

Western Culture and the Christian Gospel

What is happening in our society today?

maranatha

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Introduction

Western culture and the Christian Gospel

What is happening in our society today?

This document, published by the Maranatha Community, is an exploration of this question. It is essentially a provisional document, addressed to both Christians and non-Christians.

The fruit of much thought, sharing and investigation, it is presented at a time when many believe that our culture is in great crisis and when some even foresee its collapse.

A large number of people throughout the United Kingdom, drawn from a broad range of disciplines and backgrounds, have been involved in some way in drawing up this statement. It was considered at a National Ecumenical Conference at Swanwick. An ongoing study group has been established to develop fuller understanding of this subject.

Comments and suggestions are welcome.

Dennis Wrigley
Community Leader

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The Maranatha Community is an international movement of many thousands of Christians who are active in all the main churches throughout the United Kingdom and abroad.

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I. Change

A major cultural shift?

- ' A major cultural shift is currently taking place. Western civilisation is now experiencing **changes** of a magnitude and speed hitherto unknown.
- ' Virtually every society is in the **process** of changing. This process may be slow, rapid or sudden. It may occur smoothly, erratically, quietly or convulsively.
- ' The changes may bring great **benefits** to some but great **disadvantage** to others.
- ' Today the **pace** of change is accelerating at an unprecedented rate.
- ' In order to understand the nature and direction of the changes now taking place in our society, we need to consider the basic **formative influences**.
- ' Changes come about through both **historical** inheritance and **contemporary** events which may or may not be deliberately contrived.
- ' Changes may appear to happen haphazardly but, **patterns** and **trends** emerge and these can be identified.
- ' There is a widespread and understandable **fear** of change. Many are apprehensive about embracing the unfamiliar and relinquishing established ways.
- ' The influences bringing about change may appear to be independent of one another and seemingly disconnected. They may, however, be **orchestrated**, co-ordinated and brought about through deliberate manipulation. Often these changes are triggered off or instigated as a direct reaction against something or someone.

- ' The idea of change being equated with **progress** in an unfolding evolutionary process has been undermined by catastrophic global events and a continuous series of wars, bloody revolutions and acts of terrorism.
 - ' Confidence in change has also been undermined by a growing recognition of the immense **dangers** as well as the benefits, which may accrue from changes, particularly in science and technological advancement.
 - ' There has been a sudden transformation of cultural **values** and **practices** in the West, generated and accelerated by factors such as new technology and cheap travel. The immediacy of communication and the growth of travel, have in themselves generated substantial problems.
 - ' Rapid and fundamental changes have undoubtedly made a major contribution to a widespread sense of **uncertainty**, doubt and apprehension.
 - ' It is being increasingly recognised that the **consequences** of some of the changes currently taking place in society are potentially calamitous.
-

A changing world

Marshall McLuhan, writing in 1967 wrote, *"The medium or process of our time - electronic technology - is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate practically every thought, every action and institution formerly taken for granted. Everything is changing, you, your family, your education, your neighbourhood, your government, your relationships; and they're changing rapidly"*. Since then the process of change has accelerated.

Rapid technological changes have made the world more dangerous. Bill Joy, a former co-Chairman of the Presidential Commission on the future of technology, one of the original designers of the Unix operating system and founder and chief scientist of the software maker Sun Micro Systems, made a sombre warning about the risks to humanity during the next generation from new scientific developments. He said *"The 21st century technologies – genetics, nanotechnology and robotics are so powerful that they can spawn whole new classes of accidents and abuses. Most dangerously, for the first time, these accidents and abuses are widely within the reach of individuals or small groups. They will not require large facilities or rare raw materials. Knowledge alone will enable the use of them"*. He also said *"Robots engineered as organisms and nanobots (microscopic robots) share a dangerous amplifying factor: they can self-replicate. A bomb is blown up only once – but one bot can become many and quickly get out of control"*. One of Bill Joy's fears is genetically engineered viruses against which people have no defence. Another is nanotechnology which enables scientists to use individual molecules as circuit elements. It could create smart machines small enough to fit inside a blood vessel and able to reproduce themselves like computer viruses, he says. Bill Joy concludes *"The only realistic*

alternative I see is relinquishment: to limit development of the technologies that are too dangerous by limiting our pursuit of certain kinds of knowledge". (Times 15.3.00)

"Cultures are born and die. The question now is whether we are at a point where a culture is approaching death". (Lesslie Newbigin)

Fundamental changes in attitudes towards the value of life are evident in the widespread acceptance of the destruction of the child in the womb, the readiness to embrace euthanasia and the remorseless move towards human cloning.

Changes in standards of living are evident in terms of higher incomes, better housing, countless creature comforts and a supportive welfare state. However, the rich have got richer, and the poor have got comparatively poorer. Changes in lifestyle are to be seen in a new hedonism, fuelled by the all-powerful new entertainment, communication, leisure and sports industries. The mushrooming of 'recreational' drug taking, drug addiction and drug-related crime are indicative of an extreme hedonism.

Changes in gender roles and the emancipation of women have led to a far higher proportion of the workplace being made up of women and the introduction of the contraceptive pill has had a formative influence on the role of women in society. Changes in the quality of human relationships are evident in the decline of the marriage-based family, widespread promiscuity and the mushrooming of pornography.

The percentage of the United Kingdom population over 65 will increase substantially during the next 20 years and this, together with serious economic recession, is already having a bearing on pension schemes. The long-established security of pensions has been eroded and with the collapse of some schemes, destroyed. All this directly contributes to a widespread feeling of insecurity.

The fabric of society is being eroded by the destruction of family relationships and the ensuing problems with children and young people. We are now facing the emergence of a society in which violence, corruption and promiscuity with its associated sexually transmitted diseases, is now endemic.

A job for a life-time has become a rarity. Many people have short-term working contracts. They frequently change skills and professional disciplines throughout their working life. There has also been a large increase in the number of part-time jobs and shared jobs, using flexitime. An increased number of people working from home. Redundancy and early retirement are now experienced by a high proportion of the workforce.

Changes in attitudes to law and order have meant that former restraints have been swept away. Vulgarity and aggression are freely flaunted. Graffiti covers many walls in urban areas. Vandalism has become a national disease. Acts of violence have rapidly increased and the majority of offenders are never apprehended or prosecuted. There has been a rapid change in public confidence in both the police and the courts.

Changes in communication techniques now mean that information is exchanged instantly and often universally. The role of television and the Internet has profoundly influenced patterns of human experience, thought and morality, which had been established over the centuries.

Changes in industry are evident, with a marked swing away from manufacturing to light and service based industries. Huge commercial groups have collapsed and many traditional and well-known commercial names have vanished. The new economy is more vulnerable to sudden change.

Changes in attitude towards religion and the growth of secular humanist influence means that the sacred is often vilified and ridiculed. The extreme evidence of de-christianisation is the regular desecration of church buildings and sustained attacks upon the Christian faith in the media. Whilst there has been an explosion of interest in New Religions and the occult, membership of churches and attendance at church services have steadily declined.

At a time of change and uncertainty, it is worth recalling that the Gospel of Jesus is about radical change, both in individual men and women and in society itself.

Some Evidence

- In one generation the numbers marrying has halved and the numbers divorcing has trebled, while the proportion of children born outside marriage has quadrupled. (*'Social Focus on Families' issued by Office for National Statistics – in Family & Marriage document*)
- Well over 750,000 children in Britain have no contact with their fathers following their parents' marriage breakdown. (*Family Policies Study Centre Survey of Lone Parents*)
- About 1500 children each year, born by artificial insemination by donor, are the only group of people who do not have the legal right of access to their parents' genetic information. (*The Guardian 31.1.98*)
- One in five of all children now suffers from a mental health problem before they are old enough to leave home. (*Daily Mail 4.2.99*)
- The number of children living in poverty has increased substantially, being 4.5 million today – 3 times the number in 1979. (*Times 22.9.99*)
- In 1972 4% of all children were overweight. In 2002 it is 30%. In 1972 1 to 2% of all children were obese. In 2002 it is 7%. The average 9 year old boy is now 24% fatter than he would have been in the 1970's. An average 11 year old girl would have consumed more than 2,000 calories but would have weighed nearly half a stone less than her modern counterpart at 6st 8lbs. In 1972 children had five hours exercise per week. In 2002 they have 2 hours. In 1972 children watched 2.3 hours of television per day. In 2002 they watched 3.8 hours. The percentage of children who walked to school in 1972 was 40%. In 2002 it was 15%. (*NHS Trust & Institute of Children's Health, BMJ, British Heart Foundation – Guardian 16.12.02*)
- In 1950 4% of the population was reliant on national assistance. In 1998 17% of the population is on Income Support, but if housing and council tax benefits are included, this figure rises to 27%. (*Benefit Dependency, David Green, IEA 2 North Street, London SW1P 3LB*)
- According to figures published by the Office for National Statistics conception rates for women aged 20-24 fell by 20% between 1976 and 1988. For women aged 30-34 they rose by 62% and for those aged 35-39 by 82%. The proportion of births outside marriage rose from one in ten in the 1970's to one in four today. The number of one-parent families rose from 750,000 in 1976 to 1.6m in 1996 and the number of children in one-parent families increased from 1.3m to 2.8m over the same period. The report included evidence that fuels earlier sexual activity. Among those born in 1931 1% had first intercourse before 16, rising to 5% for those born in the 1950's and 24% for those born in 1974. (*Guardian 21.6.00*)
- There are now a record 4045 women in prison in Britain. The female jail population has risen in every month since 1993 and has risen by 20% in one year. Martin Narey, Director General of the Prison Service said "What has happened to the women's jail population is beyond all predictions. It is not just that it has gone above the population projection made last year, it has hurtled upwards". In the previous year there had been a 44% increase in the number of women jailed for robbery. The overall jail population has at the same time reached a record 68,357. (*Times 26.11.01*)
- According to a report by the Economic and Social Research Council, women with children are working longer hours than ever and becoming increasingly unhappy about it. The struggle to balance work and home life has become harder over the past decade. Women with a dependent child are working 2.5 hours more a week, relative to women without children, than they were during the early 1990's. The co-director of the study was Michael White of the Policies Studies Institute. He spoke of the need for women with children to develop a satisfactory working life with shorter hours for their male partners to enable them to do more at home. (*Financial Times 9.9.01*)
- According to the 2002 Social Trends Survey published by the Government there are 13.2 million woman who have jobs compared to 10 million 30 years ago. Over the same period the number of working men has risen by only 300,000 to 16.3 million. One woman in five keeps working full-time after their child is born. Nearly one in four opts to stay at home and around a third move to part-time work. (*Daily Mail 31.1.02*)
- According to research by Professor Francis Green, Professor of Economics at Kent University, the average British household with two adults was working seven hours a week more at the end of the 1990's than in the early 1980's. Professor Green concluded that there was a stronger, faster rise in work intensity in Britain than anywhere else in Europe in the 1990's. (*Guardian 21.6.00*)
- The Health & Safety Executive said that 5m workers now report their jobs are very stressful and 6m work days a year are lost through work-related stress. In December 2001 the Economic and Social Research Council reported that "A significant decline in the level of work satisfaction had taken place among both men and women over a wide range of job facets" between 1992 and 2000. The Scottish Equitable has found that 5.2m people are ill from stress and 1.8m are taking time off work. (*Daily Telegraph 7.1.02*)

- It was estimated in 2000 that within 5 to 10 years the domestic customer would have access to an 'always on' internet connection, 10 to 20 times faster than the best computer available. This has already happened. Computer processing capacity will double every 18 months as it has done since the 70s. (*Cabinet Office 'The Future and How to Think About It' – 2000*)
- The report 'Opportunity for All, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusions' published by the Government states that one third of all children – 4.5 million - live in poverty, three times the number in 1979. One fifth live in households where nobody works – twice the 1979 level – this is significantly higher than all other European countries. The proportion of families with dependent children that are headed by lone parents increased from 8% in 1971 to 21% in 1996. (*Times 22.9.99*)
- The number of violent crimes committed by women has increased by 250% between 1973 and 1997. (*Evening Standard 20.8.97*)
- Muggers are increasingly turning to real or imitation guns on the streets of London. Commander Allan Brown, Head of Scotland Yard's Flying Squad, has warned that muggings involving real and fake firearms had risen by 53% in the past 8 months. There were 667 cases between April and November last year compared with 435 for the same period in 2000. The latest figures show that street crime is 39% up on figures for last year. Between April and November last year there were 45,255 street robberies and snatches (the definition of street crime) against 32,497 for the same eight months of 2000. By the end of the financial year in April muggings in London are expected to have exceeded last year's record total of 50,607. (*Times 3.1.02*)
- Home Office figures show that 561 youngsters aged from 10 to 17 committed what are called "grave crimes" in 2000, up from 315 in 1993. The number of children found guilty of serious offences has surged in the past 30 years. In 1970 six young people were found guilty of grave crimes, 39 in 1975 and 154 in 1985. The statistics for 2000 reveal that there had been a 78% increase in serious crimes by the young in seven years. A crime committed by a young person is classified as grave if an adult could receive 14 years or more in prison for the same offence. Included are murder, manslaughter, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm. In such cases the Youth Court, which can only give a maximum of two years in prison for a crime, declines to hear the case and instead sends the young person to stand trial at a Crown Court – where they can receive an adult sentence up to and including life.
In December 2001 a gang of youths aged 14-15 chased and then raped a girl in Guildford's shopping centre on a Saturday afternoon. In May 2001, a 16 year old and a 17 year old were found guilty of torturing a 39 year old man to death in Stockport in an horrific and prolonged attack. In January 2002, a gang of boys robbed children of their mobile phones as they were leaving a cinema in London. (*Sunday Telegraph 6.1.02*)
- Gun crime has almost trebled in London during the past year and is soaring in other British cities, according to Home Office figures. During the ten months to January 31st there were 939 crimes involving firearms in the Metropolitan police area compared with 322 in the ten months to the end of January 2001 – an almost three-fold increase. Greater Manchester also recorded a 23% increase in gun crime. Sir John Stevens, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, said "Gun gangs were spreading across the country whereas until recently they were confined to a handful of London boroughs". (*Sunday Telegraph 24.2.02*)
- Fewer crimes are being solved by British police than at any time since 1993. Detectives are failing to clear up nearly 4 million of the 5.3 million offences reported last year according to Home Office figures seen by the Observer. In 1990 police succeeded in solving 32% of all notifiable offences. In 1997 the police solved 28% of crimes recorded. The clear-up rate has now dropped to 25%. (*Observer 13.5.01*)
- The number of crimes solved by police reached its lowest level with fewer than one in four of the 5.1 million offences detected according to the Home Office. Police detected 24% of recorded crimes in 2000 to 2001 compared with 35% in 1988. Recorded violent crime increased by 4.3% to 733,326. 40% of robbery suspects were males aged between 14 & 19. The detection rate for violent crime fell by 4% to 55% in 2000-01. The detection rate for sexual offences was 68% in 1998-1999 but this dropped to 53% in 2000-01. The detection rate for theft from a person was 6%, theft of and from a vehicle 8%, burglary 12% and criminal damage 14%. Paul Wiles, Director of Research Development and Statistics at the Home Office said that detections were at their lowest level "in numerical terms". (*Times 19.7.01*)
- Under a new strategy the Government is planning to increase spending on drugs policies in the next three years from £1.02 billion to £1.5 billion. There are now an estimated 250,000 drugs addicts and drug misuse is estimated to cost between £10b & £18b a year in social and economic costs. (*Times 4.12.02*)

2. Roots

What are the origins of what is happening?

- ' From the 14th to the 16th centuries during the so-called Renaissance, with its rediscovery of classical culture, there was a remarkable celebration of **human** achievement and creative excellence. Although this was not initially seen as conflicting with the dominant Christian belief system, humanism was born.
- ' During the 18th century, flowing from the Renaissance, the age of **reason** or the so-called Enlightenment emerged. This was a time of increasing scientific knowledge.
- ' The formative **influences** on our present situation include the Enlightenment, the materialism and romanticism of the 19th century, and the existentialism, modernism and totalitarianism of the 20th century.
- ' Ideas which have prevailed for much of the past century have been rooted in the supposed **certainty** of scientific truth and in the **confidence** of humanism. Many readily believed that human beings alone can solve all their problems and, by their own efforts, are perfectible.
- ' The Enlightenment, which in turn ushered in so-called modernism was intended to lead men and women from the darkness of what was conceived to be ignorance and religious **superstition** into the light of wisdom, reason and human knowledge. It was seen as the victory of reason over faith. However, reason, in fact, builds on and explores foundations that are held by faith.
- ' A form of **rational belief** was also bred by the Enlightenment. This replaced traditional theism with deism in which God was deemed to have created the world and then absented himself, rather like a divine architect. It was believed that creation had been left to run by itself within a framework of laws, which precluded all possibility of miracles.

- ' In the early 19th century the movement of romanticism arose in reaction to the Enlightenment. This rebelled against the **structures** of society, perceived rigid civilised standards and Enlightenment rationalism. It expressed a libertarian view and saw the world as one integrated whole.
- ' The widespread rejection of the **miraculous** in the 19th century led to a new form of 'natural' religion. This was heavily influenced by romanticism and tended towards pantheism. The 'natural' was embraced and the 'supernatural' was to a considerable extent rejected. New Age thought and practice of today has some of its roots in this movement.
- ' Those who were called 'naturalists' originally saw nature as God's creation. The reality of good and evil was also recognised. God was still seen to be a **foundational** truth and a reference point, but not a personal being who can be encountered and known.
- ' In the new age of **reason** and **rationalism** which emerged many 'truths' inherited from the centuries of Christian faith began to be seen as questionable or obsolete. There was a marked tendency to dismiss all religious practice as superstition, and religious belief as untenable.
- ' Although Christian belief and practice were rejected by much Enlightenment thinking, initially the **concept** of God was not. However, in due course, the idea of God began to be abandoned in favour of agnosticism or atheism.
- ' The 19th century saw the emergence of materialism, in which reality was limited and restricted to that which could be seen and measured by our senses – **matter**. Belief in materialism grew dramatically with the emergence of the industrial revolution and urban society.
- ' The Enlightenment inevitably led to utilitarianism in which ethical questions were resolved solely on human and **functional** terms without reference to God.
- ' Materialism, coupled with Enlightenment thinking, led to the concept of a totally man-made and **planned** society.

- ' Forms of dialectical **materialism** together with the practice of Marx-Leninism, led ultimately to the ruthless and bloody imposition of a godless Communism across large areas of the world as a system embracing all life.
- ' Existentialism emerged as an alternative to, and perhaps a reaction against materialism. Rejecting inherent meaning and purpose in existence, existentialists **privatised** personal values and beliefs and gradually moved towards an anarchic and often chaotic form of living. There was a great emphasis upon self. This frequently led to deep introspection and the embracing of the esoteric.
- ' The climate of thought in the early part of the 20th century was **optimistic** and self-confident and the inevitability of progress was widely believed. Initially, it was directly influenced by the Christian belief that history progresses towards a goal. Rapidly, this belief in progress became highly materialistic and associated with purely human achievement.
- ' Modernity propounded a belief in inevitable 'progress' in terms of economic and social improvement, coupled with the supremacy of science and technology. This, together with the emergence of new academic disciplines such as **psychology** and **sociology** and the embracing of **social engineering**, led to a widespread belief in the supremacy of human reason and the expulsion of God, Christ and the Bible from serious consideration. This was fuelled by the controversy about evolution.
- ' The confidence and optimism of the 19th century and the belief in things getting 'better and better' was severely **shaken** by the catastrophic wars and revolutions of the 20th century.
- ' During the 20th century Christian influence steadily **diminished** in the United Kingdom and Western Europe. Nevertheless, the need for some form of overall moral, social and spiritual framework continued to be acknowledged.
- ' The attempt to apply **reason** alone to the foundation and structures of society has led to widespread pessimism, cynicism and a prevailing attitude which rejects all absolutes.

- ' As a direct result of our inheritance, Western society is today experiencing the **overlap** of two very different ways of thinking - the 'modern' and the so-called 'post-modern'.
 - ' This is a time of conflicting definitions, ambiguous language, monumental change, widespread confusion and fear. The situation can only be addressed by first recognising and understanding the **origins** of what is happening.
-

Why we are what we are

The Renaissance placed humankind at the centre of the universe. The Enlightenment elevated reason over revelation. The reformation acclaimed a new freedom and also generated a new individualism.

Dualism advocated by Rene Descartes had a profound influence upon European thinking and created an artificial division between public 'truth' and private 'opinion'. Thus God had no place in the world of facts, but only in the area of personal beliefs.

Much of what is happening today is rooted in ideas developed during the past 150 years. The influence of the Enlightenment led to the glorification of human reason. Faith was put in 'progress' and science. The writings of Freud, Jung, Marx and Darwin began to take on an authority of biblical proportions and had widespread influence on our culture. These are now being increasingly disputed.

The questioning of the authority of the Bible in the 19th century coincided with the emergence of a godless intellectualism. Sir Julian Huxley said in 1975 of the emergent religion of the near future "*Instead of worshipping supernatural rulers, it will sanctify the higher manifestation of human nature in art and love, in intellectual comprehension and aspiring adoration...*". Pride in human effort and discovery led Huxley to boast "*Man is the latest dominant type of life on this earth and the sole agent for its further evolution*".

The call to humanism was expressed in the words of Alexander Pope "*Know then thyself, presume not God to scan, the proper study of mankind is man*".

New disciplines such as sociology and psychology in large measure expelled God. Paul Vitz has even said "*Psychology has become a religion, in particular a form of secular humanism based on the worship of self*".

The poet Charles Swinburne prepared the way for the present celebrity-obsessed culture when he wrote "*Glory to man in the highest! For man is the master of things*". The inheritance of the deists who believed that although God created the world He plays no active role in it, is that their successors, faced with an inactive God, have now totally dispensed with Him. The 19th century declaration by Nietzsche that "*God is dead*" is now embraced enthusiastically by many leaders in the 21st century.

In the past hundred years there has been a deeply rooted belief in continuing 'progress' through social reform, education and science. Hilaire Belloc proclaimed "*When science has discovered something more, we shall be happier than we were before*".

The confident age of continuity has, however, now been displaced by what Drucker calls "*The age of discontinuity*". The optimistic and utopian faith in progress, so fervently embraced by many, including the churches, has been virtually destroyed.

Belief in the inherent goodness of human nature has been eroded and as Tom Wright has said *“The so-called ‘age of reason’ produced revolutions that sent millions to their deaths”* (Myth of the Millennium). The atrocity on 11th September 2001 added to the recognition of the magnitude of evil and human sinfulness.

The history of the past 100 years tends to confirm what G.K. Chesterton is believed to have said *“The trouble when people stop believing in God is not that they thereafter believe in nothing; it is that they thereafter believe in anything”*.

The consequences of extreme theological liberalism are to be seen in churches, which have gone on to embrace agnosticism, and in people who are utterly confused about their faith or who have totally lost it.

Western attitudes are changing dramatically. Michail Gorbachev states, *“Humankind stands at a watershed in its history”*.

A fundamental transformation of unprecedented proportion is currently taking place, rooted in the wrestlings of the past century.

Patrick Glynn in his book ‘God - the Evidence’ asserts *“What our century has experienced...is a disenchantment with reason, the collapse of the Enlightenment’s secular and rational faith. Perhaps, not entirely coincidentally, God is re-emerging in Western intellectual life at the very moment when reason appears to have hit the end of the road”*. He also said *“The great error of the Enlightenment – for which the worst horrors of modern history are themselves the evidence – was the idolatry of reasons, the belief that reason could replace god. Marx was such an idolater. Freud was another.is it any wonder that the Communist experiment eventuated in disaster or that a later generation of scholars has concluded that Freud’s views of religion and of a thousand other aspects of human psychology were wrong-headed? Should we be surprised that ‘godless Communism’ resulted in unprecedented cruelties or that ‘godless psychiatry’ has come under increasing criticism in recent years for condoning self-evidently immoral behaviour?”*

Diogenes Allen recognised the immensity of this change when he wrote *“A massive intellectual revolution is taking place and is perhaps as great as that which marked off the modern world from the Middle Ages. The foundations of the modern world are collapsing, and we are entering a post-modern world. The principles forged during the Enlightenment ... are crumbling”*.

Many social commentators now see the nature of what is happening. *“There is a widely shared sense that Western ways of seeing, knowing and representing have irreversibly altered in recent times”* (John Snyder). *“Western culture is in the middle of a fundamental transformation: a ‘shape of life’ is growing old”* (Jane Flax). *“Our society is in the throws of a monumental transition, moving from modernity to postmodernity”* (Stanley Granz).

3. Stability

Security in an insecure world?

- ' There is a sense of transience and **impermanence** in contemporary society.
- ' The '**modern society**' was essentially a mobile society in which people, products and ideas moved further, faster and more frequently than ever before.
- ' Over the 20th century, rates of change and movement accelerated. Rootedness and stability gave way to a sense of everything being **temporary**. Commercial pressures have led to products and processes having built-in obsolescence and short life.
- ' Periods of rapid transition are frequently destabilising, creating insecurity in both individuals and society. The increased mobility of people, processes and ideas, on a hitherto unknown scale has led to **tension** and stress, causing widespread emotional and mental breakdown.
- ' Mobility and transience in society have directly affected interpersonal relationships. The absence of **stability** leads to a lack of commitment to others which in turn causes serious human suffering and social injustice. Marriage has been increasingly abandoned over recent years in favour of **temporary partnerships** resulting in widespread personal insecurity and disastrous social consequences, particularly for the children involved and their grandparents.
- ' The advent of television and popular journalism has led to a **trivialising** of important human issues. 'Sound bites' and 'pop' language have frequently replaced measured argument. Messages are presented simplistically. The concentration spans of readers, listeners and viewers, especially children, has diminished radically.

- ' **Fashion, sport, popular entertainment** and the novelty of passing fads have become a dynamic influence in a society driven largely by powerful commercial interests.
 - ' Sudden **political** and **economic** change and technological innovation may in a moment destroy established ways of life.
 - ' Terrorist **outrage** can suddenly destabilise entire nations.
 - ' There is, therefore, a profound and growing sense of instability, **discontinuity** and unease in contemporary society.
-

Instability – the cost

Because of instability and lack of continuity in contemporary society, many people feel insecure. Many worry about the future due to job insecurity. There is a high incidence of stress-related illnesses. There are high levels of suicides, particularly among the young.

People feel less secure because of the growing level of lawlessness. Many communities which were stable and secure for generations have become places of danger and fear. There is also the growing phenomenon of drug-induced instability. There is a growing sense of impermanence and obsolescence which seems to be built into the products we buy and, also with human relationships.

Social stability and community life can easily be destroyed, particularly where a neighbourhood is totally dependent upon one industry or employer. The closure of mines, steelworks, textile mills and other major activities such as shipbuilding have had devastating effects upon towns, families and individual lives. In the past most people could often expect a job for a lifetime. This is now a rarity. Unexpected and frequent redundancy plus early retirement are becoming increasingly common. More people expect to have many different jobs during their lifetime.

Insecurity in the home undoubtedly contributes to delinquency, youth crime and homelessness. Peter Wilson, psychotherapist and Director of the children's charity 'Young Minds' said *"Children are undoubtedly growing up in a less stable, clearly structured environment. With the increasing incidence of divorce, solo parenting and re-formed families, there is a less secure grounding in family life than there once was". (Times 19.8.97)*

A former Vice-President of the European Parliament, Sir Frederick Catherwood, has warned of the basic problems of instability and points to the importance of the marriage-based family unit. He claims that Britain risks a violent backlash unless effective action is taken to tackle the unprecedented level of social breakdown in society. He says that increasing levels of lawlessness in the inner cities have created parts of Britain where the police no longer have control. In the publication 'Can be Done' he says *"At some level of unemployment, some depth of corruption of the nation's youth by drugs and decadence, too many young people will have had enough and be tempted to take the law into their own hands....Someone may organise the young unemployed into disciplined battalions, making them feel for the first time that they matter and give them something to live for, fight for and even die for".* Urging the Government not to undermine the family Sir Frederick said *"It has been the job of the family through the ages, all around the world*

and in every society and under every religion, to teach children how to live with each other and with those around them. There they are taught that there are sanctions against bad behaviour and rewards for good behaviour. The family is the place to learn that selfishness does not pay". (Church of England Newspaper 31.3.00).

We are living in a dissatisfied, unstable and sick society. David Harvey says *"The most startling fact about postmodernity is its total acceptance of ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity and the chaotic"*.

"The very scaffolding on which people are standing is collapsing" (David Bosch).

