise of the 'counter-culture' and the expression of a wide range
of interests and values in pressure groups and less organised
social movements. This has sometimes been interpreted as a sign
of the demise of 'traditional' classes and class attitudes. At
other times it has been taken to indicate the emergence of a new
class or classes based on something other than the ownership of
property or the distribution of income and wealth. In the study
of worker's consciousness, as we have seen, most current
interpretations of this trend emphasise the fragmentation of
culture and consciousness. They point to a general lack of
coherence and consistency in beliefs, attitudes and images of
society.

     The second important trend which it is usually agreed can be
traced to a watershed in the late 1960's, is the tendency for
organised opinion in the form of 'official' accounts and mass
media messages to emphasise the commonality of social and political
interests. This therefore is a trend towards greater, not lesser,
consistency and coherence. Thus Burns' conclusion to a survey of
the historical development of public opinion is that, on the one
hand, "political, social, economic and cultural interests, values
and opinions have appeared to become more and more disparate"
while on the other hand "the kind of opinions and attitudes and

values and, above all, information, conveyed by broadcasting and
the press has tended to become more constrained and more
internally consistent".[15]   If these are indeed the dominant
tendencies in the organisation of public opinion in the past two
decades we can assume that they have some general repercussions
in social consciousness.   For example, the 'organised disparity'
which Burns refers to might be reflected in a heightened sense of
identity and the narrowing range of opinion available to consumers
of the mass media might be reflected in an increasing awareness of
the 'national interest'.   These are empirical questions which
require further research before they can be fully answered.
However, there are strong indications that the varieties of social
consciousness which have been identified are subject to these
conflicting tendencies.   It follows that consciousness forming
institutions like the church will experience a tension between
increasing disparity or individualism and the need for organisation
and predictability.

Differentiation and the Future of Religion

        This leads me to a consideration of some possible consequences
of the processes of social differentiation and identity 'crisis'
for the future of religion in the late 20th century industrial
societies.   What follows is some sociologically-informed
speculation along these lines.   Being sociological (rather than
theological) it is expressed in terms of social relationships and
structures.   It is nonetheless theologically highly relevant
because questions about the dynamics of religious change are at the
interface between the two disciplines.[16]

        From the foregoing discussion, it seems fairly clear that there
is a fundamental problem about the development of institutions and
the development of personal experience and identity.   On the one
hand the differentiation of institutional spheres is bringing about
the decline of traditional sources of cultural authority and
legitimation.   On the other, the multiplication of modes of
individual existence is causing the proliferation of identities.
In social system terms, these processes may literally reach a
critical point or 'crisis' in which change has to occur because the
system cannot cope with too high a degree of indeterminacy.   Before
this stage is reached (if it ever is) we can predict that present
trends will continue.   These are twofold, namely:
(1) The continued decline of large-scale, universal and homogeneous
religious frames of identity.   In Bellah's words, society has
"simply no room for a hierarchic dualistic religious symbol system
of the classic historic type."[17]   As a consequence of the processes
of industrialization, urbanization and modernisation, this decline
has been fully enough documented by students of 'secularization'
for me not to spend more time elaborating it.

(2) The development of relatively isolated, smaller and more cohesive frames of religious identity (the trend away from 'church' and 'denominational' religion towards so-called 'sect' religion, with the emphasis on groups and do-it-yourself styles of worship). Sociologically speaking, it seems likely that such groups will tend to 'sacralize' existing sources of identity, i.e. they will tend to occupy social niches defined by criteria of occupation, education, ethnicity, age, sex and so on rather than by purely religious criteria.   In theory any of these things can become the focus for identity.   At the local level, these groups would reflect the strengths, weaknesses and idiosyncracies of 'black' theology, 'liberation' theology, 'urban' theology or for that matter 'water-buffalo' theology.

These two trends are of course linked, and not just conceptually.   There is a much more direct link which is well illustrated by the activities of, for instance, the moral crusaders and the Nationwide Festival of Light.   When such groups plead for society to 'put the family back in its rightful place' or call for a Minister for the Family, they are trying to reinforce the universal, homogeneous framework of values by appealing to the most important of the 'private', sacred sources of identity, the embattled family, which is one of the last remaining frameworks of 'religious' identity (in the broad sense). In sociological terms, therefore, it is no accident that the family has such an important place in the thinking and policies of the moral campaigners.

Finally, I want to speculate about a possible third trend which shows some signs of emerging.
(3) I mentioned above that it is difficult to envisage the continuation of present trends indefinitely without a point of crisis being reached is less important than the fact that it must eventually occur.   In the opinion of Daniel Bell, it is likely to be averted because "a long-submerged need on the part of people in the West for simple pieties (will) join with a rediscovered sense of community and discontent with dry and abstract science to fuel a new religious impulse."[18]   Bell claims to discern the roots of a religious reawakening in the fundamentalist churches in the United States and in people's desperate search for wonder and mystery in the world.   However, described in this way, such developments are not necessarily distinct from the second trend I have just outlined, although Bell is more optimistic about the scale of the changes and the possibility of their combining to form an integrated movement.

My own view is that the logic of these processes is just as likely to encourage the re-instatement of large-scale, homogeneous frames of identity to make up for the lack of consensus about social values and social goals.   There is no necessity for these

frameworks to be 'religious' in the strict sense of the word: they
could be political ideologies, nationalism, economic philosophies,
etc.   However, given the place of religious symbols in the
national cultural inheritance, it seems more than likely that such
a 'revival' could be at least partly religious.

     Herein lies a great danger.   As a religious revival it would
be artificially based on the mobilization of old slogans and folk
memories.   For the purpose of legitimation it would tend to be a
'national' or 'civil' religion in the service of the state,
inclined towards universalism, and syncretism — in the non-
theological sense.   The distortion of religious identity and
religious consciousness which would inevitably occur in this
situation — which has antecedents in pre-war Germany and elsewhere
— is a disturbing thought.

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DAVID LYON

PROGRESS, MANIPULATION, AND THE WELFARE STATE

Dr. Lyon argues that social
attitudes to the Welfare
State are in many respects
idolatrous with the result
that, as with idolatry in
all its forms, much harm as
well as good results. This
paper was the first to be
presented at the VI
Symposium on IDEOLOGY AND
IDOLATRY IN BRITISH SOCIETY
on 19 May, 1979.

'We've never had it so good' was the slogan of the new-welfare-
state in the 1950s.   That slogan was based on certain beliefs,
in particular beliefs about progress as the application of science
to human welfare.   A kind of political salvation was vested in
the welfare state, but it has not been realized.   We still await
Professor Titmuss's dream of a 'welfare society'.

       Of course, it cannot be denied that the welfare state has
ameliorated major hardships and relieved many symptoms of social
sores, and I would not wish to do so.   But I do suggest that the
faith of those welfare-optimists was misplaced.   Both the slogan
'we've never had it so good' and the very term 'welfare state' are
glosses on some specific social relationships and beliefs.   When
this is recognized, it is also possible to see that the very
apparatus designed to control and to conquer Beveridge's five
giants (squalor, want, ignorance, disease, and idleness) has
itself begun to control us.

       This paper is by way of being an experiment in interpretation.
There is a classic tradition of Christian social thinking which
focuses on 'idolatry' as a means of describing (and by the same
token partly explaining) social institutions, movements, and
events.   The prophetic denunciation of idolatry in ancient Israel
has from time to time been revived as a means of exposing social
(and personal) ills.

       The essence of idolatry is that something within the created
order becomes an object of worship (Is. 44: 9-20) which is
trusted, and raises expectations.   Though a human artefact, (Is.
2: 8; 40: 18-20) it becomes a spiritual force to be reckoned with
(1 Cor. 10: 20), and in time it controls its worshippers.   These

become afflicted with a certain blindness to reality, accepting
as true totally false ideas (Hab. 2: 18) and in some respects
become like their idols (Jer. 2: 5).

Andrew Kirk suggests that idolatry today may be any
Weltanschauung based on a belief in human autonomy.[1]   Vigo Demant,
in his version of 'Christian sociology', speaks specifically about
the idolatry behind capitalism.   He insists that the ethos of
capitalism is maintained by an innocent-looking set of business
theories and warns that "it is pride which finds satisfaction in
working a machine or system, and which continues to find
conscientious reasons for working it even when it becomes divorced
from human purposes."   And pride blinds men to such divorce.[2]

Idolatry also features in Marx' analysis of social
relationships.   He spoke of money as a secular god, an 'alien
essence' which dominates people as they adore it.[3]   In its
developed form this idea is known as the 'fetishism of commodities'.
"A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and
easily understood.   Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a
very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and
theological niceties."[4]   What are these?   Put simply, they are
human relationships which are regarded objectively as if they
were commodities.   People introject qualities of life and purpose
into relationships which are their own creation.   I wish to
suggest that something of this kind is applicable to the welfare
state.

Welfare as Progress

The whole triumphal approach to welfare in the 1940s was
suggestive of religious commitment.   Beveridge was 'fighting
giants' who had to be conquered.   The welfare state was born in
a wave of post-war optimism about 'reconstruction', and faith in
human fraternity.   The pre-war depression was destined to be
reduced to a mere memory — a bad dream.   The new dream was a
different one: 'You've never had it so good'.   Yet even in the
1950s that slogan veiled much human misery and deprivation
untouched by welfare.[5]

Why do I associate the term 'progress' with the welfare
state?   Because although progress is not often mentioned today,
belief in its reality is undoubtedly connected with the history
of welfare in Britain.[6]   Belief in progress was a key motif in
the Enlightenment and in all subsequent humanistic thought.   It
is both supported by, and a catalyst to, the application of
science to human welfare.[7]   The title of Henry George's
important late nineteenth century book, *Progress and Poverty*[8]
is significant here.   The two notions were felt by many to be
incompatible.   It was disgraceful that widespread poverty, at
that time being dramatically exposed to the horror of the

Victorian bourgeoisie, should be allowed to coexist alongside
vaunted material-industrial progress.

Welfare provision in Britain has emerged as a contradictory
process.   The values which have brought capitalist society into
being are incompatible with the community-spirit and selflessness
assumed in the welfare outlook.   Though some social democrats
have felt that the welfare state is an egalitarian measure, it
has also long been realized that it coexists with great inequality.
In 1950 T.H. Marshall pointed out that the rights of a citizen
provide "the foundation of equality on which the structure of
inequality could be built".[6a]   The progress in which the makers
of the welfare state believed in is of a kind that reduces major
inequalities, but fails to produce equality. (See note added in proof)

The idea that the welfare state was progressive and fraternal
was widespread in the 1940s.   The sober *Times*, for example,
carried an editorial on July 1st 1940 which spoke glowingly of
the 'new order' which would soon characterise Britain.   Equitable
distribution of wealth, the right of all men to live and work, and
an end to class and individual privilege — this was to be the new
order.   Those who criticise the welfare state have only to
measure success in terms of the actual legislation of the 1940s in
order to support their case.   Beveridge's giants, though weakened,
are still alive and well.   And curiously enough, the debate is
still carried on in terms of 'progress'.   For example, Vic George
and Paul Wilding frequently use the word 'progress' where 'change'
would do.[9]   Though they can discern little progress since the
1940s, they clearly believe that, given their approach to the
problems, progress is possible.

Again, I must stress that I am not simply taking a negative
view of the institution of welfare in our society.   Many social
evils have been reduced by the welfare state.   But I argue that
a kind of political salvation was vested in it, especially during
that euphoric era of post-war reconstruction.   The very fact that
the Beveridge Report was an immediate best-seller in 1942 is
further evidence of this.   Faith in progress, bolstered at that
time, has been strongly maintained ever since.   And if this
assertion is true, we may also expect the corollary of idol-
worship also to be manifest in the welfare state.   Control is
the idol.   Idols tend to take over the lives of their
· worshippers.   Has this in fact occurred?

Welfare as Manipulation

Jurgen Habermas argues convincingly that the contemporary
state is undergoing a crisis of legitimation.[10]   That which
commands national loyalty, and converts power into authority is
lacking.   Once upon a time market forces legitimated the

distribution of resources in capitalist society.   But the market
proved inherently unstable, and the state intervened increasingly.
In advanced societies the state virtually replaces the market as
the steering-mechanism of capitalism.   The institution of
welfare, I shall argue, illustrates Habermas' point very well.

But what makes the new state legitimate?   The imperatives
of scientific-technical progress is the answer.   Technical
experts must run society along rational lines.   The logic of
scientific progress determines the development of the social
system.   Here are echoes of Jacques Ellul, and also the more
recent work of Egbert Schuurman.[11]   Ultimate questions of how
people ought to live are excluded: manipulation by experts is the
order of the day.   Pragmatism rather than principle rules.

I do not intend to explore the crisis of legitimation here.
Habermas shows how intrusion into (and therefore politicization
of) 'private' areas of life leads to a contradiction.   On the
one hand the capitalist state wishes to be a law unto itself,
excluding the masses from decision-making.   On the other, its
very intervention raises expectations and political hope.   He
argues, also, that motivation decreases under state influence and
that this further erodes legitmation.

So how does welfare operate?   Feminists such as Elizabeth
Wilson argue vehemently that both life-styles and life's
opportunities are severely restricted by welfare practices.   It
is welfare ideology which brings this about.   For Wilson, this
is seen above all in social work: "The literature of social work
is the ideology of welfare capitalism."[12]   The technical expert
syndrome is clearly seen here.   When psychotherapy, counselling
and casework fail, 'family sculpting', 'crisis intervention' and
'systems theory' are brought in and pragmatic change is
fetishized.   The latest fashion is to describe social workers
as 'change-agents'.

How is all this manipulatory?   The assumption which
underlies so much of the literature of social work is that
'clients' are inadequate, and are especially impoverished because
their vocabulary is too limited to describe their problems.   The
social workers know best.

But there are other ways, sometimes less obvious, in which
welfare, rather than creating a more human *lebensraum*,
manipulates its beneficiaries.   Let us briefly examine three
areas.   Two affect everyone: the medicalization of motherhood
and the takeover of educational responsibility by the state.   The
third affects an ever increasing number of people, those
dependent upon social security.

The rapid increase, over the past few decades, of intervention
in motherhood, has had several effects.   On the one hand, lives
which otherwise might have been lost have been saved through the
use of.induction or surgical techniques.   But at the same time,
the natural process of having a baby has been transformed out of
all recognition.   The health services, originally intended to
fight giant disease, have themselves become a giant to be fought.
(Note, for example, not only the increase of inductions in general,
but also their decrease over weekends and at bank holidays!)   In
short, motherhood has been medicalized.[13]

Having a baby which, crudely speaking, before the coming of
the National Health Service was a natural occurrance, is now a
medical business.   Diagnosis and treatment are now meted out to
women who, though apparently fit, are defined as ill.   Women have
lost the store of social knowledge which used to be passed from
mother to daughter, and have to rely instead on magazines and
ante-natal clinics for information.   Medical control, while it
may have made some births safer, also appears to produce anxiety
and a sense of helplessness.[14]   It may also be, as Raij and
Nilsson suggest, that medicalization helps to account for the
increasing incidence of post-natal depression.[14a]   Welfare thus
begins to control us.

My second example concerns education.   Once again, while
certain minimal improvements in educational opportunity do seem
to have occurred since 1944, welfare provisions in this area have
got out of hand.   The state seems intent on denying the very
principles enshrined in the 1944 Butler Education Act.   The
result is that educational responsibility is seen as a province,
not of parents, but of a state-controlled system.

Despite the myth (often supported by the popular media[15])
that children have to be schooled away from their parents, the
1944 provisions still stand.   Parents are seen there to be
responsible for their children's education, and they choose (in
theory) who will be delegated with schooling responsibility.
The minister and LEAs are to see that 'pupils are to be educated
in accordance with the wishes of their parents'[16].   Yet one
suspects that few parents realize that this God-given
responsibility is supported by British law — and even fewer
take up the opportunity.

Moreover, the idea of a system which would increase parental
responsibility meets with a cold reception today.   Frank Musgrave,
one of our education experts, writes, "It is the business of
education in our social democracy to eliminate the influence of
parents... We have decided that children shall not be at the mercy
of their parents.   It is the business of the LEAs to see that they
are not."[17]   But when some parents in Ashford, Kent, were given a
chance of airing their views on parental control *via* a voucher

system, 90% indicated their belief in the desirability of
parental choice.   That such opinions are still held is evidence
of a huge gap between the 'welfare' state and the people.   But
it is not merely a matter of the powerlessness of the electorate.
The system, despite itself, seems to aim at control and
manipulation.   It is impossible even to ask whether the state
should or should not be responsible for the education of children.
Such are the wages of progress.

Lastly, we glance at the matter of dependency.   I am
referring to those, mainly among the poor in the working classes,
who are vulnerable to manipulation by the welfare system.   In a
broad sense, it may be said that a large number of the poor in
the working classes find themselves dependent upon the bureaucracy
of welfare — staffed mainly by the educated middle classes.   The
class nature of poverty and welfare is accentuated here.

Western society assumes that people, given time and effort,
can make a success of their lives.   The American Dream, writ
small, is a common British belief as well.   But for those who are
poor, and dependent on welfare and state income, this is
manifestly not true.   People come to feel powerless and
controlled by their circumstances.   W. Haggstrom in *The Power of
the Poor* describes them as having "very little scope for action,
in the sense of behaviour under their control which is central to
their needs and values"[18].   Withdrawal, apathy, resignation and
hopelessness may set in among those dependent upon the welfare
state.

Poverty, in particular, gives rise to a sense of hopelessness
and lack of control.   Haggstrom also notes another response to
this situation; opposition: "People tend either to retreat from or
to attack forces controlling their lives which they cannot affect."
The welfare services themselves may in fact perpetrate poverty,
and give the poor a strong sense that they are not in control of
their lives (though the impression may be given that they are
responsible for their poverty).

What I am arguing here is that welfare serves to prop up this
system by keeping a certain pool of people dependent.   The
'poverty trap' is one such obvious mechanism.   This is a unique
dilemma of the poor.   If they go out to work to increase their
income they may, at certain levels, find they lose some means-tested
benefits, and end up worse off than before.   Little wonder they
feel manipulated — by 'welfare'.

These kinds of arguments may be extended to other welfare
fields.   Beveridge's fight against giant squalor, for example,
while it has reduced overcrowding and homelessness, and improved
standards, has hardly increased choice.   One's class-position
largely determines the kind of housing in which one lives, and

this is reinforced by housing policy.   Again and again the
argument is illustrated.   People believed in the welfare state
and trusted it to provide benefits but it has proved to be a
Janus-faced god.   One face hands out benefits and alleviates
distress.   The other cultivates dependency and reduces personal
control and responsibility.

Welfare as Ideology

It is insufficient to expose idolatry.   Alternatives must
be spelled out.   The prophet Jeremiah warned against 'learning
the ways of the nations'.   Idols, he insisted, are a 'discipline
of delusion' (Jer. 10: 2,8).   His confession, following this, is
"I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself; nor is it in
a man who walks to direct his steps.   Correct me, O Lord, but
with justice." (Jer. 10: 23,24)

However, it is noteworthy that in keeping away from idols,
God's people were not therefore to withdraw from surrounding
society into a ghetto.   Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in
Babylon explicitly refers to their positive task within a culture
of different ethos from theirs: "Seek the welfare of the city
where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its
behalf; for in its welfare you will find welfare." (Jer. 29: 7)
The Lord had future plans for the fuller welfare and hope of his
people.   *Shalom* would one day be realized.   But for the present
they were to seek the *shalom*-welfare of their immediate
neighbourhood in the city.   Disciples of Christ today are to be
the salt of the earth.   Not by withdrawing out of the welfare
state into a ghetto, but by seeking the welfare of their own
cities.   Perhaps as a spin-off there will be welfare for the
kingdom-community in the welfare of our society.

Ideology has already been mentioned.   It is part of the
'discipline of delusion' of idolatry.   There is a clash in our
day between the ethos of capitalism (in its pure form) and the
welfare ethos.   And yet it is within capitalism that welfareism
has grown up.   The liberal ideals of capitalist society — self-
help, individualism, competition, achievement and trust in those
who handle our money[19], along with the belief that the market
system of distribution is inherently just, — these make up
capitalist society's ideology.

In part to mitigate capitalism's own excesses, the ethos of
welfarism has emerged.   Here mutual aid (helping others),
cooperation, communal achievement, and a concern for the community
at large are seen to be the keys.   Socialist critics of the
welfare state such as George and Wilding hope for these kinds of
changes.   They rightly press for a "reconsideration of fundamental
social objectives" following the failure of the piecemeal

pragmatism of the last thirty years of social administration in Britain.[9a]

George and Wilding elaborate on the arguments of John Rawls and Gary Runciman on the meaning of justice and equality.   The ideal is equality.   All inequalities should have to be justified. The test, according to Runciman, "is whether they can be justified to the losers; and for winners to be able to do this, they must be prepared, in principle, to change places."[20]   These theories are highly attractive and superficially plausible, but it is difficult to see how they would work out in practice.[21] Beyond this, moreover, both George/Wilding and Rawls/Runciman begin from the premise that there are no objectively right or wrong principles for welfare.   Their ideology is as unprincipled as that of capitalism.   George and Wilding go a long way towards finding a definition of 'need', rightly stressing both expert and popular evaluation.   They also make helpful comments on a comparative approach.   But behind it all is their wistful longing for a 'new ideology', which will ensure that people begin to think communally, fairly, and put themselves willingly in others' shoes.   It is a hope which on their terms will ever remain unfulfilled.

Over against this, the Christian social analyst may argue a different case.   Rather than exchanging one idolatry for another, the Christian view begins with a rejection of the nation of human ethical autonomy.   We cannot know what is best for human welfare, however well we balance grass-roots expertise, and comparative approaches to need if that is all we do.   It has to be revealed to us.   A biblical perspective on welfare must be brought to bear on the ideological arena of social policy.   Thus the welfare of the city in which Christians find themselves may be sought. Tentatively and humbly, and recognizing past failure, yes, but also with the assurance that the Lord's requirements speak to today's social situation.

Societal and Local Welfare

The theme of this paper has been that the idea of a welfare state became an object of worship.   As such, it shows signs of a creeping control of its worshippers.   Whilst acknowledging the rightful place for the intervention of the state in the cause of justice, it can be argued that in many ways locally based community care has thus been bypassed.   Rather than maintaining local, face-to-face, relationships with people in need, welfare has become highly bureaucratized, impersonal, and dehumanizing.[22] Talk of the 'welfare state' then, must ever be in the twin context of societal and local welfare.   The church has much to offer at the local level, and there are also various means whereby Christians may also foster national welfare.

