

Transcripts of
**FLIGHT FROM
KNOWLEDGE and LIFE**

A Lecture Series by R.J. Rushdoony



R.J. RUSHDOONY

(1916–2001)

Rev. R.J. Rushdoony (1916–2001), was a leading theologian, church/state expert, and author of numerous works on the application of Biblical law to society. He started the Chalcedon Foundation in 1965. His Institutes of Biblical Law (1973) began the contemporary theonomy movement which posits the validity of Biblical law as God's standard of obedience for all. He therefore saw God's law as the basis of the modern Christian response to the cultural decline, one he attributed to the church's false view of God's law being opposed to His grace. This broad Christian response he described as "Christian Reconstruction." He is credited with igniting the modern Christian school and homeschooling movements in the mid to late 20th century. He also traveled extensively lecturing and serving as an expert witness in numerous court cases regarding religious liberty. Many ministry and educational efforts that continue today, took their philosophical and Biblical roots from his lectures and books.

Learn more about R.J. Rushdoony by visiting: <https://chalcedon.edu/founder>

Flight From Knowledge and Life (1)

Flight From Knowledge

R.J. Rushdoony

Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior was not only the leading American champion of legal positivism, but he was also prominent in the relativistic hostility to knowledge. In a letter to Harold Laski, dated October 30, 1930 Holmes observed: "I detest the man who knows that he knows." In part, Holmes' remark had reference to fanatics who manifested an irrational insistence on the truth of their position, but Holmes had more in mind than this. Basically his position was the same of a later Chief Justice, Frederick Moore Vincent who said: "Nothing is more certain in modern society than the principle that there no absolutes." Vincent and Holmes were both relativists. For them there was no truth, no absolute right or wrong. Their perspective was pragmatic and positivistic and of course anti-Christian.

The possibility of true knowledge concerning ultimate reality is denied by relativism. It is held that man cannot know God, if he exists, nor can he know the world of nature truly. He can use reality but he cannot truly know it. Not only this but the attempt to gain knowledge is itself condemned. According to Comte, the father of sociology, the quest for meaning and knowledge represents the theological and metaphysical stages of history. Now in the scientific stage, man moves not in terms of myth and meaning, not in terms of knowledge, but in terms of utility. The real question we are told is not 'what does this mean?' but 'how can I use it?' Man must renounce meaning and knowledge for the pragmatic use of things. The goal of learning therefore is not knowledge but the power to manipulate. In dealing either with men or things our purpose under pragmatism and relativism becomes not a knowledge of things but the power to manipulate them.

Education today is under the influence of this philosophy and expressive of it. Whether it is Marxist, existentialist, pragmatic, instrumentalist, progressivistic, or other forms, modern education is hostile to knowledge, and is in flight from knowledge. Its negative function is to indoctrinate its subjects with a radical cynicism concerning the family, patriotism, religion, philosophy, theology and all things else. The students must be divorced from meaning and knowledge and married to power because it is held: "knowledge is power." As a result, all the traditional subjects have changed. History is no longer treated as history, the knowledge of the past. It is social science now, the science of human control. And when the past is studied, it is in terms of controlling the present. Philosophy too has changed. It is no longer as its name indicates; 'the love of wisdom or knowledge.' Its basic disciplines; epistemology and metaphysics are treated with contempt. Philosophy has become the tool of power, it is instrumental to science and science controls it. The idea that true knowledge should be the goal of philosophy is ridiculed as a prescientific expectation. Much of philosophy has become logical analysis, the study of words and their uses as instruments of power.

Semantics too is interested in language only in the instrumental sense. Thus as S.I. Hayakawa has observed:

"Identification is something that goes on in the human nervous system. Out there, there are no absolute identities."

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In other words there is no truth, and therefore man is free to pioneer in this world without any restrictions or inhibitions. Therefore education today is concerned not with knowledge but with the techniques of power. We call it 'technical education' or 'technical knowledge,' but it is simply the ability to use the techniques of a profession, not the knowledge of things. People in other words are interested in power.

Even in the churches this basic pragmatism prevails. It is not the knowledge of God and his word that men seek, but rather how to live more successfully, how to find peace, how to win friends and the like. The basic question asked of religion is this: "what is God doing for man?" People go to church, not to worship, not to submit themselves to God and to gain knowledge from God's Word, but to advance themselves psychologically and socially. And increasingly it is held that the church is not truly the church unless it works to further the social revolution. The church itself has become another pragmatic tool of humanistic man.