Some Evidence

- The breakdown of a relationship is the most common reason for people becoming homeless. 40% of those questioned said they were homeless because of breaking up with their partner, 21% blamed heavy drinking, 18% losing their job, 13% money problems, 10% said it was drug use, and 1% blamed mental illness. (*Times* 12.2.98)
- Social Services in Gloucester could not trace a hundred young people who had been in the Department's care between 1970 and 1994. 390 files had been mislaid, including 97 on youngsters aged between 13 and 21. (*The Guardian* 9.11.96)
- 34% of children aged 10-17 admitted worrying about the prospect of their parents splitting up or divorcing. 75% believed that marriage should be for ever and 72% believed it was better for children to live with both natural parents. (*Report quoted in Readers Digest* November 1995)
- By the age of 33 more than 4 out of 10 children of divorced parents had seen their own live-in relationship or marriage break up. (*Daily Mail* 30.9.97)
- One fifth of all children now live in a household where no one works – this is twice the 1979 level. Nearly 1 million children live with parents who have drug or alcohol problems. (*The Times* 22.9.99)
- 250,000 teenagers now suffer from depression. (*The Times* 25.11.99)
- Children of divorced parents are more likely to suffer the early collapse of their own marriages or relationships and children from broken homes are twice as likely as those whose parents stay together to have children outside marriage or while they are still teenagers. (*Daily Mail* 30.9.97)
- Children brought up by single mothers are twice as likely to commit criminal offences than those born into two-parent families. (*Sunday Telegraph* 3.5.98)
- 2.7 million children now live in lone parent families and 6 out of 10 lone parent families live in poverty. (*Westminster Watch* 6.3.98, quoting *Child Poverty Action Group*)
- A magazine called 'Loving More' is dedicated to new models of relationship which are non-monogamous. (*The Guardian, The Editor* 1.6.98)
- An estimated 55 children under the age of 11 run away from home each day according to a report of the Children's Society entitled 'Child Runaways'. Of these 14% are likely to be sexually abused. The report is based on a survey of 13,000 children and young people. In 1999 the Children's Society report 'Still Running' showed that 100,000 children who were under 16 run away from home every year in the United Kingdom. (*Church Times* 7.12.01)
- According to research carried out by MORI for the Youth Justice Board, a non-departmental public body set up under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, a fifth of schoolchildren say they go out armed and a quarter say they have committed some kind of crime. Those excluded from the classroom were even more likely to have been involved in criminal activity than were their peers, with 44% saying they carried a knife and 23% that they had been in possession of a gun at some point in the past 12 months. (*Guardian* 16.5.01)
- According to a Home Office report violent crime in England and Wales has risen at three times the average for European Union states. England and Wales now have the highest number of recorded burglaries in the EU. They have the second highest number of vehicle thefts with 374,000 stolen in 1999. The figures show that between 1998 and 1999 violent crime recorded by the police in England and Wales increased by 16% compared with an average rise in EU members states of 5%. The rise in England and Wales compared with a 7% decline in the United States. In 1999 there were 703,000 violent crimes recorded in England and Wales compared with 215,000 in France and 186,000 in Germany. Recorded domestic burglaries in England and Wales fell by 6% to 442,000. In France there was an 8% drop to 191,000 and in Germany an 11% drop to 149,000. (*Times* 4.5.01)

- Police solved just 25% of the offences recorded in England and Wales last year, the worst annual figure for a decade. Almost 4 million crimes recorded by the 43 police forces in England and Wales last year remain unsolved. Charles Clarke, the Police Minister, disclosed the figures in a Commons written answer. The figures show that 3.9 million of the 5.2 million recorded crimes in England and Wales in 2000 were not cleared up. (*Times* 12.5.01)
- The Centre for Defence Studies at King's College in London has produced a report 'Illegal Firearms in the UK', stating that handguns were used in 3,685 offences last year compared with 2,648 in 1997, an increase of 40%. The report also shows a dramatic rise in firearms incidents in general, from 4,904 recorded incidents in 1997 to 6,843 last year. It reveals an increase in crimes using shotguns up from 580 in 1997 to 693 last year. (*Sunday Telegraph* 15.7.01)
- According the National Criminal Intelligence Service up to 900 gangs engaged in drug trafficking, immigration rackets, fraud and money laundering are active in Britain. The agency says that turnover from organised crime exceeds £8 billion and could be as high as £50 billion. The groups range from Mafia-style gangs organised around families or ethnic groups to small numbers of opportunists who have banded together. Although gangs of Albanians, Lithuanians, Jamaicans, Chinese and Turks are operating, mainly in the South East, the vast majority are British. The Director General of the agency, John Abbott, says "It affects everyone in this country and its effects can be seen wherever you go: counterfeit currency in pubs, counterfeit goods sold on trestle tables in high streets, child pornography on the Internet, class A drugs at teenage discos". Two-thirds of organised groups are involved in the drugs trade. British gangs found it easy to become involved because of the proximity of the Netherlands which had established itself as "the nexus of much of the drug trafficking activity in Europe". The report stated "Most UK based traffickers appear to obtain their supplies from the Netherlands and therefore have potential access to more than one type of drug". Every year British addicts consume 30 tonnes of heroin. Two tons of the drug seized. Most of the heroin reaching Britain originates in Afghanistan and is processed in Turkey before being smuggled to Western Europe, often via Bulgaria. British consumption of cocaine is between 25 and 40 tonnes and the bulk of this originates in Columbia and is smuggled into Spain. Illegal immigration is the main criminal activity of 3% of organised gangs, while another 5% is involved to a lesser degree. Albanian and Lithuanian gangs are involved in bringing in foreign prostitutes. Other gangs force immigrants to work in illicit sweatshops, fast food outlets and agriculture. Organised frauds accounted for annual losses of between £5 billion and £12 billion the report said, with the Treasury losing almost £4 billion through tobacco smuggling. (*Daily Telegraph* 9.8.01)
- Shopkeepers are increasingly the victims of violent crime according to figures used in a survey conducted by the Independent Retail News. It shows that almost half of all independent retailers say they have been attacked – almost double the rate last year. Four out of ten assaults were serious enough to require medical treatment and over a third of those attacked have since left their jobs. At the same time conviction rates have fallen steeply. In the previous year almost one in four of all cases resulted in a conviction; last year this fell to only 5%. The significant majority of shopkeepers believe matters are getting worse. (*Daily Telegraph* 7.9.01)
- Professor John Benyon, a Criminologist at the Scarman Centre at the University of Leicester said of Home Office figures showing increased violent crime. "People in this country are suffering one of the worst victimisation rates in the developed world in terms of violent crime". (*Observer* 3.6.01)
- Hundreds of convicted criminals in London are getting away unpunished because of a collapse in the system for hauling them back into court when they ignore community penalties. More than 1,000 – including sex offenders, burglars and car thieves – have evaded justice since April when the government introduced a new system. Rosie Eagleson, General Secretary of the Magistrates Court Staff Union AMO said "The credibility of the criminal process is being undermined by the lack of resources". Harry Fletcher, General Secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers claimed Probation Officers have been advised by managers to ask courts to write off cases which have gone for more than 12 months without a warrant being followed up. He said "That means if a criminal manages to keep their head down for a year they will get off scot free. The fact that they did not serve their sentence properly will not show up on their criminal record, so if they are charged again in the future, the court will think they are suitable for a community punishment instead of prison". The Home Office Minister, John Denham, has admitted that 903 unexecuted warrants were outstanding in the capital from the new system. (*Evening Standard* 22.11.01)
- Mr. Fred Broughton, Chairman of the Police Federation, referring to the violence and lack of police presence in the centres of London, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds said "There is a sense of disorder and anarchy in many of these areas. Most people would avoid these hot spots altogether as there are no police officers to turn to". Referring to rural policing he said that the closure of local police stations for financial reasons had been disastrous. (*Guardian* 16.5.00)
- Manchester has 70 murder and attempted-murder trials waiting to be heard by a jury and because the court list is so full they have been forced to send cases to Liverpool. The city has more pending violent crime trials than anywhere outside London and in recent months the figure has risen to an astonishing 82 awaiting trial – the highest number of murder cases that Manchester Crown Court has ever known. (*Daily Mail* 26.1.02)

4. Identity

Who am I? Who are we?

- ' Identity is the knowledge of 'who I am'. This governs our perception of our **individual** worth.
- ' In contemporary society, there is a danger of loss of self-worth, rooted in a lack of **identity**.
- ' Identity is often **perceived** according to wealth, family, popularity, skills, profession or power. Frequently those who lack these are deemed by themselves or others to be of less or little worth.
- ' We carry **labels**, bear titles and qualifications and are put into advertising classification groups, but these, alone, fail to give us true identity.
- ' We wear **masks** of nationhood, culture and class.
- ' In contemporary society, identity is often centred on wealth and leisure. It frequently revolves around consumption and the fulfilment of **appetites**, based on external appearances and images.
- ' In an age of individualism, personal identity becomes divorced from any sense of corporate **belonging** and responsibility.
- ' We may easily become **nameless** and anonymous and prone to hide our real identity.
- ' In our individuality we may consider ourselves **answerable** to no one, apart from ourselves. Alternatively, we may consider ourselves answerable to others, or on the other hand to the One who has made us.

- ‘ In a post-modern society there is a great danger of people **losing** or never even discovering their own identities. The consequences of this are serious.
-

Loss of Identity

Vaclav Havel said *“I believe with the loss of God, man has lost a kind of absolute and universal system of co-ordinates, to which he could always relate anything, chiefly himself. His world and his personality gradually begin to break up into separate, incoherent fragments to different relative co-ordinates. And when this has happened, man begins to lose his inner identity, that is his identity with himself.”* (quoted in the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Millennium Message)

With the advent of mass movements, mass organisations and structures of society in which the identity of the individual counts for less and less, our identity is expressed increasingly in terms of relationship – with ourselves, with others, with creation, with God. However, Kenneth Gergen comments depressingly, *“As the self as a serious reality is laid to rest and the self is constructed and reconstructed in multiple contexts, one enters finally the stage of the ‘relational self’. One’s sense of individual autonomy gives way to a reality of immersed interdependence, in which it is relationship that constructs the self”*.

Crowd activities are popular because they give a sense of sharing and belonging. They give confidence, but often in a crowd we lose our identity. In the home, where we are loved, known and affirmed, we have our identity.

Striving for identity often leads to a preoccupation and even obsession with ourselves. In many respects we are becoming an introspective society. Much is spoken of self-improvement, self-help, self-knowledge, self-healing. ‘Selfism’ has become a characteristic of our age. Ironically, Walter Truett Anderson wrote, *“For the postmodernist there is no true self. Whatever you might call by that name is merely the momentary reflection and bodily states, the environment, all the inputs of culture, ideas about what a self might or should be – and the language you are using”*.

Loss of a sense of identity can be extremely painful. There is a deep desire in all of us to know our origin – the roots of our identity. Adopted people go to great lengths to identify their biological parents and are sometimes in distress until they do so. In an anonymous and heartless society, people are anxious to establish and explore their family genealogy because it gives them identity and therefore worth.

Western culture is based largely upon the biblical concept of the great value of individual men and women. If God knows when even a sparrow falls to the ground and if, as the scriptures teach us, God calls us by our name and knew us in our mother’s womb, our identity must be very important. We are not lost in the crowd. We are not absorbed into an amorphous, anonymous, impersonal universe or Gaia mass. New Ager such as Marilyn Ferguson in her ‘Aquarian Conspiracy’ insists *“the separate self is an illusion”*.

Totalitarianism invariably robs people of their identity and sense of value. In our culture a loss of identity can lead to a dysfunctional approach to sex as in pornography and anonymous sexual encounters in gay clubs. It can lead to suicidal tendencies and to people, especially the young, running away from home, family and friends. In the confusion of some cohabiting situations, there can also be a major loss of identity and of self-worth.

A society obsessed with image, packaging and appearance can easily mistake the mask which is worn for the real identity behind the mask. Masks can be changed and Douglas Kellner observes *“The overwhelming variety of ... possibilities for identity in an affluent image culture no doubt create highly unstable identities”*.

In a materialistic world, postmodernists readily say in the words parodied by Graham Clay “*I am what I consume and what I have*”.

Our identity in the workplace can be threatened by electronics. In the Industrial Society’s 2020 Vision Programme a 17 year old on probation in Norfolk said “*A lot more people won’t bother going to school because they realise no matter how many qualifications you’ve got, there’s going to be a computer that can do that job more efficiently*”.

Some Evidence

- A study issued by the Office for National Statistics reveals that nearly 20% of all people who have been adopted have taken steps to seek the identities of their natural parents and the name they were given at birth. (*Independent 29.6.01*)
- Andy Warhol, famous for his dehumanising of art declared “The reason I am painting in this way, is because I want to be a machine”.
- A young woman punk rocker said “I belong to the Blank Generation. I have no beliefs. I belong to no community, tradition or anything like that. I am lost in this vast, vast world. I belong nowhere. I have absolutely no identity”. (*Quoted in ‘Reality isn’t what it used to be’ by Walter Anderson*)
- Adults, no less than teenagers, are subject to peer pressure. Yuppies are careful to own the right name brands, to eat the trendiest cuisine, to affect the latest beliefs. Keeping up with fashion is a sign of status, a way to identify themselves with the group that sets the trends. In the postmodern world, people are increasingly defining themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, or “sexual preference”. Others define themselves by associating with a cause or “interest group” – environmentalism, physical fitness, animal rights, natural foods. In another ominous parallel to fascism, individuals find their identity by submerging themselves in a group. (*Gene Edward Veith in ‘Guide to Contemporary Culture’*)
- A surrogate mother from England has begun a legal case to win back the child she gave away ten years ago for £6,500. The Irish couple for whom she gave birth have separated and the surrogate mother says that the break-up has put the child at the centre of a ‘tug of war’ with both parents questioning the other’s ability to care for her. The baby, conceived through artificial insemination, was handed over within 3 hours of the birth. The surrogate mother refused to allow the couple to adopt the child legally, however, and has remained the named mother on the birth certificate for the past ten years. The father now lives with his girlfriend in the North of England and the surrogate mother says “This is an example of how surrogacy can go horribly wrong”. The arrangement was carried out by an agency called ‘Childlessness Overcome Through Surrogacy’. (*Times 30.7.01*)
- Gay and lesbian couples are teaming up to ‘share’ babies. This move in Britain follows a boom in American in “co-parenting”. A four-parent gay and lesbian “family” exists in Brighton. Three years ago a teacher decided she wanted children with her lesbian partner who already had two children from a previous marriage. She was inseminated by a homosexual, who believed his involvement would stop there, but he changed his mind after the baby was born. He and his homosexual partner now share two children and they have an arrangement where the children spend time at weekends and some weekdays with the homosexual couple. The children know one of the men as daddy and his homosexual friend as ‘daddy’s partner’ and their natural mother as ‘mummy’ and her lesbian partner as ‘mummy’s partner’. Dr. Gill Dunne, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Plymouth, who has studied 37 lesbian couples with dependent children and interviewed a 100 gay fathers said “The trends are definitely towards more of these kinds of situations happening in Britain. Before, gay men were just helping lesbian friends have children. Now more and more gay men want to have families”. (*Sunday Times 17.6.01*)
- The Samaritans organisation claims that ‘macho’ stereotypes are preventing suicidal young men from asking for help. Figures now reveal that 12 men aged between 15 & 24 are killing themselves every week. The suicide rate for young men rose by 60% for the first 5 years to 1991 from the same period ten years earlier. (*Guardian 18.10.99*)
- A study of 1400 boys aged 13-19 shows that a male role model is vital to a child’s self-esteem and confidence. The report ‘Leading Lads’ was compiled by the charity Young Voice in association with Oxford University’s Department of Applied Social Policy. It shows that teenage boys without a strong father figure are more likely to suffer from depression, display anti-social behaviour and do badly at school. (*Times 12.11.99*)
- Tessa Jowell, the Public Health Minister, summoned the editors of teen magazines, journalists and broadcasters to a crisis meeting to explore ways in which they can work with the Government to help reduce teenage pregnancy rates. The Health Minister blamed teenage promiscuity on the media that bombarded children with images of sex from a very young age. It was hardly surprising, she added, that teenagers should think being sexually active was the norm when sex was used to sell everything from cars to ice cream. She said “If a child is encouraged by advertising to think that having sex would make them an adult, we need to find ways to tell them that it isn’t so. These powerful communicators, the youth media, can help us do that”. Ms. Jowell said the expansion of youth media had made the life of today’s teenagers completely different from their parents’ generation”. (*Times 24.9.99*)

- A mob of up to 25 children aged between 10 & 13, mostly girls, beat unconscious a girl of 12 during a 30 minute attack. She was head-butted, punched and kicked for a mile as she struggled to reach home. She lost consciousness but her assailants waited for her to come round before resuming their attack. The girl was saved by a woman who intervened and was herself attacked as she protected the battered child. Eight girls and one boy were convicted of assault and police said it was the worst instance of bullying they had ever dealt with. Their sentences of conditional discharges were attacked by the victim's mother. The girl has been unable to return to school since the attack ten months ago. She has lost two stone in weight and does not go into the street. She becomes frightened in crowds and is scared of the dark and spends days in her bedroom. For months after the attack she would wake up screaming at night. Before the case local youngsters tried to intimidate her into dropping the charges. (*Times 8.12.99*)
- Three teenage killers were ordered to be detained indefinitely at the Old Bailey but were cheered by supporters in the public gallery. They had taken part in a gang attack upon a 17 year old boy who was bludgeoned to death with weapons including a baseball bat, cricket stump and snooker cue. Currell, one of the killers, had been an habitual cannabis user since the age of 12, the court was told. (*Times 21.10.99*)
- Kurt Cobain, the pop star of Nirvana, came from a dysfunctional family, was deeply involved in pornography, addicted to heroin and finally shot himself in 1994. His life of unhappiness and corruption has been called by the writer John Peel 'the ultimate rock and roll morality story'. With Hendrix he preached rebellion and anarchy and frequently smashed up his instruments at the end of performances. He often carried the logo on his guitar 'vandalism : beautiful as a rock in a cop's face'. Renowned for his obscene and foul language and drunkenness, his child born to his junkie wife, was addicted at birth. Born in 1967, Cobain injected himself with heroin and put a shotgun to his mouth and pulled the trigger. He formed physical relationships with men in bars and gay clubs around Europe and was involved in cross-dressing. Writing about Cobain, Bernard Levin in the *Times* said "We all need idols, and some of us find them in the most extraordinary situations. Why should not ten million youths find theirs in a foul-mouthed, brutish, violent, singer-guitarist, drugged to the eyebrows and hating himself and his way of life?" The *New York Times* ran the story of his death on its front page above items on Rwanda and the resignation of the Japanese government. His death was also reported on both the BBC and 'News at Ten'. An entire issue of 'Rolling Stone' was devoted to his life and his face appeared on the covers of 'Melody Maker' and 'New Musical Express'. Cobain had a strong personal affection for the 'Sex Pistols' group. Cobain was strongly opposed to the Christian religion. Two months after his death the bass player in his widow's group was found dead of a drug overdose in her bath. She was 24. (*Kurt Cobain by Christopher Sandford, Vista 1996*)
- Tessa Adams, senior lecturer at Goldsmiths College, has expressed disquiet at the rising number of modern artists who exploit, plunder or injure their own bodies "to seduce the contemporary art market". She warned that we have entered a realm "where the body becomes the medium, where pain becomes a product and the stability of intimacy is forfeited". In her talk entitled "Stolen Bodies" she said "We can ask what will happen next in a climate of exchange that caused the artist to offer the testimony of their flesh to seduce the contemporary art trade. What of the artist who plunders their own body? Who steals their substance for some sort of exchange? In this business the viewer, the critic and the curator claim the body in a sinister way...what happens when the distinction between the body of art and the art of the body is eroded – and where are we going? The artist Orlan "employs surgeons to act out her startling quests for a series of facial transformations. Orlan refuses a full anaesthetic and insists on speaking to us as the knife plunges into her flesh luckily the epidural works while the video records her transgressive witness. Orlan's last operation was one of adding unnecessary implants". The British sculptor Mark Quinn tapped eight pints of his blood over five months to make a frozen cast of his head. "Now preserved through refrigeration, the precious substance stands as a monument of useless incarceration". Tracey Emin, "of unmade bed fame", is certainly a seasoned player in this game. Since she has art-marketed her nakedness in a narrative of sensual obligation – where the boundaries of abuse, submission, promiscuity and love blur – her body will never be reinstated. The US cystic fibrosis sufferer, Bob Flanagan, "acted out a sequence of self-imposed pain" in his sick bed. Dr. Adams asks the question "should the public have stopped him there and then?" She said the question I am asking is whether we can bear the responsibility of these artists bringing us into their bodies". (*Guardian 27.1.01*)

5. Purpose

Why are we here?

- ' The journey of life was traditionally deemed to have a starting point and a **destiny**.
- ' For generations the goal of the journey of life was supremely important. Today the **journey** appears to matter far more than the final destination. Many have dispensed with the concept of any ultimate answerability for our lives and with the concept of judgement and, therefore, they have dispensed with the concept of guilt and sin.
- ' Today life for many is fundamentally **directionless** and **purposeless**. We do not appear to know, or even care where we have come from. We are not sure where we are. We do not appear to know or care where we are going.
- ' Our life journeys may be fast, but today they appear to be inherently **confused**, without ultimate meaning, destination or purpose.
- ' The belief that there is no ultimate destination implies that the individual moves on into **oblivion** or that, in some mysterious way, life becomes a series of so-called re-incarnations about which we know nothing. Some believe that there is ultimately an absorption of everything into an impersonal cosmos, where individual identity is lost for ever.
- ' In this climate of **purposelessness**, great emphasis is put upon momentary feelings. The instant gratification of appetites becomes all-important. Many now see no need for any direction either for the individual or for society as a whole.
- ' According to many contemporary writers, **direction** in life is not chosen by the individual but is largely dictated by others. It is believed that powerful

prevailing influences in society inevitably impose themselves upon us and our freedom is, therefore, considerably less than we suppose.

- ' We are highly vulnerable to external influences, which frequently coerce us into **conformity**. Our lifestyle may appear to be freely chosen but in many respects it is not.
- ' Products are sold on the basis of **envy** – cars, clothes, homes. Possession of these is seen as the purpose of life itself.
- ' We are bombarded by the media with **images** and messages. Changes of style and habits are frequently dictated solely by commercial influences. Entertainment has become all-important. The pursuit of pleasure has become the highest priority. Hedonism has replaced belief-systems. Instant self-gratification has replaced self-control and concern for others. Vandals say “we do it for a laugh” and believe everything is a joke.
- ' Our ‘modernistic’ inheritance was rooted in a form of perceived **self-confidence**. By contrast the ‘postmodernity’ which we experience today is inherently rooted in **uncertainty** and scepticism. This contrasts totally with the absolute certainties of traditional Christian belief.
- ' Without any purpose there can clearly be no **direction** in life.
- ' In our competitive culture we are frequently told that the purpose of life is to **succeed**. Each person is encouraged to be a winner and parents want their children to be winners. Ironically, winners are often unhappy and the many losers frustrated.
- ' The idea of any overall ‘story’, a ‘**grand narrative**’ or ‘universal truth’ embracing the whole of life, is rejected by the postmodernists. This rejection includes the Christian account of God and man.
- ' What are today proclaimed as the ‘narratives’ of life are basically **incoherent**. ‘Stories’ are accepted but are claimed to be only relatively significant and ultimately to be completely meaningless.

- ' The most clear manifestation of the rejection of God is to be found in **nihilism**. Nihilistic ideas today dominate many aspects of our culture, particularly contemporary writing, drama, art and popular music.
 - ' The **denial** of life and ultimate purpose for the individual and for society robs humanity of everything of value.
 - ' In contrast with the pervading aimlessness and futility, the Christian faith undoubtedly gives a clear **purpose** to life.
-

Purposelessness

Albert Camus wrote *“I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd”*. His belief has been taken up by many influential writers who have concluded that there is no purpose in life.

Bertrand Russell said *“I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego will survive”*. He spoke of all human genius, devotion and inspiration being *“destined to extinction”*.

Albert Einstein, however, asserted *“The man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unfortunate but almost disqualified for life”*.

The implications of meaningless life were freely admitted by Somerset Maugham. *“If one puts aside the existence of God and the possibility of survival as too doubtful to have any effect on one’s behaviour, one has to make up one’s mind – what is the meaning and use of life. If death ends all, if I have neither to hope for good to come nor to fear evil, I must ask myself what I am here for, and how in these circumstances I must content myself. Now the answer to one of these questions is plain, but so unpalatable that most men will not face it. There is no reason for life, and life has no meaning”*.

Atheists have the greatest difficulty in presenting any purpose in life. Consequently they find it almost impossible to offer any workable moral framework for existence. The depressing message of materialism is that the amassing and spending of wealth is the most important human activity. The message of hedonism is that self-gratification is the most important human activity. Both messages proclaim purposelessness.

The psychiatrist, Dr. Paul Tournier, spoke of the desire for purpose and a hunger for God being deeply rooted in human nature. He said *“Everybody today is searching for an answer to those problems to which science pays no attention, the problem of their destiny, the mystery of evil, the question of death”*.

Some Evidence

- The pop singer Marilyn Manson proclaims a message of purposelessness in many of his lyrics being beamed out to young people. Promoted by the BBC and the New Musical Express, many of his songs declare that life is pointless. His lyrics included the following phrases *“We are dead and tomorrow’s cancelled”* and *“We know that nothing is true”*. *“Let’s sing the death song kids, because we’ve got no future”*.
- Marshall Mathers, who uses the stage name EMINEM, comes from a dysfunctional family and expresses his anger and bitterness in the words of his songs. Obsessed with death, violence and hatred, he needs to be outrageous to gain publicity

and is deliberately controversial in order to shock. The following are phrases from his songs "Now bleed, bitch, bleed. Bleed. Bleed. Bleed. Bleed". "F. that, take drugs, rape sluts". "I never knew I get him to slit his wrists". "Hey, Slim, that's my girlfriend screaming in the trunk, but I didn't slit her throat, I just tied her up. See I ain't like you. As she suffocates she'll suffer and then she'll die too". "OK. I'm ready to go play. I got the machete from O.J. I am ready to make everyone's throat ache". "There's a four year old baby lyin' dead with a slit throat in your living room, ha-ha". Other rappers have 'lyrics' which are obsessed with death. These include Gangsta Rap sung by ICE T – "Die, Die, Die pig Die" and the Motley Crue sing "In goes the knife, pull out his life". (Source - Maranatha research)

- A 17 year old boy committed suicide after being depressed when a homosexual at a party said he "fancied" him. He was a fan of the pop singer EMINEM who is renowned for his profane and extremely violent lyrics. David Hurcombe of Devon ran in front of a train. A computer printout of the lyrics from one of EMINEM's songs was found by his mother after his death. It began "Cause when we die we know we're all going the same way". The boy had added the phrase "any way got to go, missed my train, see ya'll in hell". The Coroner at Teignmouth observed that he may have been influenced by both the song and the encounter with the homosexual. (*Daily Telegraph* 24.1.01)
- A 13 year old girl, Kayleigh Davies, who was infatuated with the controversial rapper EMINEM killed herself after listening to his music an inquest in mid Hampshire was told. Her father said his daughter had "A love affair with EMINEM. She was infatuated with him" and he said he had looked back through some of her CD's including material by EMINEM and said "it does talk about suicide and whether that put it in her mind, I don't know". (*Daily Mail* 8.3.01)
- A student guide giving instructions on the best way to commit suicide has been condemned by universities. The free guide published by the magazine FHM gives jokey reports of five real student suicides with headlines such as 'Third time lucky for historian' and 'Jumper gets a first'. The feature shows a man with a gun to his head and gives marks out of ten for different forms of suicide, saying "try these methods out for size". The magazine's editor, Anthony Noguera, defended the guide as a "sarcastic piece". (*Daily Telegraph* 22.10.99)
- Matt Groening, creator of the sick cartoon feature 'The Simpsons' which focuses on a dysfunctional American family, has now launched another feature – 'Futurama' - in which his projected Manhattan is a place where robots use coin-operated prostitutes and suicide booths. Promoted on the Internet and elsewhere by Fox Television, Groening has said he seriously plans to build a theme park based on it. In an article he said "We have death rays and hideous mutants and we have robots that want to kill humans." Mr Groening is very rich - the Simpsons is watched in 70 countries, usually weekly, the characters resold as toys and constantly imitated. (*Times* 23.1.99)
- 'Most times I watch TV or go to someone's house and just hang around. In 3 months time I'll probably be doing the same thing.' (*Bridging the Gap, Report by the Social Exclusion Unit – 1999*)
- According to the book UK 2002 published by the National Office for Statistics, watching television is now the nation's favourite past-time with women watching an average of 27 hours each week and men three hours less. (*Guardian* 22.11.01)
- Speaking at a conference on men's health in London, Dr. Ian Banks said "We need to look urgently at this tragic loss of life. If there was a disease which killed 1,500 young men a year society would want to do something about it". Nearly 500 young men aged 15-24 take their lives annually and the figure for the 24-34 year olds is more than a 1,000. The number of female suicides among 15-24 year olds is around a fifth of that for men and in the 25-35 age group it is a tenth. (*Daily Mail* 2.3.00)
- Almost one in five of all deaths in the 15-24 age group is by suicide. In addition to this, at least another 19,000 10-18 year olds attempt suicide every year. (*Daily Mail* 8.6.99)
- Andrew Blyth, age 12, whose parents were separated, hanged himself in his bedroom. A friend said he told her "I am suicidal, I don't think my life is worth living anymore. My pet mouse is dead and I miss my dad." (*Daily Mail* 18.6.99)
- Brian Jones of The Rolling Stones drowned in his swimming pool, apparently as a result of too much alcohol and an overdose. Jimi Hendrix choked to death on his own vomit after drinking alcohol and taking sleeping pills. Janis Joplin, "Queen of Rock", died from an overdose of heroin. Ron McKernan of The Grateful Dead died a slow death as a result of alcoholism. Marc Bolan, T-Rex lead guitarist and songwriter, who attributed his success to black magic, died in a mysterious car accident. Keith Moon of The Who committed suicide. Elvis Presley died as a result of drug abuse and over-eating. Sid Vicious of The Sex Pistols overdosed on heroin after stabbing his girl friend to death. John Bonham of Led Zeppelin choked to death on his own vomit after drinking 40 glasses of vodka. Bon Scott of AC/DC, singer of "Highway to Hell", choked to death on his own vomit after an all-night drinking bout. John Lennon of The Beatles, who sold his soul to the devil for the success of his group, was shot dead by a fan. Pete Dinklage of The Pretenders was found dead in the bathtub, with the hypodermic needle from his heroin fix still in his arm. Marvin Gaye, a celebrated rock singer, died from self-inflicted bullet wounds after a quarrel with his father. Yogi Horton, a popular drummer, leapt from the seventeenth floor of a New York hotel. Jaco Pastorius, jazz and rock bass-guitarist, was badly beaten up and died from the injuries. Roy Buchanan, one of the world's best blues and rock guitarists, hanged himself in a drunken stupor while detained in a cell to sober up. (*Rock Music, Where From, Where To? by M. Basilea Schlink*)

- Sarah Kane, the well-known 27 year old playwright famous for the violence and depravity of her plays, has committed suicide. Her play 'Blasted' at the Royal Court Theatre in London portrayed explicit sex and violence and featured a character being raped by a soldier before having his eyes gouged out and his tongue eaten. The play traced the ordeal of a man trapped and tortured by a depraved mercenary until, left alone and blinded, he can survive only by eating the baby buried under the floorboards. Another of her plays 'Cleansed' featured someone injecting heroin into an eyeball and a man being raped with a broom handle. Sadly, she called her own Christian upbringing 'spirit-filled, born-again lunacy'. (*Times* 23.2.99)
- 75 per cent of 16 and 17 year old young men who are charged and appear before the youth court are in no formal full time activity. (*'Bridging the Gap', Report by the Social Exclusion Unit – 1999*)

6. Values

What is it worth?

- ' The changes currently taking place in society are essentially a shift of **values**.
- ' Christianity teaches that every individual is made in the image of God, has unique value and is of inestimable **worth**.
- ' Contemporary society has rejected Christian values, particularly the **value of life** itself, and has failed to discover and embrace any coherent set of new values.
- ' There is a strong movement for the establishment of a **value-free** society and for a value-free education system.
- ' It is frequently argued that in a **pluralist** society no agreed set of values can or should exist. Yet without agreed values society disintegrates into chaos and anarchy. There are signs of this happening already.
- ' The industrial society, with its mass-production and standardisation, led to increased **disposability** in terms of material products, but also in terms of human relationships. Growth, profit and efficiency were deemed to be more important than people, who frequently became the casualties of technological change.
- ' With the emergence of the 'throw-away society', products and even human relationships become **disposable** and short-lived and thus diminished in value.
- ' In 'modern' society individual people depreciated in value. In a post-modern society there is an immediate danger that individual people have no inherent **value**. They can readily be discarded at will.

- ' A materialistic society inevitably measures worth in terms of **money** and possessions.
 - ' The worth of people, ideas and projects, is largely decided by the **media** and commerce. The emphasis is primarily upon money, rather than the dignity and worth of individual men and women. Loving, caring relationships are sacrificed to the presentation of dysfunctional and often violent relationships. Obscenity is presented rather than modesty, vulgarity rather than beauty.
 - ' Many, particularly secular humanists, now proclaim the supremacy and the autonomy of the **individual** over and above God.
 - ' Those who discard God inevitably risk ultimately discarding the concept of **absolute truth**.
 - ' The rejection of any form of absolute truth leads to the concept of **situational ethics**. What is right or wrong is deemed to depend entirely on the particular situation. Inherent moral values are dispensed with.
 - ' The blurring of the distinction between right and wrong has led to the belief that nothing is inherently right or wrong. No longer are there any basically 'immoral' or 'sinful' acts. There is merely '**inappropriate**' behaviour. Significantly, the so-called postmodernists fail to define what is 'appropriate' behaviour.
 - ' Those who dispense with the mystery of God and with the concepts of a fallen world, **sin** and **judgement**, find it extremely difficult to establish an alternative and workable ethical framework for living. Many even deny the need for one. They move relentlessly towards a valueless basis of living.
 - ' Valueless living leads to a **dysfunctional** society.
 - ' **Western civilisation** is inextricably bound to Christian values.
-

A shift of values

Significant changes in values were identified in the Cabinet Office document "The Future and How to Think About it". It said, *"UK Society and social values have changed significantly in recent decades. Since World War II political stability, economic prosperity, mass consumerism, increased education and the Welfare State have led to a shift to so-called postmodern values. Modern values are the product of industrialisation. They include wealth accumulation as the primary goal, respect for legal/rational authority, emphasis on the family and social obligations, allegiance to large institutions such as governments, big companies, trade unions and churches. Postmodern values have gained ground since 1945. They include emphasis on quality of life, not just wealth, belief in individual self-expression and creativity and belief in individual value-systems rather than ideologies."* (2000)

Issues of morality have been implicitly rejected by political leaders, who no longer regard private or public morality as an issue in the life of the nation. They devalue the concept of morality as being merely the whim of the individual. We have travelled far since William Ewart Gladstone proclaimed *"What is morally wrong can never be politically right"*.