In addition, it must never be forgotten by Christians that
a biblical notion of welfare (*shalom*) is not restricted to those
who are in special need (though particular aid is to be extended
to them).   The comfortable and affluent may be totally lacking
in *shalom*.   Christians ought to press for a concept of welfare
which transcends the merely financial — a trap into which many
welfare ideologies fall.   As Stanley Carlton-Thies has put it:
"Only a direct concern with well-being in all areas of life can
promise a fulfillment of hopes signalled originally by the
welfare state: the chance of well-being for all citizens.
Shalom can only come from a harmonious development of all sides
of life for all."[23]

The welfare of which Jeremiah spoke was, in Hebrew, *shalom*.
That is, a fulness of life-relationships and opportunities
(horizontal, between persons, and vertical, between persons and
God).   This, though we may not expect its realization in the
here-and-now, is nevertheless the model for Christian hope.   (The
source of that hope, of course, is God himself.)   In its full
sense, Jesus came to bring *shalom* through His cross (Eph. 2:
13-14).   He came to proclaim good news to the poor (Is. 61: 1
and LK. 4: 16-20), which means that His message speaks, as the
catechism puts it, to both human sin and misery.[24]

This lack of distinction between 'spiritual' and 'practical'
life is part of the whole Old Testament understanding of *shalom*.
As Chris Wright has shown, proper welfare had to do with a right
relationship with God, the family, the nation, and the land.[25]
Moreover, he shows that economic forces, created and accelerated
by greed and oppression, led to the break-up of the land-family-
nation relationship, and therefore the breakup of moral and
spiritual relationships as well.   Those who bemoan the moral
degeneracy of British culture may not safely ignore its socio-
economic dimension.

There are many principles enshrined in the Old Testament
legislation for Israel which are readily translatable into the
present-day language of welfare.   (Which is not to say that one
ignores the theocratic or the predominantly agrarian context into
which this legislation was originally given.   Nor is it to suggest
that the Old Testament is the only source for such principles.
They are simply more fully spelt out here than in the New
Testament.)   Positive discrimination, for example, has biblical
roots.   Measures are taken to ensure that those who are
particularly disadvantaged do not simply 'tread water' when a
universal benefit is proposed.   Such are always special cases in
the Old Testament. (See especially Deut. 15.)

Wright's conclusion, which has great relevance for social
policy today, is that the ideal society of the Old Testament
would have the following provisions: Families would have a measure

of economic independence based on an equitable share of the
nation's wealth; they would feel their social relevance and
significance in the community and would have opportunity to hear
and to respond to the message of redemption. (See especially
1 Sam. 6.)   Deeply engrained in the Old Testament ethos was
opposition to the manipulation of families in the name of the
state.[26]

In order to demonstrate the relevance of Old Testament
principles, we may glance briefly at the Supplementary Benefits
Review. The committee started work in 1976: it published a report
in 1978[27] which was under discussion in 1979. The arbitrariness and
complexity of the present system comes in for considerable attack.
The whole report aims at greater simplicity and straightforwardness.
There is potential for decreased manipulation.   So far, so good.
But at the same time, it appears that those most in need (and who
feel most manipulation) will not necessarily obtain more help if
the report is accepted.   In many cases, groups such as one-parent-
families and the elderly may get less.[27]

But welfare is not just money.   Questions which relate
directly to the need for families to feel social relevance and
significance (as Wright puts it) are neglected.   Stigma, and the
related low take-up rate of many means-tested benefits, is
undiscussed in the report.   The feeling of helplessness
experienced by so many claimants in the face of a massive
bureaucratic machine is unlikely to be mitigated if the report is
accepted.   Rather, the ability of claimants to comment on their
situation or to challenge official decisions may actually be
weakened.

Here is an area for Christianly-directed and *shalom*-oriented
concern.   (Similar principles may be applied in other areas as
well, including the aforementioned health and education.)   It is
a field of social analysis, interpretation, and action quite
compatible with the biblical mandate of neighbour-love.   It is a
way in which the idolatry of progress and the manipulation by the
state may be opposed.   For no faith is placed in social policy
or social reconstruction.   Rather, faith remains firmly planted
in the Lord whose ways are sought and practised.   Faithfulness
to Him, rather than commitment to some unrealizable goal, is the
mark of Christian involvement.   But at the same time, unless
clear goals are articulated, based on biblical principle rather
than human-autonomous pragmatism, there is every chance that the
idol of the welfare state will simply tighten its grip.

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Note added in Proof.

The makers of the welfare state did, however, believe in
fraternity.   Progress in welfare was supposed to come through
a new sense of the 'common good'.   As Graham Room has pointed
out (in his new book, *The Sociology of Welfare*) there existed a
strong belief that social solidarity and moral commitment could
be achieved via social reform.   R.H. Tawney, remember, coined
the phrase 'socialism as fellowship'.   He, along with Titmuss,
Marshall and others saw social integration as an essentially
moral phenomenon.   This has strong overtones of what Robert
Bellah has termed 'civil religion'.   The very legitimacy of a
socio-political order is maintained by the use of religious
language and themes.

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ALAN STORKEY

ILLUSION AND SUBSTANCE -

The Image in the Media

A study of the TV 'image'
from a Christian perspective.
The Third paper given at the
VI Symposium on 19 May 1979
on Ideology and Idolatry in
British Society

The power of the image down the centuries is scarcely in dispute.
From earliest times images have played an important part both as
a cultural and religious focus and also in defining the authority
and social relationships of most societies.   A study of the
significance of the mask, the totem, the icon, the statue and the
wallpainting in various societies would fill many books, but in
this paper we shall narrow our enquiry to the use of the image in
TV in Britain today.

Images and Symbols

    It is usual to think of an image as a 2- or 3- dimensional
artifact representative of something actual, or even purely
imaginary, in the created world.   By looking at the image we
at once recognise what it stands for.   In this an image differs
from a symbol, which, as conventionally understood, stands for
something with no basis for visual recognition.

    The image, as it appears on the TV screens, is characteristic
of the 20th century, whereas symbolic communication characterised
the 16th to 19th centuries in Western Europe.   Today's child
spends more time in front of the single imaging system of
television than he does at school.   The change marks a great
historical discontinuity and needs to be studied in depth.
However, because it is not possible to study this subject
neutrally, we shall first consider a Christian perspective on
the meaning of the image and attempt to define what is involved
more closely.

A Christian View of Image

    Some cultures, notably Islamic and Upanishadic Hindu, make
little use of images.   Christianity, by contrast uses them

freely and provides an understanding of the meaning of image at a
number of different levels.   At the first, the most basic, level
mankind is created in the image of God: therefore his very
identity is bound up in the authenticity of image.   The second
is apparent in the incarnation; when Jesus stated, "He who has
seen me has seen the Father".   He was underlining His power to
reveal God to us in a deeper way even than that conveyed by the
word, 'image'.   Furthermore, central to the Christian revelation
is the principle that that which is unseen can be revealed by that
which is seen.   In this fundamental sense the image is an
inherent part of a Christian world view.

In addition, Scripture stresses the diversity and richness
of the creation, and throughout its pages there is constant use
of analogy, metaphor, simile and parable.   Whether in the
prophets, the Song of Solomon, Christ's teaching or the Letters,
there is a complexity of imagery which underlines the vast
resources of communication open to those who respond to the
richness and multiformity of the creation.   Those who take the
parables of Jesus seriously cannot limit imagery to mere
representation.   As Rookmaaker puts it:

> Truth in art does not mean doing accurate copies, but
> that the artist's insight is rich and full, that he
> really has a good view of reality, that he does
> justice to the different elements of the aspect of
> reality he is representing.   Truth has to do with
> the fulness of reality, its scope and meaning.[1a]

Thus a proper understanding of the creation gives a framework
within which the maker of an image experiences great freedom,
assuming, of course, that he is responsible to the truth and to
the norms of the creation order, for images can be false and
evil as well as true.

The false and evil image in its primary sense is disclosed
to us by the absolute prohibition of the Second Commandment.

> You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any
> likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that
> is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under
> the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.
> (Ex. 20: 4)

It is generally understood that this is not a prohibition of
images as we have defined them.   The meaning is that no image
of anything within the creation is to be made which usurped God's
position as Creator and Lord.   Anything which is made an object
of worship, or a religious integration point, or is a lie against
God.   An image which is believed to have intrinsic meaning, like
the golden calf, is a false focus in people's lives.   This

implies that images which accrue false significance to themselves,
which fail to recognise their inferior position before God, are a
lie.   We realise that a totem, seen as a guardian spirit, a mask
representing an ancestral identity, a fertility goddess and a
temple idol are all in this basic sense pagan, but it is more
than possible that a whole range of contemporary images are
totemic and pagan.   This is a possibility we shall examine later.

        A second way in which there is a potential for evil in images
lies in what the Bible describes as the vain imaginations of the
hearts of men.   Image making is an area where man faces few
constraints imposed by his environment.   Indeed a great deal of
the image technology in recent years has been directed to removing
the few constraints which do exist.   It could be claimed that one
of the main motives behind artistic development this century has
been the impossible goal of pure creation.   Pure creation would
mean independence of the Creator which is the humanist's goal.
But in fact every artist, himself made by God, must work with
God's raw materials.   Nevertheless, the potential freedom
offered gives great scope for the imagination of man.   But
although this 'creativity' is often assumed to be a virtue in
itself, it is the product of sin-affected minds, and needs to be
viewed critically.   Many art movements, notably Surrealism and
Dada, have authenticated whatever can be imagined or associated.
A Christian perspective shows this to be a false step.

        A third way in which the Scriptures underline the potential
evil of images is in relation to their makers.   Insofar as the
maker of an image is able to get a following for what he has
made, his power is increased.   Indeed, one of the abiding sins
of the priestly class of all cultures is that they seek to
increase their power by manufacturing idols and images.   It is
such a power struggle that takes place on Mount Carmel between
Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Ashtorah.   To create a
successful image means power (how much we shall see later) and
this brings into question the motives of the image maker.   If
the image is worshipped, how much more significant is the person
who makes the image, the puppeteer who holds the strings, the
producer who gets the hit.   In this sense, too, images are open
to perversion.

        This cursory vista gives us some basic insights into the
true meaning and potential misuses of images.   They are not to
be taken casually; as Revelation chapter 13 shows, they are
going to be of world-wide significance.   However, before we
come to examine our situation, a number of issues need
clarification, especially in view of the complex image-making
process in contemporary British society.

The Philosophy of the Image

What we have said leads us immediately to some important
conclusions.   The first is that image making is *normative*.
Rookmaaker states it thus:

> The norms for art are in fact basically no different
> from the norms for the whole of life.   Art belongs
> to human life, is part of it, and obeys the same rules.
> The fact that the artist must keep in mind the specific
> structures of art is the same as anyone else in other
> human activities must do: the government has to work
> within the structures of the state, the motorist within
> the structures of the way the car works and the rules of
> the road.   But whether you are an artist, a politician
> or a motorist you must apply not only the specialized
> structures of your own field of operations but also the
> structure of the whole of life, the fact that, being
> human, man is designed to work in a particular way,
> and that only by being wholly true to humanity will
> each activity really fulfil its purpose.[1b]

Thus the image maker not only has to fulfil norms in creating
images — technical ones, aesthetic ones, honesty, respect etc.,
but he also has to fulfil norms in the areas which form its
subject matter.   Is a film which glamourizes promiscuity
violence or mere activity being true to its subject matter?
What about the relationship between the filmed act of violence
and the unfilmed permanent injury, fear, distrust, retaliation,
and sense of violation which result from it?   There is no area
where the image creator is not subject to norms.

A second point is that all images have a religious
direction or meaning.   Their creation is an act of faith.
Even a holiday snapshot implies a great deal; normally it
involves a commitment to family continuity and history, and also
('Smile, please'), the idea that holidays must be fun.   Images
have layers and layers of meaning built into them.   They embody
many different levels of truth and falsehood.   Moreover, the
images which do not give glory to God and respect His creation
are, at some levels at least, creating lies.

It is also possible to see the way in which major conflicts
within the arts can be resolved by a Christian perspective.   For
example, one of the main tensions in modern art has been between
abstraction and realism.   There seems no hope of reconciling
these polar approaches to image making.   But why are they in
tension?   The reason, I suggest, is that advocates of both
abstraction and realism are looking for an absolute source of
meaning within art on which they can build.[2]   Abstractionists,

in hoping to create some pure form on which the heart of man can
rest, belie the fact that God is the source of all meaning.
Conversely, realists, make a fetish of objects in themselves and
hoping thereby to create a self-subsistent environment, enact a
lie.   Both approaches result from a religious drive to find some
kind of ultimacy apart from God, but this kind of autonomy is
impossible.   Only if this is recognised, is there a freedom to
use visual languages of varying degrees of abstraction, depending
on what the artist or image-maker wants to communicate.   He is
not tied, any more than Christ himself was tied, to a strict
representationalism, realism or purist abstraction.   The
normative framework actually provides great practical freedom.

     It is also necessary to understand the relationship between
the *content* of an image and the *motives* that led to its formation.
The two are intrinsically related: the latter necessarily affect
the former.   An image which is shaped by the motives of self-
glorification, money making and manipulation will differ from one
shaped by neighbourly love in its *content*.   It is not possible
to have pure art, or art for art's sake, because the context of
art and image is always neighbourly love or its absence.
Moreover, this affects the way an image communicates.[3]   Here
I want to introduce a distinction which develops this point.
Communication, visual or otherwise, is *transparent* if the motives
that led to it are loving, open and honest.   On the other hand
it is *opaque* if the motives are hidden, selfish and conflicting
with what is actually communicated.   My conclusion later will be
that modern image creation is tending to become more and more
opaque.

     Finally we note a few further points more briefly.   There
is a problem of *misinterpretation* by the receiver of the image,
especially where the visual language used is not shared.   Can
most viewers handle the visual conventions surrounding a
documentary, the news, drama, or current affairs programmes?
Electronic images create especial problems in this area.   Further,
images have a *range*, the number of people who receive them,
permanence, the time period over which they can be viewed, *status*,
the importance attached to them, and *geography*, the context in
which they occur.   With this introduction we move on to consider
the place of images in our society.

Historical Development

     The production of a still image was a manual operation until
well after the Industrial Revolution: only in 1877 was a moving
image developed; not until after the Second World War were colour
images widespread, and it is under twenty years since colour
television first appeared in Britain.   In comparison with many
other areas the technological development of imagery has been very
recent.   Its impact has been more recent still.   Film was

important during the interwar years as a cultural force, but it is
only with the growth of television, the dominant form, that the
average person has experienced the level of exposure to images
which is now regarded as normal.   Key developments were the
introduction of commercial television in 1955, BBC 2 in 1964, and
the lifting of restrictions on the hours of broadcasting in 1972
which resulted in a tripling of BBC output within a decade.[4]
This growth is very rapid and recent.   The technology is one
which allows mass production, and only now with cable television
and videorecorders are the constraints on choice beginning to
disappear.   So recent are these developments that it is scarcely
possible to begin to analyse the effects of the change.   Not only
is the image newly dominant, but the instantaneous image which has
taken root within the home has overtaken all other forms.   The
average person will now spend at least seven solid years of his
total life-span in front of a flickering screen.   What therefore,
is the significance of the image in the life of 1970 British
citizens?   Let us isolate some crucial aspects of the content of
the television image.

The Content of the Image

(a) *The Vicarious Life*.   The commitment to the visual image
during a large proportion of the day time which is free from
obvious constraints like school and work is an expression of
preference for *living within those images* rather than just living.
As Raymond Williams showed, the medium of television has a heavy
bias towards programmes which are fictional and offer various
forms of vicarious living to the audience.   In 1965 he estimated
that 38.5% of BBC and 51.7% of ITV's output was fiction.[5]
Although many of the programmes are Westerns, Crime and Adventure
films, many also are concerned with domestic and social life which
offer regular entertainment and undemanding experience of *other*
people's lives.   The ITV Guide for 1974 describes them thus:

> The television serial may gain the attention and
> loyalty of viewers because of an abiding interest
> in other people's lives.   But one of the side
> effects, not without special value, is to bring
> their attention to problems about which they may
> have been aware but not previously regarded as
> being of significance to their own lives and
> attitudes.[6]

What is the significance of this regular dose of vacarious living?
One outcome is that viewers are regularly provided with images of
people with whom they can easily relate.   The television
characters are undemanding, consistent, entertaining, constantly
facing new situations, amusing and understandable.   They are a
perfect retreat from the greater complexities and pressures which

many people actually face.   Indeed, a German study suggested that
when television was withdrawn, there was more tension, quarrelling
and physical aggression in the home.[7]   Here, then, is a 'solution'
to difficulties in social relationships.   Another aspect of this
regular escape pattern is the fuel it provides for daydreaming.
Although it is almost impossible to do comparative studies of the
streams of consciousness which people experience,[8] it is
undoubtedly true that the images and visual experiences which are
available to the modern viewer are so extensive that his ability
to fantasize through life is enormously extended.   He is
continually provided with images belonging to others and of the
situations which face them and so is extracted from the life God
has actually given him to live.   There must already exist on a
massive scale a pattern of alienation from day to day existence
which is predicated on these vicarious images.

(b) *Epistemology of the television Image*.   A great deal of
television output is intended to convey knowledge, information
and understanding.   The news, documentaries, quizzes, features,
outside broadcasts and other 'factual' programmes have this as an
obvious aim, but most programmes aim somewhere to convey something
of wisdom and knowledge.   What kind of knowledge do these
programmes tend to convey?   What are the theories of knowledge
to which they give credence?   The issue is complex and its
examination in depth would require a book.   However, there are
some tentative points which can be suggested.   The first is that
television is weighted towards *positivism*, not automatically, but
because the producer is keen to exploit to the full the visual,
the presentation of sense data.   Let us take an innocuous example.
For Einstein's centenary BBC 2 presented a special programme,
starring Peter Ustinov, expounding the special and general
theories of relativity.   Visual simulations of the theories were
produced using motorcycles on the lonely ranchlands of Texas —
seeing was believing, although the actual predictions of these
theories are testable only at the limits of astronomical vision.
Or another innocuous example.   On the news a comment is made
about ambulancemens' pay, and a picture of an ambulance is shown.
Or another innocuous example from *The Radio Times*: "The naked
truth about Teacher's" is written beside a large picture of a
bottle denuded of label.   The appeal, steady and ubiquitous, is
to the image as a standard for authenticity.   Of course,
television is a visual medium; that is not the point.   The
point is that when visual sense data are made the key to knowledge
and understanding, then the medium is projecting a certain kind of
faith, a positivist one.   The fact that positivism as a
philosophical position was completely discredited in the 30's
does not affect the faith that is transmitted.   The lie that
seeing is believing is conveyed in a hundred different subtle
ways each day to most people in Britain.   We recall Jesus' words
to Thomas, "Have you believed because you have seen me?   Blessed
are those who have not seen me and yet believe." (John, 20: 29).

Another important element in the epistemology of television,
is rooted in the attempt by these public bodies to be *neutral*.
The way neutrality is attempted in many situations is through the
bracketing of experience associated with the phenomenology of
Husserl and Schutz.   The emphasis in phenomenology is on the
neutral description of subjective attitudes and orientations to
the world.   It is a positivism of subjective states of affairs.
But it is also a retreat into pseudo-neutralism.   The statement,
'X is a lying hypocrite' is open to dispute, and would probably
produce a polemical reaction, but the statement that Y said X was
a lying hypocrite is merely saying what is the case.   It is
easily possible for television to retreat into statements of the
latter kind, and thereby avoid the important issue of whether X
was ....   Does this happen?   One of the major differences
between our normal social lives and what faces us on the screen,
is that we are accustomed to people actually looking at us and
talking to us.   The communication is direct and we listen and
agree or disagree.   But on the screen this is relatively rare —
newsreaders, programme introducers, lecturers, the occasional
politician or vicar and the weathermen would be the main examples.
On television there are by contrast many bracketed or packaged
'neutral' images.   Again there is no straightforward way of
establishing the extent to which this bracketing takes place, or
its significance.   It is relevant that the structure of television
rests on a strong body of professional mediators who largely
monopolise the process of image creation and regularly package the
units that are transmitted to the public.   Insofar as this group
is intending to make programmes which are interesting and
entertaining, it is likely that attitudes, beliefs and views will
be bracketed more and more firmly.   An example of this process
was supplied by Dr. David Martin in relation to a programme on
which he was asked to appear.

'In each of these programmes, 15 people are to be offered
an average of 1 minute 50 seconds each to opinionate on
the armed forces, sex and the family, religion, education,
drugs and so on.   The young sociologist by whom I was
approached concerning this series has assured me it is
to attempt a much more profound probing of the issues
than has been normal practice hitherto.'[9]

There may be other reasons why the proportion of floating voters
in Britain has increased since the Second World War from under ten
percent to over thirty, but I suggest that this bracketing, the
new technique of agnosticism, is one of the main reasons for the
fall in political commitment.   That there should be a similar
effect on religious conviction is also likely.

(c) *The Images of Humanism.*   It is obviously not the case in our
culture that there are graven images and idols in the old biblical
sense.   The chief religious commitment of today is to the worship
of mankind, his achievements, attributes, intellect, emotions,
personalities.   It is with the mundane day to day glorification
of man in mind that a high proportion of television images are
created.   Consider the meaning of most television props and
scenarios.   Consider the apparatus of star and personality
development.   Consider the emphasis on achievement.   In one
evening's viewing we are presented both with a skater, who "if he
can conquer his nerves, he'll conquer the world" and an artist
whose "talents are recognised and celebrated in America, but he
hasn't met with the success he deserves at home in England."[10a]
A group of people, a new class, is constantly being groomed to
appear as the new interpretation of humanity.   The basis of the
appeal of this group varies; it may be sociability, security,
intimacy, popularity, charisma, humour or notoriety, but usually
the image conveys something of the success of humankind.   The
message is not simple nor is it direct.   It is certainly not
co-ordinated and consistent.   It is partly the absence of
untidyness, tiredness and the inability to cope.   It is partly
the extensive number of glamorous guardian angels.   It is also
the fact that the elite is being watched by so many viewers, and
that time is managed with such expertise.   (Why do you respond
with such euphoria when an announcer is left holding a technical
hitch?).   It is also partly the extent to which praise is so
important in the medium.   The argument is that the implicit
humanism of so many of these images does great harm, that it
destroys the truth about many aspects of people's lives and leaves
them with illusions.   The definition of happiness, success,
conscience, variety, and life which they receive will in the end
let them down.