The flight from knowledge means basically an anti-social movement. To deny that there is any absolute truth and absolute knowledge is to deny that there is a God who is the creator and Lord over all things and whose order and truth govern all things and is the source of all truth and knowledge. If there is no absolute knowledge in God and from God in his revelation, then the only absolute in any man's life is himself. Then every man is his own God, his own law, and his own source of knowledge. His self-knowledge is the only knowledge possible to him because then there is no other truth than man. Man's purpose becomes power over other men. That control over the world of men and things that will prove to himself that he is God which he believes he is. As a result, he isolates himself from all men, withdraws into the solitariness of his imagined godhead. And together with all the other men who delude themselves with the same pretension of godhood, he becomes a member of 'the lonely crowd.' Instead of being a man among men, he sees himself as a god among men, and his goal becomes not to love or hate men, that is to have a personal relationship with them, but to use men, to manipulate them impersonally.

As a result, in the name of humanity, this man-god treats mankind as an object to be used and manipulated. The modern humanist is in secession from society. He is in flight from knowledge and is in full-scale retreat from reality. The humanist is compelled to deny the possibility of knowledge because it is the only possible way he can imagine of denying God. David declared:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament sheweth his handywork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language,
Where their voice is not heard."

Saint Paul said:

"...that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.."

All men's knowledge witnesses to God and the law and order of God's creation witnesses to God. So that man faces everywhere the inescapable knowledge of God. The knowledge of God is inescapable, because all things were created by God and therefore witness to Him. Every fact is a God-created fact, and therefore can only witness to God. Every fact proclaims God when it is truly known.

The only way the humanist believes that he can escape God is to deny the possibility of knowledge. The purpose of relativism in its every form is to shut the door in the face of God, to deny the possibility of knowledge, because all knowledge testifies to God. It is not merely the denial of knowledge but the intense flight from knowledge which characterizes it.

Relativism is the modern form of atheism. It is far more radical than the older atheism which merely denied God. Relativism denies not only God but all knowledge. Relativism therefore unleashes the forces of total negation. It creates an hostility of all fronts to all law and order, to every institution except the power-state. It attacks the family because it hates the ties of family love. Family love involves subordination to an accepted law and order, to parents, to the responsibility of a husband or a wife. Such subordination and responsibility is intolerable to these humanistic gods. The only relationship tolerable to them is 'free love.' That is, a relationship without obligation or responsibility, a relationship which can be assumed freely or dropped just as freely. It is an intolerable concept for these humanistic 'gods' to be chained to domestic responsibilities.

Total negation means total hatred. As a result relativism attacks every kind of loyalty, faith and responsibility. Love involves affirmation, love means loyalty and association, it means responsibility. For men to maintain the illusion that they are the gods of creation it is important for them to maintain their independence from all other men, and from all ties and responsibilities. As a result, humanism leads to man's isolation from man, to man's hatred of every tie that binds, every love that claims him. Total negation is total hatred.

Total negation is also total ignorance. The flight from knowledge can only cumulate logically in ignorance because relativism and pragmatism are dedicated to a systematic ignorance of certain knowledge. It is not surprising, therefore, that progressive education produces academic ignorance. Nor that existentialism produces an unwashed, boorish and ignorant herd of followers. The flight from knowledge, however, is doomed to frustration. Since man also is a God-created fact, man can nowhere escape the knowledge of God. David made clear this inescapable knowledge of God:

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

Men can neither escape from God nor from the knowledge of God. Saint Paul declared that in the fullness of time:

"every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The inescapable knowledge of God shall bring inescapable submission to Jesus Christ, either as savior or as judge.

The conclusion of the flight from knowledge is the grim reality of the inescapable knowledge of judgment. Every individual and every civilization is faced with the fact of inescapable knowledge. Either they dedicate themselves to the knowledge of God and the knowledge of all things in Him, or they face the inescapable knowledge of God in the form of judgment.