An agreed morality in the life of the nation has been largely displaced by the concept of testing out what the public is ready to tolerate at any given time. Thus the media carry out public opinion polls in an endeavour to defend lower standards of broadcasting and publication. The question of what is right and wrong is resolved either by the politicians or the crowd. It is unsurprising when a group of teenagers were recently asked what is right or wrong, they responded that what was legal was right and what was illegal was wrong. If the crowd is the ultimate arbiter then clearly, at the height of his popularity, Hitler was right.

Comparatively new attitudes to children, marriage, sexual behaviour, violence, drugs and money reflect the radical changes in values which are taking place.

Some Evidence

- Two 14 year old boys boasted to their classmates the day after they lured a drunken man into a park and bludgeoned him to death. The boys put wood over the head of their victim and started to stamp on him. They jammed a piece of wood down his throat before they jumped on him. They rammed another piece of wood into his eye before running off. One of the boys was unable to run away because he was laughing so much. They appeared at Luton Crown Court. The boys were part of a gang which mugged and terrorised children. They received life sentences and Detective Inspector Mulvaney of Bedfordshire police said "It is disturbing to think that two 14 year olds could use this level of violence just to get a buzz". One of them said "We had a mad day – we murdered someone". (*Times* 26.10.99 & 5.11.99)
- Two teenagers were convicted at the Old Bailey of battering a father to death as he tried to protect his mentally disabled son. Ray Steadman, aged 18 and his accomplice aged 17, turned on Arthur Beardsdell after taunting his 29 year old son, Gary, who has a mental age of 10. Gary could only watch helplessly as his father was kicked until he was unconscious. He died in hospital. The victim had been kicked in the head and had been bullied by his assailants on previous occasions. The day after the assault, Steadman bragged to his friends about killing the man, in what the prosecuting counsel referred to as a "a vicious and unprovoked attack". (*Daily Mail* 19.5.01)
- A riot took place at Britain's first jail for children aged 12-14. Inmates at the Medway Secure Training Centre in Rochester, Kent, armed with metal poles and socks filled with snooker balls, ransacked the centre. Staff at the Unit, run by Rebound, a subsidiary of Group 4, lost control and were forced to seek safety in a secure area of the prison, which holds inmates at a cost of £2,400 each per week. Police were called to restore order. A 13 year old boy told officers that he had taken part in the riot because "it looked like fun". (*Times* 7.12.98)
- 2,500 youths aged 15-17 who are currently in custody have cost the taxpayer £200m in policing, insurance, detention and social services bills – an average of £75,000 each, according to the report 'Wasted Lives'. (*Times* 14.12.98)
- The Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool, treated 200 intoxicated youngsters over a one year period ending in September 1997. This compared with an average of 20 per year in the 1980's. Dr. Joan Robson, Consultant in Paediatric Accident and Emergency medicine at the hospital, said children overdose largely on strong cider, powerful lagers and vodka. She placed some blame on TV soaps - "children see them as real life and copy them" she said. (*Daily Mail* 23.10.97)

- In the Big Brother House in aid of Comic Relief transmitted on prime-time viewing when children were watching, Vanessa Feltz told Big Brother to “F... off” and scrawled endless violent words on a blackboard. Claire Sweeney repeatedly joked about oral sex and there was a group discussion on masturbation. Jack Dee broke wind. Lynda Lee-Potter said of Big Brother “Intelligent people purporting to raise money for charity have been rude, unpleasant and obscene. The implicit message is that lewdness is amusing, blasphemy is entertainment and so control is a joke. It is clear that neither performers nor television bosses feel any respect for their audiences. Over the years we have been coarsened by what has become the norm, as standards of conversation and behaviour fall to new depths of nastiness. If the trend is not reversed, how much deeper will we sink?” (*Daily Mail* 14.3.01)
- Police in Sao Paulo, Brazil, have stated that a 9 year old boy's knife attack on a girl was inspired by the slasher doll Chuckie of the Child Play 2 horror film. The attack happened three days after the boy had watched the film. His 7 year old victim received 25 knife wounds in the back, chest and neck, but survived. (*Gulf Today* 11.2.00)
- The Government has raised the age at which young people may buy fireworks from 16 to 18, simultaneously with their commitment to reduce the age at which teenage boys can engage in homosexual acts from 18 to 16. (*Daily Telegraph* 16.10.97)
- Department of Health figures have revealed that 82 children died from abuse between April 1997 and March 1998. (*Mail on Sunday* 22.11.98)
- 177,332 abortions were carried out in England and Wales in 1998 according to the Office of National Statistics – a 4% increase on the previous 12 months. The statisticians say that the figures demonstrate that large numbers of women are now using abortion as a form of contraception. (*Daily Mail* 28.5.99)
- The number of women having abortions has risen from 154,300 in 1995 to 175,139 in 2000. Ann Furedi of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service said “Increasing numbers of women in their 20's have decided they either don't want children at all or they want them later in life.” Also lots of women are using abortion as a back-up to contraception. According to a national survey by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists a third of women now have an abortion by the age of 45. (*Daily Mail* 5.1.01)
- A report published in the journal “Sexually Transmitted Infection” has reported that a girl of 16 who turned up at a sexual health clinic had been pregnant ten times, the first when she was just 12. Researchers learned of her plight while studying worrying levels of sexually transmitted diseases amongst under-age girls. They discovered that she kept two babies, had three abortions and five miscarriages. At the clinic which they visited, of 144 under-age girls, one in five had chlamydia, almost one in ten had gonorrhoea and some had both diseases at the same time. The report also found that the under-age girls attending the clinic were three times as likely as older women to have had sexual infection. Researchers were drawn from the Camden Primary Care Trust. The study was carried out at a specialist clinic serving patients in Brixton and Peckham. (*Daily Mail* 3.10.02)
- A new web-site has been established for sperm donors with links with lesbian couples wishing to have children, eliminating the difficulties of using an identified donor or dealing with fertility clinics. The founder of the service, John Gonzalez, says “I have believed for a long time that same sex couples have a fundamental right to have children”. Mr. Gonzalez said the company allowed women to state their preferred race, eye colour, height and weight of donors over the internet, but the donor and the recipient couples would never meet. The web site does not store sperm but provides fresh samples which takes it outside the remit of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. The HFEA said that British law allows any woman to have artificial insemination as long as certain conditions pertaining to the child's welfare were fulfilled. There are specific provisions for lesbians. A spokesman said “The HFEA is concerned about the possibility of genetic or infectious diseases being transmitted through gamete donation. We would strongly recommend that women do not use sperm from donors who have not been screened to standards recommended in current professional guidelines. In order for such screening to take place donor sperm must be quarantined in a licensed storage facility prior to treatment in a licensed centre. Donors and recipients should also be aware that where unlicensed insemination takes place, there is no legal guarantee that donors may not be regarded as the legal parents of any children that may be born as a result”. (*Daily Telegraph* 25.6.02)
- More than 80 British women have given birth to ‘designer babies’ after having their eggs screened to weed out genetic faults. Developed at Hammersmith Hospital, a pioneering technique was used which is designed to guarantee healthy births. Doctors were granted a licence by the Fertility Watchdog – the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. According to the Times four other centres have also been granted licences. The HFEA said “It is a very sensitive ethical area and we do need to have clear guidelines on what can be done”. Developed by Lord Winston the technique involves eggs being taken from the mother and artificially fertilised. When the eggs develop into embryos they are examined and only those which are perfect are implanted in the womb. This week the Care Clinic in Nottingham was authorised to grow embryos. More are said to be seeking permission. (*Daily Mail* 17.1.98)
- The Royal Pharmaceutical Society at its Annual Meeting have changed a “conscience clause” in their code of ethics which for many years protected pharmacists who take a religious and moral position against products such as the morning after pill and similar drugs. The original protection stated that no patient shall be deprived of pharmaceutical services because of the personal convictions of a pharmacist. But a pharmacist “may object on grounds of conscience to the dispensing of certain

medicinal products for the control of fertility, conception or termination of pregnancy". The revised clause reads "pharmacists assuming responsibility for any pharmacy function....must ensure that before accepting employment pharmacists must disclose any factors which may affect their ability to provide services". Caroline Hubert, a pharmacist in Brighton, says "This would effectively render pharmacists who have a conscientious objection unemployable. It singles out certain members of the profession at the selection stage on the grounds of their religious belief". The revised clause omits the words "the control of fertility, conception or termination of pregnancy" as a grounds on which an objection to supply may be made. (*Daily Telegraph* 21.5.01)

- A new BBC drama series features police officers snorting cocaine, faking evidence, beating suspects and having sex at work. A cocaine-taking WPC is shown being sick after discovering her first dead body and delivering a baby on the floor of a cell surrounded by drunken football hooligans. The actress playing the part, Katie Cavanagh, said of the character "It's just what a lot of people do at that age It's just that everybody does it". Mark Thompson, the Controller of BBC 2, says of the series "This one really does break new ground". "This show is explosively new". (*Times* 29.8.98)
- The BBC 'Clothes Show' magazine published by BBC World (Enterprises) Wide, displayed lewd advertisements, e.g. "Sex line – anal sex and masturbation". Numerous people complained, particularly as the magazine was aimed at teenagers. After complaints the BBC apologised, withdrew the advertisements and said they would not appear again. (*Encompass* 27.2.96)
- Channel 5 has been criticised by the industry watchdogs for its use of 'tacky, erotic' drama and criticised for 'eroding standards' and creating a change in the use of sex on British television. Channel 5 has defied criticisms of both the Independent Television Commission and the Broadcasting Standards Commission by launching an 'unashamed autumn season' which will not only maintain its quota of 'adult' movies but serve up a new raft of sex programmes. These include 'Sexual Intercourse : A 'frank' weekly late night chat show and a so-called documentary 'Female Orgasm'. Defending her decision to commission the shows the Director of Programmes, Dawn Airey says "If we are being honest most people do spend a lot of time obsessing and talking about relationships and sexuality and, as the new kid on the block, we are not ashamed of talking and screening programmes about it. (*Times* 19.8.99)
- The animated television programme 'South Park' was first shown in July 1998 and has become cult viewing for both adults and children. The feature-length movie contained 399 swear words, 128 crude gestures and 221 violent scenes. Because of its association with the vulgar cartoon an infant school in Reigate has changed its name from South Park to The Orchards. (*Independent* 13.8.99)
- The concept of family values is not popular with some publishers trying to sell advertising in magazines. Angela Humphries of the Advertising Consultancy EGG Research said, "there is something about the word family that sounds stuffy". (*Rochdale Express* 21.8.98)
- The second national survey of sexual attitudes and lifestyles has concluded that a change in attitudes towards sex over the past ten years has led to a rise in promiscuity, an increase in the use of prostitutes and a surge in sexually transmitted diseases among young people. The research was led by Professor Anne Johnson, a Professor of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at University College London, and concluded that 1 in 12 men and 1 in 28 women said they had slept with more than 10 different people in the past 5 years. For many, staying faithful is not important and 1 in 7 men and 1 in 11 women said they had had overlapping sexual relationships in the previous year. (*Daily Telegraph* 30.11.01)
- Until last September it was impossible to buy hardcore pornography legally in the UK. Since then the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) has passed about 250 hardcore titles uncut for sale in licensed sex shops. This year it is expected to pass more than 330 titles that could generate in excess of £50m worth of business. The list of activities now permitted to be viewed in R18 films includes "erection, masturbation, oral-genital contact, licking and sucking, penetration by finger, penis, tongue, vibrator or dildo, group activity, ejaculation and semen". The pornographer Greg Hurlstone who runs a company called 'Trime Time', has said "To be honest we were absolutely stunned with the guidelines ... our turnover has doubled since last September – we just didn't expect the BBFC to be quite so pragmatic about it". Anna Kieran, who runs Hot Rod Productions, has said "the new guidelines have given us the chance to build a proper industry. Hurlstone says "There are too few licensed sex shops" and his views that the UK could easily sustain 500 licensed sex shops is shared by the BBFC President, Andreas Whittam-Smith. He says that the relaxation in R18 material is a "good start". The US pornography industry is worth an estimated \$10b each year. Cable and satellite stations earn \$310m a year from broadcasting pornography. There were 11,000 pornographic films made in Los Angeles last year compared to 400 Hollywood releases and Americans now rent 700 million hardcore videos a year. (*Observer* 3.6.01)
- Milton Schulman has stated that he was "astonished, shocked and disgusted by the audacity of Channel 4" in transmitting the film 'Kissed'. The film portrays the attractions of Necrophilia. The film showed a girl in a funeral parlour taking her clothes off and indulging in an explicit act of intercourse with a corpse. The final scene of the film is of the woman in a passionate embrace with the dead body of her boyfriend. Mr. Schulman said "Necrophilia has, in civilised societies, always been condemned as an immoral and criminal act". He questions "Does it mean that television is free to transmit any pornographic or violent material, no matter how deeply it offends the moral conscience of our society?" (*Daily Telegraph* 5.6.01)
- A former advertising film producer, (known for his video for the REM song 'Losing my Religion') Tarsem Singh, has produced his first film entitled "Call". It was described in the Independent as "a veritable orgy of grotesque imagery, stomach-churning

violence, scenes of torture for torture's sake, rape, child abuse and serial murder". In one sequence a horse is shown being sliced and diced into transverse sections (like Damien Hirst's work). In another guts are ripped out with a pair of scissors and twisted on a barbecue spit. The Los Angeles Times calls it a "nauseating" film. The hero's pastime is to kidnap women and imprison them, videoing their slow deaths by drowning. He then masturbates himself in a sadomasochistic scene, suspended from the ceiling by chains. Note – Mr. Gore, the Democratic candidate for the US Presidency, raised a record breaking \$5m in direct campaign contributes from Hollywood last week. (*Independent* 23.8.00)

- A 14 year old British schoolgirl has signed a recording contract worth more than £1m. Lisa Naraine has signed the deal with Palm Pictures record company. She will fly to Miami to film a video and this will be followed by a promotional tour of Britain. Her mother was initially opposed to her daughter's plans but she said "It was just too good a chance to turn down". (*Sunday Telegraph* 11.3.01)
- Illegal drug users spend four times more on their habit each year than the entire country spends across the counter on legitimate medicines. Estimates have been published by the Home Office based on results from the British Crime Survey and suggest that the size of the drug market could be about £6.6 billion. Last year £1.7 billion was spent on cold and cough remedies, analgesics and other medicines. The sum exceeds the total national spending on footwear (£.54 billion), out of home entertainment (£4.25 billion), eating in restaurants (£5.7 billion), soft drinks (£5.8 billion) and biscuits & cakes (£2.68 billion). Heroin has the highest number of regular users (270,000). Crack cocaine has 177,908 users; powder cocaine has 118,000 users and amphetamines 126,000 users. The street value of heroin drug transactions is £2.3 billion, followed by crack cocaine (£1.8 billion) and cannabis (£1.57 billion). Even in prison drugs valued at more £10 million are consumed every year – smuggled into jail by friends and relatives. In 2000 one quarter of people aged 16-29 admitted using an illegal drug during the year. The Home Office estimates it costs regular heroin and cocaine users up to £400 per week to feed their habits. Users of crack and cocaine among those arrested, each stole property worth £15,000 a year. (*Daily Telegraph* 22.9.01)
- Antoinette Hardy presented a report to the Psychology Post Graduate Affairs Group in Derby in which she said that the rate of female imprisonment for violent attacks had increased 43.7% between 1991 and 1996 – far outstripping the rise in male imprisonment. There are now nearly 3,300 women behind bars and prisons say that they will be short of 400 places by the end of this year. Mrs. Hardy said that projections suggest that by 2008 adolescent females will outnumber males for violence. The report claims that emotional response by young girls after fights are changing, with only a quarter of the girl assailants feeling remorse. (*Guardian* 22.7.98)
- A survey by the Association of British Insurers has estimated that total crime in London costs £4.8 billion a year. (*Evening Standard* 12.1.99)
- An outbreak of syphilis in the gay population of Manchester has seen the number of cases increase seven-fold between 1998 and 2000. Public Health Professor, Mark Bellis, said that in addition to this, cases of chlamydia are increasing dramatically and as many as one in ten women may have the disease. 70% of women and 50% of men do not know they have the disease. It can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility in women. (*Manchester Metro News* 11.1.02)
- A profit making organisation called 'the Institute for Plastination' in Heidelberg is publicly exhibiting corpses from which the water and fats have been sucked out and replaced with curable polymer. Doctor von Hagens has made his corpses touchable. The macabre exhibition has been criticised by doctors, and churches have expressed outrage. (*Times* 15.11.97)
Note : British artist Damien Hirst who used body parts in his work has received a prison sentence for stealing the parts of cadavers.
- A report for the Home Office by Geoffrey Pearson, Professor of Criminology at Goldsmith College, London, found that in the space of six weeks an individual could advance from club dealing to become a middle-man making up to £10,000 a week through his own network of drug retailers. The report divides the supply chain into a hierarchy of importers, wholesalers, middle market brokers and retail dealers of cannabis. (*Times* 31.12.01)
- Marcus Plantin, the Head of Entertainment Production for Granada, says "With the world as it is now, more than anything else people want to be entertained" Mr. Plantin was urging the reintroduction of the celebrity Michael Barrymore in spite of revelations about a recent death at his home and his lifestyle involving drugs and drink. (*Daily Mail* 2.11.01)
- According to research carried out by the Office for National Statistics, the number of one-parent families has almost doubled in 15 years to 1.75 million. One in nine single-parent families involves a woman who has never married. Only a minority of these will marry the father of their child or any other man, although they may have more children with other men. (*Daily Telegraph* 2.7.9.02)

7. Reality

What is real and what is imaginary?

- ' The concept of **reality** is widely rejected. It is claimed that no thing, no one, is real. Life and human history is dismissed as a story, a fiction, a 'narrative' in the imagination of the observer or participant.
- ' Society is preoccupied with external image and **appearance** rather than with underlying reality. Packaging is all-important. Substance matters less.
- ' People find it increasingly difficult to accommodate the realities of human **suffering** and **death**. This manifests itself in obsession and withdrawal.
- ' There is a widespread sense of people being **overwhelmed** by forces and influences far beyond the power of the individual to negotiate. Ironically in the midst of unprecedented choice, the individual feels that personal direction is not chosen, but dictated by others or by 'chance'.
- ' Many, lacking peace in their personal lives and feeling that all attempts to change the world have failed, have been stripped of coping mechanisms to deal with pain and suffering. Therefore, they escape to an **unreality** which is more tolerable than **reality**.
- ' **Unreality** is manifest in esoteric and occult practices and also a broad range of created images, including advertising language, contemporary art, drama, sport, literature and popular music lyrics. These all powerfully influence attitudes of day-to-day living.
- ' The inability to change reality has led to attempts to change the **experience** of reality and to create so-called virtual reality.
- ' In many areas of contemporary life the distinction between reality and unreality has become **blurred**. In the club scene the carefully controlled lights and beat achieve this. Similarly, in the media there is now a

deliberate mixing of truth and fiction. This is illustrated in 'docu-drama' television programmes, which are part documentary and part drama, resulting in confusion. Children also are often **confused** and unable to recognise the difference between the real and the unreal, particularly on the screen.

- ' Today the **medium** is all-important, powerful and sophisticated. The **message** may appear insubstantial and trivial but is often insidious and corrupting.
- ' People increasingly engage in **escapist** activities. These include the use of so-called 'recreational' drugs, manufactured and distributed by huge criminal coalitions on a global scale. Powerful profit-making corporations also actively encourage people to consume vast quantities of tobacco, alcohol and medical drugs, often addictively, regardless of the damage caused to individuals or society.
- ' The huge growth in the popularity of computer games, science fiction, adult comics and 'virtual reality' are, to some extent, an indication of a deep desire to escape from real life.
- ' Information overload, multiplicity of choice, complexity of life, and loss of meaningful work trigger an opt-out approach to adult **responsibility**.
- ' The promotion of **recreation, sport** and **entertainment** fills the void in a society which has discarded both over-arching ideals and religion. Sport is brazenly presented as a new 'religion'.
- ' Powerful commercial interests actively encourage a **shift of attention** away from day to day problems of living.
- ' Intimate human relationships are used as an avenue of **escape**. Sex, instead of being an expression of deep personal love in a permanent relationship, linked directly to the responsibilities of reproduction and ultimate parenthood, is trivialised. It is presented as an ephemeral recreation or even entertainment with no real spiritual significance and no long-term consequences.

- ' With highly selective and often very biased television coverage of world affairs, many find it extremely difficult to come to terms with the reality of what is happening globally. There is also a real danger of a **retreat** from a worrying and perhaps alarming reality with which people cannot cope.
- ' Some who would claim to be postmodernists believe there is no such thing as **meaning** and that all reality is an illusion.
- ' If nothing is real, then life itself is an illusion, without **purpose** or value.

Unreality – a feature of our times

Physicist, Stephen Hawking, says "*Questions about reality don't have any meaning*".

Jean Baudrillard, one of the leading protagonists in the debate about postmodernism, claimed that the distinction between simulation and reality has collapsed. He said "*Everything is destined to reappear as simulation*".

The promotion of drugs and the visual images on television and video lead people into unreality from reality, or into a state of confusion between unreality and reality.

Drugs, together with occult practices offer people the opportunity of altered states of consciousness. The consequences are often disastrous.

Following the classic US radio broadcast 'The War of the Worlds' featuring Orson Wells the cause of the ensuing national panic was rooted in the inability to immediately and clearly distinguish the real from the virtual.

The lyrics of the Beatle's song 'Strawberry Fields' proclaimed "*Let me take you down 'cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields, nothing is real....*".

Jean Baudrillard argues that in American culture, reality has disappeared behind a surface of simulation and presentation. He warns of the great attraction to dreams and fantasy in the psychedelic generation and points to the inevitable consequence of chaos and the movement away from reality. Speaking of the division between the imaginary and the real, he presents an image of a 'hyperreal future'. He says, "*Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the 'hyperreal'*".

Speaking of destructive entertainment based upon unreality, David Alton warns of the dangers of widespread destructive entertainment based upon unreality. He says, "*In our homes virtual reality allows us to kill, maim, brutalise or abuse one another through video games or computer software without any 'real' consequences. Near-real worlds are more comfortable than the hard realities of life; true values invariably become casualties - in both worlds*". (Citizen Virtues 1999).

Totalitarian dictators and their thought-police are, of course, highly accomplished in the art of presenting unreality as reality, the lie as the truth.

Although claimed to be informative, much television contributes to confusion, particularly between reality and unreality. Neil Posterman in 'Amusing Ourselves to Death' says "*The average length of a shot on network television is only 3.5 seconds, so that the eye never rests,*

always has something new to see. Moreover, television...requires minimal skills to comprehend it and is largely aimed at emotional gratification". He also says "Entertainment is the supra-ideology of all discourse on television. No matter what is depicted or from what point of view, the overarching presumption is that it is there for our amusement and pleasure". He said an audience viewing a rape trial "could barely tell the difference between the trial and their favourite mid-day soap opera". He also says that "trials of varying degrees of seriousness, including murder, are regularly televised and are considered to be more entertaining than most fictional court room dramas". Commenting on the juxtaposition of grave international news with today's television adverts he says "One can hardly over-estimate the damage that such juxtapositions do to our sense of the world as a serious place". "20 years ago the question 'Does television shape culture or merely reflect it?' held considerable interest for many scholars and social critics. The question has largely disappeared as television has gradually become our culture". He also warns "There is no more disturbing consequence of the electronic and graphic revolution than this: that the world as given to us through television seems natural, not bizarre. For the loss of the sense of the strange is a sign of adjustment and the extent to which we have adjusted is a measure of the extent to which we have been changed". Of television he says "We have so thoroughly accepted its definitions of truth, knowledge and reality that irrelevance seems to us to be filled with import, and incoherence seems eminently sane".

"God is the only reality and we are only real insofar as we are in His order and He in us". St. Augustine.

"What a man is before God, that he is and nothing more". St. Francis

Some Evidence

- BBC1 are introducing the world's first virtual presenter. She is being presented in Tomorrow's World introducing features and chatting with other presenters. Created by computer she is a three dimensional representation of a real person created by the Glasgow company Digital Animations Group. Every aspect of her virtual background has been thought through and vetted and she is equipped with an artificial intelligence "chat bot" and she can hold conversations in 20 languages, take part in studio discussions and answer questions on science. (*Daily Telegraph 20.3.02*)
- A six year old girl accidentally shot her grandfather dead with his revolver as she copied a scene from a film starring Sylvester Stallone. The girl had been watching the action comedy video 'Stop, or my mum will shoot'. (*Daily Telegraph 18.5.95*)
- A London School of Economics report has found that British children are much more likely than their European counterparts to be watching television or playing computer games and spend an average of 5 hours a day on media use. Watching television was the most popular leisure activity with an average two and a half-hours a day spent in front of the screen. Just over two-thirds of young people now have televisions in their room. Among children aged 6 & 7, half have televisions. About half of young people have personal computers at home and a third have television-linked games machines in their bedrooms. The study was funded by the Advertising Association, the BBC, BT, the Broadcasting Standards Commission, ITV and several European bodies. (*Times 19.3.99*)
- Channel 4 have been fined £150,000 by the Independent Television Commission for broadcasting a 'documentary' about rent boys in which key scenes were faked. This follows the £2 million fine imposed by the ITC on Carlton Communication over 'The Connection' a documentary about the Colombian drug cartels that contained faked scenes. The BBC Governors have issued a statement expressing serious concern about the BBC programme 'The Vanessa Show' in which fake guests were used. The Governors said, "The Board will not tolerate fakes masquerading as facts". (*Times 26.2.99*)
- A survey by the Independent Television Commission has revealed that 32% of under 16's now have TV sets in their rooms. The number of under 4's with a TV in their room increased from 21% in 1999 to 36% last year. The study "Television : The Public's View" showed that parents who spent more time in front of the television are more likely to allow children to have their own set. The Pre-School Learning Alliance has warned parents to keep a close eye on the content of their children's viewing and the amount of time spent watching TV. The ITC survey showed many parents apparently do not stop their children watching unsuitable programmes. Only 47% said they prevent youngsters watching programmes they think are inappropriate. Researchers from the London School of Economics have said that youngsters in the United Kingdom now watch five hours of television each day, whereas the average in the rest of Europe is just two hours. The report stated "The UK tends to stand apart as a country where screen entertainment, above all television viewing, is particularly important for children". (*Daily Mail 24.7.01*)

- Channel Four is to go ahead with the screening of a controversial drama about a fictional terrorist anthrax attack on Glasgow, despite government criticism of the media for whipping up public anxiety about biological and chemical weapons. The 75 minute drama tells the story of a right-wing extremist releasing anthrax on a community of asylum seekers living in a run-down housing estate in Glasgow. Channel Four said the film 'Gas Attack' was "not alarmist" and had been "very carefully researched for accuracy". (*Daily Telegraph 1.10.01*)
- According to a study edited by Sonia Livingstone and Moira Bovill of the London School of Economics and produced in association with the Broadcasting Standards Commission children in Britain are becoming heavily addicted to television. They spend more time watching the screen and less playing out doors than youngsters elsewhere in Europe. While continental children watch around two hours television a day, their counterparts in the UK sit through as many as five hours. The study found British youngsters were the most likely to prefer watching television to reading. The report entitled 'Children and their Changing Media Environment' said the amount of time British youngsters spent in front of the television was due to a lack of things for young people to do in the area where they lived and parental fears for children's safety outside the home. In previous research Professor Livingstone had said that children "were increasingly living artificially through the imaginary lives and images of the television screen". Currently around 65% of British children have television sets in their bedrooms – higher than the figure for other European countries. (*Daily Mail 26.6.01*)
- In a programme "Chemical Britannia" BBC television claimed that taking cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and even heroin is not dangerous, but extremely enjoyable. The presenter, Matt Southwell, is a former NHS employee who says he has taken ecstasy for 12 years and still does so regularly. He enjoys drugs and argues that they should be legalised. He said "Most people take drugs because they want to – to relax and feel good, much in the same way they might have a drink at the weekend". One user on the programme explains "Heroin is my drug of choice over alcohol or cocaine. I take it a weekends in small doses and do the gardening". A regular ecstasy user says "Ecstasy is one of the nicest things I have ever tried. I know it is positive for us". Another said "You can form greater friendships with someone you have never met before. I am in control of what I have, I don't take it habitually every weekend". John Griffiths, Chief Executive of the group Drug Abuse Resistance Education, which works in 500 schools said "It's very disturbing that any programme is produced in such a way that it makes people think there are benefits to taking drugs that may harm them in the long run. It makes our work harder in making young people realise that most people don't get involved in drugs". The programme presents smoking a cannabis joint as relaxing as drinking a glass of wine, while many people find taking ecstasy the most pleasurable experience of their lives. Injecting a modest dose of heroin can make mundane, but essential household chores enjoyable according to the drug users featured in the programme. (*Observer 25.3.01*)
- Dr. Hugh Williams led a research team from the accident and emergency department of St. Thomas' Hospital in London, the report of which was published in the Journal of Accident and Emergency Medicine. Dr. Williams said "weekend drug abuse is a growing problem for Accident & Emergency Departments, and the most worrying finding we made is that many of these people are now mixing Ecstasy with other drugs. Mixing drugs is a bit like driving a car with bad brakes and bald tyres. You may crash with good brakes or bald tyres but you are more likely to have an accident if your car has both". (*Daily Mail 12.9.98*)
- A recent survey by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs found that 35% of British teenagers regularly took cannabis compared with 25.7% in France and 21% in Germany. The recreational drug Ecstasy has been tried by 9% of young Britons but by only 2.8% of Germans 3.1% of French and 1% of Swedes. (*Times 2.1.99*)
- Dr. Karen Bryan, a speech therapist, analysed the language and communications skills of prisoners at Swinfen Hall Young Offenders Institution in Staffordshire. The research suggests that half of all young prisoners held in England and Wales may be suffering from substance induced memory loss and Dr. Bryan's line of research revealed that 73% of inmates were grammatically incompetent and more than a fifth had the comprehension skills of 11 year olds. About 50% suffered from memory loss. Among those analysed by Dr. Bryan was a 20 year old who was unable to comprehend prison rules because of a "poor memory due to sustained amphetamine usage prior to entering prison". Another 20 year old cannabis-user prisoner said "he became muddled" if people "talked fast" to him. (*Independent 3.04.01*)
- The reputation of cannabis as a relatively harmless 'soft' drug has been challenged by psychiatrists who say it can drive people temporarily insane and harm the heart, lungs and immune system. Dr. Andrew Johns of the Institute of Psychiatry in London said regular cannabis use led to acute psychological problems in a high proportion of people. His review in the British Journal of Psychiatry of Research includes one study that found that 15% of cannabis users identified psychotic symptoms, including hearing voices or irrational feelings of persecution. (*Daily Telegraph 2.2.01*)
- A computer game in which players assume the role of a suicide bomber and try to kill as many men, women and children as possible has been launched. In 'Kaboom!' players move their suicide bomber along a busy street to get as close as possible to a maximum number of innocent victims. At the opportune moment they click on their mouse and the terrorist opens his coat to reveal grenades strapped to his body, then explodes in a shower of bloody limbs. Scoring is broken down into tallies of dead or injured men, women and children. It has been copied to thousands of computers on the Internet and players are already posting their scores on the Internet with comments such as "Seven dead with one blast was my best". Another suggestion was "I wish you could kill more people". The game first appeared on the Internet sandwiched between "Murder Project" and "Lesbian Wrestling 2" on Newgrounds.com. It has registered more than 750,000 'views'. Tom Fulp, the creator of the Newgrounds site and of games such as 'Assassin' and 'Club a Seal' has refused to remove 'Kaboom!'. He said "Newgrounds will continue to protect the freedom to make extreme games". (*Sunday Telegraph 26.5.02*)

8. Rights and Duties

Freedom or responsibility or both?