An obvious aspect of this development is the way the image
has both ignored its own normative constraints and important
Christian norms.   When man is his own master, he makes the rules
and changes them.   The masters of the image claim that they can
show whatever is the case, often on the basis of the phenomeno-
logical argument already presented — the producer who films
violence or sex is merely recording that which is the case, and
he is therefore neutral with respect to the subject matter or the
actions which he portrays.   What has effectively happened is that
all kinds of human activity hitherto regarded as wrong have been
dramatized and explored by the image in a way which has glorified
them, and the process of glorification of human actions of various
kinds has been used to destroy norms.   Further, as we shall
consider soon, one of the main problems in this area is that the
communication is opaque.

A further aspect of humanism which, it would be argued, is being developed by image on television is a new conception of human relationships.   The emphasis, often tacit, of a lot of programmes is on the ability to handle relationships, to act in such a way that relationships can be successfully negotiated. The underlying assumption is that each individual is out for himself, and that his social life is a matter of expertise in relating to and handling other people.   The emphasis is many-sided; partly it arises because the images constantly portrayed on television are of social interaction — many of the more intimate aspects of life like privacy, rest, memory, prayer, thinking, quietness, meditation, solitary work, learning, reading, preoccupation etc. are visually suppressed, because they do not provide the interest needed to maintain viewing levels.   Another aspect of the emphasis grows from the fact that actors and media people are employed most of the time on the screen; their expertise lies in 'acted' relationships, and this is implicitly the norm that is held up for emulation.   It is relatively infrequently that ordinary people appear on programmes, and very rarely that they do so without being drafted into a prepackaged slot, delivered to the audience by a Bruce Forsyth or a Terry Wogan.   Television also emphasises the other-directed response; it is what the audience thinks which matters — the collective twenty million or so are the arbiters of how a person or a performer is to be judged.   Thus the whole pressure of the image tends to be to the horizontal relationship; indeed it will not strike many people that this is anything but normal, anything but what must be the case.   In the limited scope of this paper we cannot look at the different aspects of this commitment, but we note that the perspectives of role playing and acting have even been taken up by sociologists as definitive frameworks of analysis.[11]

What is conveyed in image after image is thus the depths of a religious perspective which glorifies man, which develops its own norms and which proclaims that he is arbiter in relationships. Most people are beyond questionning that this perspective might be false.

(d) *The Entertaining Image.*   The guiding norm for the formation of images is not truth or love, but *entertainment.*   What does this mean?   Essentially, it is a contractual situation where the people entertained pay the entertainer, while *he provides them with what he thinks they want.*   Sometimes the position has been rather precarious, as with the medieval jester.   More recently audiences have been able to vote with their feet by going to or staying away from places of entertainment.   An important aspect of the idea of entertainment is that it does not involve full communication in two significant ways.   First, the entertainer is giving to the audience what he *thinks* they want to hear, but he is not sure because the audience has very limited means of

communication available — clapping and booing were possible in the
pre-electronic age, but now it is limited to the rather futile
gesture of throwing one's boot at the screen.   Thus the
entertainer *constructs* a picture of what the audience wants.
Today, there are a range of techniques of audience research and
measurement to try to establish this picture, but, as the
Viewers and Listeners Association quite rightly maintains, they
are most inadequate.   The reason they are so is that they are
based upon the concept of MASS response, rather than attempting
to differentiate the audience; communication from audience to
entertainer is thus passive and weak.   But second, the entertainer
is not communicating either; he is giving the audience what he
thinks *they* want to hear or see.   The point is made by a British
comic in the Radio Times.

> Despite the political content of his act, he remains
> uncommitted.   "I'm in the middle; I let them get on
> with it.   It's not like in the States where you get
> Warren Beatty campaigning for the Democrats and Frank
> Sinatra for the Republicans.   You have to remain
> neutral if you're in showbusiness in Britain.[10b]

You have to remain neutral or you risk losing a large section of
your audience.   The entertainer is thus always performing for
his audience to varying degrees, not communicating with them in
the sense of conveying truthfully what he wants to pass on to
others.   The differences between entertainment and communication
is thus important and affects the whole process of transmission.

I have argued elsewhere that television should be primarily
a medium for communication, and that the actual structure of BBC
and ITV prevents this possibility from being realised.[12]   What
we have instead is the situation where the norm of entertainment
has spread into all kinds of areas.   The news is made entertaining,
so are documentaries, discussions, sport and education.   The
implication is that the image creator must always go behond what
is interesting in its own right to some of the viewers to entertain
all of the viewers whether they are interested or not.   The
tyranny of the viewing figures makes perpetual entertainment
necessary.

Moreover, this entertainment is manipulative at a more
technical level.   The people using television cameras, the film
editors and the producers are experts at entertaining your eye.
It will never be allowed to rest long enough to get bored.
Changes of angle, lighting, the tempo of movement, scenery,
subject, distance and focus will keep your eye occupied, whether
your mind is or not.   It is your eye that must be kept turned on.
It is not impossible that the visual passivity which this kind of
treatment implies is actually inhibiting people from seeing what

what is around them when their eyes are not continually being bombarded by visual stimuli.

Thus, it is possible that the norm of entertainment is fundamentally devaluing the content of television, not just in the sense that there are a lot of variety programmes, but in the deeper sense that what is entertaining is not allowed to be significant in its own right.

The Opaque Image

These points about the content of television images have suggested that there are deep seated weaknesses in what is presented to the public on a very large scale.   However, there are reasons for this, and they are to be found in the motives which direct the institutions concerned.   The primary aim within the Independent Television Companies is to make money, which depends through the logic of advertising on large audiences. BBC, partly because it was conceived as a monopoly institution, and partly because it feels vulnerable if its audience drops below 40%, is also fundamentally committed to large audiences. There is therefore a continual attempt to influence the viewers control of the knob, or the remote control module, to stay watching, and to stay watching a particular programme.   It is essentially a manipulative situation in which these motives cloud that which is being communicated. Consider, for example, the suspense formula; this is a straightforward technique which is used in film after film to keep the watcher glued to the set. However, realistic or gripping the suspense — will he fall off the side of the mountain? — the images are merely being used to hold the viewer; they are not *true*.   In many other areas there are similar patterns of opaqueness and degeneration, but there is no institutional channel for criticism, for the validation of the system is viewing figures, and the whole system is geared to maintaining those at a level which automatically preempts criticism.   How can such programmes and images be false when they are watched by such a high proportion of the British public?

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9   *The Times*, 26th June, 1971.
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★★★★★★★★★★★★

J.A. WALTER

SALVATION AND WORK:

A CHRISTIAN CRITIQUE OF THE MODERN IDEOLOGY OF WORK*

> A Christian ethic for work
> needs to begin with a
> sociological description of
> work in modern society.
> Dr. Walter describes the
> current ideology that work
> provides a man with worth,
> and then criticises this in
> the light of the Christian
> theme of grace.   A
> guaranteed income system
> that would replace the
> present social security
> system is one example of
> how grace could be embodied
> in the economy.   This was
> the 4th paper to be
> presented at the VI
> Symposium on Ideology and
> Idolatry in British Society
> on 19 May 1979.

Introduction: On the Place of Sociology in Ethics

In this paper I shall attempt a Christian critique of the
ideology of work that is current in modern industrial society and
in particular that found in modern Britain.

     A possible starting point might be a brief outline of
biblical teaching on work, to be followed by its application to
the modern situation.   Such an approach might fall into two
traps.   First, it would assume that what is meant by work today
is to be identified with work in its biblical sense.   This by no
means follows.   As members of contemporary society, our definition

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of work is ideological and derived from that society, so that
what *we* mean by work may be an entirely non-biblical concept.
Our first task then is to identify the modern definition or
ideology of work *before* we turn to the Bible.

The second trap is that the end result of searching the
Bible may prove to be a bizarre collection of references
apparently unconnected with the central themes of the gospel,
to which they are merely tacked on in a wholly arbitrary way.[1]
(Compare irrelevant Christian treatments of the state that focus
on Romans 13, or views of work based on the injunction in 2
Thessalonians 3 to the effect that if a man does not work neither
shall he eat.)   This method leaves Christians from other
cultures or with different political leanings free to tack on
other and contradictory theologies of work, etc.

In this paper, therefore, we shall seek first to clarify
what is commonly understood by work in modern society, we shall
then be free to examine this idea of work (highly critically, as
it turns out) in the light of some central Christian themes.
Finally we shall suggest an alternative conception of work that
may be appropriate to modern industrial societies.

What I am advocating is, then, that a sociological
examination of things as they are should precede a biblical
exegesis of how things ought to be or might be.   Ethics must not
be left to the theologians!   This is not, however, to advocate
the conventional positivist distinction between descriptive
(sociological) facts and prescriptive (biblical) values, for the
sort of descriptive sociology I am recommending is itself informed
by biblical ideas.   Two advantages of describing a situation from
a sociological standpoint before theological ethicising may be
observed:

(a) If we start by enquiring what the Bible teaches about
e.g. work, there still remains the problem of cultural translation:
how will teaching about work in ancient Israel provide specific
guidelines for work in a modern context?   One procedure that has
heen proposed is to translate specific biblical teaching about
specific social matters into abstract general principles which
may then be reapplied in the modern or any other situation[2].
The difficulty with this approach is that there are two stages of
translation, both of which are subject to the translators' bias,
and in any case it seems unwise to invoke abstract 'principles'
which certainly were not in the typically concrete and specific
thinking of the biblical writers.   The procedure advocated here,
rather, applies the central themes of the gospel as agreed upon
by wide consensus within the church direct to the contemporary
situation as identified by a careful use of modern social science.
No abstruse heuristic devices like 'underlying principles' need
be invoked.

(b) Whatever else may be said of Edward Norman's Reith
Lectures, he may be thanked for pointing out the 'me-too-ism' of
much contemporary Christian social thinking.   Christians often
imbibe ideologies from the surrounding 'secular' culture, and then
baptise them as Christian.   Many of the so-called 'biblical
principles' about social matters referred to above are of just
this nature: rationalisations for contemporary secular wisdom.
The only way to guard against this danger is to clarify, *right
at the beginning* of our ethicising, what are the contemporary
secular ideologies about work, the family, or whatever we are
studying.   If our biblical exegesis then simply reiterates the
contemporary ideology, we should immediately be suspicious and
invite others to examine critically the process by which we have
come to our conclusions.

The Ideology of Work in Modern Society

What is counted as work today?   Not only what do
individuals count as work, but also what counts as work in terms
of employment, in law, in the social security system, and in other
public structures?   What is the modern view of work?   I submit
that in modern society *work is any bounded period of time spent
by people, by virtue of which they deserve and receive payment.*
Five elements in this may be noted, (although it is only the first
two that we will be concerned with in the rest of the paper).

(1) *Payment* must ensue as a result of work.   Thus, if a
painter and decorator paints your house, or if the garage mends
your car, this is counted as work because they get paid for it.
But if you do your own home decorating or car maintenance, this
is not work because you do not get paid for it; instead it is
called 'leisure'.   The amateur, whether painter, potter or golfer,
sees himself engaged in play, a hobby or leisure; but when he goes
professional and gets regularly paid for it, then he and others
come to see it as work.   Activity which cannot be called leisure
but which nevertheless is not paid (such as manning the Samaritans
telephone or hospital visiting) cannot be called work; instead it
is 'voluntary work'.   The same definition is found within the
social security system in which every week in Britain over a
million unemployed are confronted on the counter where they sign
on by a prominent notice which says "Before claiming, please tell
the clerk if you have done any work since last claiming benefit",
by which is meant, Please tell the clerk if you have received any
income from time spent in the last seven days.

(2) Payment is *deserved* and *necessarily* results from work.
Time spent that results in payment is not necessarily work: a day
at the races or a night at bingo that results in a fat haul is not
work because financial reward accrues as a result of chance; there
is no guarantee that payment will ensue as a result of this time

spent, and payment ensues because of luck rather than because it
is deserved.

(3) Work must take place within a *bounded* period of time
that has a definite beginning and a definite end; the time that
is called work must be clearly distinguishable from the time
that is called leisure.   People do not see themselves as
working every hour of the waking day.

One reason why housework, motherhood and childrearing are
so often not seen as work (in a male dominated society) is that
they do not fit these first three criteria in the definition of
work: (i) Housekeeping and other allowances to the wife do not
follow but precede housework.   (ii) The wife's allowance is not
granted her as a deserved reward for her work, but simply as a
response to her status and rights as a wife.   Thus when the
children eventually leave home, the mother's personal allowance
is not reduced by the husband on the grounds that now she has
less work to be paid for.   (In fact it is likely to be
increased now that the departure of dependent children leaves
more money over for the couple.)   (iii) There is no bounded
period of time during the day in which housework and motherhood
take place; they are literally full time occupations.

(4) The time that results in the receipt of money, if it is
to be counted as work, must be time spent by a *person*.   The
income from invested capital is not work, since this is time
spent not by a person but by money.

(5) Work in modern society is not *activity* which results in
payment, but *time spent* which results in payment.   A considerable
proportion of what is counted as work has nothing to do with
productive activity: this may range from official and brief
coffee breaks to several hours a day — as a student I once
'worked' doing nothing six hours a day for the GPO parcels
service.   Work cannot be defined as a list of productive
activities: *any* activity or *any* passivity can be either work
(= paid) or leisure (= unpaid).   Usually making automobiles is
work, but there are a few who make their own as a hobby.   Usually
activities such as watching television are leisure, but film
critics do it as work.   Even the ultimate passivity of sleeping
can be work, as with the paid subjects of certain psychological
experiments: this is time spent which results in payment, and is
therefore work.[3]

In modern society, then, work is reckoned as any bounded
period of time spent by people, by virtue of which they deserve
and receive payment.   This does not, of course, apply
universally among mankind.   For example, in a near subsistence
rural economy (such as in the middle ages, tribal societies, or
ancient Israel) work, if such it may be called, (i) did not

necessarily result in the payment of money; (ii) did not
guarantee reward (the harvest could fail or the hunt be
unsuccessful); (iii) did not take place within a bounded period
of time (the daily round was determined by sun, season and
weather: life consisted of this daily round, and was not broken
up into discrete segments of 'work' and 'leisure'); and (iv)
work necessarily involved activity.   There is nothing God-
ordained or timeless about work as we currently understand it.

    This paper will focus on *the relation of work to money*.
The idea that work is done for the sake of the money it earns
is the main reason why people work.   True, some people work
partly for the satisfaction of doing a job well or for the
sociability it entails with fellow workers, but mostly people
work for the money.   This is taken for granted at all levels.
Conventional economics sees the prime purpose of industry as
making a profit and the prime intention of the worker as selling
his labour for the highest price, other motivations being seen
as secondary, uneconomic or irrational.   In Britain, the tax
system is criticised by politicians, economists and laymen
because "it doesn't make it worth working".   This happens both
at the top of the supertax bracket where it is not worth putting
in extra work because it is mostly taxed away, and in the poverty
trap at the bottom where an extra pound of earnings leads to the
loss of possibly rather more than a pound of welfare benefits
and allowance.   All this assumes that the chief reason people
work is that they want the money.

    (This view of the relation of work to money is not entirely
pervasive in modern society; the traditional notion of the
professional calling in which the professional, scholar or artist
lives for his work rather than works in order to live, rejects
the notion that work is what one gets paid for.   But the calling
is not the dominant work ideology in modern society.   Indeed,
outside of their own community, the 'work' of professionals,
scholars and artists is not counted as such by large sections of
society.   This attitude goes back to the 18th and 19th centuries
when aristocrats and professionals did not need to work, and
their daily activities of estate management, law, etc., were not
called 'work' or 'labour'.   These terms were reserved for those
who deliberately spent time *in order* to gain money — the
'labouring' or 'working' classes.)

    Although people work in order to earn money, money is not
the ultimate end.   We are supposed to live in a 'materialistic'
age, but if you ask people what they live for or what their aim
in life is, few will reply 'money'.   Rather, the adult male
worker may say "I live for my family"; the mother may say "I live
for my children"; the teenager, the sink-bound wife yearning for
liberation, or the member of an ethnic minority group, may say
"My aim is to be free"; while the ambitious may reply "My aim is

to be someone that others can look up to".   In fact, people
work not for the money, but for the things that money can buy,
in particular, security (especially security for their family),
a place in society (expressed in terms such as respectability
and status), and personal freedom (this is especially why
teenagers and women want to work).   Given that security,
freedom and a sense of place are psychological necessities, work
may arguably be described as sacred, as an idol.   Without work,
man is lost[4].

     In capitalist society, money — and therefore work — is the
essential means toward achieving security, status, freedom and
an honoured place in society.   These things are not free: they
have to be bought, and this means they have to be worked for.
Work has become a sacred shrine at which men must worship if
they are to remain whole.   This is generally accepted as quite
right and proper.   Indeed, work is regarded as a laudable way
of earning justifiable self-esteem, social respectability and
security for one's family: it is more highly valued than
inherited status.

                          A Christian Response

     How does this modern ideology of the meaning and function
of work appear when viewed through the prism of the central themes
of the Christian gospel?   The view is tinged with sadness and
grief: for in capitalist society security, freedom and a place
in the scheme of things are not free but have to be bought and
striven for.   (In socialist societies they are conditional not
on work but on political conformity, which is no better.)

     In Creation, freedom, security and a place in the scheme of
things are offered mankind as free gifts from God.   At the Fall,
man forfeited these gifts when he rejected the God who gave them,
and consequently had to strive unremittingly to regain them by
his own efforts.   The message of salvation is that in Christ
they may once more be appropriated as free gifts from God.

     By now it will be clear that work in modern society has
little to do with the grace of God shown in Creation and
Salvation, but much to do with fallen mankind's attempt to save
himself and mitigate the effects of the Fall.   If Paul's message
to the Jews of his day was that they need strive no longer for
salvation through the good works of the law, and if Luther's
message to medieval man was that they too could not buy God's
favour with their good deeds, then the Christian message today
is that an enduring security, freedom and a place in the scheme
of things are not to be found through work.   These hoped-for
fruits of work are as precarious as the salvation that was
supposedly earned by legalistic religious folk in days gone by.

Unemployment, retirement, Sunday even, cause work to cease and
threaten people's security and identity just as his latest
little sin threatens the salvation of the religous legalist.
What is involved here has been classically described by Max
Weber in his study of the process by which the original Puritan
notion of work as a response to salvation degenerated into the
capitalist notion of work as the means to salvation[5].

The meaning and function of work in modern society, then,
epitomises the human condition from which Christ offers to
liberate mankind.   What then would an alternative concept of
work look like, if it epitomised the kingdom of God instead?
Work would cease to be a means to anything, for everything of
ultimate worth has already been given freely by the grace of
God.   Like the traditional Christian virtues, work would cease
to be a calculated means to get others to like and honour us,
and would become a fruit emanating from the experience of God's
grace.   This concept of work is found right at the beginning of
the Bible in Genesis 1: 26-31 where work is introduced as man's
natural response to the abundance of Creation, right through to
the end where the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem portrays all
human activity as response to and worship of God.   Mankind is
overjoyed at being a member of God's abundant Creation and a
participant in his free Salvation, and works and acts and loves
in joyful response.

How is this notion of work as joyful response to membership
in Creation to be embodied in society and in economics?
Basically, membership of society and of the economy is to be
granted freely to everyone, and work is to become a response to
rather than a means of achieving membership.   Just as access to
God's creation and heavenly community is not something that can
be earned, so we must abandon the notion that full membership of
society is something that must be striven for.   I hesitate to
use the modern liberal term 'rights', but it is suggestive of
what is needed:- the right of every human to belong fully to his
society simply because he is alive.   The idea of 'human rights'
is perhaps a useful way of persuading those who would not accept
Christian theology of the need for an alternative conception of
work.   The rest of this paper will explore one particular way
of basing work on membership of society as of right[6].

The Guaranteed Income

Accepting everyone as a full member of society is not just
a matter of words; it must be embodied in politics, in the law,
and in economics.   As far as politics is concerned, democracies
have come a long way.   If democracies are compared with either
medieval society or many contemporary societies that do not
enjoy civil and political liberties, it becomes apparent that.

simply by being born into a modern democracy the individual is
valued as a free and responsible person whose freedom is to be
protected and whose responsibility and rationality are to be
allowed expression in the ballot box.   Although this freedom
and responsibility may be formally taken away in certain
exceptional circumstances such as a state of national emergency
or committal to prison or psychiatric hospital, they cannot be
removed simply because one is not as gifted and does not
achieve so much in this world as one's neighbour.

But the vote alone does not make a person a full member of
society.   In some 'independent' countries in black Africa
everyone may have the vote now, but if the basis for gross
economic inequality remains intact and the average black person
remains vastly disadvantaged economically then he is far from
being a *full* member of society.   Certainly this has been the
experience of blacks in the USA for decades: they may have had
the vote, but they were still second class citizens.   Being a
first class citizen was conditional on having a white skin.   In
Britain today, full membership is conditional (for healthy, adult
males) among other things on being employed, or at least on
wishing to be employed.

Political rights must be supplemented therefore by economic
rights if full citizenship is to be a reality for all people.
That is, every person should be guaranteed an adequate income
simply by virtue of being a member of an advanced industrial
society.   Various ways have been suggested of implementing this:

(1) All modern governments have become committed to the goal
of *full employment*, or at least their rhetoric is committed to
it.   (Their economists warn them that full employment is not
without its costs, and in practice governments do not expect to
achieve full employment.)   But the goal of full employment is
in any case not an embodiment of the notion of membership of
society as of right; it still embodies the old ideology that work
is a precondition for full citizenship.

(2) The concept of *social security* at first sight seems to
embody the notion of economic rights.   But unemployment and
supplementary benefits are not granted simply because a man
belongs to society; they are granted only so long as the
recipient shows signs of the work ethic, so long as he continues
to try to find what society counts as work and ritually repents
for having failed.   As the leaflet "Responsibilities of
Claimants" that is handed to all those claiming unemployment and
supplementary benefits in Britain says[7]:

> You must not sign the declaration on your claim form
> unless you are and were for any day covered by the
> claim prepared to accept at once any offer of
> employment suitable in your case....

The social security system merely makes a minor modification to
the dominant ideology that a person is worth something only if
he works, by adding that he may also be deemed worthy if he *wants*
to work; which still maintains the ideology of work as the
prerequisite for worth.

(3) A much more radical proposal and one that embodies a
Christian view of work is the *guaranteed income*. This is a
substance income accorded to every member of society.   In
addition, those who wish and are able to find paid employment
may receive an additional income from their employer.
Alternatively they may wish to become self-employed and so earn
a supplementary income from their own businesses.   On the basis
of the security afforded by the guaranteed income, people are
free to work; and they work *because* they feel they are worth
something, instead of working *in order to* be worth something.
Worth precedes work, rather than the other way around.   Human
worth does not depend on the precarious circumstance of having a
job.   The guaranteed income (g.i.) would be set at the present
supplementary benefit level, that is, at a level just adequate
for subsistence.   (This would have the great merit of abolishing
the social security system with its absurd complexities and
degrading prying.)