ENDNOTES:

1. Edmund Wilson: Eight Essays, p. 235. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954.
2. 'Nothing is more certain in modern society', Chief Justice Vinson wrote in the First Amendment case of Dennis v United States (1951), 'than the principle that there are no absolutes'.
3. S.I. Hayakawa, "How Words Change Our Lives," Saturday Evening Post, December 27, 1958.
4. The Holy Bible: King James Version (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Ps 19:1–3). (2009). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
5. The Holy Bible: King James Version (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Ro 1:19–20). (2009). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
6. The Holy Bible: King James Version (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Ps 139:7–12). (2009). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
7. The Holy Bible: King James Version (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Php 2:10–11). (2009). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Flight From Knowledge and Life (2)

Flight From Life

R.J. Rushdoony

One of the dominant aspects of modern life is escapism. Not only in literature but in all the arts, there is a rebellion against the realities of life and a systematic attempt to find refuge in a dream-world. A prominent area of escape for the past century has been in the academic world, the university in particular. Men who found the realities of a workaday world unpleasant, turn to the university as a way out. It was not scholarship they loved, but the business world which they hated. To them the test of a working world was anathema. They were in a sense a new kind of hermit, running away from the civilized world and renouncing it for a new way of life.

Speaking of some of these men in England, the critic Edward Wilson spoke of them as belonging:

“To the monastic order of English University aesthetics.”

Their asceticism was forsaking the world of capitalism and Christianity, the world of the family and its morality for a new order, an anti-Christian one. Everything in the old world was and is to these men evil and anathema. And they denounce it with religious intensity and passion. The basic fallacy of these men was and is their flight from reality.

Now, a rebellion against the injustices and evils of this world is a healthy and necessary reaction in every generation. Progress is in part a product of discontent. An unwillingness to accept the status quo and a desire to establish better law and order, greater justice and a stronger sense of community. Inventions have been a product of man's restlessness with inadequate devices and a desire to improve on techniques and devices. Progress, however, comes only when men move in terms of a sense of reality, not in flight from reality.

To cite a commonplace illustration, two brothers from a particularly unprivileged home both sought to escape it. One sought refuge in liquor first, and later in narcotics. The other studied at night until he was able to qualify for a responsible and well-paying position. But history has periodically seen man in full rebellion against reality, and in flight from it. They seek to conform life and reality to their dream world, to impossibilities which seem wonderful in imagination, but produce horror and destruction when forced onto reality. For a man of seventy-five to dream of being twenty-one again is foolish enough. But to attempt to play the part of a young man of twenty-one is insanity! It is a flight from reality and life, because life can only be lived in terms of reality.

University is still a major form of escapism. And the perpetual student who is unwilling to grow up and leave the university is a common fact today. Most universities are crowded with non-students or unweaned students who cling to the school because they are unwilling to face the hated adult world of work and responsibility.

Politics, however, has become an even more important form of escapism. The political escapist hates

reality and he plans to abolish reality by means of political action. Basic to the biblical faith is individual responsibility. Man is a sinner, accountable to God, redeemable only by Jesus Christ. And the focal-point of social change must be the heart of man. But because man is a sinner, he is unwilling to accept responsibility for his sin. Nor is he ready to blame himself for his failures. Instead, his basic presupposition is that all is well with him and all is wrong with the world. Therefore, his every answer to his problems is to change the world, not himself.

For Karl Marx, this meant revolution. Marx had a religious belief in the power of revolution to create a paradise on earth. The result of the destruction of the old order would be the birth of a new order. This faith was plainly stated by the Marxists in Russia at the second congress of the party, August, 1903. It was actually believed that the revolution would abolish exploitation and class divisions, in actuality, it increased them.

This 1903 manifesto was one of the four great communist manifestos. Some of the things this manifesto called for are of interest. Thus, it called for local self-government on a wide scale, home rule for all localities where the population is of a special composition, and characterized by special conditions of life. It also demanded:

“...inviolability of person and dwelling, unlimited freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, strikes and unions. Freedom of movement and occupation.”

Of course, the very opposite of this is the rule in all Marxist countries. But this is not all. The manifesto called for:

“An eight hour weekday for all hired labor, and also for the complete prohibition of overtime work, and prohibition of night-work from nine p.m. to six p.m. and all branches of national economy with the exception of those in which this is absolutely necessary because of technical considerations approved by labor organizations. Prohibition of the employment of children of school age. Prohibition of women’s labor in all branches of industry injurious to women’s health.”

The manifesto cited the need for a complete socialist overturn as the only way for abolishing all poverty and all exploitation. The necessary condition for this social revolution they said was the dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolution, according to the manifesto, would bring about a transition from barbarism to a democratic republic whose constitution would guarantee liberty. The reality of course is that the revolution which the Marxists of 1903 brought about in 1917 in Russia, not only did not bring about the glorious new world they dreamt of, but created a tyranny which executed virtually every surviving framer of the 1903 manifesto. Instead of a glorious liberty, the result was a brutal reign of terror. One which continues to this day.