- ' Over centuries the concept of the dignity of individual human beings, rooted in Christian teaching, directly led to the emergence of **democratic** institutions and the establishment in law of basic **human rights**.
 - ' The recognition of many fundamental injustices has led to a justifiable **acceleration** of initiatives to establish human rights more firmly in the legal system, and on an international scale.
 - ' Few deny that rights are important. These are, however, often demanded without any acceptance of the consequential **responsibilities** and **duties**.
 - ' Individualism often conflicts with our responsibilities to **others**. Those who do not recognise that they have any responsibilities to others invariably act irresponsibly.
 - ' Our inherited tradition is one of maintaining a delicate **balance** between rights and responsibilities within an agreed common, moral framework. This framework is now no longer universally accepted.
 - ' If rights and responsibilities are not kept in balance, the basic structure of community and relationships is put at **risk**. By claiming our own rights we may deny the rights of others.
 - ' **Wrong relationships** damage ourselves, other people, society and the environment and, as such, are believed to be an offence to God.
 - ' The concept of righteousness i.e. **right relationships** has underscored Christian social philosophy. These right relationships are with God, with ourselves, with others and with creation. Each of these relationships involves great privileges and enormous responsibilities.
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Our obligations

It is easier to demand rights than to accept responsibilities. Rampant individualism can displace civic pride and easily leads to the disintegration of community. Following American practice we are now seeing the emergence of 'litigation' culture in Britain, where people who consider themselves aggrieved have sought massive payments in damages. This has led to many public and private bodies radically changing their approach to their services and activities. It has also led to large numbers of people endeavouring to make profit out of comparatively trivial situations.

If we do not accept responsibility for one another's welfare we soon see the disintegration of society. *"He who loves community destroys community; he who loves the brethren builds community"* Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Unrestrained selfishness and greed soon creates deep and damaging divisions in society. A refusal to accept the life-long responsibility of marriage and children brings disaster. Sharing of responsibilities brings enormous benefits. Where people are denied or deprived of responsibility, they act irresponsibly.

John Stott writes "Here then is a Christian perspective on human rights. First, we affirm human dignity. Because human beings are created in God's image to know him, serve one another and be stewards of the earth, therefore they must be respected. Secondly, we affirm human equality. Because human beings have all been made in the same image by the same Creator, therefore we must not be obsequious to some and scornful to others, but behave without partiality to all. Thirdly, we affirm human responsibility. Because God has laid it upon us to love and serve our neighbour, therefore we must fight for his rights, while being ready to renounce our own in order to do so. Two main conclusions follow. First, we have to accept that other people's rights are our responsibility. We *are* our brother's keeper, because God has put us in the same human family and so made us related to and responsible for one another. The law and the prophets, Jesus and his apostles, all lay on us a particular duty to serve the poor and defend the powerless. We cannot escape this by saying they are not our responsibility. As Solzhenitsyn has written, *'There are no internal affairs left on this globe of ours. Mankind can be saved only if everybody takes an interest in everybody else's affairs'*". (Source - *'Issues Facing Christians Today'*)

Some Evidence

- According to a MORI Poll two-thirds of young men would not marry their partner if she became pregnant. The Poll was commissioned by the Reader's Digest Magazine, which said it showed Britain was "producing a generation of 'lads' willing to avoid their moral obligation towards the children they father. Piers Henu, 32, editor of 'Front' a magazine for men aged 18-24 said attitudes were changing and added "it's a young bloke's job to get in to some scrapes and find out what life is all about. If he doesn't, he's boring, and there is nothing worse than that". (Daily Telegraph 3.6.99)
- Sarah Grocott, a 14 year old schoolgirl mother in Stoke-on-Trent is refusing to return to her classes unless the local council provides childcare for her baby. With the support of her parents she is insisting she will not attend Brownhills High School unless it opens a creche for her 9 month old son Jake. Her parents both work full-time. (Daily Telegraph 31.8.96)
- Wayne Jackson, a charity organiser, left his 18 month old daughter at a police station with a telephone number scribbled on a piece of paper. He told staff he was leaving for a week's holiday in Spain – he went to celebrate his wedding anniversary with his wife and two children aged 2 and 7. The child he left at the police station was the daughter of a young woman he had met in his job. (Times 24.8.99)
- Rod Stewart, the twice-married rock singer, has called for the ending of life-long marriage vows. Separated from his second wife, the 56 year old singer lives with his 29 year old girlfriend. In an interview in the Daily Record Stewart said "I think the vows should be changed because they have been in existence for 600 years when people used to live until they were only 35. So they only had to be with each other for 12 years then they would die anyway. But now it is a big commitment because you are going to be with someone for 50 years. It's impossible". He has two children from his first marriage and two children from his second and he also has a daughter by the former model Kelly Emberg. Of the marriage commitment he said "The vows should be written like a dog's licence that has to be renewed every year". (Daily Telegraph 1.5.01)
- The mother of a 17 year old girl living at home has demanded fertility treatment for her on the NHS because she had apparently been trying unsuccessfully to get pregnant for a year. She had a steady boyfriend. The girl lives in Hartlepool

where about 60% of all births in the town are outside marriage. Only 3% of mothers aged under 20 are married. (*Times* 13.11.99)

- David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, said that 80% of all parents summoned to appear with their children in court failed to attend. (*BBC Radio 4 News* 30.9.99)
- Lesbians who pay money to the Regents Park Clinic, London, will be introduced to homosexuals to father their children. Currently advertised on the Internet, the service will also be advertised in gay magazines. Lesbians can choose between homosexual men wanting to play an active role in bringing up their child and those who do not want to do so. David Hinchcliffe, Chairman of the Parliamentary Health Committee, expressed "deep unease" and is going to investigate the scheme. Many concerned with children fear a generation being born into dysfunctional families. The Clinic gives lessons in self-insemination and provides take-home do-it-yourself kits. A sperm donor who is known to the mother and child is considered in law as an unmarried father. One of the gay applicants at the clinic said "I don't want to be a full-time father ... I would like to be something between an uncle and a father who would, perhaps, see the child at weekends". (*Mail on Sunday* 25th July 1999)
- General Sir Michael Walker, Chief of the General Staff, has announced that the army is to allow single soldiers to bring their girlfriends into barracks overnight. It is considering setting up "welfare houses" where service men or women who do not have single accommodation could hire rooms in order to spend the night with their girlfriends or boyfriends. This move has been restricted to a few units for a trial period. Until now, service men and women bringing their boyfriends or girlfriends into their rooms faced disciplinary proceedings. (*Daily Telegraph* 5.3.02)
- A homosexual man who fathered a child for a lesbian couple made legal history when he was awarded full parental rights and responsibilities. The 30 year old social work assistant went to court after falling out with the women over access to his 18 month old son. The lesbian couple decided he was "only a sperm donor" and tried to restrict the time he spent with the boy. The Glasgow Sheriff Court found that a lesbian couple did not constitute a proper "family unit". The girl's mother, a teacher, wanted her girlfriend to be awarded parental rights. The father said that the other woman was to be known as "auntie". The women then changed their minds and decided that she also would be "mummy". Sheriff Duncan said the lesbians had been "secretive, calculating, manipulative and devious" in promoting their case. She said the father was "emotionally overwhelmed by his feelings of becoming a father and found it hard to stay away from his son. Miss Y and Miss Z had no understanding of this". She also said, "They have attempted to extinguish any bond which may have been developing between him and the baby". (*Daily Telegraph* 8.3.02)
- In a case of great significance for other countries, a Supreme Court judge in Vancouver has ruled that Canadians have a constitutional right to possess child pornography if it is for private use and not for distribution. In dismissing the case against a Vancouver man, the judge said that to punish him would be "an invasion" of personal privacy and freedom of expression. (*Independent on Sunday* 17.1.99)
- A sharp and unexplained increase in the number of National Insurance numbers issued has provided new evidence that Social Security fraud is running rampant in Britain. Since 1997 the Government issued more than 4 million NI numbers (the main passport to claiming welfare benefits) but over the same period the number of people entitled to one was only 3.5 million. The government has admitted that they are 81 million National Insurance numbers washing around Britain against a population of only 60 million. Ministers admit that NI numbers are obtained by criminal gangs to create bogus identities to cheat the Department of Social Security. NI numbers are used by the Inland Revenue to list taxpayers, by the DSS to identify welfare claimants and on NHS patient records. Frank Field, the former Minister for Welfare Reform calls NI numbers "the weakest link" in the welfare system. Last November the Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance Scheme said that cases of deception in the private sector involving bogus identities had risen by 450%. (*Daily Telegraph* 25.2.01)
- The Health Service is losing millions of pounds because of people who fail to turn up for appointments with consultants. Every working day up to 500 patients in Manchester, Trafford or Stockport don't show up for hospital appointments, meaning that consultants are left with empty timetable slots, whilst other people in need of medical attention have to wait longer than they need to. A spokesman for Manchester Health Authority said, "We always see headlines about the Health Service needing money. But here is an example of how money is being wasted". (*Manchester Metro News* 18.3.99)
- A burglar lost his fight for compensation for the injuries he suffered when a police dog bit him as he was being arrested. A judge at Leeds County Court rejected the claim by Richard Dixon, a heroin addict aged 29 that a police officer had instructed the dog to attack him. (*Times* 14.6.01)

9. Feelings

Emotions or intellect?

- ' Long-held and commonly accepted truths are today often displaced by a **'personal perception'** of truth, largely based upon feelings. In an individualistic society people develop their own 'personal truths' and, as is freely admitted by New Agers, tend to become 'gods' in their own right.
 - ' If we are governed by our feelings alone we are inevitably in a constant state of flux and **instability**. This contributes to disruption and fragmentation in our personal lives and in our social relationships.
 - ' If our reference point is ourselves, it is by our very nature **moveable**. If our reference point is the unchanging God whom we experience both emotionally and intellectually, our reference point is **fixed** and stable.
 - ' Limiting truth to **personal perception** can lead to introversion and introspection for the individual and inconstancy and instability for society. It frequently involves the rejection of the agreed values and codes which create an integrated, stable and cohesive culture.
 - ' Words, thoughts and deeds which were originally held to be inherently right or wrong, good or evil, become 'inappropriate' or 'unacceptable' in accordance with the **feelings** of the individual at any particular moment. These feelings are subject to rapid and frequent change.
 - ' The need for balance between heart and head, intellect and emotion is important. If we are ruled primarily by our feelings or primarily by our intellect we will be **unbalanced**.
 - ' Christians believe that the characteristics of God's Spirit are **Truth** and **Love** in perfect balance and harmony.
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Desire and truth

Postmodern society is increasingly concerned with feelings, at the expense of reason. Those whose lives are governed by feelings tend to live by impulse. They are rootless, uncertain and often confused. Motivated by moods they rarely have long-term vision and they have no fixed point of reference. Their searchings are invariably inconclusive. Their aim and desire is often instant gratification. Their lifestyle tends to embrace a cycle of hedonistic activities.

Brian Carrell in his book 'Moving Between Times' says *"Emotion and intuition are increasingly replacing reason as the surest guide and the most reliable indicator of the way forward for humanity. Feelings are considered to make better sense than arguments. The advertising industry in its reading of the postmodern condition, refers to this as the 'feel-good factor' and this plays a crucial role in determining the pitch promoters may make in their play for the attention of the consumer. Yet in areas of life that are still largely cerebral, such as the purchasing of computers and their software, the pitch is almost always to the mind, with tightly condensed descriptions of the capacities and speed potential of the PC's on offer, little hype, and no feminine figures casually draped over the monitor"*.

Professor Herman De Dijn warns against sentimentalism and people driven by feelings. He says *"For the sentimentalist, the important thing is not whether something is right or wrong, interesting or dull, valuable or worthless in itself, but 'how it feels', 'what effect it has on one's emotions'. Sexual transgression, for instance, is undesirable not because it is wrong in itself, not because it is immoral, but only to the extent that it hurts someone's feelings. If it doesn't do this, or doesn't do it any longer, then it is entirely acceptable. For the sentimentalist, the only objective way of assessing something is in terms of its effects on sensitive organisms. Reality itself is unimportant except insofar as it makes a difference to our feelings. If certain desired effects can be produced equally well by illusions or by artificial means, reality can be thrown overboard and together with it the bother of real contact. In such a view there is no distinction between the real and the illusory, or the virtual or the fake, as long as they lead to the same results"*.

On the other hand, there are also many people who, by virtue of their culture or hurts inflicted upon them, find it extremely difficult to give and receive love. They find it difficult to establish close personal relationships, but have no difficulty in pursuing what they believe to be scientific truth.

Instability in relationships is leading to a recognition of the value of balance between truth and love, between intellect and feelings. The Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit is highly significant in this respect, for the Spirit is claimed to be both Truth and Love – in balance.

The pre-occupation with feelings has led to an introspective approach to personal improvement manifesting itself in the Human Potential Movement, which today is propounding numerous techniques for 'personal growth', 'consciousness expansion' and 'self-enlightenment'. Many senior management training courses now embrace New Age processes, running 'transformational seminars'. Great attention is currently being paid to the two hemispheres of the brain. We are told the left side tends to be logical and verbally orientated and the right side creative and intuitive.

The Centre of the Human Potential Movement was the Esalen Institute founded in 1964. Esalen invitees ingested psychedelic drugs. The group pushed the boundaries of human relationships advocating group sex and self-absorption. One of their devotees was Werner Erhard (former Scientologist) who founded the Erhard Seminar training course (EST). At these EST sessions, trainers subject followers to abusive comments designed to break down their value system and the idea is to free people from all moral and psychological restraint. (Three days before the Sharon Tate murder in 1969, the Charles Manson group was welcomed as honoured guests at Esalen where they performed music composed by Manson).

Eastern religions and many New Age practices have a marked emotional undercurrent and in many of their activities feelings tend to matter more than truth.

We are in danger of adopting a 'pick and mix' attitude to relationships, situations and beliefs. The 'feel good' factor often predominates and may overwhelm both intellectual and moral considerations and constraints.

In popular culture, feelings, exemplified in magazines for teenage girls and boys, are deliberately trivialised. The young are encouraged to be led by their emotions rather than reason. Emotional disorder has become a characteristic of our society.

Some Evidence

- A study by researchers at the University of Leeds portrays a society riddled by mistrust and cynicism and longing for spiritual or other-worldly comfort. The majority of the 8,000 adults questioned said they did not trust other people. More than half believe the national lottery has made people greedier. People appear to have elevated material objects and physical appearance virtually to objects of faith. With the emergence of an increasingly materialistic, insecure and fast-moving environment, there appeared to be a longing for spiritual understanding. (*Times* 5.9.97)
- In less than 15 years the new family of anti-depressants headed by Prozac has become one of the big success stories of the pharmaceutical industry. More than 22 million prescriptions were written for anti-depressants in England during 2000 compared with 9 million in 1991. In that time the cost of prescribing the 'wonder' pills on the NHS soared from 54 million to 310 million. Dr. David Healey, a consultant psychiatrist at the University of Wales College of Medicine, said "I think we have reached the stage where SSRI's are overused". (*Independent* 12.2.02)
- According to a report by the Henley Centre, 55% of people at work believe they have been subjected to more pressure at work during the past three years. (*Planning for Consumer Change* 2002)
- The Health & Safety Executive said that 5 million workers now report their jobs are very stressful and 6 million work days a year are lost through work-related stress. In December 2001 the Economic and Social Research Council reported that "A significant decline in the level of work satisfaction had taken place among both men and women over a wide range of job facets" between 1992 and 2000. The Scottish Equitable has found that 5.2 million people are ill from stress and 1.8 million are taking time off work. (*Daily Telegraph* 7.1.02)
- According to a survey carried out by the Independent Television Commission, election apathy among television viewers has reached an all time high in the recent General Election. 70% of viewers said they had no interest in watching coverage of the General Election and a quarter ignored it altogether. 40% of viewers said they switched channels to avoid election coverage. The audience for BBC1's election night coverage has fallen from 11.9m in 1992 to 4.9m this year. On ITV the audience went down 7.7 million to 2.7 million in the same period. As in 1997 when the ITC carried out a similar survey, viewers felt that too much of the coverage had focused on the personalities of politicians, press conferences, walkabouts and opinion poll results, rather than policies. (*Daily Telegraph* 1.10.01)

10. Control

Who exercises power and authority?

- ' During the past century a significant shift has taken place in the balance of power in society. Deference to those in authority has declined and there has been a steady erosion of respect for all **authority** whether civic, legal, parental or educational.
- ' People seeking power for themselves rightly or wrongly wish to have a greater **control over life**. This is manifest in the trend towards abortion on demand, selective breeding and euthanasia.
- ' Although many strongly advocate the value of personal preference in a free society and the 'right to choose', in reality, the concept of **individual** choice is often over-ruled. Ironically, libertarianism can be oppressive.
- ' The emerging attitudes of libertarians can be very **intolerant** and even totalitarian in nature. Those who refuse to accept the dictates of the so-called 'politically correct' are often subjected to mockery and persecution and their opponents even go to great lengths to silence them.
- ' Although often claiming to reflect society, television and other media are in fact now a **formative** influence on society. To a considerable extent the media exercises a very strong controlling influence on the ways in which we act, think and communicate.
- ' It is now possible for a very small number of people - newspaper and magazine proprietors, film makers etc. - to **dictate** what we see, read, buy and believe. To some extent the Internet is beginning to change this but is bringing its own problems.
- ' The advertising and public relations industry has the ability to **manipulate** people and has become a dominant influence in our culture.

- ' Individuals are under immense pressure to **conform**: to buy the products 'they' want us to buy, to believe the ideas 'they' want us to believe and to behave as 'they' would want us to behave. The media can readily become an instrument of propaganda used by the State and by powerful and wealthy minorities.
- ' **Peer pressure** is a controlling influence over lifestyle and, for the immature can be irresistible.
- ' The movement towards **centralised** Government control has accelerated. This is evident in many aspects of British political life, in the emergence of a remote and centralised bureaucracy in the European Union and in steps being taken in an almost conspiratorial way to One-World Government.
- ' **Language** is increasingly a means of exercising power. Meanings of words are deliberately changed and new words invented. Catch-phrases and ideas used repetitively by the highly paid employees of the communications industry exert a powerful influence on our culture. Their power is exercised with little constraint or sense of responsibility.
- ' One of the prime features of **totalitarianism** is its abuse of words, which often take on totally new meanings..
- ' Decadent and 'corrupt' political and judicial systems deliberately exploit and abuse **language** and through this, exercise power.
- ' In the absence of open and acknowledged authority, the exercise of social, political and economic power soon becomes hidden and **manipulative**.

Rulers, influence & propaganda

The exercise of power and control over our lives by others has increased. Financial, cultural and political power is concentrated in fewer hands and is increasingly remote.

Our lives are increasingly governed by a complex range of legislation, with a labyrinth of rules and regulations, codes and standards, which impinge on almost every aspect of our lives.

Vested interests ensure that those who do not conform to political correctness are deliberately labelled 'bigoted', 'intolerant', 'reactionary', 'right-wing'. In the same way, the communists, who used extreme violence, labelled their revolutionary movements with the word 'peace'.

In popular terminology 'pornographic' has become 'adult', obscene has become risqué, the destruction of a child's life in the womb has become 'termination', prostitutes have become sex workers, 'partners' have displaced 'married couples'. Those who legitimately question male homosexual acts on medical or social grounds are labelled 'homophobic'. Those with any strong belief are labelled 'bigoted'. Those with deep Christian faith are labelled 'fundamentalist'. Those who disagree with new proposals are automatically labelled 'reactionary' or 'traditionalist'.

Values and moral standards are, to a considerable extent, now dictated by the state, the educational system, or commerce. The media has become a major formative influence on opinions, ideas and ethical standards. It has replaced the Church in this respect. Because they are essentially committed to the creation of profit, the media inevitably preach self-interest and hedonism. Ideas and movements which conflict with the power blocks are pushed aside, ignored or even silenced. In a very real sense, 'thought police' are very active. Christian comment in the media has been marginalised or censored out.

Advertisement dictates lifestyles. Ominously, the Government has now become the largest advertiser in the United Kingdom.

The lifestyle of millions is now controlled by some of the most powerful influences in the world. These are the highly organised, heavily financed commercial networks which create and maintain markets and which exploit millions who are dependent upon or addicted to their products. Some of these operate legally as in the case of the tobacco and drink industries. Others, as in the case of hard drugs, operate illegally through huge internal criminal networks on a global scale. Mass addiction is an expression of the huge control exercised over millions of vulnerable people by a comparatively small number of the rich and powerful.

Because power is exercised primarily over our public lives, a sharp division is emerging between private and public life. Belief and truth are now being privatised. Religion has been moved into the private domain – simply a matter of personal preference.

Our health is controlled by huge pharmaceutical groups who have a dominant influence upon medical services and research, on an international scale. Concern is currently being expressed about the dangers of pharmaceutical companies financially influencing Governments and research bodies in order to promote palliative (and some times addictive) products which patients need to purchase over many years, as opposed to curative and preventive products and treatments.

Our food is controlled by the influences of commercial organisations who organise the inclusion of potentially dangerous chemicals as additives and admixtures into processed food. Similarly, control over the food production chain directly affecting the lives of millions, is exercised by the introduction of hormones, toxins and poisonous fertilisers.

The broadcasting of much of the material on television amounts to a formative and even controlling factor in contemporary life. What is seen is frequently replicated by the viewer. The abnormal is normalised. The unacceptable is made acceptable.

Sexual standards are controlled by the huge sums of public money which are devoted to the promotion of certain sexual lifestyles, which in past years would have been rejected. Promiscuity is presented to the young as normal. Multi-partnering of adults is seen as fashionable. Marriage and family life are frequently presented as unacceptable. Homosexuality has been intensively promoted.

Promotion and propaganda are evidence that the Western world has moved from being an industrial society into an information society. Computers and information technology far outweigh the manufacture of goods in many economies. Entire economies are immediately vulnerable to the accidental or deliberate breakdown of computer systems and Michel Foucault concluded, "*In an information-based society knowledge equates to power*".

There is growing evidence of the movement towards global authority. New Agers and others speak of the necessity for a powerful elite to rule the world. David Spangler, the leading New Ager says, "*Only the so-called 'fit' i.e. those awakened to their divinity should be allowed to lead the planet*".

The political process in the West is very strongly influenced by commercial interests and there is growing public concern about the motives for gifts from wealthy industrialists to political parties in Britain, who often appear to receive benefits and honours because of this.

Some Evidence

- Since 1993 quangos have been responsible for a fifth of social public expenditure, more than £47.1 billion. £24 billion of this has been transferred from locally elected bodies. (*Citizen Virtues – David Alton*)
- The new Mayor of London will have greater direct powers of patronage than even the Prime Minister or the Queen according to a study by the Association of London Government. The Mayor will have the power to appoint two political advisors, ten members of a Mayoral Policy Unit, all 15 Board members of Transport for London (the new body in charge of all transport in the capital) and all 15 Board members and the Chief Executive of the London Development Agency. Although the Mayor will have unlimited tax raising powers he or she will also appoint 12 of the 23 members of the New Metropolitan Police Authority and 9 of the 17 members of the new London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority. The Mayor will also appoint the Chairman and the Board of the Cultural Strategy Group for London which will be responsible for tourism, sport and the arts in the capital. Tony Travers from the London School of Economics has said that the Mayor will also have to be consulted by the Home Office about the appointment of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and will be able to create his or her own 'quangos' or boards of special interests that could cover just about any topic that he or she sees fit. He said "In terms of direct powers of patronage, I suspect that the Mayor will be the most powerful person in the country". The Mayor will not have to seek anybody's approval and will be able to appoint anyone he wishes to the various posts. The Mayor will have an electorate of 5 million – a larger constituency than any politician in the European Union apart from the French President. The process will be open to scrutiny by the Greater London Assembly. (*Times 5.1.00*)
- Sunday trading legislation has led to more than 4 million regularly working on Sundays. Figures obtained from the government by Lord Alton show that 4, 329,000 people – nearly 20% of the workforce – regularly work on Sundays. Nearly 2 million of these are female, 40% of whom who have dependent children. Lord Alton said "Sunday trading has driven people into Sunday work. Many of the people who are forced to work through a clause in their contract are low paid, particularly females. The affect on family life can be devastating. No other country has this agenda, countries such as Germany whose economic growth is immense still safeguard Sundays". He said "Both partners very rarely have the same day off together therefore making it useless for family unity". (*The Universe 4.6.00*)
- Each year millions of pounds are spent on exploiting the children's market. Most of it is devised to catch children's attention on television. The total spent on advertising children's products in the four key areas between July 1998 and June 99 is as follows: - Snacks £3,848,427; Food/confectionery £10,469,626; Drinks £11,821,840; Toys £81,451,766. (Note: No advertising for children under 12 is allowed in Sweden and Norway and various countries are now considering a ban.) (*Source – MMS – Campaign 27.8.99*)
- In the United Kingdom children see an average of 18,000 advertisements per year. In a survey of European Countries the UK had the highest number of advertisements per hour during children's T.V. (*Friends of the Earth and a Spoonful of Sugar – Television Food Advertising aimed at children, an international comparative survey. Consumers International 1996*)
- According to a study by the Institute of Alcohol Studies, the drinks industry is conducting a "systematic campaign" of manipulation, glamorising alcohol in an attempt to lure young people to its products. In the report by Gina Dafalias, it is stated "The alcohol industry is carrying out a systematic campaign to turn young people into drinkers as a way to consolidate and increase its profits. As a result young people are drinking at an earlier age and increasing the number of drinking occasions and the quantity drunk. The exploitation of vulnerable young computer users is a new form of alcohol marketing. The Internet is subject to no regulation and as a result alcohol companies are able to pursue children and young people with very few restraints". The study draws attention to Budweiser's website, offering free email and electronic postcards, and its popular television advertisements featuring animated frogs and lizards. A recent study showed that schoolchildren were more familiar with these characters than with carton cereal characters such as Tony the Tiger. This report follows another report published last month which showed that British children were among the heaviest underage drinkers in Europe. It showed that 14% of boys and 9% of girls under 11 experimented with alcohol at least once a week. (*Daily Telegraph 29.3.01.*)
- According to a study carried out by researchers at the University of Hertfordshire, children under 7 who watch a lot of television adverts ask Father Christmas for five times as many presents as those who watch less. Children who watched more commercial television requested far more toys and presents, with the heaviest viewers typically asking for five or six presents, while those who watched the least asked for just one. Heavy viewers also asked for far more branded toys. Top of the lists were Barbie dolls, Furby toys and Action Man figures – three of the most advertised products. Researchers found that during three hours on one Saturday morning ITV showed 127 adverts for children's toys or food. Children in Britain watch television for an average of two and a half hours a day and 63% have their own set. Dr. Karen Pine said "What this study does show is that increased exposure to commercials has the effect of making children want more toys in general rather than specific named

products". A similar study in Sweden, where advertisers are banned from marketing at children under 12, found they wanted significantly fewer toys than British youngsters. (*Daily Telegraph* 30.3.01)

- The following are the current annual earnings for film and TV performers: Sir Antony Hopkins £19m; Ridley Scott £17m; David Dimbleby £8m; Liam Neeson £8m; Catherine Zeta Jones £5.5m; Ewen McGregor £5m; Patrick Stewart £5m; Tracey Ullman £5m; Jude Law £4m; Elizabeth Hurley £3.94m; Chris Tarrant £3.5m; Frank Skinner £3.3m; Carol Vorderman £2.7m; Sir Michael Caine £2.5m; Sir Sean Connery £2.5m; Johnny Vaughan £2.4m; Cilla Black £2.25m; Michael Barrymore £2m; Jim Davidson £2m; Rupert Everett £2m; Rachel Weisz £2m. (*Daily Mail* 2.11.01)
- An actress, Jane Leeves, is to be paid nearly £19m to continue her role as Daphne Moon in NBC's *Frasier* Show on Channel 4. She has had her earnings raised from £45,000 per episode to £275,000. NBC has decided to run the show, which is 8 years old, for three more years. Each episode is estimated to cost £3.9m and there are 23 per series. The star of the show Kelse Grammer, earns about £1m per episode and two other players, David Hide Pierce and Jo Mahoney, each earn about £700,000. (*Daily Telegraph* 1.1.02)
- The 'Business Age' magazine has listed the personal wealth of a number of pop musicians: Paul McCartney £500m, Elton John £156m, Mick Jagger £145m, Keith Richards £125m, Tom Jones £100m, Engelbert Humperdinck £100m, David Bowie £96.5m, Gordon Sumner (Sting) £96m, Phil Collins £95.9m, George Harrison £86.9m, Ringo Starr £75m, Eric Clapton £73m, Paul Hewson (Bono), Larry Mullen, Adam Clayton and Dave Evans (The Edge) each £70.6m, George Michael £70m, Rod Stewart £68m, Charlie Watts £65m, Cliff Richard £60m, David Gilmour £58m, Robert Plant and Jimmy Page £57.6m each, Ronnie Wood £57m, Mark Knopfler £55m, Roger Waters £50m, John Deacon, Brian May & Roger Taylor £45m each, Nick Mason £43m, Rick Wright £41.2m, Jim Kerr £40m, Mick Hucknall £38.5m, Van Morrison £35m, Barry, Robin & Maurice Gibb £33.3m, Chris De Burgh £30m, Victoria Beckham £24.6m, Noel Gallagher £23.8m, Dave Stewart £22.9m, Melanie Chisholm & Melanie Gulzar £21.8m each, Emma Bunton £21.2m, Gerri Halliwell £17.4m, Liam Gallagher £18.8m, Annie Lennox £14.7m, Norman Cook £13.8m, Robbie Williams £10.8m. Elton John's 1999 American tour grossed £22m and in addition to this he earns £25m a year from his companies. (*Daily Telegraph* 22.11.00)
- The following are the current yearly earnings of entertainment and other celebrities – Cilla Black £2.2m, Kate Moss (model) £1.2m, David Beckham £2.3m, Tim Henman (tennis player) £3m, Stella McCartney (fashion designer) £5m, Hugh Grant (actor) £5m, Cat Deely (TV presenter) £950,000, Anne Robinson (TV presenter) £10m, Dido (pop singer) £12m, Elton John £27.5m, J. K. Rowling (Harry Potter author) £40m. (*Daily Mail* 11.3.02)
- The pop singer Madonna had an income of £30m last year. She has just finished a film – *Love, Sex, Drugs and Money*. (*Daily Telegraph* 1.3.02)
- Forbes magazine chronicles the fortunes of the worlds rich and famous. The top 50 in the entertainment business earn from \$18m to \$400m (£250m). Some of last years earnings are as follows – George Lucas \$400m, Oprah Winfrey \$150m, Giorgio Armani \$135m, David Kelley \$118m, Tom Hanks \$71.5m, Tom Clancy \$66m, Stephen King \$65m, Backstreet Boys \$60m, Steven Spielberg \$60m, Bruce Willis \$54.5m, Rolling Stones \$50m, Julia Roberts \$50m, David Copperfield \$50m, Bill Blass \$50m, Michael Schumacher \$49m, Shania Twain \$48m, Tiger Woods \$47m, Harrison Ford \$56.5m, Mel Gibson \$45.5m, Jim Carrey \$45.5m, Oscar De La Houier \$43.5m, Celine Dion \$43m, Michael Jordan \$40m, Cher \$40m. 18 year old Britney Spears, a teenage pop star, earned \$15m last year. (*Guardian* 4.3.00)
- The comedian Frank Skinner has demanded a pay deal worth £20m from the BBC. The BBC chiefs have walked out of the negotiations. The Director of television Alan Yentob described the demands as "ridiculous". (*Evening Standard* 2.9.99)
- "Millions of people are being damaged and billions of hours of our lives wasted through intended and culpable media addiction" says a report entitled *Media Addition* published by the Movement for Christian Democracy (MCD). It states "Children's educational development is undermined by media addiction, even before they start school, and any serious attempt to address educational standards must consider it". "Media addiction especially among children has destructive effects on basic aspects of life. It undermines speaking, thinking, sleep, emotions, activity, seeing, concentration, reading, the shaping of beliefs, growth of relationships and people's sense of identity". It states that the British spend around 15 years of their waking lives staring at television. (*Times* 12.8.99 & *Evening Standard* 12.8.99)

11. Learning

Preparing for life?