The guaranteed income would introduce a much needed
flexibility into work.   People would be able without stigma
(but with reduced income) to take 'sabbaticals' from work, or to
work only part-time, in order to develop creative skills, go
back to school, or look after their children.   Productivity and
creativity would be facilitated.   Work would reflect the
Christian notion of freedom, rather than the fallen notion of
work as grim necessity.   This argument for the guaranteed income
can be presented in terms that make no reference to the Christian
gospel (essential if it is to be taken as a serious political
possibility):

> Young people growing up in today's world are faced with
> what could be called economic tyranny.   Well-paying
> jobs in large organisations are available, complete
> with all the elements generally referred to as the rat
> race.   Other than something like the Peace Corps,
> however, there are few other alternatives except
> dropping out completely... At present, there is very
> little middle ground; for the most part, you are
> either in the system or out of it, and for many
> individuals neither alternative is very satisfying.
> The g.i. would offer a major new alternative.[8]

Associated with the g.i. would be *the abolition of the
national insurance* stamp.   The present flat rate stamp, payable
by the employer for both part-time and full-time workers, is a

disincentive for employers to take on part-time workers and leads
to the present situation in which adult males are either employed
full-time or not at all.

Even without the g.i., abolishing the insurance stamp and
paying instead for pensions, unemployment and sickness benefits
out of taxes would be desirable.   It would finally scotch the
fiction that these pensions and benefits have been worked for
and paid for by the individual contributor (and are therefore
acceptable).   Individuals believe that over a lifetime of work
they have paid for their own social security: this is all part
of the ideology that security must be worked for and paid for by
the individual.   In fact, this is a fiction.   With rising
living standards, it is not possible to pay an individual's
pension (whether state or private) out of the sum of his lifetime
of contributions; instead they are paid out of the higher level
of contributions being paid by current contributors.   In
actuarial fact, pensions and benefits are not paid by the
individual; they derive from the responsibility felt by the
representatives of society to maintain the old, the sick and
the infirm at a currently acceptable standard of living, simply
by virtue of their being members of society.   That is to say,
actuarial fact reflects the Christian view of worth preceding
work, and is to be welcomed; the ideology, bolstered by the idea
of insurance, embodies the aspirations of fallen man to save
himself, and is to be deplored.

Fears and Reservations

The g.i. is a somewhat unusual idea,[9] and people are likely
to have fears and reservations about it.   These fears derive
from the challenge the g.i. presents to the present ideology of
work: it demolishes the edifice by which people (especially men
and liberated ladies) construct their sense of worth and
replaces it with a completely different basis for worth and
security.   Since these fears are deeply rooted in emotions
which are fundamentally religious in origin, it is unlikely that
reason will do much to allay them.   Nevertheless it seems worth
while to examine three particular fears and reservations.

(a) *Theological reservations.*   One argument against this paper
would be that it is not possible to base economics or politics
on *grace*.   Mankind is fallen, and the kingdom of God can only
come among the children of God, not in society at large.   My
answer to this is that if this is so (and it may well be) then
the gospel (rather than odd bits and pieces of Old and New
Testament teaching) has nothing to say about work, the economy,
or politics.   This may in fact be the case, but it does seem
worth asking first whether basic christian teaching does in fact
imply anything relevant rather than blithely assuming that it
does.

Another answer to objections is that by the abolition of
slavery economics has been firmly based on free membership of the
human community.   Abolition ended the idea that a man could only
be free and worthy of respect if he could buy himself out of
slavery; instead it became widely believed, and is so to this day,
that everyone should be accredited freedom and respect as of
right.   A polity based on grace (inclusion as of right rather
than through proof of worth) was also embodied in universal adult
suffrage in which the previous notion that people had to buy the
vote through wealth and income was abolished.   The abolition of
slavery and universal suffrage both ensured that all men were
reckoned responsible citizens: to forfeit being counted as such
they had to act in extremely unsocial ways.

Assuming that those who hold theological reservations about
embodying grace in social structures *approve* of universal suffrage
and the ending of slavery, the onus is on them to show why they
*dis*approve of a guaranteed income.   The principles involved are
the same.   Why should grace be appropriate for the polity, but
not for the economy?

(b) *The fear of abuse.*   A fear not restricted to theologians,
though not unrelated to the theological fear just mentioned, is
that people will abuse their g.i. and no one will work.   This
is similar to the argument of those who resisted the abolition
of slavery and the extension of the vote (and also of those who
currently oppose political rights for blacks in various
countries): the masses cannot be trusted with responsibility,
and therefore they are to be denied it.   It is also the classic
conservative argument against the government taking responsibility
for full employment and opposing social security: people will no
longer need to work and will therefore no longer want to work.

This argument flies in the face of all the evidence.
Despite scare-mongering about social security 'scroungers', work
is as popular today, if not more so, than at any other time in
recorded history.   Even at the height of the famous Puritan
ethic of the 17th century, I suggest that most people, (and most
people were not thoroughgoing Puritans) were no more inclined to
work than today, probably less so.

In fact, the g.i. would actually increase the incentive to
work of those few who are presently discouraged from work by the
social security system.   Those at present unemployed who are
qualified only for low-paid manual jobs are little motivated to
work since the more they work the less they receive.   By
contrast, the g.i. cannot be threatened by activity or earnings,
and by working more those at the bottom of the economic ladder
would benefit greatly.[10]

Also, evidence from those groups of workers who already work
on the basis of a g.i. (not necessarily guaranteed by the state),
far from suggesting that they abuse their freedom, indicates that
some such groups are among the hardest working in our society and
even deliberately invent work for themselves.   Let us look at
some of them:

(i) By far the biggest group working on the basis of a g.i.
is the traditional, 'unliberated' housewife or mother.   As
mentioned earlier, she is granted her housekeeping and allowance
by the breadwinner simply by virtue of her status of wife, but
within a framework of commitments and obligations.   Placed in
this financial and moral situation, women work as hard as
anyone in the community; indeed, they deliberately invent
housework and child care, and have done so ever since the first
wives were released from the family workplace of farm or
workshop in the late middle ages.   I mention this, not to
eulogise the role of the stay-at-home wife, but merely to provide
evidence that a guaranteed income does not induce idleness.

(ii) Another group working on a guaranteed income provided
by either parents or the state are students, to whom we may add
those academic researchers who have been awarded long-term grants
by research councils and the like.   As with housework, there is
the combination of the prior granting of money simply by virtue
of the status of the recipient (highly intelligent) within a
framework of mutual obligations and commitments (although these
commitments are not as far reaching as those in marriage).   And
again, there is no evidence that students and researchers spend
their time at the races frittering away their grants; in general
they work as hard as, if not harder than, other people.

(iii) A third less obvious group on a guaranteed income
comprises aristocrats and those with private means.   Although
previous eras have known indolent and wastrel aristocrats, the
typical aristocrat of today is rather hard working and takes his
responsibilities seriously.   The classic example is the royal
family, and again we see here the importance of a framework of
obligations and commitments which induce hard work.   (I am no
more a supporter of the monarchy than of the unliberated
housewife, but royalty provides invaluable evidence of the sense
of responsibility shown by those with a guaranteed income.)

(iv) The three groups mentioned above all consist of
individuals who work on the basis of money first, work next.
But there are an increasing number of *companies* and *groups* that
work this way.   In the traditional *laissez faire* capitalist
economy, work had to come first and then profit followed.   But
in the modern mixed economy there are many instances of grant
aids (from government and elsewhere) to organisations as big as
giants such as British Leyland and as small and ephemeral as

local arts and community groups.   If *organisations* can be funded
this way (grant first, work next), then why may not *individuals*
also?

In sum, there is plenty of evidence from the odd variety of
individuals and organisations who presently work on the basis of
a g.i. to suggest that such a system does not inhibit the
motivation to work.

(c) *Can we afford it?*   Surely the g.i. is impossibly expensive?
Economically, it would cost no more than the present social
security system (perhaps less because of reduced administration).
It would involve a much higher rate of tax for those in work,
but they would get this back in their basic personal g.i.

A valid question, though, is whether we can afford such a
development *politically*.   Would it not greatly exacerbate the
power and tentacles of the state in every area of life?   Would
it not reduce people to utter dependence on the state?   In fact
it is far from certain that it would actually extend dependence:-
we are already dependent for pensions, subsidies, basic services
and so on, and politically the g.i. would be a matter of simply
reorganising the financial channels through which this
dependence operates.   Administratively, the system would be
immeasurably simpler than the present or any conceivable social
security system: government would therefore be more open and
more accountable.   (There *is* a real problem here though:- the
nature of politics is such that a g.i. could only be introduced
piecemeal, which would temporarily increase the social security
and civil service bureaucracy, which would then resist its own
dismantling when the g.i. system proper came into operation.)

The question whether or not we can afford a g.i. may be
turned profitably on its head.   Can we afford *not* to have such
a system?   Forecasting the future is an uncertain business (and
also an ideological business in that each scenario of the future
tends to justify the interests and values of particular groups
of people), but one scenario that has raised its head of late is
that of mass unemployment due to automation.   Should such a
situation arise, great difficulties will be encountered if we
continue the present ideology of work in which security, freedom
and worth have to be bought through work.   If we continue to
maintain that a man's (and increasingly now, a woman's) worth is
based on (or has to be confirmed by) work, yet as a society we
fail to provide work for all but a minority, then there can be
little doubt that the one occupation that *will* be fully manned
in future is psychiatry.   A g.i. system not only reflects a
Christian conception of human worth, it is also tailor made for
an automated future full of wealth and leisure, should such a
future ever come to pass.

Toward an economy of grace

It may be that a g.i. system will emerge not because of
prior change in the ideology of work but out of the necessities
of coping with mass unemployment.   One of the most interesting
moves in this direction in Britain is the Youth Opportunities
Programme which operates in accordance with the belief that
young people who have never succeeded in finding a job have a
right not only to social security but also to work.   The
Programme advertises itself to businesses as follows[11]:

> The idea is extremely simple: If you can take in young
> people for up to six months, we will pay them £19.50
> a week.

Now this particular advertisement is permeated with the usual
ideology of work in that it assumes that without paid employment
young people will come to see themselves as 'dustbin kids' of no
worth, and on this ideological level it is damaging.   But it
does embody a fiscal principle that is promising in that work is
provided on the basis of a g.i. from society, rather than income
being earned on the basis of work.   Since ideologies often
change to accommodate us to changing circumstances, in the long
term the economic principle of this Programme may become
embodied in other programmes, and form a context for future
ideological change in the direction suggested in this paper.

There are many ways in which individuals, small groups and
churches can begin to embody the principle of the g.i.   A small
community can pool its resources and pledge itself to provide
subsistence and the possibility of creative activity for all its
members.   At the church level, I have heard of churches in high
unemployment areas arranging to share all the available money
and work.   At the group level, I have heard of a group of
doctors, some staying at home to support the others on the
mission field, in rotation.   At the individual level, I know
of at least one individual who has been on the dole voluntarily
for long periods in order to do work that would not otherwise be
funded.

Finally, the g.i. is not utopian.   It is a concrete
possibility for advanced industrial societies with already
expensive social security systems.   It is only one small step
on the way to an economy of grace, for it is only the substratum
of the basic g.i. that is premised on grace; above this base,
individuals are still free to subject themselves to the
capitalist ideology of working for ever more material gain.   It
is still very far short of the early church pattern of having
all things in common, or of Marx's vision of "to each according
to his need, from each according to his ability".   But it is a

step in the right direction that is feasible *now*.   Now is a very
good time, for the government is currently reviewing the whole
supplementary benefit system[12]; somebody ought to tell them about
grace.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1   This is not necessarily the case.   Jacques Ellul's *The
     Meaning of the City*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970
     coherently relates to the heart of the gospel a thorough
     examination of scriptural references to the city.
2   See, for example, Howard Marshall, "Interpreting Scripture
     Today", *Third Way*, 18th Aug. 1977.
3   The experience of work in terms of time spent rather than
     as activity does not appear to fit that of some of my
     professional friends, nor perhaps those on piecework.
     The issue is complex, but it is worth noting that with
     the growth of bureaucratically-organised people-processing
     professions such as teaching and social work there is an
     increasing tendency to see work in terms of time.   Since
     the productivity of a teacher is very difficult to measure,
     the educational administrator is concerned merely that the
     teacher is there in the classroom from 9.30 to 3.30; he is
     barely concerned with what the teacher is *doing* during that
     period.   A critique of the relation of work to time cannot
     be pursued here; a good starting point would be E.P.
     Thompson's "Time, work discipline and industrial capitalism",
     Past and Present 1967, 38 , 56-97 in which is described the
     introduction in the eighteenth century of the element of
     time into work.   My view of work as time is not in any case
     crucial to the rest of the paper.
4   I have explored the idolatry of work in *A Long Way From
     Home*, Exeter: Paternoster, 1980, ch.2.
5   Max Weber: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of
     Capitalism*, 1930.
6   I am indebted to Haddon Willmer's *Towards a Theology of
     Politics*, Nottingham: Shaftsbury Project, 1976 for the
     basic idea behind what follows.
7   DHSS leaflet UBL 18.
8   W.A. Johnson, "The Guaranteed Income as an Environmental
     Measure", ch.8 in H.E. Daly (ed), *Toward a Steady-State
     Economy*, San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1973, p.184.
9   Not entirely.   It extends the commonly accepted principle
     of the *child benefit* into a 'human being benefit', and also
     resembles some *negative income tax* proposals.   It has been
     suggested to the author that it also resembles the '*social
     credit*', first propounded in 1919 by Clifford Douglas and
     subsequently advocated by some Christians such as V.A.
     Demant and the then Duke of Bedford.   The social credit
     involved government putting money gifts into the hands of

consumers in order to stimulate mass consumer demand; it was
soon to be rightly discredited by Keynesian economics.
Despite some possible apparent similarities of operation,
what is being proposed in this article is very different
from the social credit as concerns its intention and
economic assumptions.

10   Bill Jordan, *Freedom and the Welfare State*, 1976, p.198.
11   Advert in Radio Times, 14 April 1978.
12   See the DHSS document *Social Assistance*, July 1978; this is
     being followed by countrywide public consultations.

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PHILIP SAMPSON AND MIRIAM SAMPSON

NECESSITY AND FREEDOM

The authors discuss the
necessity/freedom dichotomy
with special reference to
the writings of Sartre,
Niebuhr and Ellul and the
programmes of political
parties in Britain.

Introduction: The Dichotomy between Necessity and Freedom

In this paper we shall be examining two related concepts which
arise from attempts to understand human experience — those of
'freedom' and 'necessity'. These ideas emerge again and again
in contemporary theories of man and society, but an additional
reason for choosing them as the focus of our study arises from
current interest in the Christian philosophy known as the
'Amsterdam School', whose foremost exponent was the late
Professor Dooyeweerd[1]. Representatives of this school have
analysed the development of western thought from the standpoint
of Biblical Christianity and have emphasised particularly the
dependence of all theorising upon pre-theoretical religious
presuppositions, and emotional attitudes, called collectively
'ground motives'. It is our contention that the necessity/
freedom dichotomy found in so much social analysis today derives
from the humanistic commitment which pervades our culture.

Different 'ground motives' characterise ideas arising in
cultural contexts other than ours. For example, the ancient
Greeks had no notion of creation in the Biblical sense. Rather
they modelled their theory of origins upon the nature of human
creativity. Man forms his products from pre-existent matter.
In like manner the Demiurge, Plato's divine Reason, needed pre-
existent chaotic matter to which he (or it) gave form. This
dualistic form-matter motive was the driving force behind Greek
thought and itself had its origins in the conflict between two
religions: an earlier one centred on the vital forces of life;
and a later one centred on the cultural activities of man. The
religious nature of the ground motives underlying all theorising
is, according to Dooyeweerd, inevitable and arises from the fact
that nature has been created: it is not 'autonomous'. Man must
worship and serve either the true God or else an idol, and this
applies to theorising as to all other activities of life. (Josh.

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24: 14; Rom. Ch. 1 & 2).   Theoretical thought is dependent upon
religous pre-suppositions, however disguised these may be.[2]

        Dooyeweerd locates the root of humanistic thought in the
necessity/freedom ground motive.   In its most radical form this
assumes that man is autonomous and free while nature is completely
determined.   However in its various articulations, such a
simplistic split rarely arises; rather the dualism of the ground
motive produces a tension or dialectical conflict of perspective
interwoven in the theorising itself.

        Examples of this dualistic thought form may be seen in many
contemporary debates.

        Penal theory is trapped in a perennial oscillation between
the poles of freedom and necessity.   On one side are those who
wish to emphasise the freedom of the individual in his moral
choices and hence the significance of criminal responsibility.
On the other are those who look to the causal network within which
the criminal behaviour occurs and who thus emphasise the
environment, the psychology of the offender and the social
processes which produce the criminal.   These two perspectives
have very different implications — punishment or treatment.

        In historical studies the setting of the individual in his
social context produces similar conflicts.   For example, did
Napoleon's individual genius change the face of Europe?   Or was
he the necessary product of objective historical forces owing
nothing to his human freedom?   Does man make history or does the
moment make the man?

        Perhaps the most familiar example of this conflict between
freedom and necessity arises when we consider the nature of man
himself.   Does the mechanistic nature of the biochemical
processes taking place in the brain prove human freedom to be an
illusion?   Various 'complementarity' theories have been devised
to cope with this and similar questions but all produce a final
dualism which institutionalises into the theory a conflict which
arose at the level of the pre-theoretical religious assumptions.

        Looking at these examples, we see that each offers anti-
thetical ways of interpreting and changing the world.   At one
pole we have a universe of things, of causality, necessity,
mechanism and determinative science.   At the other pole a
universe of persons, freedom, human experience and feelings.
R.D. Laing gives an illustration which is interpreted in each of
these ways and which it is worthwhile looking at in more detail.[3]
Laing is describing a clinical history involving abnormal human
reactions and interactions and which, for this very reason,
highlights the issues we are discussing.   He quotes a description

by Kraepelin (1905) of a patient 'presented' as a case before a
room full of students.   Kraepelin's description rests on the
assumption that the patient's behaviour is subjectively
meaningless and is to be understood as the product of mechanistic
and pathological forces.

> The patient I will show you today has almost to be carried
> into the rooms [sic] ... [He] sits with his eyes shut, and
> pays no attention to his surroundings.   He does not look
> up even when he is spoken to, but he answers beginning in
> a low voice, and gradually screaming louder and louder.
> When asked where he is, he says 'You want to know that
> too?   I tell you who is being measured and is measured
> and shall be measured.   I know all that, and could tell
> you, but I do not want to'...   Although he undoubtedly
> understood all the questions, he has not given us a single
> piece of useful information.   His talk was...only a
> series of disconnected sentences having no relation to
> the general situation.

Kraepelin's description is graphic and his point clear.   He
is presenting a case to his students in order to illustrate the
'signs' of a 'disease'.   The patient's behaviour has no human
meaning ('series of disconnected sentences') and was not a free
personal response to his situation.   Laing, however, turns the
tables on Kraepelin by re-interpreting the description precisely
as a free personal response of the patient to his situation.

> Surely, [comments Laing], he is carrying on a dialogue
> between his own parodied version of Kraepelin, and his
> own defiant rebelling self.   'You want to know that
> too?   I tell you who is being measured and is measured
> and shall be measured.   I know all that, and I could
> tell you, but I do not want to'.   This seems to be
> plain enough talk.   Presumably he (the patient) deeply
> resents this form of interrogation which is being carried
> out before a lecture room of students.   He probably does
> not see what it has to do with the things that must be
> deeply distressing him.   But these things would not be
> 'useful information' to Kraepelin except as further
> 'signs' of a 'disease'.

Laing goes on to re-interpret further apparently disconnected
remarks of the patient in a similar way and concludes:

> This patient's behaviour can be seen in at least two
> ways... One may see his behaviour as 'signs' of a
> 'disease'; one may see his behaviour as expressive
> of his existence... What is he 'about' in speaking
> and acting in this way?   He is objecting to being
> measured and tested.   He wants to be heard.

The conflict between a 'scientific' account of the signs
which necessarily accompany a disease and a personalistic account
of the patient's free expression of his existence is clear.   By
skillful re-interpretation Laing has switched from the necessity
pole to the freedom pole.   To opt for one pole does not however
enable him to evade the dualism of humanistic thought and his own
later work oscillates irreconcilably between these two poles.[4]
In order to switch back to the necessity pole one has only to ask
why, if the patient 'wants to be heard', he speaks in so elusive
a manner.   To answer such a question one must resort to
'mechanistic' concepts, a point Laing, himself, later makes.

Attempts at Resolution

We have, then, a dualism which is implicit in humanistic thought,
with two irreconcilable poles.   The first, that of necessity,
provides a good basis for order, prediction and control but not
for humanness; the second, that of freedom, emphasises
responsibility, empathy and human experience but is descriptive
rather than analytic, individualising rather than generalising.
This dualism becomes problematical as soon as we try to deal with
concrete situations which obstinately refuse to be categorised in
the one way or the other.

     In response to this situation we find the following reactions,
though often enough they are not consciously articulated.

(i)   Popular eclectic solutions aiming at a 'middle path' or
'seeing both sides', but unmindful of the contradictions inherent
in such a position.   This attitude is common in humanism as
Dr. Francis Schaeffer has shown.[5]

(ii) The two poles of necessity and freedom may be explicitly
split apart, possibly with the reduction of one pole to the
other.   This attempted resolution of the conflict often occurs
in the form of a science (necessity) — human experience (freedom)
dualism.   For example, it is only on the ground of a split such
as this that the concept of 'social responsibility in science'
can arise, for this concept presupposes that social responsibility
is external to science, making a synthesis necessary.   Instances
of the reduction of the one (freedom) to the other (science) are
provided by the 'scientisms' which see man as a more or less
elaborate machine.   Classical behaviourism is a well known
example[6].

(iii) Finally there are the attempts at a synthesis between the
poles of necessity and freedom which aim to achieve a 'human'
science or a scientific anthropology.   These attempts at
synthesis tackle the problem at its root and often imply a
profound insight into the nature of the issues involved.
Nevertheless, so long as they hold to the pre-theoretical and

religious commitment to the science-freedom ground motive, no
degree of insight or sophistication will suffice to resolve the
conflict; indeed, the most able attempts have rather served to
sharpen it.

We shall examine three such attempts at synthesis — two by
Christians and one by an atheist.   In the cases of Niebuhr and
Ellul, it is our contention that their work, in attempting a
synthesis between necessity and freedom, demonstrates the
influence of the humanistic ground motive as well as Biblical
revelation.   Thus, possibly unwittingly, both thinkers remain
trapped in the necessity/freedom dichotomy.   Though both have
contributed richly to Christian scholarship, their work reminds
us of the need for constant reassessment against biblical revelation.

We have not selected these three individuals primarily for
their contributions to social analysis, significant though these
are.   The reason for our choice is rather that all three share a
concern for both interpreting the world and changing it.   This
double focus upon scientific analysis and human experience throws
into sharp relief the associated conflict between the science
and freedom motives.

Jean-Paul Sartre: Existentialism, a Philosophy of Freedom

J.P. Sartre who identifies himself as an 'atheistic existentialist'[7,8]
is probably the best known representative of the European movement
known as existentialism and he has had a significant influence on
contemporary sociology.

In *Being and Nothingness*[9], his major philosophical work of the
early 1940's, he consistently developed the implications of the
humanistic thesis that man is alone in the universe, that there is
no sovereign God.   If this is so, then man is not defined
externally, outside himself.   There is no external measure of who
man is, in the sense that, for example, there is an external measure
of a commodity like a house which is, in essence, for living in.
If, however, man is not in essence defined, then he first of all
exists and must create for himself who he is to be.   Hence arises
the famous formula defining existentialism as 'existence before
essence'[8].   Sartre finds his starting point here, in the supposed
nature of man, alone in the world, creating himself, and responsible
in his freedom only to himself for who he is.   Central to this view
is an emphasis on the responsibility inherent in such a freedom
which places the individual's choice over against the void.   Once
the thesis of humanism is taken seriously — that man is alone in the
world — emptiness does not simply lurk in the wings waiting, but,
in Sartre's horrible phrase, "nothingness lies coiled in the heart
of being — like a worm"[9a].   It is scarcely surprising that with
this emphasis upon the 'angst' involved in authentic choice and

with the entry of nothingness into the very heart of being, Sartre
was accused of proposing a sordid, base and nihilistic philosophy[10].

It is clear that Sartre's view is rooted in the freedom pole
which we have outlined above.   This was early recognised and the
philosophy was critcised, particularly lucidly by Marxists, as
subjectivistic and voluntaristic; that is to say, rooting itself
in the free, undifferentiated and autonomous choices of individuals.
Symptomatic of this was the inability of the philosophy to deal with
the more complex social structure, with groups or with ethics.   In
Being and Nothingness Sartre twice promises to deal with this issue
by founding an existentialist ethic which would act as a bridge
between individuals in concrete situations[9b].   The whole question
is finally relegated to another book which was, however, never
written.

The fact is that Sartre never achieved a theoretical ethic
and that the weakest area of his thought is his analysis of the
relations, other than destructive ones, between individuals[11].
It seems symptomatic that, in his well known trilogy *Roads to
Freedom*, the main character, Mathieu, only acts authentically on
one occasion and that is one which seemingly involves his own death
as he kills others in war.   Sartre had intended to write a fourth
volume in which Mathieu survives and authentically realises himself
in solidarity with the Communist Party.   The volume was never
written, and the most lucid literary development of existentialist
philosophy ends: "But Mathieu went on firing. He fired. He was
cleansed. He was all-powerful. He was free."[12] "Hell is other
people"[13] is the inevitable finality of such individualism.

The meaninglessness of such an individualistic stance forced
Sartre towards a collectivist pole where the norm of freedom gives
way to a norm of mechanism: the dialectical method.   Sartre tried,
and failed, to bridge the abyss which had opened between the
individual and larger social structures and it was not until the
1950's that he developed a more sophisticated framework within
which to analyse group structures in concrete contexts.   It is ,
to this that we must now turn.

A Dialectical Resolution?

In *The Problem of Method*, Sartre asks whether it is possible to
construct a structural and historical view of man.   That is to
say, a view which aims at a synthesis of the necessity/freedom
antithesis and avoids both voluntarism and determinism.   He
starts by criticising Marxism as having come to a full stop,
thinking that it knows all the answers and thus falling into
idealism.   "Men and things had to yield to ideas" and freedom
could find no place in historical necessity[14a].   Sartre places

Marxism at the necessity pole as a static, fixed, 'totalised'
theory of history and society.   Against this he opposes the
individualistic pole of existentialism which "intends....to find
mediations which allow the individual concrete — the particular
life, the real and dated conflict, the person — to emerge from
the background of the general contradictions of productive forces
and relations of production"[14b].   However, having established
these two poles, the problem of finding a synthesis ·arises and,
to do this, he proposes a technique: the progressive-regressive
method.   Following the structuralist tradition, he identifies
two dimensions of a community: a horizontal complexity of men and
their relationships (corresponding to our freedom pole); and a
vertical complexity consisting of the history of the community
spread out, as it were, over time (and corresponding to our
necessity pole).   The 'method' proposes that, by interweaving
these two dimensions (progressing and regressing) so that each
enriches the other, it is possible to construct a sort of
increasingly complex spiral each point of which gives the
totalised background from which the individual acts, as well as
the individual's detotalisation of the given in the making of
history.   A family, for example, has a multiplicity of
horizontal aspects — the environment, the relationships between
members and so on; however, it also has a vertical, historical
dimension of previous generations, of present parents as past
children and even of the 'survival.' of previous family members in
the present family nexus (as when a mother says of her son that he
is the 'spitting image' of his deceased grandfather).   According
to Sartre, such a family cannot be understood either in terms of
the free activity of its members in the present, or in terms of
its history; in order not to get lost in such complexity, one has
to analyse methodically both dimensions and rediscover, elucidated,
the truth of the present.

This attempt by Sartre to resolve the conflict within humanism
between individual freedom and historical necessity is criticised
by traditional Marxists as simply another form of voluntarism —
that is, as attempting to ground history in contingent individual
choices.   Certainly Sartre has difficulty in establishing that
existentialist ideology does not undermine the Marxist concept of
truth in history and he has largely failed to extend his critique
to wider social analysis.   In view of the fact that he regards
collective objects as parasitical upon the concrete activities of
the individuals involved, this is perhaps not surprising.   Sartre,
himself, has demonstrated his method most convincingly in
biographical works which again find their focus in the lives of the
individuals concerned.[15]   The other notable development has been
the application of the progressive-regressive method to the analysis
of families experiencing crisis[16,17].   It is significant that here
too the emphasis is on the individual within a social structure
(family) and that the social structure itself, because it is in
crisis, is in a fragmented state.   It would be interesting to see

a similar analysis of less fragmented families where the
structural aspects might be expected to have a more prominent
place and the biographical aspects a lesser one.   Laing *et al.*
promised just such a volume in the mid-1960's but it was never
published.

Sartre's appeal to a dialectical method to resolve the
necessity-freedom antinomy of contemporary humanism is
unconvincing.   The specific applications are most successful when
the focus is biographical or in some other way centred upon the
individual.   There has however been a general failure to do
justice to the structure of particular concrete social institutions.

Two Christian Approaches

Both Niebuhr, an American of German origin, and Ellul, a Frenchman,
are influenced by modern existentialism to the extent that *paradox*
is central to their thinking, as is the case with key existentialist
figures such as Kierkegaard and even Sartre.   Neither of them
really attempts to resolve the necessity/freedom issue; Niebuhr
seeing a contrast between 'natural necessity' and 'creative freedom'
as a distinctive factor in human life, and Ellul wishing to
emphasize God's freedom and, at the same time, man's responsibility
to make a personal decision of faith when confronted by God's Word,
in spite of the binding realities of social and political
'necessities' which may hinder him.

Reinhold Niebuhr: A synthesis?

Niebuhr's thought developed over the period of the 1920s to the
1950s, quickly leading away from a liberal, social gospel, towards
a more radical perspective in which he was strongly influenced by
his experience as a pastor among car workers in Detroit, and by
his reading of Karl Marx.   At the same time he opposed Protestant
orthodoxy on the grounds that it was too strongly committed to the
status quo.   In his later work themes such as sin and redemption
play an increasingly prominent role, but his treatment of these
issues remains 'neo-orthodox' in that the Biblical accounts from
which these themes emerge are treated primarily as 'myths' rather
than as rooted in historical events.

Niebuhr accepts the assessment of 'positivist' science that
'objective' factors surrounding human life are governed by
necessity.   These factors give a general shape to society and
history and constrain the lives of individuals: "The most
indubitable constancies are those which are rooted in natural
necessities, as, for instance, facts of geography and climate in
man's collective life and those of sex and age in man's individual
life."[18a]

Freedom enters in that man attributes meaning to his
experience of such necessities and he is able to act upon them to
some degree and to use them creatively to achieve his goals.
Niebuhr sees 'the self' as "a creature which is in constant
dialogue with itself, its neighbours and with God"[18b] and this he
holds to be the Biblical view.[19]   However, his view of freedom
is far from romantic and here his position can be clearly
distinguished from the optimism of liberal theology., He is
acutely aware that we all use our freedom to further our own
selfish ends, and that sin is a reality in our experience, such
that any view of personal or community relationships which over-
looks this is hopelessly utopian.   His insight into the
multifarious ways in which this self-centredness can be revealed,
even in the most altruistic actions, is one of the most striking
aspects of his thought:

> The universal inclination of the self to be more concerned
> with itself than to be embarrassed by its undue claims may
> be defined as 'original sin' ... We will understand the
> nature of this universal inclination if we note that it
> expresses itself on many levels ... A person may be
> thoroughly 'devoted' to a cause, a community, or a
> creative relationship and yet he may, within the terms
> of that devotion, express his final concern for his own
> prestige, power or security.[18c]

Indeed, Niebuhr sees the most worthy causes and the most
noble commitments as allowing the possibility of the greatest
pretension and therefore the greatest sin.   For example, writing
just after the end of World War Two he issued a warning to America,
Russia and Britain not to fall into the same temptations of pride
and injustice against which they had been fighting:

> No man or nation is wise or good enough to hold the power
> which the great nations in the victorious alliance hold,
> without being tempted to both pride and injustice. Pride
> is the religious dimension of the sin which flows from
> absolute power and injustice is its social dimension.
> The great nations speak so glibly of their passion for
> justice and peace; and so obviously betray interests
> which contradict justice and peace.

It is, however, important to note that Niebuhr, rightly, does
not equate finiteness and sin as, for example, classical Greek
thought did — he cites the story of Prometheus to illustrate this.
Rather, the Biblical account shows us that sin is evidenced in
man's attempts to use the freedom which God has given him to
challenge the limits which God has rightfully set: "In the 'Fall'
myth it is not regarded as inevitable that men offend God in his
creativity.   God sets limits for finite man, but these limits do
not exclude his dominion over nature and all that this dominion

implies ... Man's sin consists in a pride which pretends to defy those limits."[18d]

Thus Niebuhr sees an order of natural necessity constraining our lives but at the same time an area of real freedom and creativity, although this freedom carries with it a destructive undertow which cannot be ignored. This makes it necessary for us to be realistic, not idealistic, in our hopes for society. We cannot expect, for example, to carry the Christian ideal of love directly into the political arena. Considerations of justice must come first in this sphere. "If love means wanting the welfare of the neighbour, it can never be irrelevant to any social situation. If love is defined exclusively in terms of attitudes which can express themselves only in personal relations, as it is frequently defined by Christians ... it becomes irrelevant in any situation in which structures of justice must become instruments of love".[18e]

Niebuhr poses two key questions regarding any social and political programme: Does it "do justice to the moral resources and possibilities in human nature and provide for the exploitation of every latent moral capacity in man?" and does it "take account of the limitations of human nature, particularly those which manifest themselves in man's collective behaviour?"[21] Thus he sees 'freedom' and 'necessity' as equally important in social policy and political activity. As a result he has been termed a 'Christian realist'.

Similarly, Niebuhr sees freedom and necessity as intertwined in the fabric of human history, so that the task of historical interpretation is highly complex and not subject to easy generalizations. The metaphor he uses is that of a 'drama', with plot and sub-plot cutting across one another: "History is the more complex because one pattern is super-imposed upon another: the dramatic pattern of a national history, for instance, on the dramatic pattern of a whole culture."[18f]

The emphasis on drama, however, highlights an undercurrent in Niebuhr's thought which still owes much to a dialectic ultimately derived from the Greek world-view, and in particular the shape of Greek tragedy, rather than that of Biblical history. For him, Christ stands at the centre of history as, in a sense, a 'tragic hero', with the cross and the resurrection representing the core of a dialectical contradiction between 'nature' and 'grace', rather than a real redemptive act in history, accomplished by God on man's behalf.

Thus, Niebuhr does not finally show us the biblical pattern of Creation — Fall — Redemption being unfolded in real dealings between God and man in history. Rather, he tries to combine perspectives deriving from humanistic, and ultimately Greek,

thought, together with some penetrating psychological insights of
modern existentialism, with elements of a Biblical vision.   In so
doing he highlights some important aspects of the problem of
'freedom' and 'necessity' but he fails to resolve it.

Jacques Ellul: An Antithesis?

Jacques Ellul comes from a very different background.   He is
Professor of Law and Government at the University of Bordeaux,
and a Protestant who played an active part in the French Resistance
in World War Two.   Yet, he too could be characterised as a
'Christian realist' for he harbours no illusions as to the power
of pious hopes and moral strictures to influence the 'necessities'
of political and social life today.   At the same time he is
thoroughly uncompromising in his demand that Christians should
stand fast on the truth that they believe, regardless of whether
it appears unfashionable, negative or utopian.   For example, in
his provocative book on the timely subject of violence, he states:

> Only one line of action is open to the Christian who is free
> in Christ.   He must struggle against violence precisely
> *because*, apart from Christ, violence is the form that human
> relationships naturally and necessarily take.   In other
> words, the more completely violence is of the order of
> necessity, the greater is the obligation of believers in
> Christ's Lordship to overcome it by challenging necessity.[22a]

Like Niebuhr, then, Ellul sees two opposing orders in the
world; on the one hand nature, sin and necessity, but on the other,
revelation, grace and freedom.   However, this latter order is not
destined to find its fulfilment in history — it will always lead
those who follow it, as it led Christ Himself, into suffering.

Ellul is more familiar with the social sciences than Niebuhr,
although he is sceptical of many of their claims.   He has written
detailed studies of politics[21], technique[22] — that is the
dominance of the 'technical' approach in so many areas of modern
life — and the process of secularisation[23].   This last study
analyses new 'sacred' entities which perform the traditional
functions of religion, including technique, sex, the nation-state,
revolution and the myths of history and science.   On the other
hand, Ellul has written a number of books which reflect on
theological issues and Biblical themes — for example, *The Meaning
of the City*[26] which looks at the power of the image of the city in
the Scriptures, pointing on the one hand to rebellion (the city
that Cain built) and on the other hand to redemption and fulfilment
(the New Jerusalem).

The themes of necessity and freedom are implicit in much of
Ellul's work and he identifies the source of freedom with God's

Word, rather than with man's creativity — though itself God-given
— as Niebuhr tends to do.   For Ellul, necessity rules in the
ordinary processes of the political and social order, whether they
be the dealings of the 'establishment' or of revolutionary groups of
leaders today or kings in the Old Testament times.   However, God's
Word breaks into the chain of necessity with a challenge which
often seems irrelevant or outrageous but which nonetheless
commands both the attention and the obedience of the believer.
Thus, if the Christian seeks to intervene in the social order —
and Ellul is convinced that he has a vital role to play in this
sphere — his intervention will never fit easily into established
patterns and conventional alliances.   For example, if he decides
he must participate in some violent activity — knowing God's
command 'Thou shalt not kill' — he must proclaim this command
even as he stands alongside his comrades in the war, the revolution
or whatever the situation might be.   Thus:

>   He ought to be the conscience of the movement; the one who,
>   on behalf of his unbelieving comrades, repents, bears
>   humiliation, and prays to the Lord; the one who restrains
>   man from glorifying himself for the evil that he does.[22b]

Christians should be 'realists' in the sense that they are
not to be easily taken in by the glib justifications which the
world proposes for its policies; we must be prepared to strip them
of their moral justifications and thus to undermine their
credibility.   Yet we must not do so as cynics, as if we hold to
no values at all; rather, we hold to the realities of God's truth,
refusing to compromise its message to accord with the cultural
climate of the time.   As St. Paul says: "Do not let yourself be
overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12: 21)

Thus, Ellul emphasizes the radical distinction between God
and the world, between His Word and the natural order of things.
In many ways his vision is allied to that of Karl Barth, for whom
God was 'wholly other' — a phrase which Ellul also uses.

Since he identifies God with freedom as against a natural
order of necessity, Ellul is open to the possibility of the Holy
Spirit working in unexpected ways.   This gives much of his
writing a refreshing, even provocative, character.   However, he
is far from rash:

>   Christian realism demands that a man understand exactly
>   what he is doing, why he is doing it and what the results
>   of his doing will be.   The Christian can never act
>   spontaneously, as though he were an illuminist ...
>   contrary to widely held opinion, faith in the Holy
>   Spirit does not mean that we act imprudently, close
>   our eyes and refuse to think; rather, it means that
>   we must use our heads and try to see with clarity.

> True, the Holy Spirit — who is clarity itself — may
> propel us into the greatest imprudence; but then we
> shall know it.[22c]

What Ellul's work seems to lack in its emphasis on the
paradoxical relationship between God's Word and the world into
which it is spoken, is a recognition of the creation order which
His Word brought into being.   The Bible teaches us that, in
spite of man's radical Fall into sin, which must not be under-
played, some residual 'fit' still remains between man, the universe,
and the God from whose hand both proceeded.   (Cf. Rom. 1: 18-21)
As he focuses on the freedom which God's word in the gospel can
give from the binding 'necessities' we seem to experience in our
lives, this leads him to undervalue the 'sustaining grace' whereby
the creation order is upheld and evil is restrained from its
worst possible excesses.   From this perspective man does not seem
to face such an implacably hostile world of 'necessity', though its
traps for the unwary are no less real.   There is certainly no
excuse for Christians to remain content with the *status quo* — a
trap into which the Church has too often fallen — and the need to
unmask man's attempts to 'sanctify' the order he attempts to impose
upon the world from his own self-seeking perspective remains
as strong as Ellul suggests, but the predominant pessimism which
often seems to colour his vision could perhaps be thus allayed.

Summary

The three writers whose work we have discussed here have all been
aware of an increasing emphasis on order and control in the modern
world and they have been concerned to search out areas for the
operation of human freedom in an attempt to combat this.   Sartre
sees the potential source of such freedom in the irreducibility of
the cultural order to the natural order.   Niebuhr and Ellul,
however, are both too aware of the corruption of the cultural
order to found freedom there.   For Niebuhr, human creativity
gives a promise of freedom but this promise remains unfulfilled
because of the binding necessities of the 'natural order' and of
sin.   For Ellul, freedom can break into the world through God's
Word, but this appears to be radically opposed to an abandoned
world of necessity.

We are thus left in the end with the familiar modern view —
typified by contemporary science — that the universe is a 'closed
system' governed by laws of necessity, and in spite of himself man
has been sucked into such a system in his social and political
life.   If there is to be any place for freedom, and if God can
act into the system at all, it is only in extraordinary ways.

Conclusion

In conclusion we should like to draw attention to some practical
implications of the freedom/necessity dichotomy as it affects
contemporary social policy and the political choices we face today.
In doing so we shall, to some extent, be following Ellul's advice
to Christians to face contemporary issues critically and from a
perspective of real commitment to God's truth.

As we look at the world around us it is obvious that the
freedom/necessity issue does not only arise in theoretical thought
but also has real consequences for action.   For example, even a
cursory glance at the programmes of the two major political
parties in Britain reveals evidence of the power of this conflict.

On the one hand the Conservative Party identifies itself as
the party of the 'free market economy' — and never was this more
clearly seen than at the last General Election.   Together with
the emphasis on a free market we find an insistence on certain
individual freedoms — for example, freedom of choice for parents
regarding their children's schooling and freedom of tax-payers to
decide what to do with their own money as opposed to high levels
of taxation by the state with money channelled into public projects.
At least, these freedoms were proposed in the party's manifesto
even if they have not been fully implemented yet in practice.

At the same time, however, the Conservative Party also
emphasizes 'law and order' in a commitment to increased control
over certain sorts of behaviour which are regarded as undesirable.
This policy embraces both the notion of harsher treatment for
young criminals (Mr. Whitelaw's arguments in favour of a 'short,
sharp, shock') and also the government's thinking on industrial
relations, comprising measures to place trade unions under stricter
legal controls.   This type of thinking derives from the
'necessity' pole of the dichotomy we have been discussing, and it
stands in uneasy tension with the party's ideas of freedom,
sometimes adding fuel to the flames of accusations about the
party's class bias.

If we turn to the Labour Party, however, we find a similar
contradiction between ideas of necessity and freedom, but in a
different form.   Labour party policy emphasizes the role of
order and planning in the economy, where we find a strong
emphasis on public ownership and accountability, planning and
government control.   Hence the idea of a wages policy has been
influential and Labour governments have been much more willing to
intervene in the industrial life of the country to safeguard what
they have seen to be vital areas of our economic life, than have
Conservative administrations.

On the other hand, the politics of the 'left' have been associated with a greater emphasis on civil liberties than those of the 'right', as seen, for example, in a readiness to espouse the causes of disadvantaged and minority groups; whether they be immigrants, women, homosexuals, or one-parent families.[27]   It is in this area that we see the influence of the 'freedom' side of humanistic thought.

It is instructive to note that the differing emphases on necessity and freedom which characterize our two main political parties are related to different ideas of justice in society. While Conservatives see curbs on the free market as an unwarranted interference in individual liberty, Labour's economic policies claim to aim at greater economic justice for the community as a whole.   On the other hand, Labour's defence of Trade Union rights, for example, is construed by Conservatives as an unjust distribution of power allowing union 'barons' to run the country.

Each position can be understood in relation to the history of the respective parties' ideologies, social bases and sources of electoral support, but the one-sided view of justice which each programme demonstrates can surely be related to the failure of humanism to establish a satisfactory basis for social and political ethics.   This failure is intimately related to the oscillation of humanistic thought between the two poles of freedom and necessity.