- ' Educational systems have facilitated the passing on of prevailing knowledge, experience, values, beliefs and assumptions from one **generation** to the next. These may be explicit or implicit.
- ' Over the centuries the educational process in this country has been based upon Judaeo-Christian values. These have governed the **working** of our society. They have provided the clear ethical guidance and belief system on which our civilisation is built. This teaching was begun in the family and continued at school.
- ' Children were taught the difference between right and wrong. They were taught to respect and value themselves and other people as unique individuals, made in the image of God. They were taught to accept **responsibility** for themselves and their behaviour and for the community.
- ' The Judaeo-Christian foundation of culture and education is now, in large measure, being **dismantled**.
- ' There is increasing **confusion** about the fundamental teaching and assumptions that ought to be conveyed to our children.
- ' When modernist **assumptions** of secular humanism are imposed upon the educational process, children are taught that absolute truth is accessible by human reason alone. This assumed truth is then the platform from which a critique is made of religious beliefs and practices. Christian belief becomes one competing belief system among many. Under the umbrella of Religious Education, religion can be devalued and can easily become a matter of personal preference.
- ' The move towards postmodernism has meant that belief in any underlying truth is being abandoned. Children are, therefore, being taught that there is no overarching belief system and no clear distinction between right and

wrong. The role of the teacher is deemed not to impart values but to encourage the child to form his or her own **personal values**. Some educationalists are even arguing for total value-free education in our schools.

- ' Much **bewilderment** within our educational system arises because on many occasions all opinions are given equal weight, irrespective of whether they are true or false, right or wrong, good or bad. Even though tolerance is preached, the questioning of this diktat is often not now allowed.
 - ' In the name of **tolerance**, the educational system can become very intolerant of those who do not confirm to its supposed 'political correctness'. Libertarians readily adopt highly intolerant and illiberal stances.
 - ' In spite of claims for freedom and openness, education is, in fact, a highly effective instrument of social engineering and even **manipulation**. It can easily be used by minority interests and governments to introduce social changes outside the democratic process. Totalitarian regimes have always been quick to recognise this.
 - ' There is a constant danger of children being moved beyond the **control** and influence of their parents, particularly in terms of what they learn about relationships, moral behaviour and family.
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Moulding the future

Cardinal Hume identified the three key influential areas in western society as education, the family and the media. He saw schools, colleges and universities playing a dominant role in the formation of standards and values in society.

Educational systems have always been exploited by tyrants. Within the United Kingdom we are beginning to see signs that children may be influenced without the approval or even knowledge or approval of their parents.

Considerable controversy for example, surrounds the issue of sex education and clearly there is widespread concern about the use of the educational system to destroy the child's concept of the marriage-based family. There is much evidence that promiscuity is being promoted and the policy of offering birth control and abortion facilities to children, even in schools, without their parents' consent or knowledge and without even reference to their General Practitioner, raises fundamental issues of public morality. The school is now even being seen as a battleground for presenting 'correct' views on homosexuality.

Efforts have been made to minimise the influence of parents and older generations. The concept of the teaching of moral standards is being vigorously attacked. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in 1999 exemplified the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Passport project as good practice and clearly stated "*it is not a major aim of Personal and Social Education to transmit knowledge from the teacher to the pupils ... PSE is not about teaching values, but enabling pupils to clarify their own values*".

In 1955 the BBC broadcast a series of lectures by Margaret Knight, a lecturer in educational psychology entitled 'Morals without religion'. She said "*In a climate of thought which is increasingly unfavourable to (Christian) beliefs it is a mistake to try to impose them on children, and to make them the basis of moral training*".

Professor Michael Barbour, Head of the Standards Unit at the Department of Education and Employment has said that pupils should learn the ethics of '*global citizenship*' to replace what he termed "*crumbling religious values*". He said, "*Progressively over the last 200 years... the belief systems which sustains Western societies have crumbled away. Christianity which established ethical codes for the last 2000 years has become a minority interest...by the 1970s all that remained in Western countries was rampant consumerism and the quicksand of cultural relativism – an abandonment of the morality of right and wrong...in the absence of God and Marx what are we to do?*" (*Guardian 23.3.98*)

The educational system in the United Kingdom is in crisis. A substantial proportion of teachers wish to leave the profession and there are countless and ongoing debates about educational policies.

Sybil Marshall said, "*Education must have an end in view, for it is not an end in itself*". (*An Experiment in Education*, Cambridge University Press 1996)

Some Evidence

- A new organisation has been established by the Teachers Benevolent Fund to provide a 24 hours a day Samaritan-style help line to be known as 'Teacherline'. It is aimed at reducing the high level of stress-related sickness and early retirement, which costs the State tens of millions of pounds every year. They are expecting to receive thousands of calls from teachers who feel under growing pressure from the demands of the school curriculum, new government initiatives, Ofsted inspections and unruly pupils. Many teachers suffer stress, anxiety or clinical depression as a result of their work. The start-up costs of 'Teacherline' are £500,000, half of which is being met by the Department of Education. (*Evening Standard 8.9.99*)
- According to a report of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, one-third of school pupils say they have been bullied in the last year with one in four claiming threats of violence. 13% of children at middle and secondary schools report being physically attacked. Peter Smith, the Association's General Secretary said, "These findings are shocking.... It seems that youngsters are increasingly becoming victims of violence". 11% of the pupils said they had missed school because of their fear of violence. 39% of boys and 44% of girls are worried about violence and a quarter of the pupils said they were worried about travelling to and from school because they were afraid of bullying or attacks. (*Daily Telegraph 17.4.00*)
- The Department of Education and Employment has revealed that last year teachers in England took sick leave amounting to 2.5m days off. 55% of all teachers (265,000) took an average of 9 working days off in addition to 13 weeks annual holiday. (*Daily Telegraph 13.5.00*)
- A survey of 3,121 pupils aged between 11 & 16 in 20 Scottish schools revealed that a third of all the boys and 8% of the girls had carried a weapon in case they got into a fight. Overall about 30% of students admitted to having used illegal drugs. Boys who had used any drug were three times more likely and girls six times more likely to have carried a weapon. There was a strong association between weapon carrying and reported drug abuse. Three-quarters of those who stated they had used five or more drugs had carried weapons to school. (*McKeganey Norrie J – Association Between Illegal Drugs and Weapon Carrying in Young People in Scotland's School Survey – British Medical Journal 2000 320:982-4 reported in Medical Monitor 24.5.00*)
- A report from the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA) has recommended drug education for children starting at age 5, should become an integral part of the personal, social and health education curriculum. (*Guardian 21.4.98*)
- David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary said, "Three in four of those in care leave formal education with no qualifications, compared with only 6% of the general population. One in five care leavers goes on to further education

compared with two thirds of the general population". He also said that permanent exclusions were 12,700 in 1997, and 12,400 last year. (*Guardian 17.6.99*)

- More than 160,000 young people aged 16-18 are not in school, training or work and a high proportion are criminals, drug-takers or teenage parents. A further 161,000 are in dead-end jobs with no training or chance of promotion. Home Office figures show that 75% of 16-17 year old males who are charged and appear before the youth court are in no formal full-time activity. Source -Bridging the Gap, Social Exclusion Unit. (*Times 14.7.99*)
- A video and information pack produced by Avon Health Authority is described as "a guide to challenging homophobia" and so far 76 schools across Britain have bought it. Pupils are encouraged to act out gay perversions in class and even pretending to be men touting for sex in public lavatories. Other roles they are asked to play include a bi-sexual granny, a wheelchair bound lesbian and a pain-freak. In one of the presentations a boy tells pupils "Try experimenting with other boys and girls and see who you feel most comfortable with". In a bizarre lesson called 'Spot the Heterosexual' youngsters are told to look at nine faces and guess each persons sexual preferences. A spokeswoman for the Authority claimed the video promoted tolerance. (*The Sun 13.11.99*)
- According to Mike Tomlinson, the Head of Ofsted, the teacher shortage in England is the worst for 35 years and 40% of new teachers leave the classroom within three years. The Department of Education disagreed with the figures and said that 75% of teachers were still in post after three years. (*Daily Telegraph 29.8.01*)
- A Gloucester primary school has 35 teachers of whom 18 are from overseas. The headmaster looked abroad for staff after advertisements here failed to attract enough recruits. The recruits were each given a four-week-crash course in the National Curriculum and advice on maintaining discipline among tough inner-city children. (*Daily Mail 19.9.01*)
- 50,000 children play truant every day. Despite an intensive Government campaign, according to an Education Department report, 0.7% of school hours were missed because of unauthorised absences in both 1997 to 1998 and 2000-2001. (*Daily Mail 22.12.01*)
- According to a survey carried out by Dr. Sean Neill at Warwick University, four out of five teachers believed that behaviour in schools had deteriorated since they joined the profession. Almost six in ten said pupils had got "very much worse" and a further fifth reported a "marked deterioration". Teachers believe that children are now more violent and destructive than they used to be, with increased bad language and abusive behaviour in schools. This picture was painted by the National Union of Teachers whose General Secretary, Doug McEvoy, said that "children's television programmes were partly to blame". He said, "If you look at some of the programmes, they are all geared to violence of one sort or another". He said, "The very high level of disruption to lessons is making teaching a decreasingly satisfying experience". A female primary teacher said she had been head-butted by a 5-year-old. (*Daily Telegraph 21.9.01*)
- According to a survey for the Home Office by the Basic Skills Agency, one third of prisoners are unable to read, nearly half cannot write and two out of five juvenile offenders are innumerate. (*Observer 10.6.01*)
- Tony Hardman the President of the National Association of School Masters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), has said that he has been bombarded with complaints about pupil behaviour, not only in deprived inner city areas but also in more prosperous parts of the country. Tony Hardman said, "Hardly a day goes by without an incident of outrageous behaviour being reported". He also said, "Poor pupil behaviour is a factor which contributes to many experienced teachers leaving the profession". In Cardiff members of the National Union of Teachers have voted to strike rather than be obliged to educate ill-disciplined pupils forced on them by the system. The NUT has voted to continue to back members by authorising ballots and action as appropriate, up to and including strike action, to protect themselves against unruly pupils. (*Daily Telegraph 17.4.01*)
- Melvin Burgess, an author who was attacked for writing a children's novel about drugs and prostitution, has now written one about a teenager who gives up her GCSE's to have a sexually rampant adventure fuelled by drink and drugs. Publishers are preparing for demands that children's books should now be rated like films, with a warning sticker for parents. Burgess says he has no qualms about tackling themes of "casual sex, drugs and desire" in the book because teenagers appreciate "real life, not a fairy tale". He said "nowadays there is so much media that, from the age of 10 onwards, people have access to it all – sex, violence, drugs, breaking the rules.....". His books have won the Guardian fiction prize and the Carnegie medal, the most prestigious prize in children's literature. Burgess says, "Of course, people will say that because Sandra makes immoral rather than sensible decisions it is a bad example ... but that's a joke". A key part of the story in his book presents the girl accidentally turning into a dog and learning to relish the freedom of running with the pack and the joy of being a bitch on heat. (*Daily Telegraph 7.8.01*)
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has produced figures showing that the proportion of 17-year-olds in education or training is lower in Britain than almost all other industrialised countries. Just over two-thirds of youngsters stayed on after the age of 16 compared with more than 90% in Sweden, Belgium and Japan. Another OECD study published earlier this year revealed how Britain has fallen below average in a table of educational achievement over the last 40 years. A report last year by the Government's National Skills Task Force concluded that 7 million British adults were functionally illiterate and lacked numeracy skills. Many are unable to cope with every day tasks. Educational Secretary, Estelle Morris, admitted the scale of the problem was "frightening". She said, "We need to encourage more young people to stay in learning, increase demand for learning among adults and improve the skills of our workforce". John Harwood, Chief Executive of the

newly formed Learning and Skills Council which has taken over from the 72 Training and Enterprise Councils, said that more adults need to stay on in education and training if we are to avoid slipping further behind our international rivals. He said, "As the nature of advanced economies change, we have to recognise that the future position of the UK's economy depends on increasing the levels of technical skills and educational attainments in our working population. If we don't the future is bleak. The blunt truth is that we are far too complacent about our educational performance". (*Daily Mail 31.7.01*)

- The Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy has told the Government that children wanting to have sexual intercourse before the legal age of consent should be able to receive the Pill and condoms at school. One of the groups members is Simon Blake, Director of the Sex Education Forum. The Chairman of the IAG, Lady Tumim said "There are still too many young people who have not been able to make a truly informed decision about becoming sexually active, or becoming a parent. This might be due to a lack of education and understanding about contraception, pregnancy and the right to confidential sexual health advice. It is, therefore, important that we change the culture within our society to one that enables all young people to make positive and informed choices in their lives". (*Daily Telegraph 1.12.01*)
- A study by the Children's Society involving 66 local education authorities has revealed that Head Teachers now issue up to 137,000 suspensions a year to pupils – some as young as four. The first national survey of temporary exclusions has found 11 times as many pupils are suspended as are expelled for violent or unruly behaviour. More than 500,000 days of lessons are lost each year by children who are suspended. (*Daily Mail 31.3.98*)
- The Education and Leisure Directorate of Salford Corporation are offering 75 free places on three courses run by a psychic medium. (*The Advertiser 26.6.97*)
- According to a United Nations report Britain has a functional illiteracy rate of 22%. The report warned that Britain's literacy record threatens to undermine its whole economic and 'quality of life' progress. Richard Jolly, the author of the report, said, "Britain's literacy rate is a real shocker". Britain now lags behind many third world countries in the three R's. (*Daily Mail 13.7.99*)
- According to 'Bridging the Gap' a report by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit, 9% of all young people are ending up drifting out of the education and training system. Three quarters of all young men charged in youth courts are not in education or training and of these three-quarters use drugs. (*Daily Mail 13.7.99*)
- A survey of schools and local education authorities carried out by the National Association of Head Teachers predicts that Ministers will be faced with a major embarrassment before the next election because half the primary schools in England will fail to reach the Government's targets for reading and arithmetic. The survey was carried out by the Curriculum Evaluation and Management Centre at Durham University. (*Daily Telegraph 2.6.99*)
- A chief of Ofsted, Mike Tomlinson, after his retirement will manage education in Hackney, East London, after the authority was deemed incapable of running its 72 schools. (*Daily Telegraph 16.1.02*)
- Dr. Vivenne Nathanson, the British Medical Association's Head of Science and Ethics said at the launch of the BMA report "Sexually transmitted Infections", "Seven year olds should be taught about using condoms.....". The BMA report said "moral outrage" over making sex education a compulsory part of the curriculum for young people must be set aside. It also warned the government that the £47.5m being spent on a national sexual health and HIV strategy was nowhere near enough – five times more was needed. Sexually transmitted diseases increased by almost 300,000 between 1995 and 2000. Reported cases of chlamydia soared from 13,877 to 64,000 but doctors believe that this is a fraction of the true number. Cases of gonorrhoea in England, Wales and Northern Ireland rose from 10,204 a year to 20,663. Syphilis has gone up by 145% from 136 in 1995 to 333. (*Daily Mail 27.2.02*)
- David Bell, Chief Inspector of Ofsted has said that 31% of 7 year olds cannot read properly, 40% could not write and at least 25% of 11 year olds went on to secondary schools ill-equipped. A companion report on the National Numeracy Strategy said that more than 150,000 7 years olds and even more 11 years old failed to reach expected levels in maths. In a speech on adult illiteracy Charles Clarke, the Education Secretary said "Every day we pay 3 million to go to work who can't read like an 11 year old. What does that do to our productivity? Getting our people to read, write and count is enormously important to British business". (*Daily Telegraph 27.11.02*)
- The Education Secretary has revealed that one in five British adults struggles to read and write – they are 'functionally illiterate' which means that they have the reading age of the average 11 year old or worse. Apart from the literacy problems, one in four adults has difficulties with numbers and would not be able to write "£104.04" in figures. (*Daily Mail 20.8.02*)

12. Generations

What are we doing to our children?

- ' We are the fruit of generations. The **inheritance** from our forebears, particularly through our families and culture, is a very powerful influence on our lives.
- ' Children are very **vulnerable** to both good and destructive influences. They readily absorb all that is presented to them and depend primarily upon adults, particularly their parents, for protection and guidance.
- ' We are now witnessing the tragedy of systematic and remorseless **damage** being inflicted upon the lives of children and young people in western civilisation and worldwide.
- ' We often **rob** children of their dignity and innocence. We exploit them. We force adult ideas upon them. We abuse and confuse them. We deprive them of faith and deny them a moral framework for life.
- ' We often **deliberately** put our interests and rights as adults before their interests as children.
- ' Vast numbers of children now live in **fear** and loneliness, deeply damaged and deprived of love and security.
- ' Children's minds are being **polluted**, as they are taught vulgarity in language and lifestyle. We also desensitise them to violence. They are being corrupted by the standards of a selfish and materialistic society in which appearance is all important. They are being poisoned with squalid and degrading sexual images. We are implanting into their minds questionable standards of behaviour – greed, lust, violence, dirtiness, bad manners, lack of consideration for others and lack of respect for themselves.

- ' We live in an age of **discontinuity**. Children, lacking a sense of continuity, can easily feel insecure, rootless, lacking self-worth and purpose.
 - ' A civilisation can be judged by the way it treats its **children**.
-

The damage we inflict on the young

William Stainsby, President of the Newman Institute, Ballina, Ireland says *“Whoever forms the family forms the future. ... culture and family are inseparable. Every human culture has its first cell in the family”*. He speaks of the *“set backs which nature’s oldest institution has experienced through negative so-called social engineering and the implementation of anti-family legal and socio-economic policies”*.

The marriage-based family is the fundamental building block of a civilised society. For generations it has been seen as a model for right relationships, both personally and socially. It provides the stable and secure framework within which children can grow up in a loving, caring environment. It is about commitment and the acceptance of responsibility. Marriage has a special status in law where it is recognised as the ideal environment for the procreation and nurture of children. Marriage defines basic rights and responsibilities and is the normal reference point for matters such as inheritance. Stable marriages directly contribute to a stable society. Lord Mackay, the former Lord Chancellor has stated *“Marriage is a relationship in which the state has an interest”*.

The social analyst, Patrick Fagin, has concluded that *“Absence of marriage, not race, is the major factor in explaining crime rates and poverty. The rise in crime is tied to the disintegration of marriage. The impact on the child is significant and can be permanent. Out of wedlock birth and growing up in a single-parent family means that the child is more likely to suffer from poorer health as a new born (if a very young mother), an increased chance of dying, retarded cognitive and verbal development, lower education achievements, lower job attainment, increased behavioural and emotional problems, lower impulse control, retarded social development etc. The root of cause of these ills lies not in poverty, but in the lack of married parents”*. (Quoted in *The Age of Consent* by Robert Knight).

The current movement against life-long marriage, spearheaded and encouraged by secular humanism, is already producing a trail of disaster, with immense suffering amongst children.

Driven by commercial interests, distorted sexual images have been imposed upon the young. Pitirng Sorokin said, *“During the last two centuries, and particularly the last few decades, every phase of our culture has been invaded by sex”*.

The history of the past 50 years will reveal an alarming level of failure on the part of society to protect the interests of children. Millions of children in the womb have been denied the right to live since the abortion laws were changed. Vast numbers of them have been deprived of the right to a stable family life. They have been robbed of their innocence and their minds poisoned by what we have allowed them to see on television, the Internet and in magazines. The lives of the young have been poisoned by lyrics extolling violence, death and promiscuity. They have been exploited by drug-traffickers, pornographers and sexual abusers. Physically, we have contaminated the air they breath, the water they drink and the food they eat and above all we have deliberately deprived them of spiritual sustenance. We have denied them moral guidance and have led them into a life-denying culture of chaos, confusion and death. We have tolerated a situation in which many of the young have experienced extreme poverty and deprivation, a poor living environment and an inadequate educational system.

History will record that we have left a trail of young lives, which have been mentally, emotionally and often physically damaged.

Some Evidence

- UNICEF has reported that 2 million children have been killed in conflicts across the world over the last ten years. 12 million children have been made homeless and 6m children have been injured or disabled. Of the world's 40 million displaced people 20 million are children. Up to 10,000 children each year are killed by landmines. At least 300,000 children at any given time are actively involved in armed conflict. In the conflict in Sierra Leone 30% of some warring factions are children and in Liberia in 1996 26% of demobilised soldiers were children. (*Observer* 6.5.01)
- Every five seconds someone goes blind and a child goes blind every minute. Across the world 45 million people are blind. 80% of this blindness could be prevented or cured. Around 1.5 million children worldwide are blind, mostly in Africa and Asia. At least 40% of blindness in children could be prevented or cured. For instance each year 350,000 child go blind and 2 million die through lack of vitamin A. Nearly half of all global blindness is caused by cataract: to restore sight to a child blinded by cataracts costs just £18, for an adult it is £15. (*Sight Savers International* 2001)
- The Europe monitoring centre for drugs and drug addiction has produced figures showing that the UK has the second highest rate of drug addiction in the EU with up to 350,000 problem drug users. Only Portugal has more addicts. 7266 drug-related deaths occurred in Europe in 1999 of which 2857 were in the UK. The Chairman at the Centre said, "It is clear that the UK has a problem. That nearly 3000 mainly young people die from acute drug abuse is a national tragedy". (*Metro* 26.11.01)
- Jonathan King, top record producer and TV presenter, has been jailed for 7 years for a series of perverted sexual attacks upon young boys. As a young man he had been head of Decca Records and a well-known and popular Radio One DJ. A multi-millionaire, he prowled streets and nightclubs trying to pick up boys. He frequented the Walton Hop Disco in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey where police believe other paedophiles also operated. The young boys were plied with drink and shown pornographic pictures and videos. (*Daily Mail* 22.11.01)
- Odette Coulson, 14, died after she fainted when a fellow pupil showed her images of mutilation and deformity in a magazine. She passed out and banged her head on concrete when she saw pictures in a supplement of FHM magazine. The Coroner said he could not rule out the possibility that the sight of the images had contributed to Odette's death. Her father, a Veterinary Surgeon said, "Unsuitable material is too readily available to children via magazines and the Internet". Alan Jones, her headmaster, said "It makes it very difficult for a school or a parent to have any influence over what youngsters are seeing if it is contained in a supplement of a freely available young person's magazine". David Davies, Editor of FHM declined to comment on the images but described Odette's as "a terrible tragedy and utterly regrettable". (*Daily Telegraph* 28.9.01)
- Gavyn Davies, Chairman of the BBC said, "I am worried about children's programmes on television generally being too dominated by adverts, too dominated by foreign animations and insufficiently stretching and educative for the kids". He also raised concerns about the increasing levels of violence in video games. Last year Doug McEvoy, the General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, blamed cartoons for an increase in aggressive behaviour. (*Daily Telegraph* 16.3.02)
- A schoolgirl who was influenced by the television programme "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" believed she was a witch. Her parents who were separated gave evidence at the inquest of her passion for Wicca (witchcraft). Her father agreed with her that it was a force for good. Laura Pendall, 14, hanged herself after being taunted in the school playground about her connection with witchcraft. (*Daily Telegraph* 20.3.02)
- According to Professor Jay Belsky, Head of the Institute for the Study of Children, Families & Social Issues at Birkbeck College, toddlers going to nurseries or childminders are more likely to grow up disobedient and badly behaved. He said that children who go to day care from their first year are at risk of having worse relationships with their parents and other adults as they get older. Nearly half of all working mothers now go back to work before their child is a year old. He warned that the effect of childcare of a generation of infants could have a major impact on society as a whole. He said "More and more children seem to be spending more and more time at younger and younger ages in non-maternal care arrangements in the English speaking world. This means that even smaller effects when experienced by many children may have broad scale consequences". He said that more than 20 hours a week of child care posed a risk to relationships with parents and could harm 'psychological and behavioural adjustment' in the early years. He said "No longer is it tenable for developmental scholars and child care advocates to derive the notion that early and extensive non-maternal care poses risks for young children and perhaps society as well. There is something about lots of time in non-maternal care beginning in the first year of life that poses risks for children that may not be entirely attributable to the quality of the care they receive. (*Daily Mail* 10.4.01)
- According to the latest Asthma Audit carried out by the National Asthma Campaign 4.1million people are being treated for asthma in Britain which amounts to one adult in thirteen and one child in eight. Of 56 countries surveyed Britain has the third highest prevalence of asthma in 13-14 year olds. The report says that asthma attacks now cost Britain £1.2 billion in lost productivity; £850 million in NHS treatment and £1.61m in costs to the Department of Social Security. (*Daily Telegraph* 11.9.01)

- Julie Burchill, the controversial writer, has been commissioned by MacMillan to write a novel for teenagers. It is to be a lesbian love story. Burchill, a mother of two, had an affair with her journalistic colleague, Charlotte Raven and then left her for her brother. Sarah Davis, Publishing Director of MacMillan children's books said, "She has told us she feels the story should be about a love story between two girls. It is true that she is no stranger to controversy but I think what she will write will be very interesting". (*Daily Telegraph 26.11.01*)
- Research suggests that having a biological father who maintains a close relationship with his son might be crucial in preventing susceptible boys becoming criminals. A study was carried out by the Clinical Psychologist, Jenny Taylor, while at the South London and Maudesley NHS Trust. The report was presented at the conference of the British Psychological Society's Division of Forensic Psychology in Birmingham and it concluded that the stepfathers appeared to do little to decrease the risk of a boy turning to crime. (*Guardian 5.4.01*)
- According to figures published by the Office for National Statistics, rates of mental disorder among children in lone-parent families and step-families are double those among children living with both their parents, while children in lone-parent households are twice as likely as the population at large to live in poverty. The report suggests that the driving force behind the change in the past 15 years has been the big increase in mothers who have never married, and not marriage breakdown. The proportion of families headed by two parents has fallen below 75% for the first time and children are bearing the brunt of the fall out. About 28% of children living in married couple families can now expect to experience divorce in their family before reaching 16. The proportion of all families with children headed by single or never-married mothers rose from 2% in 1981 to 9% in 2001. (*Times 31.01.02*)
- Zoe Rodgers, aged 12, swallowed a fatal dose of painkillers in an effort to attract her parents' attention after they split, an inquest in West Yorkshire was told. Her father had left the home and found a new partner and this had deeply troubled Zoe who wrote to her father saying that she went to bed crying and woke wishing she was dead. Both parents said that they had let their children down. (*Times 6.6.01*)
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has stated that Britain has the second highest death rate among babies in the European Union. At the rate of 5.8 child deaths in every 1000 live births it is only slightly better than in Greece which has the Union's worst record. Sweden has the lowest infant mortality of the 15 EU states at 2.9 deaths per thousand births. (*Independent 29.6.01*)
- A woman who used a three-year-old child to pedal drugs was jailed for two years. She was one of five members of a "family business" which supplied heroin, cannabis and amphetamines. Deals were done in front of young children and officers were once handed drugs by a child through a reinforced iron grill at the rear of their heavily fortified house. (*Daily Telegraph 20.3.01*)
- Each week in Britain two children die of neglect, abuse or murder. According to a Mirror-NSPCC investigation, 100 British children have died every year for the last 25 years from neglect and abuse or have been murdered. This is twice the European average. (*The Mirror 7.5.01*)
- A 14 year old Liverpool boy who had not been at school for almost 12 months and whose parents were separated, and whose mother had drug problems, was sentenced at Warrington to two years detention after a jury convicted him of eight counts of supplying heroin and crack cocaine. The boy's territory centred on Rhyl and he had two drivers (aged 38 and 30) who were jailed for two years for being concerned in the supply of drugs. He drove himself, although he was barely able to see over the steering wheel. When he was stopped on the M56 he was searched and £700 was found on him. The police expressed 'surprise and concern' when they discovered how young the boy was but said, "We didn't feel he was a victim, he was a criminal". (*Guardian 4.8.01*)
- Two schoolboys killed a tramp by setting fire to him "for a laugh" as he slept on a park bench. The Judge, Mr. Justice Bell said at Maidstone Crown Court they had shown "no remorse whatsoever" during a three week trial for their unprovoked attack. They had run away laughing as George Johnstone began to burn after they had stuffed firelighters in his beard, pockets and shoes as he slept off a heavy bout of drinking in a park in Dartford. He suffered 40% burns and died later in hospital. Detective Inspector Tim Lewis said, "I am not sure we will ever fully understand what motivated these boys to act in such a cruel and savage way. It is very difficult to imagine the pain and shock that Mr. Johnstone must have undergone". The victim's brother said "We have all been staggered at the lack of emotion the schoolboys have shown in the last three weeks ... I am glad the judge noticed their lack of remorse". The boys were aged 13 and 16 and were sent to a Youth Offenders Centre. (*Daily Telegraph 10.11.01*)
- 48% of children who call Childline contemplating suicide in 1999 cited bullying as the main cause. Barry Graham, Director of Education for the NSPCC, said, "We know that bullying is the single biggest concern among children today. According to the Department for Education and Employment, one third of all girls and a quarter of all boys are afraid to go to school at some point during their school lives as a result of bullying. (*Times 28.11.01*)
- Scottish children as young as 11 are to be inoculated against hepatitis B, the deadly disease spread by unprotected sex and the shared use of drug needles. A project costing £1m will encourage 50,000 young Scots to take the vaccine. The Daily Record commented "The facts are simple: children are turning to drugs; children are having sex younger ... we must all take some responsibility for a situation where 11 year olds are considered at risk of sexually transmitted illness or drug addiction ...

if you suspected that innocence had been eroded in recent years, you were right. But that is not our children's fault – it's ours".
(*Daily Record* 19.12.00)

- Britain's leading children's charities have accused the Internet industry of refusing to act against the spread of child pornography on the web. The Internet Watch Foundation, the industry's self-regulation body, rejected a call from the charities to give itself powers to blacklist news groups, electronic bulletin boards, that contain paedophile material. The watchdog would have been able to stop its member Internet service providers from offering easy access to the blacklisted web-sites. Concern about paedophile activity has grown since the jailing in February of members of the 'Wonderland Club' who traded 120,000 images of children being tortured and abused. However, the Foundation rejected the tougher controls put forward by John Carr who represents seven charities on the Watchdog's board. The Internet industry has strong libertarian interests and sources have said that it was resisting regulation of paedophile material because it feared that would lead to further controls on adoption web-sites and tobacco advertising. (*Daily Telegraph* 27.4.01)
- Upbury Arts College in Medway, Kent, has withdrawn a school worksheet in which pupils were asked to debate the merits of sex with animals and dead people, after parents complained. Rebecca Linnell, 13, said, "We shouldn't be taught things like that". (*Times* 17.1.03)
- Professor Edmund Leach said in the 1967 BBC Reith Lecture "Far from being the basis of the good society, the family, with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets is the source of all our discontent. Children need to grow up in larger, more relaxed domestic groups centred on the community rather than on mother's kitchen; something like an Israeli kibbutz perhaps or a Chine commune. Morality is specified by culture; what you ought to do depends on who you are and where you are". Dr. Maurice Carstairs in the 1962 Reith Lecture on the BBC attacked Christians standards on sexuality and said that marriage was an "unromantic compromise between sensuality and drudgery. Many societies get on quite well without pre-marital chastity. It seems to me that our young people are rapidly turning our own society into one in which sexual experience, with precautions against conception, is becoming as accepted as a sensible preliminary to marriage...."
- In 1982 Professor Hoggett later Mrs. Justice hail said, "We should be considering whether the legal institution of marriage continues to serve any useful purpose". (*Marriage & Cohabitation in Contemporary Society*)
- "In the past 30 years the tax burden on the family has more than doubled whereas the tax burden on a single person without dependants has risen by less than a fifth" - Professor Lord Alton. (*Speaking at meeting of the Merseyside Council for Christians and Jews* 27.11.97)

13. Consumerism

The hunger to buy and to own?