In his book *How Should We Then Live?* Dr. Francis Schaeffer argues persuasively that with the loss of a Christian basis in Western society freedom veers towards chaos while order can only be based upon 'arbitrary absolutes'.[28]   We are open to the tyranny of the majority ("the 51% vote"), which can opt for one set of values today and another tomorrow, or the tyranny of a technocratic elite, such as that predicted by American sociologist Daniel Bell.[29]   Most ominously of all, perhaps, such an elite would have available to it the sophisticated tools of modern electronics and the mass communication media, allowing it to manipulate the opinion of the majority more or less as it wished. Schaeffer predicts a slide towards authoritarian government which will be accepted by the majority so long as the shoddy values of personal peace and affluence are not threatened.

Although we may differ with details of Schaeffer's argument, Christians must surely be concerned about such a prospect and it is incumbent on us to explore the real possibility of a positive Christian alternative to such authoritarianism.   The three thinkers whose work we have discussed in this paper were aware of similar dangers and they were all vitally concerned to preserve a real role for freedom and the value of persons amid the over-whelming contemporary acceptance of the 'necessities' imposed by technology, the media and other similar forces.   Yet, as we have seen, their attempts to achieve this aim themselves fell into.

the necessity/freedom dichotomy, which tends, in the end, to relegate freedom to the sidelines where it can only play an 'extraordinary' role.

     The Christian knows from the Scriptures not only that freedom can only derive from God — as Niebuhr indicated and Ellul emphasized — but also that the true source of law and of orderliness is God Himself, who has made man, and the world in which we live, according to His will.   Thus, man and creation both have an inherently normative character, that is to say they are subject to a law which is not ultimately that of impersonal necessity, but of God's Word.

     This understanding should provide us with a radically different perspective on law from that of humanism.   For example, the 'laws' of science do not derive from a blind necessity, but from the character of the created order upheld by God.   Similarly, moral law relating to personal ethics, and law in society in the widest sense — for example, social and economic justice as well as civil and criminal law — must both be derived at root from the righteous character of God Himself, in whose image man has been made, and from God's commands to man[30] as opposed to our own utopian or 'scientific' schemes.

     Such a perspective also reveals to us the true place of human freedom within the circle of God's law.   This was something which Niebuhr recognised, as we saw earlier, and he also acknowledged that man's proud attempts to claim an autonomous freedom lay at the root of the contradiction we now experience between what we suppose to be 'freedom' and external 'necessities'.   In a fallen world the harmony between God's law and man's liberty has been lost, but God has remained faithful to His creation and we see in the promises given to Israel, in the work of Christ and in the new way of living seen in the early Church, that God is at work to restore in the kingdom, that which was 'very good' in the world that He created.   Through Christ's saving work we are able to enter into new life, and in living that life we should see God's rule as extending over every area of human activity.[31]   We know that we shall never see that rule perfected in this present age, but when Christ returns to fulfil the promises and institute His glorious reign, will He find the way prepared, even in the social and political order, by those of us who claim to be His disciples?

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1   Dooyeweerd shows how the 'ground motives' which characterise
      successive periods of Western thought, though distinct from
      one another, yet reflect residues of earlier themes.   For
      example, the nature/grace ground motive characterising the
      medieval period reflects residues of form/matter dualism

but transformed by the Thomistic synthesis of Greek and Christian thought.   Similarly, the necessity/freedom ground motive reflects secularised elements of the nature/grace theme.   See: L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy*, Wedge, Toronto, 1975.

2   The example given in this section is derived from Kalsbeek, Ref.1, Ch.5.

3   R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self*, 1960, Harmondsworth ed. 1965 p.29. On Laing see also J.N. Isbister, this JOURNAL 106, 23.

4   For example, compare: Laing, H. Phillipson & A.R. Lee, *'Interpersonal Perception'* 1966 with R.D. Laing, *'The Politics of Experience'*, Harmondsworth, 1967.

5   F.A. Schaeffer: *Escape from Reason*, IVP, 1968; *He is There and He is not Silent*, 1972.

5*   For the Puritan view of science, which showed a greater influence of Biblical thought, see: *Jour. of Christian Reconstruction*, 1979 6(1). [Also Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration*, 1975.- Ed.]

6   B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, 1972. See also: F. Schaeffer, *Back to Freedom and Dignity*, 1972.

7   This was in contrast to a movement which, loosely, identified itself with Christianity.

8   J.P. Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism.

9   J.P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 1968; (a) p.21; (b) Pt.2, Ch.1, Sect.3 and Conclusion.

10   S. De Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*, Harmondsworth, 1965.

11   See, for example, J.P. Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, 1962.

12   J.P. Sartre, *Iron In The Soul*, 1963, Penguin p.225.

13   J.P. Sartre, *In Camera*, (*Huis Clos*, Paris 1965).

14   J.P. Sartre, *Search for a Method*, Vintage Books, NY, 1968, (a) p.23; (b) p.57.

15   Notably in works on Flaubert and Genet. For brief accounts, see: Ref.14 and R.D. Laing & D. Cooper, *Reason and Violence*, Tavistock, 1964.

16   R.D. Laing & A. Esterson, *Sanity, Madness and the Family*, Harmondsworth, 1970.

17   Esterson, *The Leaves of Spring*, Harmondsworth, 1972.

18   R. Niebuhr, *The Self and the Dramas of History*, 1956. (a) p.56; (b) p.16; (c) p.30-31; (d) p.92, (e) p.202; (f) p.56.

19   Niebuhr's formulation of this definition seems to owe more to Kierkegaard than to the Biblical emphasis on man made in the image of God — a definition of man which certainly implies the relationships highlighted by Niebuhr but which does not make them constitutive of man's identity.

20   R. Niebuhr, *"The Nemesis of Nations"*, *'Discerning the Signs of the Times'*, SCM, 1946, p.64.

21   R. Niebuhr, *Introduction to 'Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 1932.

22   J. Ellul, *Violence*, 1970: (a) pp.127-8; (b) pp.141-2; (c) p.82.
23   J. Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, Knopf, NY; 1967.
24   J. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, Vintage Books, NY, 1970.
25   J. Ellul, *The New Demons*, Oxford, 1976.
26   J. Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids,
      1970.
27   It should perhaps be noted, however, that not all minorities
      are championed by the 'left' and this policy can be quite
      selective — for example, the rights of the unborn child have
      tended to be subordinated to the 'rights' of women, while
      those of workers with conscientious objections to joining a
      trade union have also been overlooked in favour of the
      interests of organised labour.
28   F.A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, Revell, New Jersey,
      1976, Ch.11.
29   Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 1973.
30   'Command' is here used in the sense that everything in
      creation is subject to God's law for it, and accordingly,
      law is not in opposition to, but the condition for authentic
      freedom.   See, for example, Kalsbeek Ref.1 and R.J. Rushdoony,
      Institutes of Biblical Law, Craig Press, USA, 1974 for two
      different developments of this position.
31   For an application of this to the social and political order
      see A. Storkey, *A Christian Social Perspective*, IVP, (1979).

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J.A. WALTER

BAD KIDS AND BAD HOMES:

CRIMINOLOGICAL IDEOLOGY AND THE IDOLATRY
OF THE MODERN FAMILY

This article asks why there
exists a common belief that
juvenile offenders come from
bad homes.   The article
suggests that this belief is
grounded in two central
features of the modern family:
its sacredness and its
privacy.

According to official statistics, juvenile crime occurs almost wholly
outside the home.   Muggings take place in streets and parks,
vandalism occurs to the walls of public buildings and subways, Mars
Bars are stolen in the anonymity of the modern supermarket, and the
young thief breaks into other people's houses, not his own.   This
would lead the detached observer (say a visiting anthropologist from
Mars) to suspect that there is something about public places in
modern society (say their anonymity) that facilitates the commission
of crime.   It is somewhat puzzling therefore that by far the
commonest explanation for juvenile crime to be found today is that
it stems from deficiencies within the family.   Magistrates, social
workers, criminologists, politicians and many people in the street
all assent to the conventional wisdom that bad kids come from bad
homes.   In order to understand children's behaviour in public places,
it is assumed by many that the meaning to the child of public places
is of little importance compared to that of the private place of
the home.

      This assumption is rather curious, and so this article will
explore some of the reasons why people should hold this belief that
juvenile crime, although committed in the street and supermarket,
has little to do with street and supermarket and everything to do
with the home.   I am not directly querying the *accuracy* of this
assumption, but puzzling over *why* people should hold it: to explain
why a belief is commonly held says nothing (in the first instance
at any rate) about whether that belief is true.

      To understand the attraction and plausibility of this belief,
we must look first at the nature of the modern family and its

relation to the distinction in modern society between public and
private. Society is divided in people's experience between their
private world, which includes most importantly the family, where
they feel at home and over which they have some control; and the
public world of work,bureaucracy, politics, and the street, where
they feel much less at home and over which they have little control.
As A.H. Halsey put it in one of his Reith lectures: "The old 'us
and them' of the working class mother is now a more generalised
division as between the inner life of families of all classes and
the external public forces."[1] People are all too glad to have as
little as possible to do with the anonymous public world of
politics, bureaucracy and officialdom, while by contrast they see
their family as the place where meaning, love and commitment is
(or ought to be) both found and given.[2] (Some of course find
their families stifling and intolerable, and they deliberately
return to the public sphere of work or street; but it is important
to note that they do not do so gladly or willingly.) To use the
term of Emile Durkheim and some anthropologists, the private family
is sacred; the public world is profane. This distinction
encompasses the whole of modern life; it provides two co-ordinates
which enable the individual to map and give meaning to all the
situations he finds himself in. This current belief in the modern
family as (a) private and (b) sacred provides the key to understanding
why people blithely assume that bad kids come from bad homes. Let
us look first at the sacredness and then at the privacy of the
modern family:-

The Sacred Family

  If something is believed to be sacred, and at the same time
there are things perceived to be wrong with society, then the usual
deduction people make is that the sacred is under attack. Thus
religious folk who believe God and religion to be sacred respond to
social disorder by claiming that it's all due to a decline in
religious faith; likewise, ecologists who believe nature to be
sacred explain contemporary pollution and exhaustion of natural
resources in terms of mankind's treatment of Nature as a profane
thing to be exploited rather than as something sacred to be
respected. The same reasoning occurs with the sacred family.
All kinds of social changes such as the supposed increased level of
industrial unrest, the increase in crime, and even Britain's
declining economic performance are put down to a supposed decline
in family life. If society is going bad, it must be because the
sacred is in disrespect. This argument is most forcefully put by
pressure groups such as the National Festival of Light and also
by various right-wing and anti-feminist groups, but it is also
happily reiterated by the whole spectrum of politicians and by
those who stress the common-sense notion that bad kids come from
bad homes. If society-wide disorder derives from a general
breakdown in family life, then personal disorder (such as
delinquency) derives from deficiencies in the individual's own
family.

It is this belief in the sacred family that has sustained the plausibility of Freudian and neo-Freudian ideas and that has led to them being institutionalised within the ideology and practice of the professions of social work and psychiatry.   These professions are now geared to reducing personal and social difficulties to problems within the individual's family.   This is not to say that individual social workers may not identify a slum neighbourhood, poverty or unemployment as the origin of a client's difficulties, but *as a social worker* (or as a psychiatrist) there is rather little he or she can do about such problems.   The structure of his profession enables the social worker to intervene in a client's family, but does not facilitate intervention in other areas.   This has been substantially reinforced in the last ten years by the restructuring of social work in Britain following the Seebohm and Kilbrandon reforms which mandate the social worker to work with families rather than with individual clients.

To give an example from my own research.[3]   I studied all the court reports by local authority social workers on 50 boys who were eventually sent away.   One would expect such reports to attempt an explanation of the type "This child is in trouble with the police because he comes from a bad home" in those cases where *both* the offence was manifestly serious and beyond the normal run of childish pranks *and* where there was evidence of things awry in the child's family.   And this was indeed the explanation offered in the reports of such cases.   But even in those cases where the offence was trivial or where there was no evidence of a deprived family, the bulk of the report was still geared to exploring the bad home/bad kid link to the neglect of other possible explanations, and in no case was the bad kid/bad home model challenged.

Four specific samples of the reasoning used, taken from the reports studied of instances where the home was apparently good may be given.   In each case, the general validity of the bad kid/bad home model remained unscathed as a background assumption.

(1) If there is nothing apparently amiss in the family, it is assumed that the child cannot really be delinquent, that the offence is an isolated occurrence and will not recur.   So the child should be dealt with lightly; a word and support to the well-meaning parents will suffice.

(2) If the offence is manifestly serious (I think of a boy who stole and wrote off a Glasgow Corporation bus), and yet the boy comes from a good home, it is argued in one report that as bad kids come from bad homes, a bad kid who comes from a good home must be doubly bad.   If the devil is not in his family, it must be in himself.   In the case of the bus-thief, this resulted in an especially harsh sentence.

(3)   If it is difficult to write off the offence as a childish
prank, yet there does not seem anything wrong with the family, the
social worker may ask the court for more time to make further
investigations into what *must* (assuming the bad kid/bad home thesis)
be a deficient family.

(4)   The report writer may not have any *prima facie* evidence
of family deficiency but, once it is assumed that there *must* be
things awry in the family, then disorder can easily be read into
otherwise innocuous features of the family, as in the following
example about pocket money in which there is no other evidence of
family deficiency:

> He receives from mother a fairly large amount of pocket-
> money as well as other material things.   Mother's
> explanation of this is that this is to remove temptation
> for him to steal but I feel that this may be in reality
> an attempt to compensate for family deficiencies.

Thus the mother is not only overcompensating for (as yet unknown)
deficiencies, she is also unaware of her own motives;   clearly an
unsatisfactory parent.

There is a self-fulfilling vicious circle with regard to the
treatment of young offenders by social workers.   Whatever the
social worker may believe about the deleterious influence on the
youngster of his school, his neighbourhood or his peers, the only
explanation of delinquency that is going to keep the social worker
in a job is that of bad homes.   The social worker thus has a
vested interest in believing bad homes to be the cause of
delinquency.   To focus on other explanations would either put the
social worker out of a job, or would involve imaginative and
possibly costly re-interpretation of the job (as is currently
happening with social workers who believe in the neighbourhood
explanation of delinquency and are consequently reinterpreting
themselves as   community workers, a neo-profession with as yet
little status or resources).

Whether a profession continues with a particular explanatory
model for its clients' problems depends on the profession's
ability to take practical action based on the model.   This becomes
clear if we consider that the idea that bad homes produce bad
people is not so readily applied to adult offenders as to young
offenders.   Once the offender has ceased to be a minor and to be
the formal responsibility of his parents, there is no way that the
law can mandate the social work profession to work with an offender's
parents simply on the ground that their now-grown-up offspring is
in trouble with the law.   And even if family intervention were
possible, now that the offender has left home there is very little
good that could come of restyling the offender's parental family
into the perfect model of the loving family.   By contrast, social
workers *are* empowered to work with an adult offender's own children

(especially if the adult has been put away and the children are in need of care). Thus the importance social workers place on the explanation that bad homes produce bad offspring wanes along with their professional power to do something about bad parental homes. Explanations are not disinterested results of scientific research; they are adopted to sustain an organisation which, in the case of social work, is premised on the idea of the family as sacred.

The Private Family[4]

So far, we have looked at the process by which the belief in the family as sacred sustains the commonly accepted assumption that bad kids come from bad homes. The other major characteristic of the modern family is that it is essentially private: it is experienced and valued as a haven from the anonymous public world. This too sustains the assumption that bad kids come from bad homes.

The privacy that the modern family jealously guards makes it rather difficult for outsiders to glean information about the inner life of a modern family. It takes a long time and a lot of probing for a social worker or psychotherapist to discover all there is to know about a family, and so, when no other explanation for a child being in trouble fits the facts, the professional can always fall back on the bad kid/bad home model for, even if there is nothing apparently wrong with the child's family, it may be supposed that on digging deeper something will be found. Also, family relationships are very complex; so if a delinquent child's siblings all behave normally this does not rule out the possibility of the child's particular history and biography within the family being different. Thus, the professional investigator cannot dismiss the bad kid/bad home argument just because all the others in the family do not show adverse effects. The modern private family contains an element of mystery, which is what one would expect of the sacred. Lengthy psychoanalysis into the mysterious unconscious of the young child is made plausible by the mystery associated with the sacredness of modern family life.

This is very different from other possible causes of delinquency. The main competing explanations are those which focus on the school (as the inculcator of middle class values incompatible with the life situation of the working class child and which he cannot live up to), on the neighbourhood, on the adolescent peer group, and on the harmful effects (such as labelling) produced by previous processing by other agencies. All these groups are more or less public and more is known about them than about the private family. It can easily be ascertained by the investigating professional what is the influence on a child of his particular school or neighbourhood, for schools and neighbourhoods have pre-existing reputations. Less may be known about peer groups, but social workers, youth workers and teachers have some knowledge of these. Agencies, such as the police and social work agencies, also have reputations, especially with other agencies. Thus, it may be easy to dismiss any one of these

explanations in the case of a particular child.   But one can never
finally prove that his own family is not the cause of his difficulties,
and so diagnosis of and therapy with the private family can go on
indefinitely.

        This is facilitated by the belief that the deleterious effects
of poor schools, neighbourhoods, peer groups and agencies are
relatively even spread.   Thus, if it is true that a child is being
badly affected by his school, the investigator may expect there to
be other such children in the school;   likewise with neighbourhoods,
peer groups and agencies.   So if there are very few or no other
delinquents in the school, neighbourhood, etc. the investigator may
rule it out as an explanation of the child's delinquency.   But the
family cannot be ruled out on the grounds that no other children in
the family have been in trouble, for the private family is a
mysterious thing.

        The privacy of the modern family gives its members considerable
control and influence within their family, unobserved by bureaucracy
and officialdom, but the public/private divide means that private
individuals in modern society are remarkably powerless ouside the
family.   Thus most families have little power compared to the other
institutions and agencies at whose door the child's difficulties
could, theoretically, be laid.   For social workers or psychotherapists
to publicly blame a child's school, local police or his previous
social workers or probation officers would be inexpedient, for the
goodwill of these agencies is necessary for the continuation of the
professional social worker's work.   These other agencies can fight
back.   True, adolescent peer groups and some local neighbourhoods
cannot fight back, and this may make it easier for them to be blamed
for the child's being in trouble.   But whole towns may not be
blamed in public as they wield political and in some cases financial
power over welfare agencies.   Schools, other agencies and towns
may be blamed in private conversations among social workers and
magistrates, but it is dangerous to name these in public or in
writing as adversely affecting a particular child.

        In contrast, parents cannot hit back.   Their continuing
goodwill is not required by an agency after the child has completed
treatment, they are not organised, and they do not wield financial
power over public welfare agencies.   This is perhaps less true of
middle class and rural parents.   Middle class parents can mobilise
other professionals such as solicitors and doctors to rally to
their defence, while rural parents can occasionally rally support
from the village to counteract imputed blame for their child's
misdemeanours.   The bad kid/bad home argument is typically pinned
on urban working class families, those who are the least able to
organise and repudiate the pinning on them of the blame for their
child's difficulties.

In sum, what distinguishes the modern private family from
other potential scapegoats for a child's difficulties is that, for
the social workers, magistrates and public professionals whose job
it is to deal with children in trouble, the family is the only group
that is unambiguously on the other (the private) side of the public/
private divide and is therefore the least powerful vis-a-vis public
agencies.   Families are blamed by public agencies because they are
on the other side of this fundamental divide within society.   They
may be blamed with impunity; if they accept responsibility for
their child's troubles, then they are guilty, and if they reject or
deny responsibility then they 'lack insight' and are doubly guilty.

This pinning of blame onto deficient private families is
ideological.   In modern society, adults feel (and are) wholly
responsible for what goes on in their own families, only very
slightly responsible for what goes on in the public world, and not
at all responsible for what goes on in other private families.
By pinning the blame for delinquency on other families (that is,
not on the accuser's own family), both private individuals and
public bodies wash their hands of any responsibility for juvenile
delinquency.   Local politicians, planners and teachers (for whom
the taxpayer and voter are ultimately responsible) are exempted
from responsibility by the bad kids/bad homes explanation.   And
certainly capitalism, urbanisation and industrialisation are let
off the hook.

How do the Parents Feel?[5]

All this raises the question, "If virtually everyone blames the
delinquent's parents, then who do the parents themselves blame?"
A curious similarity emerges here, for the child's parents also
pin blame on the other side of the private/public divide (remember
the public sphere is profane) and on a particular part of the other
side that sannot make a counter attack: the street peer group.
Parents of children who have got into trouble almost without
exception blame 'the other kids he goes around with'.[6]

Why is this?   The high value that society places on the family
makes parents responsible for the fate of their children, yet the
private/public divide renders parents singularly powerless to
control their children and determine their future; they cannot
control what appears on the telly, what they are taught at school,
and so on.   In particular, whereas once the street was a 'safe'
place within the protecting membrane of the local community (and
still is in a few traditional working class areas), now the boundary
is around the family, not the local community, and so the street
has ceased to be part of home and has become part of the threatening
impersonal world out there.   This means that the other kids on the
street have, for the parents, ceased to be part of 'us' and have
become part of 'them'.   And unlike other aspects of that impersonal
world out there, aspects such as the school and the social security,
the adolescent peer group is not usually in a position to get back

at accusing parents, and so may be blamed with impunity.   (On
those rare occasions when families are explicitly threatened by
accused street gangs, the parents may well regret having made their
allegations public.)   Secondary blame is placed on the telly for
its violence and sex: "how can my kid help not be influenced by
it all?".   The telly is also a part of the public sphere that is
not going to take personal recriminations upon an accusing parent.
In private, however, parents (like social workers) do blame those
groups that could take recriminations — they blame the police, the
school and even (when it comes to the delinquency of someone else's
child) other parents.

Conclusion

(1)   The modern family is characterised by two features: it
is private, and it is sacred.   The all-encompassing distinction
between private and public spheres bears the characteristics of the
division between sacred and profane.

(2)   Elsewhere I have outlined the effects of this privatisation
of modern life on the inner city, on landscape imagery, on the
church, and on juvenile behaviour in public places.[7]   This present
paper has discussed the way in which the sacred private family
serves to maintain the dominant criminological notion that juvenile
offending can best be understood in terms of deficiencies in the
offender's family.

(3)   An implication of the above analysis is that everyday and
professional explanations of juvenile crime do not necessarily
derive from those explanations deemed most adequate by (social)
scientific research.   Rather they are closely tied to the sacred
in modern society; the notion that bad homes produce bad kids has,
ultimately, more to do with religion that with science.[8]

NOTES

1   A.H. Halsey: *Social Change in Britain,* OUP, 1978.
2   This privatisation of modern life has been discussed by many
         sociologists and historians such as P. Berger et al:
         The Homeless Mind, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974;
         E. Shorter: *The Making of the Modern Family,* Fontana,
         London, 1977; R. Sennett: *The Fall of Public Man,*
         CUP, 1977.
3   J.A. Walter, *Sent Away: a study of young offenders in care,*
         Saxon House, Farnborough, 1978, pp. 85-96.
4   Some of this section is drawn from *Sent Away, op. cit.,*
         pp. 168-170.
5   This section is drawn from Tony Walter: 'Who's For Families?',
         Community Care, 1 Nov. 1978.

6   *Sent Away, op. cit.,* pp. 105-111;   H. Parker, *View From The
         Boys,* David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1974, p. 41.
7   See *A Long Way From Home,* Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1980;
         and a forthcoming book on landscapes.
8   For further explorations along these lines, see *A Long Way
         From Home, op. cit.;*   J. Ellul, *The New Demons,* Oxford,
         1976;   T. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion,* MacMillan,
         New York, 1967.

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ESSAY REVIEW

NICK ISBISTER WITH DAVID LYON

HUMAN SCIENCE AND HUMAN DIGNITY

In *Human Science and Human Dignity** Professor Mackay attempts to
come to terms with a number of problems which the human sciences
seem to pose to the biblical understanding of man.   The biblical
view of man, he says, emphasises the unity of man's make-up, in
contradistinction to a dualistic or tripartite picture and, unlike
some widely held views, is fully compatible with human dignity.
"To some people," says Mackay "the science of human behaviour
appears as a bogey that threatens religious values in general,
and human dignity in particular."   To such people Mackay gives
an unequivocal answer — *true* human dignity is not challenged at
all by *true* human sciences, rather the human sciences establish
and enhance that dignity.

        This book, based on Mackay's 1977 London Lecture in
Contemporary Christianity, has a two-fold thrust.   On the one
hand it sets out to defend human dignity from the onslaughts of
dehumanizing kinds of science — dehumanizing because they are
either 'bad science' or good science misused.   On the other hand
it seeks to lay bare the grounds, or sanctions,for the development
of proper human sciences within specific controversial areas.

        Before undertaking this double task Mackay outlines a view
of dignity which rests upon the biblical affirmation of man's
responsibility for his actions.   He then marshalls a defense of
his position by analysing the nature of science.   A true
appreciation of what science is will protect us, he says, from
bogus human sciences, conspicuous for their lack of scientific
rigour, which launch their attacks on human dignity.

        Mackay's conception of science is revealed throughout the
book by such phrases as 'straight scientific fact'; 'scientific
data in a clean scientific spirit'; 'a scientific approach is only
out to establish straightforward facts'.   Science, for Mackay, is
value-neutral; good science is objective and unadulterated by
contamination from subjective or hidden factors.   This conception
of science has, of course, a long and noble ancestry — Galileo
epitomises it: "the conclusions of natural science" he wrote, "are
true and necessary, and the judgment of man has nothing to do with
them".   It is only the *misuse* or *abuse* of science that we have to
fear: science can in some forms be *misused* to damage human dignity
says Mackay; and "it is true of almost any scientific development,
alas, that it could be unethically abused by a dictator".

Attention is drawn to three areas in particular where *abuses* are rife: in the man/beast question (as articulated by Morris, Dawking, and Trivers); behaviourism (as represented by Skinner); and determinism.   Within each of these areas man, when he is examined, seems to emerge dehumanized.

Mackay's answer to the charge that the human sciences dehumanize man is that:

> Although various scientific ways of analysing a man may
> necessarily take him out of commission *for the time*
> *being as* a role player [that is, damage his dignity],
> the analysis as such does nothing to damage his dignity.
> If human dignity inheres in the roles that a man can
> play, then to adopt a mode of analysis that renders the
> role invisible only allows you to lose sight of his
> dignity, not to debunk it (p.39 Emphasis ours).

Attempts to make "for the time being" into a permanency, or to claim that the specialist approach of one human science provides the *only* way of looking at man; is to overstep the mark established by the very nature of science.   Those who do so misunderstood what true *science* is and are guilty of the logical fallacy of 'nothing-buttery'.   As is well known, Mackay's answer to 'nothing-buttery' is complementarity in which alternative, seemingly dissonant, accounts of man are posited as being valid accounts (provided they have been subjected to, and passed the canons of scientific rigour) at different levels of explanation.   Each scientific speciality, contributes its own unique and complementary picture of man, and is in turn complemented by the picture presented in the Bible.

This open-minded and generous approach to the various disparate human sciences is very persuasive, except where conflicting theories clash at the same level of explanation. In such cases the dissonance invites the development of a fuller, more integrative perspective which can retain the best features of the two competing paradigms while overcoming those aspects which are in conflict.   This is not simply to be resolved by accumulating more corroborating evidence for any given theory. Dissonance not only invites scientists to develop more powerful theories, it also points to a lack of harmony with reality.   In the classic case of the wave/particle duality of light each theory is not just incomplete, it is false — or at best an approximation to truth in given limited circumstances.   Enigmatic reality signals the need for newer deeper explanations.

C. Stephen Evans in his recent book *Preserving the Person: A look at the Human Sciences* has explored this area with regard to an earlier presentation of Mackay's views on human freedom. Mackay apparently claims that a human act may simultaneously be

regarded as a determinate product of necessary law, *and* as a free
outcome of rational deliberation.   But if both are true,
complementarity cannot be applied, for it is unstable.   In Evans'
words: "this instability is only eliminated when the purposes and
scope of the various models are clearly delineated, and they are
brought into some kind of coherent relationship".

        Clearly disparity at different levels is less problematic
for the complementarist approach than disparity at the same level
of explanation.   If disparate explanations cannot be housed at
different levels then their dissonance creates a serious problem.
If each account is couched in its own terms, each of which is
appropriate to its subject matter and level, then the question of
direct compatibility is raised.   Where explanations vie with
each other to give accounts of the same phenomena *on the same
level*, then the complementarity of different objective explanations
seems less persuasive.   If as Mackay is constantly reiterating,
each scientific speciality is discovering *objective facts*, and if
all of those facts inhabit the same level and yet are in
contradiction with each other; then something must give, either
the objectivity of the facts or the value and meaning of
complementarity.

        It would appear from even a cursory glance at the social
sciences that this is precisely the situation which has emerged
within twentieth century social scientific studies.   Man as a
social being is open to a number of interpretations all of which
show a degree of internal consistency as systems, seem to have
some empirical grounding, and exhibit considerable explanatory
power whether they be marxian; functionalist; structuralist; or
ethnomethodological; yet each despite its apparent scientific
validity contradicts, overlaps, reinterprets and surplants the others.
Each paradigm explains, interprets, describes the same phenomena
more-or-less equally persuasively (though, of course each might
be more fully explored and articulated within areas where the
others are less developed).   The social sciences, above all,
give-the-lie to any simple model of the value-free objectivity of
science, or the neutrality from commitment of science.   Science
is a creation of humans and it always reflects human purposes; it
is, to use the jargon, an ideological enterprize.   Those who
ignore the pervasiveness of such elements within *all science* (not
just 'bad science' or 'misused science' or 'immature science')
idealize and distort the nature of science rendering their
analysis inadequate.   The use/abuse, pure/unpure, mature/
immature views of science as a human enterprize are marred by the
fact that the interplay of ideology and truth is subtle.[1]   Thus
when Mackay notes that: "Christians in particular must surely see
it as part of our duty to the God of truth...to do objective
justice to the state of knowledge as best we can", that should
not commit us to a view which upholds a simple, value-free
objectivity of science.   When it comes to man, the impact of

hidden, mostly inarticulated, assumptions and presuppositions
demands a more sophisticated analysis within which science is
seen as intimately enmeshed in pre-scientific, or non-scientific
factors.   That is to say science is value-laden or purpose-
orientated *in its very nature* and not a mere passive unfolding
of truth[2] (it may well also be value-laden and ideological in
the way it is used but the more fundamental ideological elements
are *constitutive* of science).   Science is as much a creation of
committed men as it is a blossoming of truth; and the world view
to which they are committed colours their work.   All science,
but human science in particular, *mediates* in a complex way non-
scientific, non-rational, ideological, religious ground beliefs
(This is discussed at length in Alan Storkey's new book: *A
Christian Social Perspective*).   To separate out such factors by
fiat by claiming a sharp distinction between facts and values is
one of the central tenets of positivism.   Powerful though
positivism was in terms of its ascendency within all twentieth
century thought; and in terms of its technological achievements,
it is not an adequate philosophy of science, nor is it an adequate
representation of the biblical conception of knowledge and wisdom.
All knowledge resides within metaphysical, religious frameworks
— the clear duty of the Christian is to make these explicit.[3]

     In articulating his thoughts on the dignity of man, Mackay
has begun this task of uncovering a Christian metaphysical base
in the ideas on human agency — this is to be warmly welcomed.
But this can only be a start for the development of a Christian
perspective on the human sciences.   Progress needs to be maintained
by exploring more fully the nature of science along the lines
suggested above.   The Christian has a duty to subject science
itself to an evaluation and analysis — not just to subject
"scientific findings" but the whole enterprize of science from
its political organization to its methodology.   In an age when
for many a knee has bowed to the idol of science the Christian
should show greater reserve and bring to bear a truly Christian
mind upon science.[4]   Much ground work has already been done by
non-Christians in this critique of science - the insights of the
discipline of sociology of knowledge for instance, need to be
incorporated into a Christian understanding of science.   Perhaps
had more time been spent within this book on the questions posed
by the *social sciences*, which are after all human sciences too
(symbolic interactionism and structuralism pose equally significant
questions to human dignity as do ethology and behaviourism); then
it might have been possible for Mackay to build upon his insight
into the nature of human dignity.   In concentrating upon the
biological aspects of man rather than the social much valuable
material was simply unavailable for incorporation into the idea
of human dignity that Mackay was propounding.   This is a pity
particularly as much of the sociology of the 1970's was taken up
with attempts to reinterpret social relationships in terms
similar to those which Mackay holds to be crucial to human

dignity.   Indeed one sociologist has written recently that "the
problematic of human agency is the problematic around which the
whole history of sociological analysis could be written"[5].
There is much flesh to be added to the bones of Mackay's view of
human dignity — it is to be hoped that one day the Langham Trust
will sponsor a *social* science and human dignity series; and provide
an opportunity for this enfleshment.

       We do not wish these comments to diminish the value of other
aspects of Mackay's work in any way.   His Christian integrity,
shown in his articulation of a biblical view of personhood by
which standard to judge human science, is exemplary.   We have
chosen to comment in detail upon his view of science, as this
constitutes in our view a problematic area but one which is
pivotal to his whole approach.   We should like to see him and
others taking further their reflections on many of the themes in
the book: 'responsibility for the future' being one (the witness
of contemporary futurologist sociologists points to many more
vital issues to be considered other than those touched on in this
book).   Above all the clear proclamation of the Christian Good
News which Mackay sets forth in the final chapter on 'the truest
dignity' is an example and challenge to us all as we are reminded
that if our hearts are in the right place, and we have our
priorities right, that "this will radically affect the kind of
argument that we mount in defence of the dignity of man, as well
as the kind of witness we bear to the truth of the faith."

REFERENCE

* Donald Mackay, *Human Science and Human Dignity,* Hodders, 1979,
      PB, 126pp., £2.95.

NOTES

1   That all science exhibits this purpose-orientation is
       controversial for those wishing to explore this whole area.
       I recommend R.M. Young, 'Science *is* Social Relations'
       Radical Science Journal No.5(1977); Hilary and Steven Rose
       in *The Political Economy of Science* and *The Radicalization
       of Science* (1976: Macmillan); Barry Barnes *Scientific
       Knowledge and Sociological Theory* (1974: Routledge and
       Kegan Paul); M. Mulkay *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge*
       (1979: George Allen and Unwin), and M.B. Hesse 'Theory and
       Value in the Social Sciences' from *Action and Interpretation*
       Edit. C. Hookway and P. Pettit (1978: CUP).   All of these
       can be seen as outworkings and extensions of the pioneering
       work of T. Kuhn *Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1961:
       Chicago).

2   See J. Habermas in *Toward a Rational Society* (1971:
     Heinemann) and *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971: Beacon
     Press) in particular the appendix of K. and H.I. 'Knowledge
     and Human Interests'.
3   See E.A. Burt *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical
     Science* (London 1932) and H. Dooyeweerd *A New Critique of
     Theoretical Thought* (1953-1958: Presbyterian and Reformed).
4   See N. Wolterstorff *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*
     (1976: Erdmans).
5   See also A. Giddens *Central Problems of Modern Social Theory*
     (1979: Macmillan).

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REVIEWS

David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularisation*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1978, 353pp., £10.00.

Having once suggested that 'secularization' was an unhelpful concept, to be abandoned, David Martin now argues[1] that the term can still have useful meaning. He had previously rejected it on the grounds that it was too open to misuse by 'counter-religious ideologies'. But the debate he thus opened up has led him to put secularization in a wider socio-cultural context. He marries, fruitfully, the sociology of religion with political sociology. 'Secularization', according to Martin's new general theory, may refer to certain universal processes which are mediated through historical and particularly political filters.

The most notorious difficulty with secularization theories is the question begged by them: secularization of what? Martin opts for a broad, but not inclusive definition of religion. It is "an acceptance of a level of reality beyond the observable world known to science, to which are ascribed meanings and purposes completing and transcending those of the purely human realm" (p.12). But to be more particular, Martin is in fact discussing Christianity, albeit broadly conceived (including Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and mainstream and sectarian Protestantism). It betrays a particular ethos, set of beliefs and institutions which may all be subject to secularization. However, it also has (and has had) an important social role. Martin would dissent from the view (characteristic both of certain Catholic and Calvinistic thinkers) that religion constitutes the 'active dynamic' of culture. But he strongly asserts that it remains a 'particularly important clue to the general character of a given culture' (p.1).

What, then, of secularization? Martin's answer, in line with previous strictures against simplistic comparisons[1], is very complicated indeed. Martin rejects the notion (variously held, for example by Bryan Wilson or Peter Berger[2]) that secularization is long-term or inevitable. However, when it does occur, specific tendencies characterise it. Some examples. Religious

institutions are adversely affected by heavy industry, especially
where there is a high degree of proletarian density.   Religious
practice tends to decline more-or-less proportionately with
urbanization.   Mobility erodes stable religious communities and
exposes them to alternative world-views.   Churches lose their
connection with other social institutions and thus become
increasingly isolated from the wider social structure.   Religion
becomes more a private affair.   It will immediately be noticed
that Martin is dealing with structures, and not attempting to
discuss 'heart-religion'.   This he freely admits, but it does
indicate one of the limitations of a study of this kind.

        The point of Martin's analysis, however, is that he relates
these universal processes to specific cultural contexts.   He wants
to show *how* secularization is manifest in different socio-cultural
milieux.   This is where his highly original theory takes off.
The crucial question, he believes, has to do with religious
monopoly and laissez-faire.

        The greatest monopoly ever was medieval Christendom.   This
was once the single sacred canopy under which the West lived.
After the Reformation, which decisively cracked the canopy, the
old monopoly become increasingly aligned with state power.   Where
once there was religious monopoly, secular monopoly tends to
replace it, usually after some kind of revolution.   (Revolutions
are, in fact, the most important of the 'crucial events' which
inform Martin's thesis as a major component.)   France provides
the most obvious example of this.   This does not necessarily mean
that the church-institution will go into decline, but it may well
be co-opted for state ends.   A contemporary example would be
Romania, where the powers-that-be use the Romanian Orthodox Church
to bolster national identity while simultaneously retaining *de
facto* ideological opposition to it.

        At the other end of the spectrum is laissez-faire, or
pluralism.   This tends to be linked, not to Catholicism, but to
Protestantism.   The USA provides us with the best example of this.
There, church and state are decisively separate, and do not try to
seek legitimation from each other.   To use the jargon, the two
are differentiated from each other.

        Martin has other categories; variations on the theme.   In
England, there is both a state church, but without a monopoly.
The existence of nonconformity spells partial laissez-faire.   In
Scandinavia, however, you find laissez-faire within monopoly.   A
very low rate of church adherance is combined with a high rate of
professed personal belief and private prayer.   In Holland and
Northern Ireland you find duopoly, the one peaceful, the other
belligerent.   And so on.

Martin discusses the general tendencies of secularization in
these different contexts.   One of the most fascinating avenues
explored is a direct product of Martin's fusion of the sociology
of religion with political sociology.   It is the similarities
between ecclesiastical-religious attitudes and their secular
counterparts.   To give a telling British example:

> The nonconformist conscience dissolved into 'nonconformity'
> and 'conscience', by which I mean a generalized dislike of
> establishments and the espousal of a moralistic politics.
> This is a characteristic secularization and it works by
> generalizing religious sensibility.   You begin by banning
> alcohol and you end by banning the bomb.   Nonconformity is
> destroyed by universalization'.[3]

And there is much, much more where that came from.

Martin's knowledge of the numerous societies discussed is
encyclopaedic.   He steadily weaves variation after variation of
the patterns of secularization, through 'secular monopoly'
through to 'reactive organicism'.   (The latter is partly opposite
to the former, namely right wing statism.)   His final chapter
concerns the effect of the foregoing arguments on the position of
the clergy.   This is the 'crisis among the professional guardians
of the sacred'.   Where once there was institutional collusion
between church and state, Christianity and society, now the
process of differentiation has changed everything.   Christianity's
professional guardians have become increasingly marginal.   They
tend to respond either by adopting secular modes (sin becomes
alienation) or by co-opting secular language to spiritual ends
(such as 'healing' or 'power'), or else turn from cleric to
therapist. All very plausible.

But is something missing?   I have an uneasy feeling that
beyond this brilliantly original analysis, there lurks another
world.   For Martin writes within a self-confessedly Durkheimian
framework.   Thus people's experience of social life gives strength
and form to their religion.   Or, religion expresses the character
of social totality.   So what of secularization?   Well, Durkheim
believed that differentiation weakened the hold of religion over
everyday life, but also that new ideals which replaced old deities
had a religious character.   But while Martin discusses at length
the differentiation process, he shows great restraint in not taking
up the other aspect of Durkheimian analysis.   In this, he betrays
his debt to the person who, classically, has contributed much more
to secularization studies, Max Weber.   (Curiously enough, his
name neither appears in the index or the bibliography; I suspect
that he is mediated through Bryan Wilson.)   In short, in order to
speak of secularization, Martin has to talk of institutional
secularization.   And of course, he has taken Christianity to be
the normative form of religion for the purposes of his analysis.

But this makes him part-Weberian.

Martin does not follow up the clues which a Durkheimian mode present for seeing 'religion' in all sorts of non-churchy places. Mary Douglas, who has, would argue against at least one of Martin's 'universal secularization processes' — that secularism is a product of the city.[4]   But she inhabits part of the world beyond Martin, about which he tells us little.   Yet again, he believes in the existence of that world.   For in his commentary on the processes of secularization (*The Dilemmas of Contemporary Religion*[5]), he asks questions about surrogate religion.   Specifically, there is a chapter on Marxism as a likely candidate.   And Martin does concede that Marxism may have become a religion of a sort, but in comparison with Christianity, it is found severely wanting.   In his own words: "It is a paradox that a system which claimed that the beginning of all criticism was the criticism of religion should have ended up with a form of religion which was the end of all criticism" (p.88).   But again, it is a heavily institutional analysis, which looks at actual state socialist Marxism, rather than at the symbols and rituals of Marxism.

In both books, monopoly seems to be equivalent in Martin's thinking to pathology.   Christianity, in his view, should never be aligned with any ideology or social system.   He would argue that *this* differentiation is intrinsic to Christian faith.   The normative tone is stronger in the second book, though it is implicit in the first.   And, leaving the carping question of what he does not say on one side, it must be admitted that he has good precedent for seeing this paradox.   For, to give him the last word, "The separation of Caesar and God, nation and religion is paradoxically the end of religion, but arguably the essence of Christianity!"

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3   David Martin, 1978, 'Patterns of Secularization: General
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4   Mary Douglas, 1970, *Natural Symbols*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
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     Oxford, Blackwell.

DAVID LYON

Graham Room: *The Sociology of Welfare*, Oxford, Blackwell
and Robertson, 1979 276pp., PB £4.95.

The author tackles a mammoth task in attempting to explain the role
of social policy in the development of welfare-capitalism.   The
sociological analysis of welfare measures is placed alongside
analysis of the development of the advanced industrial economies
of the West, particularly Britain and the United States.   Various
interpretations of the function of social policy are tested against
a wide range of empirical evidence covering the breadth and
development of welfare institutions in our society.   This
scholarly work is a rigorous attempt to distinguish between
competing theories.

The author concludes that the explanations put forward by the
'social democratic' school in which writers such as Titmuss and
Townsend have been prominent in the post-war period are preferable
to those of Marxists or market liberals.   The conclusion is
qualified for two main reasons.   Titmuss and Townsend over-
estimate the determination of government and people to see an end
to poverty, sickness, ignorance and homelessness.   Also they
greatly over-estimated the role of research in the creation of
government policy.

Three principal features of the advanced industrial economy
are discussed; (1) the division of labour, (2) the accumulation of
capital and its relationship to social change and (3) the social
integration and cohesion of the population.   The effect of welfare
measures upon industrial society are examined in the light of this
analysis.

Room divides the major writers on social policy into four
groups in an exercise similar to that undertaken by George and
Wilding[1].   He criticises each category in terms of its view of
historical development, the attention it pays to the participant's
view, and the types of theory which are put forward.   The most
valuable contribution of the book lies in chapters 4-6 on "The
Development of Social Policy", "The Social Division of Welfare",
and "Social Policy and Social Integration" respectively.   In
chapter 4 the author argues that the development of social policy
cannot be understood without looking at its consequences for
different classes within society and for political order.   This
argument is illustrated by examples which refer to Beveridge's
five "Giants" which are used to demonstrate that social democratic
writers have come closest to an acceptable explanation of social
policy.   The faults among these writers include a misunderstanding
of the processes of government and the nature of society.   Welfare
measures are not usually politically attractive; they are
expensive and frequently resisted in times of economic stringency.
A consequence of this resistance is that the means-test is used to

distribute scarce resources instead of the universal services of
Education and the National Health Service.   Individuals have shown
themselves reluctant to subordinate their own interests to those
of society — lower taxes are preferred to high levels of public
expenditure.