- ' The **acquisitive** culture is preoccupied with consumption.
- ' The advertising and information industry, together with the powerful commercial interests, which it faithfully serves, has created a **consumer society**.
- ' Immense influence has been brought to bear on the individual, dictating **life-styles**, buying habits and even standards of morality.
- ' The hunger to buy and to own has an inherent **addictive** quality. It combines the promise of pleasure now with planned obsolescence.
- ' The contact emphasis is on **instant gratification** and delayed payment. This is inherently 'postmodern'.
- ' Consumer economics work through the creation of a culture of dissatisfaction and **greed**. Pleasure lies at the heart of consumerism.
- ' Consumerism actively promotes dependency. It feeds on **discontent** and even covetousness.
- ' Consumerism raises up idols and creates **unreal** expectations of copying their lifestyles. The philosophy of '**live now and pay later**' and of 'feeling good' is central to the consumerist postmodern society.
- ' A vast consumer **enterprise** has developed around sport, leisure and entertainment. It is now a major element in the national economy.
- ' Consumerism creates and cultivates tastes and appetites. What is consumed may not be nourishing or satisfying. It may even be poisonous and addictive. **Flavours** are often seen as more important than **nutrition**.

- ' The consumer world view reduces many people's vision of **freedom to shop**. Consumerism by definition promotes expectations. There is undoubtedly a direct connection between the promotion of consumerism, and the promotion of debt, crime and dissatisfaction.
 - ' A society obsessed with consumption is vulnerable to the manipulation of its **appetites**.
 - ' Consumerism is essentially materialistic, but even **spirituality** can be introduced as just another consumer item.
 - ' Information itself has become a **commodity**.
-

Organised greed?

It has been claimed that we are what we consume.

Consumerism is driven by credit, with the offer - "live now pay later".

Zygmunt Bauman points out that "*Modernity extolled the delay of gratification*" but in contrast "*the postmodern world ... preaches delay of payment*". There has been a shift from saving to debt, and therefore to control even more the lives of those in thrall.

A hedonistic approach to life is built into much modern consumerism. "*Consumerism proclaims pleasure not solely as the right of every individual but also as every individual's obligation to him or herself...The pursuit of pleasure, untarnished by guilt or shame, becomes the new image of the good life*". (Yiannis Gabriel and Tim Land 'The Unmanageable Consumer'.)

We are bombarded with advertisements and commercial images from the hoardings, from television and radio and in countless magazines and newspapers. There is hardly a part of our social life which has not been invaded by the advertising and public relations industries. They are now all-powerful. Advertising saturates our national life with massive television campaigns, global brand promotions and sponsorships. Each year millions of pounds are spent on exploiting the children's market, which is seen as a soft target. Advertising strongly exploits the ego – cars are presented as reflecting personal standing and the message is one of creating envy.

Mammon is the driving force of our culture. The profit-hungry pharmaceutical industry promotes contraceptives. The profit-hungry fashion industry promotes new styles. The profit-hungry pornographic industry promotes sex. Profit-hungry drug gangs promote cannabis and heroin. Profit-hungry music companies promote pop culture. The profit-hungry advertising companies promote sales at any cost. The profit-hungry abortion industry promotes termination of life. Profit-hungry broadcasters promote anything which increases ratings.

Shopping malls have become the new temples of mammon. Jean Veith says "*every detail proclaims the message: Spend money! The mall stands as a temple to consumerism and all of its values – comfort, affluence, convenience and fashion. The Middle Ages had its cathedrals; the modern age had its factories; the postmodern age has its shopping malls*". In the past we purchased commodities in order to live whereas now purchasing is in itself a way of life which excludes the spiritual dimension.

Some Evidence

- The average child eats 17.6 kilogrammes of chocolate worth £103.35 per year and spends another £45.94 on crisps and other savoury snacks. Research by food industry analysts, Datamonitor, shows that working and single parents have less time to spend with their children and, as a result, youngsters use guilt as a bargaining tool for increased pocket money and more treats. The snack industry is now worth £2 billion a year. (*Evening Standard* 9.9.99)
- According to a report from Mintel, the consumer research organisation, nearly two-thirds of people aged between 16 & 25 are in debt. The research has discovered that the under 20's showed a worrying "live for today" attitude when it came to using credit cards and getting into debt. A quarter of those aged 20-24 owed £3,000 or more. (*Financial Times* 5.5.01)
- The average household in Britain now spends £60 per week on leisure - £3 more than a year ago. The figures published in the Annual Family Spending Survey of the Office of National Statistics show that spending on leisure goods and services has risen from 9% of total family spending 30 years ago to 17% today. Martin Hayward, Director of the Consumer Consultancy at the Henley Centre, said "Many leisure purchases that might once have been regarded as a luxury are now regarded by most people as a basic necessity". (*Times* 25.11.99)
- Fast food outlets in the UK are expanding at the rate of at least one a week for each of the major chains. A survey has revealed that Britain now spends an average of £7 million a day on fast food, more than any other nation in Europe. The Mintel survey showed that Britain will spend a total £2.7 billion on fast food this year –not including the traditional fish and chips. (*Independent* 13.5.99)
- According to the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association in 1998 sales of cosmetics in Britain were £701m, skin care spending reached £765m and perfume and fragrance sales were £562m. A top brand of lipstick may retail at £10 although the manufacturing costs are only £1. The advertising cost is £2.50, the packaging cost is £1.70. The retailers profit is £2 and the manufacturers profit £1.50. (*Daily Telegraph* 29.4.00)
- In the United Kingdom £26 million was spent in 1992 on advertisements for toys and games. This increased to over £150 million in 1997. (*Mintel Market Intelligence, Toys and Games, July 1997*)
- Channel 5 has bid £40 million for the right to screen the Australian soap opera 'Home & Away' for at least five years. The show attracts 6 million viewers a day. (*Daily Telegraph* 23.3.00)
- J K Rowling, author of the Harry Potter children's books has already amassed a £220m fortune. She is one of the country's highest earning women with an estimated income of £45.4m. (*Daily Telegraph* 31.12.01)
- Sony are spending up to £21m on the production of one album 'Invincible' featuring Michael Jackson. (*Daily Telegraph* 28.6.01)
- Tom Cruise earns £50m per year. Tom Hanks £45m, Julia Roberts £19.5m; Harrison Ford £17.8m; Mel Gibson £16m; Bruce Willis £15m; Brad Pitt £13m; John Travolta £12, Jennifer Lopez £12m; Nicolas Cage £11m. (*Daily Mail* 6.6.01)
- One of the richest men in the world, Larry Ellison, has spent £70m on his Silicone Valley home. He is creating a Japanese imperial villa and gardens the final cost could reach £107m when it is completed in 2003. Mr. Ellison has been married and divorced three times. (*Daily Telegraph* 31.3.01)
- British company, Sale Cure Interactive, have launched a controversial game 'Carmageddon II – Carpcalypse'. It is a sequel to an earlier game 'Carmageddon' and it awards points for killing people. In the game pedestrians and animals can be maimed or killed in an explosion of blood and limbs. It has been licenced by the European Software Publishers Association. The creator of the games is Stainless Software whose Director Neil Barnden admitted it was gory but said, "everything is done for comic effect". (*Times* 13.11.98)
- In the face of growing public demand for a ban on advertising to children the Advertising Association President, Sir George Bull, said "We simply must find the time to make common cause in the defence of our freedom to advertise". Robert Howell, the President of The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, said "We will be four square behind the Advertising Association's defence of our freedom to advertise to children". (*Marketing* 15.7.99)
- The World Health Organisation has accused Marlboro of trying to push young people into addiction by encouraging them to smoke more. The company, which has already admitted that smoking is addictive, is offering free gifts to those who can prove they have bought 1,600 Marlboro cigarettes. For 80 pack foils smokers can receive a Nikon Nuvis A20 camera, for 70 a Sanyo CD player, for 60 a Lorus watch (made by Seiko), for 50 a BT Easy Reach Pager. The WHO newsletter 'Health!' has reported that youngsters are being handed free packets of cigarettes in exchange for their names and addresses. Later they received leaflets promoting the accessories and BT have now said that their decision to take part in this promotion was a mistake. Spokesman Robert Dunnett said, "We are sorry about it". A spokesman for Nikon said that they would "ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future". (*Guardian* 16.10.99)

- In a £1m initiative more than 8,000 children will be given smart cards on which to collect positive behaviour points. These points will then be exchangeable for tickets for sports and leisure events across London and children could even travel to Disneyland on the Eurostar. Superintendent Charles Griggs of the Metropolitan Police in Southwark said "It is all about rewarding good behaviour... for some children just turning up to school is positive behaviour and it is not noticed". More than 50 commercial organisations have signed up for this initiative. (*Daily Telegraph 11.12.01*)
- A magazine has provoked outrage by running a competition to win a divorce. 'Chat' offered a prize of £500 towards legal costs to the reader offering the best reason for wanting to escape a wretched relationship. 'Chat's' features editor, Paul Merrill, said, "Divorce should be a celebration. It is an escape from an unhappy relationship. There is nothing to be ashamed of". Denise Knowles, of the marriage guidance service Relate, said, "Marriage is under enough pressure. Magazines should be supporting it rather than undermining it". (*Daily Mail 4.2.99*)
- Philip Green, the owner of British Home Stores, celebrated his 50th birthday by spending £5m on a party. It was described as a three-day "orgy of conspicuous consumption". (*Sunday Telegraph 17.3.02*)
- Millions of families owe vast sums of money to banks and credit card companies and the National Consumer Council, warning of the serious consequences of an interest rate rise said "This is a time bomb ticking away". Figures reveal that borrowings have more than doubled in the past seven years to over £140 billion. Consumers are paying the lowest sums for 40 years on loans and mortgages and this is leading to increased buying and borrowing. The Consumer Credit Counselling Service has warned against continual borrowing and a Datamonitor Report shows that unsecured personal loans have been the fastest growing product sector in 2001, growing five times faster than earnings. (*Daily Express 20.2.02*)
- One of Britain's most controversial doctors, the fertility expert Ian Craft, who helped a 60 year old lady have a baby, has an annual salary of almost £2.5m. He is the sole director of the London Gynaecology and Fertility Centre. (*Sunday Times 16.9.01*)
- The biggest lottery win was £22,590,829 by Paul Maddison and Mark Gardiner in Hastings. The next largest was by Terry Benson of Hull who won £20,088,380 a month later. In three years the National Lottery has created 447 new millionaires. (*Guardian 15.11.97*)
- A retired cleaner has won the National Lottery jackpot of £8,355,000 (*Times 6.5.98*)
- 18 people each won over £1 million in the National Lottery on 31st December 1999. (*BBC News 1.1.2000*)
- Tom Naylor was presented with £15.5m by Joanna Lumley after winning the National Lottery Extra draw. Mr. Naylor earns £1,000 per month but will receive around £2,000 a day in interest alone after collecting the sixth biggest lottery win since the tickets went on sale seven years ago. He is the biggest winner to go public. (*Daily Telegraph 17.11.01*)
- In his interview with David Frost, Richard Branson together with Bill Gates, who wants to run the National Lottery in the United Kingdom, said he wanted to introduce a system which produced a new millionaire every day. This he said would "make a lot more people happier and successful". (*BBC Breakfast with frost, 9.1.00*)
- A 26-year-old man in Tilbury has become the winner of the Saturday roll-over jackpot of the National Lottery and is to receive £13,861,061. (*Daily Telegraph 11.8.00*)
- Following the large sums given to winners of ITV's 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire', Chris Evans gave away £1million on his radio show. (*Times 18.12.99*)

I 4. Godlessness

The rejection of the Divine?

- ' Many people today dismiss the concept of **God**. Many claim that God is dead.
- ' For centuries society expressed its **dependence** upon God. Today, efforts are being made deliberately to construct society as if it were **independent** of God.
- ' The centuries-old response to the transcendence and glory of almighty God, the Creator of the Universe, is being displaced by the search for a 'god within', as in the New Age movement. Religion is thus privatised and the concept of God made **irrelevant** in our social life, or at best the subject of **personal choice**.
- ' Eternal and divine truth is rejected and enduring certainty is replaced by continual **uncertainty**.
- ' The process of de-Christianisation, which is currently taking place in the United Kingdom, dogmatically rejects the **supremacy** of Jesus and His uniqueness. His claims are denied and widespread antagonism to His teachings is now a characteristic of our age.
- ' The assault upon the Christian faith and the decline of the Christian church has undoubtedly corresponded with a period of profound social malaise and **crisis**. The process of refashioning society on the dubious precepts of atheistic humanism is not working. The secular society is dysfunctional.
- ' Christians affirm that the **rejection** of God has serious consequences. When the Christian foundations crumble or we build upon shifting sand, eventually the whole edifice is in grave danger of collapse.

- ' The enormous **void** created by dismissing God from our culture will inevitably be filled. History reveals how countless dictators have attempted to fill this void. Their attempts have been futile.
- ' Christians assert that a society that rejects its understanding of and accountability to God is **adrift**. Desperate and failing attempts continue to be made to anchor it to secular, man-made rules and concepts.
- ' Many may appear to be obsessed with 'heritage' or 'futurism'. Many, however, do not see the past and future as having importance - the **present** is all that matters.
- ' Non-Christians assert that God is non-existent, absent or silent. Conversely, Christians witness to a personal **encounter** with a living, communicating God – the God of the age - here and now.
- ' Our society is in the midst of a power struggle. The outcome of this struggle may be directly dictated by our commitment to, or our rejection of God.

Turning our back upon God

Alexander Men declared *“Atheism has always been a symptom of spiritual crisis, impoverishment and decay”*.

Somerset Maugham said, *“The practical outcome of agnosticism is that you act as though God does not exist”*.

Francis Shaeffer observed *“Scientists in the 17th and 18th century continued to use the word God, but pushed God more and more to the edges of their systems. Finally, scientists in this stream of thought moved to the idea of a completely closed system. This left no room for God. But equally it left no room for man. Man disappears, to be viewed as a form of determined or behaviouristic machine”*.

Feuerbach in the 19th century declared *“I deny God”*. Freud denied God and was influenced by Feuerbach who branded religion and belief in God as *“a universal obsessional neurosis*. Marx, also influenced by Feuerbach, was highly antagonistic to any belief in God and said, *“Religion is the opium of the people”*.

In more recent times some have endeavoured to redefine the nature of God. The New Ager, Benjamin Crème, says *“God is the sum total of all that exists in the whole of the manifested and unmanifested universe...you are God. I am God...and because all is God, there is no God”*.

The New Age theologian, Matthew Fox says *"We are we, and we are God"*.

Jean Paul Sartre had to admit, *"If I have excluded God the Father there must be somebody to invent values"*.

The dilemma of secular humanism is that it leads to two contradictory conclusions – one that man has absolute value, claiming to be God and the other that man has no value, being no more than a 'pause' in the nitrogen cycle.

Secularism denies judgement and any accountability to God. Apart from obeying the law, we are not responsible to anyone. Morality becomes a personal whim, fancy or preference and not an obligation.

Secularism is unable to cope with the unending human search for a spiritual dimension of life. Ironically, the influence of sustained secularist propaganda has coincided with a multiplicity of new religions and a growth in interest in astrology and the occult.

The history of dictatorships draws some to the conclusion that ultimately the man who denies God may be led to claim to be god himself.

This has had far reaching and grim consequences for western culture. During the past hundred years the rejection of religion and the expulsion of God has created enormous, and some would say, insuperable problems for atheists and agnostics alike. Salman Rushdie, highly antagonistic to belief in God has said *"To choose unbelief is to choose mind over dogma, to trust in our humanity instead of all these dangerous divinities...imperfect human knowledge maybe a bumpy pot-holed street but it's the only road towards wisdom worth taking"*. (*The Guardian* 16.10.99)

The rejection of God inevitably has very serious consequences. Our rebellion ultimately imprisons us. The shallowness of a godless society was mocked by T S Eliot in "The Rock" when he said - *"Here were decent godless people: their only monument - an asphalt road and a thousand lost golf balls"*.

Jesus speaks of our encounter with God bringing us freedom. Seneca taught *"To obey God is to be free"*.

Some Evidence

- Professor Michael Barbour, head of the Standards Unit at the Department of Education and Employment, has said that pupils should learn the ethics of "global citizenship" to replace crumbling religious values. Speaking at the Secondary Heads' Association Conference in Birmingham he said "Progressively over the last 200 years ... the belief systems which sustained Western societies have crumbled away. Christianity, which established ethical codes for most of the last 2000 years, has become a minority interest.....". Regarded as the Department of Education and Employment's leading thinker, he said that by the 1970's all that remained in Western countries was rampant consumerism and 'the quicksand of cultural relativism' – an abandonment of the morality of right and wrong. He asked, "In the absence of God and Marx what are we to do?" (*Guardian* 23.3.98)
- Mayer Bird Associates have produced an advertisement for the Paramount Comedy Channel featuring a parody of the Turin Shroud in which the head of Christ is replaced with that of a donkey. An advert for Tango produced by HHCL & Partners showed children praying to the Lord for some of the orange fizzy drink. Lowe Howard-Spink produced a poster for Heineken at Christmas, showing a nativity scene with the caption "It's a girl!" Earlier, the British Safety Council produced an advertisement for "Safe Sex" featuring the Pope wearing a hard hat and the slogan "the Eleventh Commandment...I'd always wear a condom". An issue of London's 'Time Out' magazine featured on its cover a footballer with arms spread open and rosary beads and crucifixes around his neck, the headline said "The resurrection of David Beckham". The Sunday Times showed a photograph of Raquel Welch strapped to a cross in a leather bikini and the agency Mitchell, Patterson, Grime, Mitchell produced an advertisement for the paper company Rey & Co and showed an attractive woman holding a greetings card with 'Jesus He loves me'. The clothing company Diesel had advertisements conceived by Lowe Howard-Spink showing young nuns standing in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary, dressed from the waist down in tight fitting jeans. Research by the Advertising Standards Authority finds that 8 out of 10 people believe that "disrespectful references to any religion, race or culture should never be allowed". (*Daily Telegraph* 2.4.99)
- The Observer magazine featured an article by Barbara Ellen under the title "Heaven Can Wait". It mocks, ridicules and blasphemes Jesus. Her phrases include "I am a bit bored with Jesus...The realisation that God didn't exist tended to arrive at

exactly the same moment as the realisation that hangovers did...indeed the Son the God currently seems to rank somewhat lower in juvenile awareness than Britney, Ronan, Leonardo, or any other false god one might care to mention. The harsh truth being that, compared to even the most bottom-rung celebrities, Jesus has become very small fry. So, has Jesus lost it? By which I mean has He, the holiest of the holies, the Son of the Creator, who came down to earth to preach peace and joy, and who suffered and died on the cross for our sins, hit a bit of a career trough? Is Mary's son under-performing? Or, to couch it in terms even the most shallow of people could understand, has the son of God failed to have a 'hit' for some time, and consequently been struck off the great guest list in the sky?". She referred to God and Jesus being "the ultimate Father-and-Son song and dance act". She poses the question "What young person would want to sit around thinking about God when, with one pop of a pill, they can actually see Him?" She went on "Celebrity is what screwed up Jesus Christ's demographic. When Christ, Cat Stevens and Uri Geller were all there was, everything was fine. Now that Christ has got some serious competition, He's struggling to hold our attention". She further mocks Christ by saying "Considering that so many celebrities like to swan around behaving like they're Christ, may be JC could retaliate by behaving like a celebrity. Start appearing in churches and demanding decent plonk be used as His blood, that sort of thing. It couldn't hurt".
(The Observer Magazine 15.4.01)

- Aleister Crowley called his new religion 'Thelean' (from the Greek word for 'will'). He claimed that it had been revealed to him by 'preternatural intelligencies'. In 1904 he put their message into his supposedly sacred text the Book of The Law. He was the Grand Master of the Ordo Templi Orientis which has branches all over the world today. Like Freemasons they say, "We are not exactly a secret society, more a society with secrets". One of their supporters is Kenneth Anger who is making a film of the gnostic mask with a branch of OTO in Texas. In the 1970's he and Marianne Faithfull performed rituals intended to make the devil appear in the film Lucifer Rising. Crowley founded 'Abbey of the Liam' in Sicily and dedicated it to sex, magic and drug taking. In the 1960's International Times, they called him "the unsung hero of the hippies" and the Beatles put him on the cover of Sergeant Pepper. Jonathan Jones says of him "He is an enduring figure of the 20th century because he captured, and made into a myth, the dissolution of universal moral codes. If you want prophecy you need look no further than his slogan 'do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law'. This, alone, reveals him as the 20th century's cut price Nietzsche".
(Guardian 28.3.98)
- A full-length 6 hour voodoo ceremony, complete with a voodoo priest is touring England sponsored by the Arts Council and the European Commission. It is the first time anything of its kind has been seen in this country. Various so-called 'lwa' are summoned to possess those present. Edgard Louis, the voodoo priest was initiated at a nighttime visit to a graveyard in order to summon up the most potent of all voodoo spirits. He described a ritual 'summoning in a graveyard' and then said, "You can then ask for everything you want. You can go out and grab hold of the person who has wronged you. You can haunt people". In the performance various girls are in turn possessed and take on the characteristics of particular spirits. The performance includes lewd dancing, convulsions and contortions. Louis claims "The lwa could kill you if they escape". The churches asked Camden Council, the licensing authority for the London event, not to grant an entertainments license. However, the authorities said that it was not its job to police issues of 'faith and morality'.
(Times Magazine 16.5.98)
- On 19th April 2001 the BBC produced a 50-minute 'documentary' programme. In their Radio Times they billed it as "a great film". Entitled "Magic – Art of Darkness" it featured putting curses on people, casting spells and conjuring up demons. It openly featured the followers of the satanist Aleister Crowley and the Ordo Templi Orientis. One of the participants interviewed said that he did the ritual of the pentagram every day and adorations to the sun and spoke of agnostic 'mass' part of which involved eating a communion host doused with menstrual blood. The Radio Times advertised the film with a photograph of one of the participants wielding a dagger.
(BBC2 19.4.01 9-9.50pm)
- Coronation Street screened a non-religious cremation designed by the British Humanist Association. The Humanist Association now has 175 'officiators' who conduct funerals, weddings and baby-naming services. The televised service had a poem in place of prayers and made no mention of God. It is claimed that the number of humanist funerals rose by 40% to 4,750.
(Daily Telegraph 28.6.01)
- For several decades the Hollywood film industry was restrained by the Hays Office which issued a self-monitoring industry Production Code in 1930 which placed restrictions on sex, foul language, violence, ridicule of religion, ethnic insults and the portrayal of drug usage. The Code was initially introduced as a result of alarm being expressed in society as coarse elements began creeping into Hollywood's products. In 1966 Jack Valenti became President of the Motion Picture Association of America. In 1991 he boasted "the first thing I did... was to junk the Hays Production Code, which was an anachronistic piece of censorship that we never should have put into place".
(Quoted in Medved: Hollywood vs America)
- 'Marilyn', the lead singer of the American rock band Marilyn Manson, a self-confessed satanist has stated, "In my eyes all evil is good and that's the message I want to ram into the heart and mind of every single person in Britain".
(Daily Star 12.12.96)

15. Idolatry

New objects of worship?

- ' There is an innate desire in human nature for an object of **worship** and devotion.
- ' Those who reject the concept of God in their lives often consciously or unconsciously seek to **fill the void**. This often leads directly to idolatry.
- ' Although secular society theoretically discards worship and dispenses with icons, in fact it positively encourages **idolatry**. The supposedly neutral secular society, while disapproving of the worship of God, quite definitely approves the worship of humankind and human idols.
- ' External appearance, packaging and image creation are essential elements in the idol-making process. The idols are sustained by and contribute to many forms of **manipulation** and **indoctrination**, including subconscious **coercion**.
- ' Very powerful and profit-driven commercial interests exploit the need for worship. They raise up **idols** in the form of sports heroes, popular entertainers and other celebrities, for adulation and emulation. The advertising and public relations industries, along with the media and so-called 'spin-doctors', play a major role in identifying, creating, sustaining and frequently destroying **popular idols**.
- ' Pagans and followers of animistic religions have always made elements of nature and man-made artefacts into **objects** of worship. Neo-pagans today worship creation rather than the Creator. They deify the world as 'gaia' bowing down to what they deem to be the "earth goddess" or the "great mother". In doing this they are endeavouring to meet the deep-rooted human need to worship.

- ' The emergence of the New Age and a widespread interest in the occult may be substantially due to a real **hunger** for a spiritual dimension of life and also to the perceived poverty of much Christian worship.
 - ' While growing numbers of those involved in occult practices worship spirits and even gurus, it is significant that the prime concern and centre of attention of many New Agers is **self**. Indeed many of them believe themselves to be gods or God. When we worship ourselves we are engaging in one of the most useless forms of idolatry.
 - ' When society turns away from acknowledging and **worshipping** God, it appears to have no alternative but disintegration or idolatry.
-

The new gods and our needs

In the 16th century John Calvin said, *“The human heart is a factory of idols”*.

There is a deeply engrained need in human nature for an object of devotion. There is, in fact, a hunger for God. Eric Fromm said *“the study of people forces us to acknowledge that the need for a general system of orientation and for an object of devotion is deeply rooted in human existence”*.

The expulsion of God from our lives leaves a vacuum which may readily be filled with idolatry. Alexander Men said, *“If people turn away from God, they inevitably turn to idols”*.

This object, this idol, may be an idea or an ideal. It may be an imaginary thing or being. It may be a human person. It may be ourselves. Auguste Comte, the early exponent of positivism, in searching to understand human nature was led to worship the ‘Supreme Being’ – mankind itself.

Significantly, New Agers openly worship themselves. Shirley MacLaine in her book ‘Dancing in the Light’ brazenly proclaims *“We are not under the law of God. We are as the law of God. We are God”*. She also declares *“Each soul is its own God. He must never worship anything other than self. For you are God”*.

Countless gurus and founders of new religions say, like Swami Muktananda *“Kneel to your own self, honour and worship your own being”*.

A substantial proportion of the world views being expressed today reject any belief, philosophy or religion which refuses to accept the supremacy of human reason. The uniqueness of the truth of Jesus is rejected and placed in the category of a personal opinion or feeling. Today we are creating societies which, are in effect, independent of God. The architects of these societies are strongly antagonistic to the teachings of Jesus.

Because of the privatisation of religious belief, the search for the transcendence and glory of Almighty God, the creator of the universe, is being displaced by a fruitless search for the God who is perceived to be within. This is to be found in much New Age literature today.

For centuries Christians have believed that God has made His will and His character known. Today, many have shifted ground from being dependent upon God to striving to be independent of Him, or any higher authority than humankind.

Theoretically the secular society dispenses with icons and ideals for emulation, but in fact commercial influences in the media are constantly projecting the new 'icons' and models for behaviour. The secular society which theoretically abjures public worship has positively encouraged idolatry. The supposedly neutral secular society, while disapproving of the worship of God, quite definitely approves of the worship of humankind. The infamous Dome, rather than celebrating the birth of Jesus, brazenly celebrated 2000 years of human achievement.

In totalitarian regimes dictators are frequently presented as idols with almost divine status, having their portraits prominently displayed. In the West idols are created and sustained by equally well-organised influences. In the former instances the influences are primarily political. In the latter they are largely commercial. The media – newspapers, radio and television – in the former focus upon the personality of the all-powerful ruler and in the latter on the personality and lifestyle of the particular 'celebrities' who are extremely rich. In both instances the objects of adoration are held in awe and admiration, very close to worship. In the West they establish lifestyles, sponsor products and are upheld by a web of heavily funded public relations organisations, advertising agents and contrived 'news' stories. The global entertainment industry has mushroomed generating global responses and creating vast wealth for personalities on stage, screen, television, radio and the sports field. The crowds at one leading football match were reported as proclaiming "*Football is our God*".

Andrew Walker argues "*After the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 and Martin Luther King in 1968, hero worship was increasingly relocated from political figures (one could also add, from ecclesiastical, military, missionary, visionary figures) to pop stars, fashion models, television and film actors, and sportsmen and women*".

To sustain this worship special periodicals devoted solely to individual celebrities are produced such as 'Hello' and 'OK'. Enormous efforts are made to win devotees, especially amongst children and young people who are actively encouraged to follow personalities, many of whom are at best very dubious and at worst corrupting role models.

Even our children can be made idols, being over-fed, over-dressed, over-trained. Globally many children are physically, emotionally and economically destitute, but the newly rich in the West now spend enormous sums on their children, and failing this, upon their pets.

Mammon is worshipped in our society on a vast scale with huge popular participation. The pursuit of wealth is presented as supremely important. The National Lottery and television show games such as 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?' are evidence of this.

Just as cathedrals, temples and shrines were built for gods, so now we have our expensive sports, entertainment and shopping centres. The celebrities have their grandiose estates, with their 'holy of holies'. Although away from public gaze, they are meticulously presented to a worshipping public by the public relations managers, who recognise that idols are the most important things in the lives of millions of devotees and, of course, sources of vast profit.

Some Evidence

- An exhibition entitled 'Heaven' staged at the Tate Gallery in Liverpool depicts Heaven as an earthly paradise. God has been ousted from his position and Saints have been displaced by celebrities such as Diana, Princess of Wales who is depicted as the Madonna. The exhibition programme notes say "Religious imagery and ritual is no longer contained within a traditional sacred place and a tropical beach resort, a fashionable mall or a football stadium have become, for many, a vision of paradise". The programme states "Celebrities, super models and pop stars are now idolised and adored as once were Saints and angels and many worship at the graves of the famous, at pop concerts, clubs and fashion shows". (*Times* 9.12.99)
- The new idolatry was illustrated in 1998 when the Trafford Shopping Centre was granted a marriage licence. A couple had a blessing at the centre in December and the bride said "the service was conducted by a Reiki Master, a spiritual healer, we chose the Dolphin because it's our favourite spot in the centre and the surroundings are quite spectacular." (*Metro News* 18.1.98)
- Pop idols create cult following. Children have been cutting themselves with razors to emulate the rap star EMINEM. Pupils at a school in Oldham have been using the blades from pencil sharpeners to scar their arms in homage to a scene in one of the

singer's videos. A teacher noticed flesh wounds on the forearm of a ten-year-old and when challenged four other pupils came forward to say that they also inflicted wounds after seeing a fan slash his wrists in the video of 'Stan'. The teacher said, "It has all been instigated by this idiot EMINEM". The Greater Manchester Police Schools' Liaison Officer went to the school to warn the children. He said, "it is quite worrying that parents are allowing their children to watch things like this. It could lead to serious injury, even death". In January a coroner in Teignmouth criticised EMINEM's lyrics. At the inquest on a 17-year-old, David Hurcomb who had printed out the lyrics to Rock Bottom which includes lines such as 'wouldn't it be weird to fall to the bottom of a bottomless pit'. He did this before throwing himself in front a train. In March another inquest was told that a 13-year-old girl, Kayleigh Davies of Eastleigh, Hampshire hanged herself after becoming obsessed with the American rap singer's music. (*Times* 14.7.01)

- Children are confronted with various forms of idolatry. One of Britain's biggest teaching union has issued a stern warning to parents that J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter creation could lead children into the sinister world of the occult. Peter Smith, General Secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, has echoed concerns in America and called on parents and teachers to be wary. He said "Children must be protected from the more extreme influences of the occult and be taught in a responsible and positive way the risks of journeying into the unknown. The premier of Harry Potter, the movie, will lead to a whole new generation of youngsters discovering witchcraft and wizardry ... though it is important not to overreact to this entertainment phenomomen, the risks are clear". Peter Smith said the ATL had a long-standing concern over children "meddling in the occult" – "increasing numbers of children are spending hours alone browsing the Internet in search of satanic web sites and we are concerned that nobody is monitoring this growing fascination". (*Observer* 4.11.01)
- Reinaldo Avila da Silva, Peter Mandelson's homosexual partner has asked a witch doctor in Mexico to deal with Mr. Mandelson's political opponents. When in Mexico Mr. Mandelson attended a voodoo cemetery with Mr. Da Silva in which animal sacrifice took place. Marina Baker, author of 'Spells for Teenage Witches' and herself a member of the Saltdean coven offered to protect Charlie Whelan (who was one of Mr. Mandelson's strongest opponents) by casting a protective spell over him. She said, "he will stand in the pentagram. It is a circle with stars and five points made with Malvern sea salt and a candle at each point". (*Daily Express* 29.3.01)
- The footballer, David Beckham, is presented in a painting by the London artist, Sharon Lutchman as Jesus, the Messiah. With outstretched arms, a bare torso, and a golden halo circling his blonde hair, he is presented under a gothic arch. The artist said "I see David Beckham as the modern-day religious icon – a person who appears as a god". She said "I have projected him as somebody embracing the world". (*Evening Standard* 28.1.03)

I 6. Truth

A universal affirmation?