     In chapter 5 Room examines the consequences of social policy
on the distribution of wealth in our society.   He makes good use
of the abundant evidence that the 1834 Poor Law was a means of
cutting the cost of Poor Relief and enforcing a form of work-
discipline upon the poor.   Evidence concerning the social
distribution of morbidity and mortality is used to demonstrate
that there are still wide variations in the health of society
largely unaffected by the first thirty years of a National Health
Service.   This echoes the findings of Titmuss in "The Social
Division of Welfare"[2] which suggested that the Welfare State had
done very little to reduce inequality and may have served to
institutionalise deprivation.   Thus housing policy involves not
only the provision of council houses for those in need but also
tax-relief on mortgages which benefits the house-buyer at the
expense of the community.

     The following chapter traces the effect of social policy upon
the integration of society — an area in which there is wide
disagreement.   Room demonstrates a polarisation of thought
between the liberal ideal of selective, means-tested benefits, and
universal services provided for all members of society which he
suggests is the social democratic ideal.   Thus the distinction is
between benefits which take account of income (e.g. free school
meals) and are therefore "selective", and benefits provided on the
basis of need regardless of income (e.g. The NHS).   The example
of the social security system is examined as the liberal ideal and
it is shown that the economic efficiency must be weighed against
the social costs of a degrading system to the recipient.   As an
example of the social democratic ideal Room chooses Titmuss'
classic work *The Gift Relationship* .[3]   This concerns the Blood
Transfusion services in Britain and the United States which at
the time of writing were based on different principles.   In
Britain the service is universal; donors give blood which is used
by an unknown person on the criteria of medical need alone.   This
is compared with the American selective system in which blood is
bought and sold on the basis that the recipient is able to pay for
the blood.   The example is used to show the benefits of universal
forms of provision over the selective alternatives.   I remain less
sure than Room that this example applies to other forms of
provision.

     The example of the Community Development Project in this
country is used to examine the role of the welfare professional,
in this case the social worker, and the need of political
leadership at both the local and national levels if welfare

policies are to become socially and therefore politically
acceptable.   This demonstrates that the relationship between the
social worker and client must be better understood if the
consequences of social policies on the community are to be
understood.

       Two of the chief values of the social democratic view since
the First World War have been humanitarianism and fraternity —
often referred to as fellowship.   The social democrat places his
faith in the nature of man and in the willingness and ability of
the government to achieve significant improvements in the welfare
of the community, especially the less fortunate members of it.
The level of welfare varies between a residual provision of a few
services for those who really need them and the brave new society
based upon a major redistribution of wealth and widespread
services.

       I think there are two particular points at which the Christian
will be reluctant to endorse the prescriptions of social democracy
for the pursuit of individual and collective welfare.   The first
is that man is essentially flawed and cannot save himself.   The
second point follows from this; man cannot rely upon government to
bring about the state of affairs which Christians refer to as "The
Kingdom of Heaven".   The model of man which Titmuss adopts is
clearly attractive to the Christian.   Man is active rather than
reactive and examples of active citizenship result in the
fraternalism of fellowship which is the goal of welfare measures.
But no account is taken of the alienation brought about by sin;
alienation from God and also alienation from our fellow men.   For
these reasons the church needs to be involved in the widest
possible sense in the provision of welfare.   This is not a social
gospel, it is the church acting as salt and light in the community.

       It is wrong to think of welfare as either physical or
spiritual: it combines the two aspects. They should be united just
as our Lord's teaching and lifestyle form a unity.   Perhaps the
teaching of stewardship sheds light upon the problem.   We have
been entrusted with treasure and commissioned with good news for
a society which is in need of welfare.   We will fail in our duty
unless we urgently seek the welfare of the cities in which we live.

       Room's analysis is essential reading for those who take these
problems seriously.   It is by an analysis of capitalism that the
various explanations of welfare provision are examined.   The
conclusion is rigorously argued in the best traditions of
sociological analysis and the whole work demonstrates a scholarship
lacking in much writing in the field.

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3   Titmuss, R.M., *The Gift Relationship*, Allen & Unwin, 1970.

DAVID PERKINS

David Bebbington, *Patterns in History*, IVP, 1979, 211pp,
£3.75.

Any book which scrutinises in depth a particular academic
discipline from a Christian perspective deserves applause.   This
task desperately needs doing both for the sake of the various
disciplines and for the sake of Christian students studying in a
secular university or college, yet publishers have fought shy of
this unless the subject be theology (a guaranteed Christian
market) or the evolution/Genesis debate.   In other fields we
are usually offered no more than lightweight pamphlets.

     There are noble exceptions.   Rookmaaker on art history,
Colin Brown on philosophy, Storkey on sociology and, now,
Bebbington on history.   He fits the bill admirably.   *'Patterns'*
in history have a double meaning.   First, whether they admit it
or not, historians do see broad patterns in the historical process.
Second, historians inevitably are influenced in how they approach
their data by their broad perspective ("value-neutrality is
impossible", p.6), and so there are also patterns in
historiography — how historians study history — as well as in the
historical process that they study.

     Bebbington provides a critical survey of these patterns, and
this forms the bulk of the book.   In covering a large amount of
ground, this survey gets a bit 'potted' at times, but the thread
is always there.   Five patterns are discussed: 1) Cyclical
history, as in the ancient world; 2) linear Christian history,
from the Old Testament to the early eighteenth century; 3) the idea
of progress, and 4) historicism, both of which emerged out of the
ashes of a Christian view and which confront each other today in
mutual antagonism in the guise of positivism and idealism, the two
main forms of contemporary historical method; 5) Marxist history,
which attempts to draw threads out of the ideas of progress and
historicism but ultimately fails to overcome the contradictions in
each.   Bebbington argues that when the old Christian assumptions
are brought to bear on modern theoretical issues there is the
possibility of a resolution that overcomes contradiction while
admitting tension.

The survey is excellent.   For students, Christian or
otherwise, this must surely be as comprehensive, readable and fair
a survey as any.   Although the final chapter involves much that
the non-Christian student will find hard to swallow, the discussion
is not parochial theologically and should be of interest to
Christians of all persuasions.   Further, all of us today who are
trying to bring a Christian mind to our disciplines need to be
informed of others who have trodden the same path over the centuries;
we need to know their failings if we are not to rush blindfold into
the same traps.   As Bebbington says, theorists need to be
"conscious of standing in a tradition", and for the modern
historian he lays out the traditions with great care and with
scholarship.

Two reservations, though.   In chapter one, the author is at
pains to say that the good historian analyses his data informed by
his convictions and presuppositions *and* is prepared to modify these
presuppositions in the light of his data.   Bebbington's
presuppositions are Christian; is *he* prepared to modify *these*?
On pp. 182-3 he states categorically: "The Christian understanding
of history is in no need of supplementation....In a strong sense
the Christian view of history, a view centred on Jesus Christ, is
given."   This sounds as if the Christian historian is exempted
from the rules he makes for others, but Bebbington does not make
this clear.

The reason why this is not clear relates to my second problem.
Among the impressive list of works cited, which include several
theoretical statements about history, there is not a single one
which actually employs Bebbington's Christian approach.   This
means that we do not know whether doing history his way would
modify the original Christian suppositions; furthermore it means
we don't know whether the approach actually works.   The proof of
the pudding is in the eating.   *Does* Bebbington's synthesis
actually resolve the contradictions of modern historiography as he
claims?   We can only tell by trying it.   *Does* it lead to
historical explanations that pass the philosophers' tests?
Bebbington castigates Engels for pontificating in 1890 on a
Marxist theory of history on the basis of only one actual Marxist
historical study (Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire*) written forty
years earlier, yet Bebbington develops his theoretical approach on
the basis of not even one actual historical study.   Did
Butterfield, Niebuhr and C.S. Lewis (modern Christian theorists he
cites) never do any historical studies themselves?   If they did,
we don't hear about them from Bebbington.

Actually there is one example.   Bebbington's book itself is
a history — a history of historiography.   So the crucial question
is: is the book premised on the assumptions that its author says
should govern the study of history?   It is hard to tell, but it
seems not.   For example, the author asserts that in general history

is moving toward a goal set by God and that there are specific
instances of God's intervention in history, 'special providences'
that the Christian historian may be able to discern on occasion.
But Bebbington's history of the activity of historians does not
include a sense of providence, general or specific, as far as I
can see.

These problems can be resolved only by Christian historians
reflecting further upon their actual historical studies.   Let us
hope that they *will* do this and debate further the crucial issues
Bebbington has set out for us so clearly.

<div align="right">J.A. WALTER</div>

J.A. Walter, *A Long Way from Home: A Sociological
Exploration of Contemporary Idolatry*, Paternoster Press,
Exeter, 1979, pp.217, PB, £4.20.

Most analyses of society by Christians seem to have been produced
by theologians.   William Temple and Reinhold Niebuhr come
immediately to mind.   For this reason alone this new analysis
is significant, for Tony Walter is a sociologist.   The biblical
framework is always made clear, but he is primarily writing within
sociological perspectives and traditions.

His aim is to portray the human condition as manifested in
society by combining modern sociological and radical monotheistic
approaches.   Because Marxists are so insistent on combining
analysis with declared beliefs, such an outspoken and unrepentant
book from a Christian is now much more likely to be accepted in
sociological circles today than it would have been, say, ten years
ago.   By placing his analysis firmly in the classical sociological
tradition of Durkheim and Weber (with much Marxist input) the
author has made it possible for the sociologist who reads it to
feel reasonably at home.   (This is not to say that it will make
him feel comfortable!)   On the other hand the average intelligent
layman or theologian will also find the concepts quite manageable,
for the style is direct and simple jargon is minimal.

Rather than attempt a comprehensive portrait of society and
its idols, Dr. Walter has selected eight issues on which he focusses
to make his main points.   These are: work, family, suburbia,
individualism, ecology, race, the media, and culture religion.
The list is wisely chosen, for the subjects are all relevant, and
permit excursions into other areas like education, politics,
technology and welfare.   The thesis is simple: far from living
in a secularised world (as many sociologists and theologians would
have it) we still worship the sacred as did all our forbears.   The
objects of our veneration may have changed, and we may do it

unconsciously, but worship is still part of our daily life.   We
need an absolute to give life meaning, to make us feel at home in
the universe.   For some work becomes that absolute, for others,
the family, and so on.

   Biblically speaking these objects of worship are idols, for
only God is to be adored, only He can give meaning to life, only
in Him can man find himself at home.   Though the excursion through
contemporary idols is somewhat brief, the iconoclasm is so
effective that the concluding chapter on biblical themes is well-
placed and eagerly awaited by the reader.   The absurdity of man's
attempts to find his own meaning and security independent of God,
makes the biblical interpretation seem that much more obvious and
necessary.   But let prospective readers be warned, whether
Christian or non-Christian, that this book will not make anyone
feel at ease.   It is in the prophetic tradition, combining honest
and sometimes, scathing analysis, with an overriding sense of the
omnipotence of God.   As such the book is overdue.   Let us hope,
that like the New International Version of the Bible, it is the
'first of a new tradition'.

<div style="text-align:right">

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ERRATUM

On p.50 of Volume 107 of FAITH AND THOUGHT the publisher
of C.G. Scorer's book, *Life in our Hands*, was incorrectly
given as the Paternoster Press.   It should have been the
Inter-Varsity Press.   The book is now priced £2.95.

DAVID LYON

IDOLATRY AND THE PROPETIC TASK

Dr. Lyon seeks for a
bridge between Sociology
and Theology.

There are several signs that the traditional hostility between
sociology and theology is mellowing into a mood of rapprochement
— in some circles at least.[1]   The work of Robin Gill is one of
the key stimuli to this movement[2], although Peter Berger and
others in North America have been discussing the issues for some
time.[3]   The movement is not unconnected with efforts to produce
liberation theology[4] and what Gregory Baum has called 'critical
theology'.[5]   From the sociological side, a new genre of
committed and reflexive analysis and theory emerged during the
1970s dubbed by Robert Friedrichs 'the recovery of the prophetic
mode',[6] this has stimulated dialogue.

Evangelicals, at least thus far, have not had a conspicuous
presence in this kind of proto-dialogue, and it is not difficult
to understand why.   A certain defensiveness is present in much
evangelical writing[7] and this tends to divert energies from
constructive dialogue.   The fear lest sociology should undermine
christian faith may make dialogue appear as capitulation to an
alien world-view.   I am not for a moment asserting that this fear
is baseless.   Rather, I am advocating, that alongside a christian-
critical attitude towards sociology, we should search for common
ground as a basis of dialogue.[8]

Idol Analysis

The sociological study of modern 'idolatry' by Christians is no
new activity.   Vigo Demant, one of the leading figures in the
Anglo-Catholic 'Christian Sociology' movement of the 1920-1940s
argued that idol-analysis (although he did not call is that) was
a central aim of the movement.   Economic theorists in particular,
he maintained, had a "perverted religious passion" for "the
creation of their own brains".[9]   This required analysis and
exposure.[10]   But even before the turn of the century, Scottish
non-conformist Scott Matheson bemoaned the lack of active
evangelical interest in the area of sociology ("the science of
the reading public, just as theology was in Puritan times"[11a]),
and the fact that the recognition of Mammon-worship had been left,
by default, to the Froudes and Ruskins of Victorian England.

However, it is possible that the publication of two recent
books may indicate a contemporary evangelical revitalization of
this kind of discussion.   Tony Walter's new book *A Long Way From
Home* (Paternoster Press, 1980) is actually subtitled *A Sociological
exploration of contemporary idolatry*.   Following the insights of
Jacques Ellul and Peter Berger, he discusses the current symbols
which are the idols of today.   His sweep is broad — from the family
to the ecology movement.   On a wider -- Western civilisation --
canvas, Bob Goudzwaard discusses the 'false religion' of progress
in *Capitalism and Progress* (Eerdmans, 1979).   The 'god of progress'
he says is near death, and the choices facing the West are between
a new myth and the Creator-God of the Bible.

At this point, one may suggest an agenda which a would-be idol-
analyst might follow in order to make a constructive contribution
to socio-theological dialogue.   Firstly, some clarification is
needed concerning the causes, forms, and consequences of idolatry
in the biblical account.   Secondly, the correlations and connections
of these features of idolatry with idolatry in its modern forms as
studied by sociologists.

For example, while the cause of idolatry, the forsaking of the
Creator, is fairly clear (Is. 44: 6-23), the form and consequences
need systematic treatment.   As to their form, Isaiah makes it plain
that they may be anything within the created order which becomes an
object of worship or devotion and source of meaning.   In the New
Testament, it is clearly stated that not only 'obvious' symbols
such as calves may be idols, but also attributes and institutions
such as sexuality and property-accumulation (Eph. 5: 5; Mt. 6: 21,
24).   They are 'nothing' (that is, they have no 'intrinsic'
sacredness or power Is. 2: 8; 1 Cor. 8: 4) but at the same time
are subject to the controlling influence of demonic power (1 Cor.
10: 20).   They may be the focus of identity -- people became like
them (Ps. 5: 8) -- even though from a theistic perspective they are
worthless due to their impersonal nature, and their failure to
reveal, love, or forgive (Ps. 115; Jer. 2: 5).   However, the
consequences of idolatry are profound.   It tends to enslave (Ps.
106: 36) and mislead (1 Cor. 12: 2) the idolater, so that
blindness to true perception of reality results (Is. 44: 18; Hab.
2: 18; Jer. 10: 2,8).   Intellectual idolatry (Rom. 1: 24,23)[12]
it would seem, is just one kind of idolatry, in which linguistic
symbols become the means of grasping and organizing the world.[13]
The distortion of an understanding of reality is a general feature
of idolatry, whether thing-symbols or linguistic symbols are
involved.   We shall return in a moment to this topic of 'distortion'
(which is one way in which 'ideology' is understood) after glancing
at the sociological analogues to idolatry.

The suggested agenda for a biblical theology of idolatry is
pursued, may turn out to have more than one bearing on current
sociology of religion.   A superficial appraisal of the work of

Thomas Luckmann or Mary Douglas would suggest that this is indeed
the case.[14]   Luckmann, for example, argues, following the
Durkheim[15], that the construction of systems of symbolic meaning
is intrinsic to the human condition.   Symbols are taken from
everyday life, and are assumed to point to a world beyond
everyday experience, but do not have to be 'essentially religious'
in nature.[16]   Hans Mol, whose theory of religion runs in similar
vein[17], argues that religion is always bound up with the search
for a stable social identity.   While the faith of traditional
churches does in many cases answer well to this particular human
need, many today seek the 'sacralization of identity' elsewhere.
And one must be careful not to underestimate the power of such
natural or 'invisible' religion.   Just as with 'common' religion[18],
there is a strong emotional attachment to the source of meaning
located in the symbol.

A Critical View

If it is the case that many topics discussed by sociologists of
religion have to do with what is biblically known as idolatry,
then from a theological angle mere analysis is insufficient. The
concern of the sociology of religion is to analyse religion in a
sociological manner.   Even though their analysis will inevitably
be rooted in pre-theoretical (and in a sense theological)
assumptions, sociologists who follow Durkheim tend to agree with
his axiom that no religion is 'false', and so would be unwilling
to disturb the believers.   But from a Christian viewpoint, idolatry
is not only destructive (because of its internal contradictions and
its tendency to enslave, Ps. 16: 4) it is *wrong* (because it is a
deviation from the worship of the Creator, who alone is the source
of meaning (Rom. 1).   The bridge for dialogue at this point,
however, is more likely to be found in the cognitive distortion
than in the moral wrongness of idolatry.   It would appear that
there is at least a surface-level resemblance between this and
aspects of the controversy in sociology (of both marxist and non-
marxist varieties) around the concept of ideology.

It is no accident that ideology has a pejorative tone to it.
For, as Anthony Giddens has recently reminded us[19], early
anticipations of 'ideology' are found in Bacon's conception of
the *idola*.   His 'idols' were impediments to valid knowledge, and
it is in this sense that ideology is frequently understood.   (The
other major sense of ideology, that of rationale for the activities
of sectional interest groups also gives a critical ring to the term.)
The problem for Giddens, as for Marx, Mannheim, and Habermas, is
how to get round the obstacle of ideology (whatever it is) to truth,
or true practice, and thus to an authentically critical position.
It is no longer possible, in the present climate of the philosophy
of science, simply to appeal to the 'objectivity' of scientific
procedure.[20]   Equally unsatisfactory, however, is the alternative

of the wholesale labelling of thought-and-action systems as
'ideologies', for reasons alluded to above.

The way forward, whatever else it may involve, certainly
calls for theological honesty and sociological sophistication.[21]
Theological honesty, for the evangelical, means firstly an
uncompromising commitment to biblical revelation as the criterion
of truth and wisdom.   This would be a distinctive mark of any
evangelical contribution.   Equally distinctive, one hopes, would
be a spirit of fairness in the treatment of idolatrous and
ideological phenomena, and a willingness to admit personal and
institutional vulnerability to precisely the same processes.   When
combined with a desire to allow biblical revelation to speak
relevantly to contemporary practice, the way may still be open
for dialogue.

The Prophetic Task

If idol-analysis, *via* the discussion of symbol-systems and ideology,
is one bridge between sociology and theology, then the prophetic
task must be another.   As I have already argued, analysis is
inadequate as an end in itself.   Idols must also be exposed, and
alternatives offered.   In the Old Testament, the exposure of
idols was inseparable from the prophetic task.   The last great
prophet, Jesus Christ, is himself the fulfillment of this tradition.
Scott Matheson, complaining about commercial idolatry inside and
outside the church, put it this way: we "should hail the spiritual
authority that confronts the kings whom Mammon has crowned, and
uses the whip of cords to drive out the profane traders that make
God's House a house of merchandise."[11b]

But can the term 'prophetic' be applied to sociology?
Friedrichs, referring to the critical mode of sociology, is happy
with this usage.   But Berger has advocated caution.   Although
his now elderly book *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* was taken to
be a 'prophetic' attack on the church, he himself insisted that a
prophet is a person through whom *God* speaks, and thus hesitated
to call his work 'prophetic'.[22]   And there are other difficulties
as well.

Though sociology is inherently critical,[23] this does not
necessarily mean that it is prophetic, even if it happens to
comport well with a christian perspective.   Mere exposure and
denunciation of a particular form of idolatry is far from being
fully prophetic in the biblical sense.   As Klaus Bockmuehl has
argued, the prophetic address is God's message against specific
sin, with a warning of the consequences, followed by a call to
repentance, all directed at the actual offenders.[24]   This is
clearly a matter for further discussion.   Many would feel that
this kind of 'prophecy' would take one far beyond the merely

sociological task of theoretical analysis.   On the other hand,
some would insist that sociology ought to aim at being prophetic
in this fuller sense, and that this has implications of several
kinds for the way in which sociology is done.   These writers
would argue for a clearer spelling out of christian/human
alternatives to particular patterns of social action, and possibly
the making of connection with some kind of political engagement as
a necessary complement to sociological endeavour.[25]

    But here again, caveats are in order.   As Robin Gill has
pointed out[26], prophecy is a precarious pursuit in a situation
where churches and church-people are themselves (at least
partially) subject to social determination.   Here again is an
issue which deserves discussion.   Moreover, as evangelicals are
unlikely to be totally sympathetic to Gill's own conclusions
(attractive as they are in some ways), it may call for some rather
specific suggestions, perhaps following similar lines to those of
Jim Wallis or Ron Sider.[27]   Their own 'social analysis' is both
rooted within a biblical perspective, and bears fruit in the
practical life of socially-conscious urban communities.

Future Directions

So much for my agenda.   The challenge of the dialogical task lies
ahead.   I suspect that there are severe limitations as well as
potentialities for 'idolatry and the prophetic task' in the socio-
theological dialogue.   But it seems to me that the potentialities
are worth pursuing.   Idol-analysis, from a biblical perspective,
may help explain the powerful hold of the symbols of natural
religion over its adherents.   As to traffic flowing in the other
direction -- from sociology to theology, much may be gained (in
humility at least) through an appreciation of the difficulties of
making non-ideological prophetic statements.   Much has been left
unsaid.

    One last point, and this cannot be overstressed: any
evangelical contribution to dialogue of any sort is guided, in
the last analysis, not by commitment to the Book, or to praxis,
but by commitment to one who Himself *is* 'our wisdom', Jesus of
Nazareth.   Without Him, socio-theological dialogue is hollow,
echoing words.

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10   c.f. the comments of R. Towler to the effect that one of the new social forms of religion is 'progress, meaning a steady annual rise in the Dow-Jones and FT Industrial Share Indices', in his (1974) *Homo Religiousus: Sociological Problems in the Study of Religion*, 1974, p.141.

11   A. Scott Matheson, (1893), *The Church and Social Problems*, 1893; (a) pp.16-17; (b) p.21.

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18   Towler, Ref.1, D. Martin, *A Sociology of English Religion*, 1967, has also done work on this, calling it, among other things, 'subterranean theology'.

19   A. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, MacMillan, 1979, p.165.

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