- ' The concept of **Truth** is being questioned today.
- ' **Uncertainty** and inconsistency are the most striking characteristics of those who dismiss the concept of absolute truth.
- ' For 'postmodernists' all truths are **relative**, none are absolute.
- ' By reacting against the perceived certainties of 'modernism' many, including the self-confessed postmodernists, regard **doubt** in all things as a virtue.
- ' Many gurus today insist that moral education should enthusiastically embrace relativism. They propose a form of **pluralism** in which all values and opinions are equally valid and equally true.
- ' There is widespread objection to the teaching of any moral values. In our educational system the role of the teacher is seen as encouraging the child to **create** his own values.
- ' Ironically, in a society where absolute truth is discarded, **untruths** may be readily accepted. The young may be taught that promiscuity can be safe and acceptable behaviour. They may be taught that relationships are dispensable. They may be taught that soft drugs are harmless. They may be taught that the child in the womb is not a real person.
- ' The **rejection of God** is ultimately bound up with the rejection of absolute truth. If we declare that '*God is dead*' we open the floodgates for the promulgation of lies.

- ' The concept of absolute truth is largely misunderstood. It has been **caricatured** as meaning the full comprehensible body of all truth, as articulated by a particular person or body of people.
 - ' Ironically, those who claim that there is no truth are themselves making a **truth-claim**.
 - ' Absolute Truth is mysterious. It is beyond the capacity of the human mind to grasp in its **totality**. The more we learn, the more **questions** are asked. This is the dynamic of exploration. We gain considerable insight into truth in our searching.
 - ' Our journey towards the Truth essentially contains the idea of **mystery**. This journey engages all our human faculties and experience.
 - ' Christians believe in revelation - that God has revealed himself to us in Christ as the ultimate **Truth**.
-

Truths and Falsehoods

Those who dismiss the concept of absolute truth would enthusiastically applaud Nietzsche's claim - *"It is only moral prejudice to assert that truth is more valuable than appearance"*. Similarly they would embrace Oscar Wilde's claim *"truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style"*.

The truth about the sin of humankind and the manifest evil in human history is often rejected. The fact that people deliberately chose evil rather than good, is merely dismissed as simply the consequence of cultural environment or as some form of dysfunctional framework. It is rarely seen as the deliberate exercise of choice. New Agers like Humanists reject the concept of sin, speaking rather of 'error'. They replace the concept of original sin with 'original goodness'.

The characteristic of modernity is certainty about truth based on human reason whereas the characteristic of post-modernity is uncertainty about truth itself. There is a similar uncertainty about good and evil, the modernist assumption being that human nature is inherently good and perhaps getting better.

This is in marked contrast with the views of Richard Dawkins that human beings are *"inescapably selfish"*.

Michael Novak, speaking in Westminster Abbey in 1994 said *"During the next 100 years, the question for those who love liberty is whether we can survive the most insidious and duplicitous attacks from within, from those that undermine the virtues of our people, doing in advance the work of the Father of Lies. 'There is no such thing as truth'. They teach even the little ones. 'Truth is bondage. Believe what seems right to you. There are as many truths as there are individuals. Follow your feelings. Do as you please. Get in touch with yourself. Do what feels comfortable'. This is how they speak, those who prepare the jails of the 21st century. Those who undermine the idea of truth do the work of tyrants"*. He declared *"Truth matters. Even for those unsure whether there is a God, a truth is different from a lie"*.

Bob Dylan in Lyric (1965) said, “*You ask of truth? There is no truth, for it is but a drunken matter. Good and evil are but words invented by those that are tapped in scenes*”.

David Lyon writes, “*Whereas tolerance was once believed to be founded in unique truth, the irony is that pluralism – which that tolerance permitted - now requires that truth be abandoned.*”

Some Evidence

- A report of the National Audit Office “adjusted” figures of waiting lists in order to hide the real situation. Edward Leigh, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee said the fiddles were “a major breach of public trust”. Hospitals implicated include some of the best known in the country such as Guys and St. Thomas’ NHS Trust London, Bart’s and London NHS Trust and University College London Hospitals NHS Trust. (*Daily Telegraph 19.12.01*)
- An inquiry has been launched in Stockport because of allegations that police have exaggerated their clear-up rates by attributing unsolved crimes to convicted criminals. They are said to have asked criminals to take the blame for offences they had not committed or attributed crimes to them without informing them. Police statisticians were initially impressed by Stockport’s crime figures but uncovered so many inconsistencies that they called in the Internal Investigations Unit. They will particularly look into “taken into consideration” offences when criminals are sentenced. Under Home Office guidelines TIC’s should only apply in cases where the offender admits the crime. Greater Manchester has one of the lowest clear-up rates in Britain. In the year 2000-2001 the force solved only 22% of 363,454 incidents of recorded crime. (*Daily Telegraph 20.3.02*)
- The public no longer believes reassurances from Government, the media or industry about the safety of new technologies, a survey has shown. Carried out for Unilever UK, Green Alliance and the Royal Society of Arts by Taylor Nelson Sofres, the survey shows that 46% of those questioned said they thought the government had something to hide when it offered reassurances about the safety of vaccines, mobile phones or genetically modified food. Only 22% of those questioned trusted what they had heard or read in the press. (*Times 19.03.01*)
- Many M.E.P.s have expressed concern, following the disclosure of lax management by the European Commission in its handling of the £65b annual budget. A Dutch auditor, Paul Van Buitenen who blew the whistle on corruption, was suspended. There are many areas of investigation and the Commission has admitted that between 1993 and 1995 more than £400m in aid spending could not be accounted for. (*Times 11.1.99*)
- The European Commission’s financial watchdogs will withhold approval of its accounts for the fourth year running because of unacceptably high levels of budgetary mismanagement. The Court of Auditors annual report identifies individual projects where up to half the money allocated was improperly dispersed or accounted for. Jan Kaklsson, the Court’s Swedish President said the audit “turned up an unacceptable frequency of substantial errors”. (*Times 9.11.99*)
- The Government spent £63m on pre-election advertising campaigns according to figures published from A C Nielson MMS, a media monitoring service. Their report that the Government was Britain’s biggest advertiser in the first quarter of the year 2001 spending £62.8m almost twice as much as the household products manufacturer Unilever. In the same period last year the Government spent £24.45m. In March alone the Central Office of Information (COI) spent £30m representing 22% of the total amount spent by the top 20 advertisers. (*Times 26.4.01*)
- Britain has become a dumping ground for foreign chicken pumped up with water, protein – some of it pork – and chemicals used to increase its weight, an enquiry by the Food Standards Agency has found out. More than a quarter of chicken sold by restaurants and takeaways is not chicken. In the worst case a 100gm portion of chicken breast was sold as 182gms. The rest was water, protein derived from skin, bone or connective tissue and chemicals used to ensure that the added ingredients did not leak during cooking. Steven Butterworth of the Trading Standards Institute said “This rip-off affects consumers and businesses alike and needs to be stamped out. More than 50,000 tonnes of frozen chicken – about 15% of the market – sold to takeaways and restaurants was doctored. Most was dumped by Dutch processors who imported from third world countries such as Thailand and Brazil”. Customers were misled – products tested were not labelled as containing protein. The practice of adding water, salts, flavourings and hydrolysed protein is legal. Sir John Krebs, Chairman of the Food Standard Agency said “This joint investigation has shaken this market, with some suppliers withdrawing their products and changing their production processes”. Three British importers have been prosecuted over the mislabelling of chicken for the catering trade and more cases are expected. Several Dutch suppliers conceded to the FSA that their chicken did not meet the standards described on their labels. (*Daily Telegraph 12.12.01*)
- One of Britain’s most prominent judges, Judge Neil Denison, marked his retirement by attacking a ‘cloud of political correctness’ in the courts and a spate of Criminal Justice Acts that restricted judicial independence. He said “I see a Criminal Justice System treated by government and opposition alike as a political football. A new Criminal Justice Act is an annual event, each one of which when not contradicting the previous one brings even more complicating sentencing provisions and restricts the discretion – and therefore the independence – of judges. Over all this hangs the cloud of political correctness. In some of its more lunatic aspects, political correctness is merely ridiculous but in the thinking behind it, there is something more

sinister which is shown by the fact that already there are certain areas and topics where freedom of speech, in the sense of the right to open and frank discussion, is being gradually but significantly eroded". (*Daily Telegraph* 22.3. 02)

- Hundreds of teachers cheated in last month's SAT's (Standard Assessment Tests) by helping their pupils or by altering the final answers. The number of cases referred to the Government's Examination Body – the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) by parents and school staff has increased sharply to an all time high. The QCA is urging more parents to report schools if they have evidence of teachers falsifying results and the General Secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, John Dunford, said of teacher malpractice in the SAT's tests, "Parents say that it is going on all the time...". The QCA revealed figures showing a rise in the number of cases reported to 270 last year from 147 the previous year. Until 2001 the number had been progressively falling from 245 in 1998 to 204 in 1999. But the complaints formally logged with the QCA are likely to be the tip of the iceberg because of parents' fear about the implications for their children's school and the sensitivity of the issue. (*Guardian Weekly* 19.6.02)

17. Relativism

No fixed reference point?

- ' Awareness of moral absolutes creates a sense of **certainty**, security and continuity, whereas the characteristics of relativism are uncertainty, insecurity and lack of continuity.
 - ' To achieve and maintain stability, civilised society needs basic, agreed and **fixed standards**. This is vital for it to function in a cohesive manner.
 - ' When human beings consider themselves totally **independent** of their creator, they have no fixed point of reference and no fixed and absolute standards.
 - ' Standards, which are **absolute** and values, which are **permanent**, are invariably rooted in belief in God.
 - ' Eternal verities are today being displaced by subjective values and by **personal opinion and fancy**.
 - ' Relativism removes all **constants**, and leads to the dismissal of all ultimate authority. It prepares the way for disintegration, and even anarchy.
 - ' **Moral** standards were traditionally passed on from one generation to the next with a fixed point of reference, whereas today relativists urge the questioning of all inherited standards.
 - ' It is often claimed that the emerging secular society is **neutral** and thus not committed to any specific worldview or belief. In fact, secularism is a belief system itself and is, therefore, not neutral.
 - ' The claims of Jesus are not relative. They are absolute – for all times, all people and all situations. They are **eternal** and **universal**.
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Nothing is certain!

If we dispense with absolutes, society will be drawn into the confusion of relativism. If there is no right and wrong, morality is a matter of personal feeling and there can be no fixed standards. If there is no good or evil, there is nothing we can teach our children about morality, other than confusion.

Instability of belief inevitably creates instability in society. When relative truth is introduced into comparative religion we drift into the mists of inter-faith syncretism.

Peter Kreeft wrote, "*A corollary of scepticism is relativism. Scepticism means there is no certain knowledge; relativism means there is no certain reality, no real absolutes. But we are not consistent relativists; we do not ask whether it is only relatively true that everything is relative; we are relativistic about our relativism. If we were, we would leave room for a possible absolute somewhere. But just as we are dogmatic about our scepticism we are absolute about our relativism*". ('Love is Stronger than Death')

Arthur Slesinger Jr. dismissing "*The mystic prophets of the absolute*" says "*Sustained by our history and traditions, we must save ourselves at whatever risk of heresy or blasphemy*".

A dominant influence on New Age thinking - Swami Vivekananda, (who significantly played a major role in the 'first parliament of the world's religions') said, "*good and evil are one and the same*". He also said, "*the murderer too is God*". (The Yogas and Other Works 1953). Bagwan Shree Rajneesh said "*I don't believe in morality*" and "*I'm bent on destroying it*". (Sammy's magazine September/October 1978). He also states "*My Ashram (spiritual community) makes no difference between the demonic and the divine*". (The Sound of Running Water 1980). Bob Dylan's lyric in his Old Mercy Album reads '*they're breaking down the distance between right and wrong*'.

Emil Brunner dismissed the idea of an evolving, changing God. In his 'Christian Doctrine of God' said "*Were God one who is **'becoming'**, then everything would founder on the morass of relativism. We can measure nothing by changing standards: changeable norms are no norms at all; a God who is constantly changing is not a God whom we can worship. He is a mythological being for whom we can only feel sorry.*"

If the embracing of a particular religion is deemed to be a matter of personal preference or feeling, any question of absolute truth is precluded.

If morality is a matter of personal feeling then there can be no fixed standards. By denying God, secularism places humankind into the 'god role'. For example, the Broadcasting Standards Council, the Independent Television Commission, the Radio Authority, the Advertising Standards Authority and the British Board of Film Classification, all base their judgements on what they perceive to be popularly 'acceptable' (while admittedly giving little evidence) and frequently refer to the readiness of society to accept different, i.e. lower standards.

Pluralism dismisses the possibility of a common moral code and it also gives the highest value to tolerance and respect rather than to truth. Therefore, religious conviction is marginalised.

A writer in the Guardian said that Aleister Crowley "*is an enduring figure of the 20th century because he captured and made into a myth the dissolution of universal moral codes*". (28.3.98)

Salman Rushdie said, "*What is right action and what wrong? – It comes down to your willingness to think for yourself*". (The Guardian 16.10.99)

The significance of embracing relativism, was seen as long ago as 1944, at the inaugural meeting of the World Federation of Mental Health in Ottawa. Two of the founders, Dr. R. Reece and Dr. Brock Chisholm, said "The re-interpretation and eventually eradication of the concept of right and wrong, which has been the basis of child training, the substitution of intelligent and rational thinking for faith in the certainties of the old people, these are the belated objectives of practically all effective psychotherapy". "*If the race is to be freed from its crippling burden of good and evil it must be psychiatrists that take this original responsibility*". Unwittingly foreshadowing our

present situation they said, *“The pretence is made... that to do away with right and wrong would produce uncivilised people, immorality, lawlessness and social change”*. One of them also said *“We must aim to make our point of view permeate every educational activity in our national life: primary, secondary, university and technical education are all concerned with various stages in the development of the child and the adolescents”*. He continued *“We have made a useful attack on a number of professions. The two easiest of them naturally are the teaching profession and the church: the two most difficult are the law and medicine...if we are to infiltrate the professional and social activities of other people, I think we must imitate the Totalitarians and organise some kind of fifth column activity!”* (Quoted by Lord McNair and reported in House of Lords: Hansard 5.7.96)

Colin Horseman says *“In spite of the postmodernist credo, there are absolute values being canvassed – the view that there are no absolutes is an absolute view!”* He also said, *“Pluralism and relativism in moral education have become the new absolutes”*.

William Golding wrote *“If man is the highest, is his own creator, then good and evil are created by majority vote”*.

Pluralism encourages agnosticism, scepticism and doubt. It tends to undermine all certainty and conviction. Everything is provisional, nothing is permanent. There are no constants, no fixed points of reference. There is no foundation, but there is insecurity and purposelessness. Agnosticism is embraced and applauded while faith is rejected and even ridiculed.

Some Evidence

- Two thirds of 15-35 year olds “are not sure any more what is right and wrong”. (Mori Poll 10.10.94)
- Computer junkies in the 1995 film ‘Hackers’ say, “There is no right or wrong, only fun or boring”. (The Age of Consent, Robert Knight)
- ‘The Faith Zone’ in the Millennium Dome was renamed because its title was ‘too Christian’ and risked offending other religions. The New Millennium Experience Company decreed that it should now be known as ‘Faith Zone’. The spokesman for the NMEC stated “We have tried to be very careful with all sensitivities. If you imply that one faith ‘is the faith’ that could be offensive”. (Daily Telegraph 5.12.99)
- A survey commissioned by the Jewish Association for Business Ethics has assessed the honesty and integrity of 34,000 teenagers in England and Wales. The survey found that 20% of teenagers saw nothing wrong in travelling on public transport without a ticket. 7% had no problem with shoplifting. 40% of under 18’s would buy alcohol illegally. The survey is published alongside a new business ethics course for secondary schools, money and morals, which is supported by the government. (Daily Telegraph 21.3.01)
- The serial killer, Dennis Nielsen, serving a life sentence for 12 murders, is seeking extra legal aid so that he can challenge a ban on receiving homosexual pornography in prison. He claims he is the victim of a policy that discriminates against gay inmates and his counsel, Flo Krause said, “This policy breached the Human Rights Act”. Nielsen had lured young men to his home where he killed them and then carried out bizarre rituals with their bodies. (Independent 26.10.01)

18. Community

A neglected need?

- ' For centuries people have lived together in **gathered** communities in villages, towns and cities, for mutual help, enrichment and protection.
- ' Globally, steadily increasing numbers of people now live in urban areas. Simultaneously, many urban communities, particularly in inner cities, are falling into **decay**.
- ' **Urbanisation** can depopulate and impoverish rural areas.
- ' Cultural, tribal, family and religious bonds have created **integrated** communities.
- ' Gathered communities may develop common **characteristics** based on geographical location or a specific craft or economic activity.
- ' The arrival or removal of a **dominant influence** such as a particular industry can dramatically expand or destroy a community.
- ' Farming villages, mining villages, cotton towns and fishing ports all develop a very real **identity** and local pride. In a village or small town, authority was rooted deep in the community. Today the authority and power are often imposed from outside the community through statutory or commercial organisations. This may seem remote, impersonal, arbitrary and unfair, leading directly to division, hostility and alienation.
- ' Accelerated urbanisation and the rapid growth of cities, have coincided with the impoverishment or even destruction of inner city areas, which are now often places of extreme **deprivation**, environmental decay, crime and loneliness.

- ' With greater mobility we are seeing the **destruction** of rooted communities. Families and generations are scattered and often separated, leading to enormous social problems. People are often randomly deposited in artificially created estates, without time or facility for community to grow.
- ' Communities **divided** by historical inheritance, sectarianism or racism, can easily disrupt into violence, as we have learnt in Northern Ireland and towns and cities in England.
- ' The bonds which hold communities together are weakening, as the wider society becomes more **individualistic** and fragmented, and as the breakdown of law and order becomes more apparent.
- ' The cult of **individualism**, by its nature, impoverishes community. It separates people, encourages division and leads to the formation of inward-looking and often exclusive groups for mutual support, help and protection. There is constant search for a balance between commonality and individuality.
- ' In the United Kingdom there has been a dramatic decline in community **leaders**. Local authorities often appear remote and as a result increasing numbers of electors choose not to vote. Similarly, the perceived remoteness of Brussels has led to the majority of electors choosing not to vote in European elections. Breakdown of community and frustration with politicians has undoubtedly contributed to widespread political apathy, but also to the emergence of strongly-supported special interest campaigning groups.
- ' Public policies have concentrated power in already congested centres such as London. This, together with growing urbanisation, has led to **rural** communities seeing their shops, post offices or banks, railway stations and police houses shut down with many experiencing a huge crime wave, often matching urban areas.
- ' For centuries both rural and urban areas were served and welded together by Christian initiatives and Christian charities. The Church and the Chapel played a **central** role for worship, social life and mutual help.

- ' The roots of Church life in the community were undoubtedly in the Pauline teaching about the Church being a living **body**, with each member having a role to play. There was real interdependence. Many people were welded together in strong caring communities, by a common allegiance to Christ as the head of the body.
 - ' The creation and development of communities is now recognised as essential for the **survival** of society and the wellbeing of individuals.
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The destruction of community

The community is a projection of family. Family responsibilities generally apply to communities. Without family-based community, civilisation is at risk. A characteristic of the past century has been the diminution of the role of the family and the destruction of communities, both rural and urban. Communities give people a place of belonging, a place where relationships are forged and a place where they can exercise responsibility. Where there is no community there is inevitably a sense of insecurity and a feeling of loss.

Social scientists and politicians have committed considerable resources to the rebuilding of communities. Urban regeneration projects have been imposed from above and outside with only moderate success. Real community involves an organic growth from the roots, which need continual nurturing and encouragement. The roots of community in the Western world are undoubtedly Christian. Where the Christian influence diminishes, there is rootlessness.

“Community is a lived reality and not just a mental construct” – John English.

“We are only persons at all who are relations with other persons” – John MacMurray.

“Only in community can humanity reflect God and fulfil the image of God in which we were created for mutual relationship” – Korean Theologian Chung Hyun Kyung.

“Shalom refers to peace in a positive sense, the result of a rightly ordered society. When people live together according to God’s moral code – in Shalom – there is civility and harmony” – Charles Colson.

Some Evidence

- 13 year old Daniel Franey, threatened and abused a neighbourhood, smashing windows, throwing bottles at people and threatening to kill anyone who crossed his path. Notorious for his foul language, he terrorised customers at an Indian takeaway, racially abusing the staff and also threatening to kill a local councillor. He has not been to school for three years and his father was recently released from prison where he served a sentence for manslaughter. An anti-social behaviour order has been served banning the boy from the neighbourhood, but his mother defended her son saying “He is a nice lad at heart ... I don’t know what he does when he is on his own in the street”. (*Daily Mail 6.6.01*)
- The Home Secretary has admitted that street crime is spiralling out of control. David Blunkett said, “People don’t feel safe. We must reclaim our streets for the decent law-abiding citizens who want no more than to be able to walk safely, live peacefully and to go about their business freely, untroubled by the fear of attack”. Referring to “the enormous rise in the level of street crime” he said the predicted rise in street crime was around 26% in 2001 to 2002. Referring to a £20m grant for a scheme to cut robbery in five of the forces by his predecessor he said, “I think all of us were deeply unimpressed with what has been done with £20m”. (*Daily Telegraph 18.3.02*)

- Firemen say their lives are being put at risk after 34 cars and vans were stolen and set alight by children as young as 8 in one week as the craze reached “epidemic proportions” in Bristol. (*Sunday Telegraph 10.6.01*)
- During 1999 81 shooting incidents and 8 murders have been carried out in the gang culture of South Manchester. Sending five men to prison the judge at Manchester Crown Court said, “the combination of guns and gangs represents a frightening threat to law and order in this city. It is clear that during the 1990’s and increasing day-by-day to the present there has been a steady and terrifying increase in the carrying of guns in the city”. When the police raided a house where the young men were found, they found a sub-machine gun with a fully loaded cartridge and two fully loaded guns with their safety catches off. They found bulletproof vests. (*Daily Telegraph 16.6.01*)
- Teenage boys as young as 15 are being recruited by drug dealing gangsters to carry out contract killings according to police and social workers. Guns are easily procured in cities such as London and Manchester. Guns are used on average in more than two murders or attempted murders every day in England and Wales and the police estimate the number of illegal firearms in circulation to be at least 250,000. In one week this month the Metropolitan Police recorded 158 incidents of guns being used in robberies, assaults and murders. Last week a 14-year-old boy in Bury carried out an armed robbery during his school lunch break. Denis Clark, who until June last year was a Detective Chief Inspector working on Operation Trident, the London Metropolitan Polices’ Specialist Unit dealing with the use of guns by black criminals against other blacks, said “There is evidence that children have been involved in fatal shootings in Manchester and elsewhere and in recent times there have been shootings in night clubs in London which have suggested that many young people have access to hand guns. The crack cocaine industry is controlled by evil men who will resort to any means to further their economic interest, including the use of boys as young as 14”. In London during April and May there were 13 firearm murders and 46 non-fatal shootings. Police believe that 11 fatal shootings and 37 attempted murders carried out in London this year have been the work of ‘Yardie’ gangs of black drug dealers. (*Sunday Times 29.7.01*)
- Leading police officers have warned that thousands of crime victims and key trial witnesses are refusing to give evidence because of the intimidation and ill-treatment they face in the criminal courts. Sir John Stevens, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, said, the failure to protect the interests of victims and witnesses was leading to “a public disengagement” from the court. He said, “This leads to less detected crime and more failed cases, which in turn reinforces the confidence of offenders to commit more crime”. Police Chiefs led by Sir John and Sir David Phillips, the Chief Constable of Kent and Chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers in England and Wales said that trials were frequently reduced to “tactical and procedural games” rather than a search for truth. Calling for radical reforms of trials in magistrates and Crown courts they described the system as “riddled with archaic red tape”. Police officers who should be employed catching criminals were tied up for weeks or even months in court proceedings. Launching their Search For Truth campaign at Scotland Yard the police chiefs cited a survey in Manchester in 1999 in which 83% of people felt that intimidation would prevent them from giving evidence. Home Office research has also found that 40% of witnesses felt intimidated by the defendant or lawyer, rising to 57% for children. Of 140 witnesses called to court in London in a two week period only 19 appeared to give evidence according to one survey. Another showed that 40% of witnesses attending court on one day did not reach the stand. (*Daily Telegraph 11.1.02*)
- The consultancy company Laing & Buisson have reported that for the second year in succession care home places have declined. Last year nearly ten thousand places for the elderly and physically disabled were lost (7,300 in the private and voluntary sector and 2,500 in local authority run homes). The National Care Homes Association has given warning that the closure of homes is a crisis that could turn into a catastrophe if nothing is done. The changes are taking place at a time when the number of over 75’s is rising fast – this sector of the population is expected to grow by a fifth in ten years. (*Times 19.4.01*)
- “Cities have been growing in size and numbers over the past three hundred years, but the pace of change has been accelerating recently. In 1800 only about one in three in every hundred people lived in towns with a population greater than 5,000. The world’s population was overwhelmingly rural. By 1900 almost one in every ten people lived in towns, but by 1990 four out of every ten lived in towns. In 1900 the number of cities with more than half a million was 20, by 1990 this had increased to 600. (*The Urban Order – 1996 J. Rennie Short published by Blackwell’s*)

19. Globalisation

A shrinking world?

- ' A revolution in **travel** and **communication** on a world scale has taken place. People are travelling and communicating further, faster and more frequently than ever before. Ideas and images are transmitted instantly across the globe.
- ' **Technological innovation** has made people more aware of other cultures and ideas, countries and continents. Instant communication through satellite, mobile 'phone, email, internet and also through television and the media has had a fundamental impact upon our culture. Computers are a central element of daily life for millions.
- ' Highly industrialised societies with facilities for mass production have generated large commercial conglomerates and monopolies. This led to the emergence of huge **multinational corporations** operating globally. The political, economic and social power wielded by these groups is now greater than that of many nation states.
- ' The internationalising process has accelerated the **cross-fertilisation** of ideas, the maximising of profits and the minimising of overheads. World computing industries, world car manufacturers, world sports entertainment and world fashion groupings emerged as major economic entities, together with a world labour market.
- ' Economic, political and health problems are now considered on a world scale. The **interdependence** of different countries is readily recognised and an ever-growing range of regional, political and economic agreements are being made. New relationships are being forged between states and as co-operation grows regional groupings are emerging.

- ' The vulnerability of national economies has generated a pronounced move towards **international financial institutions**. The huge banking and financial organisations play a formative and controlling role in world affairs.
- ' Globalisation has meant that enormous **power** is wielded by a **small** number of people. Pressures to conform to decisions made by the United Nations, international groupings and multinational commercial organisations, together with political alliances, will grow. There is widespread concern about power being wielded without accountability or responsibility.
- ' For centuries the church with its missiology and privileged position, had a global view. It was inherently **internationalist** in outlook.
- ' The past century saw the emergence of a new movement committed to **syncretism** - the fusion of all world religions. Although there have been large scale revivals of the Christian faith in many lands, the inter-faith movement, including some who claim to be Christians, sought to establish a New World Religion and World Ethic.
- ' A strange and uneasy alliance between pluralism and the inter-faith movement now openly denies the uniqueness and **supremacy** of Jesus Christ.
- ' Many world-wide Christian movements and organisations have emerged in recent years. However, globalisation has facilitated the spread of secular humanism so that the world's problems are frequently seen as soluble by **humanity** rather than God.
- ' Following the First World War it was recognised that world peace would depend upon **new relationships** between nation states and this recognition led to the formation of the League of Nations.
- ' Following the Second World War it was recognised that the degree of agreement and co-operation between nation states had to grow. This led initially to the formation of the United Nations Organisation but then to a variety of **regional groupings** such as the European Union.

- ' The **interdependence** of different countries and continents became increasingly obvious, together with the need for a broad range of agreements governing trade, law, public safety and international security.
 - ' **Politically**, local alliances gave way to binding international agreements. Treaties between small numbers of nations gave way to larger groupings such as the European Union, which some are now seeking to transform into a Federal Union – a United States of Europe – in which national sovereignty would be severely diminished.
 - ' **Commercially**, national standards and specifications led to international standards and specifications. This has led to global rules and regulations.
 - ' The **vulnerability** of national economies generated pronounced moves towards a global economy, with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, the Federal Reserve and other groups playing a major role.
 - ' The cross-fertilising of ideas accelerated the internationalising process with the emergence of such things as **world** sport, **world** entertainment and a **world** fashion industry.
 - ' A feature of globalisation is the emergence of world **crime** with international gangs and multinational drug syndicates, together with a network of highly organised secret organisations.
 - ' The implication of globalisation is that great power will inevitably be wielded by a comparatively **small** number of people. Pressures to conform to decisions made outside the confines of a nation state are already considerable and these will grow.
 - ' Globalisation has brought undoubted benefits to some, but considerable disadvantages to others, many of whom have felt exploited.
 - ' Globalisation provides the opportunity for the realisation of justice and equity for all people in all nations, but Christians believe that this can only happen when **God's authority** is acknowledged and the Lordship of the creator over all creation is accepted.
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One world

Politically, socially, economically and commercially we are now thinking globally rather than continentally or nationally. The new scale is universal. World organisations proliferate and power is increasingly exercised on a global scale.

Huge financial resources now back global campaigns to promote brand names or merchandise directly linked to television and film features. The claims of ‘neutrality’ and ‘tolerance’ are very often masks for propagating pluralistic belief. This propagation, especially in the educational system, is repressive and offers children nothing better than moral and spiritual relativism.

Non-Christians have been searching for unifying truths and deeper values to ensure a global civilisation. The fact that the world, including humanity, constitutes a single ecosystem has led (under the name Gaia for the system) to pantheistic worship of Mother Earth. This concept rejects the reality of the God who is our creator and sustainer and who has a will and purpose through our life.

Humankind’s search for a world ethic, linked with a New World order, has inevitably paved the way for the establishment of a world religion. Implausibly this New World religion would be an amalgam of existing world religions.

In global terms if we destroy the concept of the meta-narrative as postmodernists urge, we are left with a plurality of different, competing and often incompatible ‘stories’. In human nature there appears a deeply ingrained search for universal truths.

Powerful world groups, heavily funded by banks and finance houses, exercise enormous power and are very active in the world of international politics and finance. These include the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderberger Foundation, The Club of Rome and others committed to the so-called ‘New World order’. They appear to exercise power without responsibility and are seen by many as sinister in intent.

Secret societies operate a web of control covering many countries. Some are legal. Others, like the Mafia and the Triads, are not. Many are involved in huge financial turnovers through involvement in drugs, pornography and prostitution.

Major financial institutions and trading companies have always been involved in funding political parties in individual countries such as the United Kingdom, where donations bring honours and privileges to the rich benefactors. This kind of funding is now taking place on a global scale as a part of corporate business strategy.

On a global scale, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. This is potentially explosive.

Occultic organisations such as the Theosophical Society have been instrumental over many years in encouraging the development of a new syncretistic religion – an amalgam of all the world religions. The inter-faith movement now has an extremely strong presence in the United Nations and in other international bodies.

Alice Bailey, one of the prominent members of the Theosophical Society, who wrote the widely read book ‘The Plan for the New World Order’ stated “*The source of all great religions and philosophies is the spiritual Hierarchy of the Planet whose members are called the custodians of the divine plan*”. She specifically claimed “*Lucifer is the Ruler of Humanity*”.

Alice Bailey, in her book ‘The Reappearance of the Christ’, which she claims to have been given to her by a spirit, states “*We are ... visioning a new and vital world religion, a universal faith which will have its roots in the past, but which will make clear the new dawning beauty and the coming vital revelation*”. “*The great theme of the New World religion will be the recognition of the many divine approaches*”.

The European movement has progressed from being the European Common **Market** to the European **Community** and to the European **Union**. The trend is now towards an all-powerful

European Federal State. It is an inherent part of a broader move to globalisation in which the nation state becomes subservient to international bodies. Inevitably, the sovereignty of national states is now undoubtedly at risk.

There has been a substantial increase in power wielded by agencies of the United Nations and in particular by powerful and often publicly funded Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) which are increasingly used by secular humanists to advance their cause.

Major issues are now being raised concerning the ultimate authority to be acknowledged in world affairs. For the Christian there is no doubt that the ultimate authority is God and "*the government is upon His shoulders*".

Some Evidence

- The three richest individuals in the world are richer than 48 countries added together. The richest fifth of the world consumes sixteen times as much as the poorest. This information comes from the United Nations Human Development Report. (*Times* 9.9.98)
- 'Looking to 2020', a number of global institutions are also likely to be playing an important role in policy making driven by an increasingly globalised economy. (*Cabinet Office paper 2000*)
- The turnover of many of the corporate giants is larger than the total economy of some smaller countries. Mitsubishi of Japan had a turnover in 1998 of £109b, Mitsui & Co of Japan £107b, General Motors of USA £92b, Royal Dutch/Shell UK £82b, Wal-Mart of USA £65b, Siemens of Germany £39b. (*International Financial Statistics 1998*)
- The rich countries are getting richer and the poor countries getting poorer. Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, has said "What we spend on Third World aid is not enough". In an interview he said that G8 countries had long ago committed themselves to spending 0.7% of gross national product on aid, but were in fact spending barely 0.2%. (*Times* 23.7.01)
- A Survey by Carnegie-Mellon University of 917,410 images downloaded by consumers in 40 countries found that 80% were pornographic while paedophilic and adolescent sex items accounted for 50% of almost 6 million downloads. (*The Times* 20.12.97)
- According to the Office for National Statistics the turnover in Britain of drugs managed by criminal gangs is probably £8.5 billion. The United Nations Drugs Control Programme calculates that the illicit business of drug trafficking on a global scale now accounts for nearly one-tenth of all international trade. (*Daily Telegraph* 27.6.97)
- Mafia-style gangs across the world make more money than the entire economic output of the United Kingdom according to a report by the United Nations. The combined wealth of the six biggest crime syndicates is estimated at nearly £100,000 billion a year. That sum is greater than the wealth of all but the three richest nations in the world. The gangs biggest single source of income is the drugs trade which brings in £250 billion a year, representing 8% of world trade and making narcotics a bigger industry than iron and steel or car manufacturing. The gangs are increasingly using the Internet to trade in drugs, sex and weapons. Trafficking in women and girls for prostitution is increasing and the business is now worth £4.5 billion a year. As criminals benefit from the opening up of borders, the removal of currency controls and unrestricted access to computers via the worldwide web, the report says "The Triads in China, the Medellin and Cali cartels in Colombia, the Mafia in Italy, the Yakuza in Japan and the Cosa Nostra in the US are now developing strategic alliances. (*Express* 13.7.99)

20. Our Inheritance

The destruction of Christian foundations?

- ' The nature and characteristics of our national life and much of Western civilisation are based upon our **Christian inheritance**.
- ' Our **legal** and **parliamentary** system, together with our **educational** and **health** services, sprang, in large measure, from Christian initiatives.
- ' A large proportion of **charitable organisations** in the United Kingdom are Christian in foundation and intent.
- ' **Basic truths**, revealed by Christ, spelt out in the Bible and experienced by Christians have enlightened Western thought and behaviour for centuries. Our culture is in danger if it abandons these truths unless it can replace them with other truths, which are equally as good for society.
- ' Our inherited Christian culture is based on the belief that there is one **God** who is **absolute** truth and love and who has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is also based on belief in the equality and immense value of individual men and women, each deemed to be created in the image of God.
- ' For centuries the belief prevailed that there is personal and corporate **purpose** in life and that we are called to obey God our creator. It has always been believed that we are **answerable** to Him. This is now being challenged.
- ' A dominant feature of our civilisation has been the belief that the Bible is 'God-breathed'. The influence of the Bible and its language on Western culture has been dominant. It was formative to the belief, thinking and behaviour of generations. Christians are convinced that, through it, the Holy Spirit can direct our **thinking** about God and creation, human beings and moral truth.

- ' Christians believe that God is continually and actively involved in the lives of **individuals** and in **society**. They believe that both individuals and society only reach their full potential when they accord with God's purpose for them.
- ' The framework of Judaeo-Christian teaching, broadly accepted by Western civilisation, has until recently been the basis of prevailing standards of **public** and **private** morality. The question exercising the minds of many today is 'What alternative basis is there for morality?'
- ' The **dismantling** of the Judaeo-Christian framework would have a major impact upon the lives of all the people in our country.
- ' Our **freedom** and even our democracy and the nature of our communities, are all derived from basic Christian teaching.
- ' For centuries the understanding that the final authority rests with God has freed the United Kingdom from the **tyranny** of those who are answerable to no-one. In denying that final authority, our society is inevitably becoming vulnerable to tyranny.
- ' Christians believe that there are **unchanging** truths and that there is an unchanging God. Christians believe that He loves us and wants the best for us and our society. They believe He is all-powerful and that we would be foolish to continue to ignore or discount Him.
- ' Societies exist by nature of the exercise of authority. The New Testament is emphatic about the **authority** and **supremacy** of Christ and the validity of His claims about Himself.
- ' The Gospel is about **wholeness** and **right relationships** - with God, ourselves, others and creation. This is righteousness. The people of God have always proclaimed - "righteousness exalts a nation".
- ' In Christian teaching there is a great emphasis on wholeness and **oneness** – one Father and one Family, one Shepherd and one Flock, one Head and one Body. Christians have consistently proclaimed Jesus as the one Lord and Saviour of humankind – the Way, the Truth and the Life. "He is before all things and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1.17).

- ' The question now arises: "Can we continue to enjoy the **benefits** of our Christian civilisation without the basic beliefs and practices of the Christian faith upon which it has been built?"
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The de-christianising process

We are now organising society without reference to God. Our claimed freedom puts us, not God, in control. Thomas Hobbs referred to liberty as "*the absence of external impediments*". God is undoubtedly seen as an external impediment, which must be discarded.

"We enter the new millennium knowing that we have the science and technology to do almost anything. But we have lost our map of what we should do, and why we should do it". (Source: Anthony Rendell, the former editor of the English Service, BBC World Service, in 'Management Features Newsletter' - May 2000).

In his book 'The End of Order' Francis Fukuyama concluded that the process whereby moral values, self-sacrifice and social order have been passed on from generation to generation, has now been disrupted. He points to the crumbling of institutions, which maintain society commencing in the 60's and the most important of these is marriage.

"The truth is that we are in a time of transition, an in-between period when the old is dying and the new has yet to be born" says Jim Wallis. *"The values, assumptions and structures that have governed us for so long have come to their logical end, and now we find ourselves at a dead end. But new values, patterns and institutions have not yet emerged. We are caught in the middle, stranded between paradigms"*.

During the past 50 years secular humanist influences have, step by step, worked to de-christianise our country. Christian festivals have been replaced by secular holidays. Christian newspaper articles have been replaced by astrology features. Christian services in schools have been stopped. Christian broadcasting has diminished. Christian moral standards have been ridiculed in the media. Christian teaching in schools has been marginalised. The Christian concept of life-long marriage has been rejected. The name of Jesus is presented as a swear word in the media. Pagans have been appointed as chaplains in hospitals, prisons and educational establishments. There has been a huge explosion of occult activity and publications. The media have generally taken an anti-Christian stance. Christian reverence for life has been rejected. Christian morality has been overthrown, as evidenced in the mushrooming of pornography, drug-taking and anti-social behaviour. Church attendance has declined and the influence of the Church has diminished. Christian influence in education, health and social services has declined. Although the foundations of our society are undoubtedly Christian we are now seeing a deliberate and concerted effort to destroy them.

The traditional family day of rest has now been swept away under pressure from national retailers hungry for still more profits. As a consequence, thousands of families cannot now spend Sunday together because one of the parents is obliged to work.

Christian morality is being overthrown with the acceptance of obscenity, drug taking and anti-social behaviour. Christian influence in education, health and social services has declined. Yet, in spite of all this, the foundation of our national life has so far remained broadly Christian, even in the context of pluralism and there is a growing recognition of the spiritual dimension of life.

John Drane comments "*One of the great ironies of our time is the way that the Western Churches are declining at the same time as the sense of spiritual search in the community is increasing in intensity and fervour*".

Some Evidence

- Hugh Hefner, the publisher of Playboy magazine said, "Sex is the most civilising influence in our society, not religion". US Media Mogul, Ted Turner, said, "We don't need the Ten Commandments any more". (The Age of Consent, Robert Knight).
- The former Chairman of the Writer's Guild of Great Britain, Rosemary Ann Sisson, in a newspaper letter condemning the series 'Attachments' shown on BBC at 9 p.m. said "This is about a group of foul-mouthed, vicious young people, snorting cocaine, getting drunk. In their business lives they are cruel, greedy and treacherous". She said "Our resistance to censorship used to stop short of endorsing violence, sadism and programmes which truly had a tendency to deprave. Such limits have long been gone. It used to be said that nothing vile and filthy should be shown when it could damage 'the children'. But the 9 o'clock 'watershed' is thoroughly absurd when children stay up until midnight and have televisions in their bedrooms". (*Daily Telegraph 14.11.00*)
- At Christmas 2002 Channel Four broadcast a show mockingly presenting Father Christmas and Jesus competing for popularity. Christ was laughed at and mocked by a noisy studio audience and the programme ended with a boxing match between the two figures presented.
- Ernest Rae who resigned as Head of Religion and Ethics at the BBC in December has accused the BBC of side-lining religion and "dancing to a secular agenda". He accused BBC television of banishing religious programmes to late times and said "the people who control the television industry in this country are, for the most part, children of the 1960's and 70's, secular people who accept as given that the notion of God is a nonsense, and who regard religion as little more than an amusing but outdated phenomenon". He referred to the BBC's religious Broadcasting Department in Manchester as being in danger of becoming "an undervalued and neglected resource, with its staff suffering from lack of morale". (*Reform April 2001 –magazine of United Reformed Church*)
- To avoid offending Muslims in the town, Luton Council has renamed the town's Christmas lights festival Luminos – after Harry Potter's Light-making spell. Although 25th December celebrates the birth of Jesus the Council has scrapped Christian images from its displays. It claims "Rebranding" the seasonal events will help include folk of all faiths. The former head of Luton's Islamic Cultural Society, Akhbar Dad Khan said "We live in a mainly Christian society and people from other faiths have accepted that". An angry local resident said "Imagine what would happen if Muslims were told to re-name Ramadan. (*Sunday People 9.12.01*)
- On 19th April 2001 the BBC produced a 50-minute 'documentary' programme. In the Radio Times they billed it as "a great film". Entitled "Magic – Art of Darkness" it featured putting curses on people, casting spells and conjuring up demons. It openly featured the followers of the satanist Aleister Crowley and the Ordo Templi Orientis. One of the participants interviewed said that he did the ritual of the pentagram every day and adorations to the sun and spoke of agnostic 'mass' part of which involved eating a communion host doused with menstrual blood. The Radio Times advertised the film with a photograph of one of the participants wielding a dagger. (*BBC2 19.4.01 9-9.50pm*)
- All previous BBC Heads of Religion since 1933 have been practising Christians, many of them ordained ministers. Now BBC has renamed the department Religion and Ethics and has appointed Alan Bookbinder as its Head and he describes himself as 'an open-hearted agnostic'. Mr. Bookbinder was divorced in the late 1980s and now lives with his girlfriend of 17 years in North London - They have two young children. (*Daily Telegraph 12.7.01*) Just before Christmas Mr. Bookbinder presented a major programme seeking to undermine Christian beliefs about Mary.
- Average Sunday attendance at church as a percentage of the population has dropped from 11.7% in 1979 to 9.9% in 1989 to 7.5% in 1998. The total loss each week between 1989 and 1998 was 2,200 and 41% of all churches now have no children's work. (*Christian Research survey*)
- An international survey, carried out by the University of Leiden in the Netherlands and published by the Economist, has revealed that people in England and Wales are more likely to be the victims of crime than citizens of most industrialised nations. An international survey has stated that they were at greater risk than anyone anywhere else of having a car stolen. Apart from Australia, they were also at greater risk of being assaulted, robbed, sexually attacked and having their homes burgled than people in any other major industrialised country. (*Daily Telegraph 23.2.01*)
- Of 193 films shown in 2000 by the five terrestrial channels there were 1021 incidents involving firearms, 799 violent assaults, 87 incidents of fire raising/causing explosions, 207 incidents involving knives and other offensive weapons, 36 incidents involving illegal drug abuse. (*Mediawatch – UK March 2001*)
- Six children aged 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, & 15, accused of causing the death of a 62 year old lady had to be repeatedly warned of their behaviour in court by the bench chairman who had to halt the proceedings three times to admonish them. The children giggled, smirked and mouthed expletives in the court at Reedley near Burnley, where they faced charges of manslaughter and burglary. (*Daily Telegraph 3.7.01*)
- According to the Health and Safety Executive there have been 462 serious assaults on British Railways. This is the highest figure for 30 years. (*ITV News 6.9.01*)

- Jonathan Burrows was expelled after his first day at Archbishop Thursten Comprehensive School in Hull. He left a classroom without permission, refused to return and ran along the corridors, swearing at another pupil. Called to the headmaster he made violent threats then ran away and left the school grounds at lunchtime. The head described the youngster's behaviour as appalling. The boy had a history of bad behaviour, having been excluded temporarily from his primary school last year for fighting. (*Daily Mail 20.11.01*)
- Statistics released for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women revealed that there were 415,327 rapes, stabbings and beatings at homes in England and Wales last year and the majority of the victims were female. Professor Stanko, Director of a violence research programme at London University, claimed only a tenth of domestic crime was reported, meaning a woman was being attacked in Britain every 6-20 seconds. (*Metro 26.11.01*)
- Violent crime continued to rise in Scotland's largest police region – Strathclyde – last year, according to their reports. There was an increase in the number of murders, attempted murders and serious assaults between April and December 2001, while the number of people carrying offensive weapons including knives, also rose compared to the previous year. In the past year the number of murders and culpable homicides rose by 2 to 48 while attempted murders soared from 204 in 2000 to 263 last year, up 28.9%. Serious assaults rose by 10% to 3,331 in 2001, while there were more than 500 additional incidents involving people carrying knives and other offensive weapons last year compared to the previous year. In all, 1,206 knives and other weapons were seized between October and last month. (*Times 12.1.02*)
- According to statistics provided by the Motor Insurers' Bureau, one in every twenty drivers is not insured. The motoring organisations believe the real figure could be a horrifying one in ten. 50% of all road accidents in the inner city area between Platt Lane in Rusholme and the Stockport border are hit and run incidents. Police say drivers without documents panic and drive away to escape the consequences. With second hand car prices getting lower people who buy virtually throw away vehicles often don't bother with insurance and road tax. Inspector Hal Hymason, who is in charge of the South Manchester Traffic Unit said "We have around 3,000 road traffic accidents in the South Manchester area a year and around 1,500 are failing to stop. It is all to do with documents. They could be as many as 400,000 without documentation". (*Manchester Metro News 11.1.02*)
- Five men have been arrested after a schoolgirl claimed that she became pregnant after having sex with them when she was 12. The girl lived in Rotherham, which has one of the country's highest rates of juvenile pregnancies. Two years ago a 12-year-old Rotherham girl gave birth in the bathroom of the family home having conceived at the age of 11. A 25 year old man was later jailed. At the same time a 12 year old girl became pregnant by her 14-year-old boyfriend in Sheffield, but the Crown Prosecution Service decided that a prosecution would not be in the public interest. (*Daily Telegraph 11.5.01*)
- Syphilis had virtually been wiped out in this country until recently. Normally only a handful of cases of the disease were reported in Manchester but there has been an upsurge in the last couple of years with 135 cases being recorded in Greater Manchester between January 1999 and May this year – 121 of them attending three Manchester clinics that serve most of the inner city. A report by Dr. Ann Hoskins, the city's Director of Public Health, revealed that the outbreak has sent cases of the disease to the highest levels in 20 years and it is being seen largely among gay men. A feature of the cases was the use of alcohol and drugs including the dance drug GHB with aphrodisiac effects causing users to lose their inhibitions. Some people have had many partners who they met in pubs or clubs or anonymously in "cruising areas" where they trawl for sex, the report says. The report states that most cases (76%) have been gay or bi-sexual men, usually in their 20's and 30's. Around a quarter had another sexually transmitted infection and half had had one before. Because of the prevalence of anonymous sex, attempts have been made to attract people to have tests and check-ups but these sessions have been poorly attended. The increase in syphilis is despite a major campaign targeted to raise awareness of syphilis in the gay community, especially around the summer so-called GayFest. (*North Manchester Evening News 24.5.01*)
- According to a report from the United States organisation Population Action International, Britain still has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe, despite being one of the world's biggest users of contraceptives. Britain has a sky-high level of teenage pregnancies with 2.9 out of every 100 girls aged between 15 and 19 giving birth every year. In France there is less contraceptive use and only 0.9 of every 100 girls aged 15 – 19 had babies. According to the survey in Japan it is only 0.4 per 100. The Family Planning Association however, said "Contraceptive use and teenage pregnancy are really two different issues and it doesn't help to lump them together". (*Daily Mail 8.3.01*)
- An outbreak of syphilis in the gay population of Manchester has seen the number of cases increase seven-fold between 1998 and 2000. Public Health Professor Mark Bellis said that in addition to this, cases of chlamydia are increasing dramatically and as many as one in ten women may have the disease. 70% of women and 50% of men do not know they have the disease. It can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility in women. (*Manchester Metro News 11.1.02*)
- Under the heading of alternative lifestyles the Independent on Sunday is featuring advertisements for "kinky people" in the "fetish scene" with suggestion of cross-dressing, "submission", punishment and group sex. (*Independent on Sunday 12.2.01*)
- Deaths from illegal drugs have trebled since 1993 and the rate of increase shows no sign of slackening according to the Office for National Statistics. Cocaine deaths have increased the fastest, by more than seven-fold between 1993 when there were 12 deaths and 1999 when the figure was 87. In total 1,244 people died of a drug overdose or in a drug related incident in England and Wales in 1999 compared with 461 in 1993. Heroin and morphine killed 754, methadone killed 298, cocaine killed 87,

amphetamines killed 79, Ecstasy killed 26 and cannabis was mentioned on 7 death certificates. Professor John Henry, consultant in Accident and Emergency medicine at St. Mary's, Paddington said that increasing numbers of people were being admitted with cocaine-related chest pains, strokes and heart attacks. (*Daily Telegraph 21.5.01*)

- According to a Department of Health survey of 7,000 aged 11-15 in 225 schools in England, more children as young as 11 are smoking, drinking and taking drugs. 3% of 11 year olds are taking drugs compared with 29% of those aged 15. The proportion of teenagers who describe themselves as regular smokers has risen to 10%. Almost a quarter of the pupils said they had had an alcoholic drink in the previous week. (*Daily Telegraph 27.7.01*)
- Tony Blair has stated "the biggest drugs hoard in the world is in Afghanistan, controlled by the Taliban. 90% of the heroin on British streets originates in Afghanistan". (*Daily Telegraph 3.10.01*)
- The seven novels of C.S. Lewis are having a Harry-Potter style marketing make-over, which includes plans to play down their Christian themes. Deals have been struck to launch a range of Narnia toys. Encouraged by the success of the Harry Potter books the Lewis Estate and its publisher, Collins, want to attract a new generation of readers to the chronicles, but they are worried that biblical imagery will put children off. A leaked Harper Collins memo said "We'll need to be able to give emphatic assurances that no attempt will be made to co-relate the stories to Christian imagery/theology. John G. West, co-editor of the C.S. Lewis Encyclopaedia, said "they are turning Narnia into a British version of Mickey Mouse". Harper Collins denied trying to secularise the books but said they simply wanted to take the books to "the broadest possible audience". (*Times 4.6.01*)
- According to a poll by Opinion Research Business, three quarters of the population of Britain regard themselves as Christians and only 17% of Britons say they do not belong to any particular religion. Jews, Hindus and Muslims each accounted for 1% of the population. (*Times 20.12.01*)
- Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, has said "Christianity is in the background of people's lives and moral decisions and for the Government and for the social life of Britain, has almost been vanquished". Last year the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, declared Britain to be a country where "Tacit atheism prevails". (*Times 7.9.01*)
- Canon Tom Wright, the Canon and Theologian of Westminster Abbey and Chairman of the Historical Jesus Section of the International Society of Biblical Literature, has attacked the BBC for its 'Son of God' series even though he was one of the advisors. He said the programme, which was one of the most lavish ever produced by the religious broadcasting department, portrayed Christ as a 'politically correct social worker'. He said the BBC had ignored critical aspects about Christ's life because of fears that the issues would be too 'difficult' for viewers. He said he had been "devastated by the omissions". The programme makers had rejected his pleas to alter the programme and he said that although there was a great deal in the series that made historical sense, "it still falls far short of a fuller historical picture of Jesus". He said "Jesus was announcing that God was at last becoming King in the way Israel had always wanted, and he saw his own work as bringing that Kingdom into being. Trying to discuss Jesus without saying something like this, is like trying to talk about Tony Blair without mentioning New Labour". He said Jesus "was saying that God's new day was dawning and that now everything was going to be different". Unfortunately the BBC didn't want to know about that. Their audience wouldn't understand it, they said. But without it they won't understand the rest either". Michael Wakelin, the co-producer of the series said, "In the context of popular prime time television programme on BBC 1 our emphasis has had to be accessibility. We dealt with a number of serious theological issues in a very interesting way. (*Sunday Telegraph 1.4.01*)
- A secondary school – the Dorothy Stringer School in Brighton – has banned pupils from using the terms BC and AD when writing dates because they are deemed unsuitable in a multi-faith society. The state school has only a few children from ethnic minorities, but admitted that it had replaced Before Christ and Anno Domini which had been in use since the 16th century with BCE and Common Era. The Headmaster said "It is not the job of the school to lead a pupil towards a particular faith: we teach about religion, not just one religion". David Guest, Communications Officer for the Diocese of Chichester, said "BC and AD have been used for centuries and do not upset people. They do have Christian significance but historical significance as well". (*Daily Telegraph 13.12.02*)
- The Red Cross has made the decision not to allow any manger scenes to be presented in its charity shops because it must not be seen to be promoting the Christian religion. Voluntary Red Cross workers have complained but in an interview the Red Cross Chief Executive said, "they were playing safe". (*BBC national news 21.12.02*)
- Christopher Coulthard raided 517 places of worship during a nine-month campaign of theft. He was jailed at Swansea Crown Court for four years. (*Daily Telegraph 4.1.03*)
- An American designer label 'Imitation of Christ' has been included in the latest edition of Harvey Nichols'. (*Daily Telegraph 20.1.03*)
- ITV will shortly feature a drama series 'The Second Coming', in which a video shop worker from Salford announces he is the Son of God. The author is Russell Davies who previously produced 'Queer as Folk', a graphic gay love story involving a schoolboy and also 'Bob and Rose', a tale of a gay man who falls in love with a woman. He says "Although I am an atheist, I wanted to challenge myself by asking questions – 'What if I woke up tomorrow and it was true that God existed? How would I deal with it?' (*Sunday Express 26.1.03*)

21. Crossroads

A time of crisis?

- ' We are at a time of radical change and **crisis**.
- ' For Western civilisation the past century has seen cataclysmic upheavals. It was an unequalled **century of war and death**, with bloodshed, genocide and ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, slavery and torture.
- ' Until recently the West **sustained** its Christian foundations, but the assault upon Christian beliefs and values has become steadily more severe. Simultaneously, there has been a substantial advance of the Christian church in many countries abroad although, significantly, more Christians have been martyred during this period than in all the previous centuries put together.
- ' The growing affluence of the West has not removed a deep sense of insecurity and **vulnerability**. There is widespread dissatisfaction and even a sense of hopelessness. Young people, searching for truth and life, are often sold a lie and offered a culture of death.
- ' **Broken relationships** have created huge social problems and the numbers of insecure and depressed people are now of epidemic proportions.
- ' Most of the absolute truths proclaimed by the Christian faith are under fierce **assault** both from within the educational system and in commerce. They are being rejected by a culture fraught with uncertainty and unbelief.
- ' There is a prevailing sense of **powerlessness, apathy** and **cynicism**. In the emerging chaos of our culture many people are searching for a reliable foundation of life. Some seek this in money, success and hedonism, others in new religions and the occult.

- ' Nihilism and post modernity offer only absurdity and despair. New Age philosophies are confusing and destructive. Secular humanism has **failed** in practice.
- ' There is a very real possibility of society **disintegrating** and even being taken over by some form of dictatorship – national or international.
- ' Christians are convinced that the grave situation of contemporary culture is avoidable. They believe in a Gospel in which people and situations can be radically changed. The Gospel is about fundamental **change** in attitudes and values.
- ' In spite of a superficial appearance of self-confidence, there is in fact widespread **dissatisfaction** with many things that are happening in society today. There is a huge burden of human need and a pervading sense of depression and hopelessness. The Christian Gospel proclaims transformation of people and of situations.
- ' Christians affirm **life** after a century of death. They affirm the power of **love** over the hating and hurting so prevalent in our world. They affirm **certainty** in the face of insecurity and proclaim **hope** at a time of crisis.
- ' In order to witness effectively, Christians must themselves have a strong spiritual foundation and a very clear **understanding** of what is happening in western culture.
- ' The Church has a particular **prophetic** calling to understand and communicate effectively with contemporary society. It has a responsibility to live and speak the Gospel in terms that people can understand. Today it appears to be wounded and failing in this and, some would say, it is bleeding to death.
- ' Many unbelievers agree that the demolition of our inherited Christian civilisation would be potentially **catastrophic**. The Christian Gospel of hope, love and truth stands in total contrast with the sickness of the age. The message of the Gospel is that things are in a mess and that we need a saviour and that we have a Saviour who has come to **save** the world and that He alone can **heal** our sickness.

- ' Christians today challenge the prevailing culture and there are signs that they are now becoming a '**counter-cultural**' movement. Their calling is not to conform to the ways of the world, but increasingly to live and proclaim a radical alternative.
 - ' One of the main functions of the Church is to reveal Jesus. The hardest and most embarrassing questions, which Christians need to ask themselves, are "Am I **hiding** or **revealing** Jesus today?" and "Am I a **help** or a **hindrance** to the understanding of His Kingdom?"
 - ' The most challenging question put by Jesus applies to us today: "Who do **you** say that I am?" The future of our culture depends on our answer to this question.
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The Vision

Alexander Solzhenitsyn said, *"If the world has not approached its end, it has reached a major watershed in history, equal in importance to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. It will demand from us a spiritual blaze; we shall have to rise to a new height of vision, to a new level of life, where our physical nature will not be cursed, as in the Middle Ages, but even more importantly, our spiritual being will not be trampled upon, as in the Modern Era"*.

Western culture is in steep decline. A deep sickness has penetrated to the core of our society. We face a profound social and spiritual crisis. There is a deep unease and we are beginning to see fundamental questioning about the whole direction in which society is moving.

In the West, the Church is in decline and confronted with enormous problems. Pope Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor* said, *"The Church is facing what is certainly a genuine crisis"*. Dr. George Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, went so far as to say of the established Church in England *"The Church is one generation away from extinction"*. Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor has referred to English society as having become pagan.

"Western civilisation suffers from a strong sense of moral and spiritual exhaustion" says the journalist Clifford Longley. *"Having constructed a society of unprecedented sophistication, convenience and prosperity, nobody can remember what it was supposed to be for. Just enjoying it does not seem to be enough. Indeed, enjoyment as an end in itself, quickly turns to ashes in the mouth. Not only is it boringly bland. It is even more boringly purposeless. There is more to human life than comfort, entertainment and the avoidance of suffering"*.

Francis Schaeffer stated *"Our view of final reality – whether it is material-energy, shaped by impersonal choice, or the living God and Creator – will determine our position on every crucial issue we face today. It will determine our views on the value and dignity of people, the base for the kind of life the individual and society lives, the direction law will take, and whether there will be freedom or some form of authoritarian dominance"*. (*Christian Manifesto 1981*)

There is a crisis of belief. There is confusion, doubt and dismay. Yet in spite of this there are seeds of hope.

The church plays a vastly diminished role in the life of the nation in comparison with one hundred years ago. It no longer dictates standards of morality. The powerful social forces of urbanisation, capitalism and information technology are now the dominant influences upon our culture.

Christianity faces the three-fold challenge of secular humanism, the New Age and Islam and is at present ill-equipped to respond.

The Church today has the opportunity to demonstrate to the world in its own life and witness the real nature of the Gospel. It can reveal love by being family. It can reveal God the Father of the Family in tangible terms. It can reveal healing by being the present, serving, living Body of Christ headed by Jesus Himself.

Dr. Dan Beeby said *“If we are confessed aliens and eccentrics to the culture let us be like those early ones in the New Testament, certain that Christ is the truth and willing to be eccentric to the culture for the culture’s sake that it may be redeemed. He posed the question “Dare we be the new dissenters, not marching under the culture’s question mark but bearing with certainty a Cross that both questions and redeems the culture?”*

Many believe we are being called to rediscover the freshness and rawness of the simple Gospel. At the same time we are called to encounter and understand the radical changes taking place in Western culture. Christians of all traditions and denominations today affirm the statement of Lesslie Newbigin **“The Gospel is public truth”**.

“If we cannot demonstrate the proof of our story by living it, we will never convince people of its truth by talking about it”.

An Explanation

The origin of this project

The Maranatha Community presented 'A Call to the Nation' in Parliament in 1993. Millions of copies of this provoked a nationwide response, which has continued. Prompted by a study of the book of Ezekiel it warned of dark storm clouds gathering over our nation. This was followed by 'A Call to the Churches' which was presented to thousands of Christian leaders. Both calls provoked a widespread response.

Following these Calls, Maranatha presented the publication 'What on Earth are We Doing to our Children?' at a meeting in the House of Lords in 1995. This generated widespread coverage in the media and prompted a special debate in the House of Commons, followed by a parliamentary consultation opened by the Lord Chancellor. This in turn led to the major national conference in Coventry Cathedral on the theme 'Heirs to the Millennium' in 1996.

We were then led to give serious consideration to what we considered to be very dangerous trends in the life of the country. In 1996 the project 'Unmasking the spirit of the age' was launched. Working groups examined many aspects of our national life and identified highly destructive influences in the life of the nation.

The findings of these groups revealed a nation in serious social and spiritual crisis. Days of sharing and prayer were held with various church leaders and leaders of key Christian organisations. This led to the National Consultation 'Unmasking the spirit of the age' in Westminster Central Hall in 1997 when Christian leaders from all parts of the United Kingdom came together. This was followed by a meeting in Parliament. Evidence about the state of the nation was presented and there was a strong, united and positive response. Sorrow was expressed for what was happening and there was an act of repentance.

Many initiatives resulted from these various events. There was a nationwide day of prayer and a series of consultations on a broad range of social issues, varying from Northern Ireland to drugs and sex education. 'Factfile', an ongoing database of factual information was launched and is a powerful resource tool for Christians in public life. 'Trumpet Call' was initiated, regularly highlighting areas of particular concern in our national life, giving practical and precise guidance on how Christians can take initiatives. It is an effective Christian voice for truth, justice and righteousness. At the same time Maranatha became more deeply involved in Parliamentary briefings and in taking up individual issues in particular for persecuted Christians overseas.

In the face of a number of social trends there is now a very rapidly growing sense of urgency in the United Kingdom. The public is beginning to recognise the high price of the destruction of marriage and family life, with the consequent huge toll of child suffering, the widespread breakdown of law and order and the corrosive spread of drug abuse and pornography.

We have been led to consider some of the roots of our disorders and to endeavour to identify the thinking and the formative and controlling influences behind the de-Christianising of our land. We believe that God can lead us out of the present darkness into His glorious light.

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