The root cause of the failure of the Marxist dream was that it represents a flight from reality. Marxism denies the biblical doctrine of original sin. Instead of dealing realistically with men as sinner, it holds to the neutral or even good nature of man and his perfectibility. This means that, instead of distrusting men and hedging him in checks and balances in the state, Marxism trusts power in the hands of men and creates a totalitarian state.

The result of this inability to see man as he is is an inability to live in terms of reality. The Marxist lacks the capacity to govern because he knows neither his own nature nor the nature of man everywhere. He lives under the illusion that his Marxist dream represents inevitable historical truth instead of error. As a result, his mental perspective is no different than that of the insane. He regards his illusions as reality, and insists on living in terms of his illusions. As a consequence, his government can only produce chaos and destruction. It is a perpetual hindrance to the very productivity it demands of the people. A

Marxist state accuses the people of sabotaging the national economy, when the actual saboteur is the Marxist state.

This flight from reality infects more than the Marxists of our time. It infects, as we have seen, the world of the university. It also infects liberalism which builds also on the fallacious premise of the goodness of man. Some forms of political conservatism, because they reject Christian foundations, are guilty of the same illusion concerning man.

Every failure to recognize man as a sinner, every failure to face reality as it is before we begin to deal with it constructively, is not a flight from reality but a flight from life. We are running away from life if we refuse to face it as it is. If we demand that life conform itself to our illusions. Dostoyevsky saw clearly the implications of the radical thinkers of his day. Starting from unlimited freedom they arrived at unlimited despotism. Mankind was divided into two unequal parts.

“One tenth is to enjoy absolute freedom and unbounded power over the other nine tenths. The others must give up all individuality and become something like a herd to attain through boundless submission and by a series of regenerations, a state of primeval innocence, something like the garden of Eden.”

In effect, what the advocates of this socialist world demand is the right to become gods and rule over all other men. For men to imagine themselves to be gods is a flight from reality into monstrous delusions. Dostoyevsky has a radical declare:

“Everyone belongs to all, and all belong to everyone. All are slaves and equal in their slavery. Slaves are bound to be equal, without despotism there has never been freedom or equality, but in the herd there is bound to be equality. The moment you have family ties or love you have the desire for property. We will destroy that desire, we shall reduce everything to a common denominator, complete equality, complete obedience, complete loss of individuality.”

Dostoyevsky attempted to warn man of what was coming. But men failed to heed his warning because they shared the same humanistic illusions concerning man. They refused to face the fact of man's total depravity. They were themselves too guilty of the desire to be gods to see this urge as a sin in other men.

Basic to every flight from reality is a flight from creaturehood, an unwillingness to accept the fact that we are men, not gods. Satan's basic temptation and man's original sin is the attempt to be as gods, knowing or determining good or evil for ourselves. Man was created by God to be a man, not a god, and given a glorious destiny as man under God. Man was summoned to be king, priest and prophet under God over the earth, but man sinned by attempting his own god.

In Jesus Christ man is restored to his destiny. Apart from Jesus Christ, man lives under the illusion that his sin, to be as god, is fact, and he attempts to make his word become flesh, that is, his illusion to become fact. The consequence is destruction and chaos. Every flight from reality is suicidal. It is the flight also from life. Life can only be realized in its potentialities on God's terms, not man's. Christ's words speaking as wisdom are still true.

“He that sinneth against God wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.”

ENDNOTES:

1. Thomas P. Whitney, ed., *The Communist Bluefrint for the Future: The Complete Texts of All Four Communist Manifestos 1844-1961* (New York: Dutton, 1962), 68.
2. Thomas P. Whitney, ed., *The Communist Bluefrint for the Future: The Complete Texts of All Four Communist Manifestos 1844-1961* (New York: Dutton, 1962), 69-73.
3. Fyodor, Dostoevsky. *The Possessed, A Novel in Three Parts*. Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925, 377.
4. Fyodor, Dostoevsky. *The Possessed, A Novel in Three Parts*. Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925, 391.
5. Fyodor, Dostoevsky. *The Possessed, A Novel in Three Parts*. Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925, 391, 392.
6. Proverbs 8:36

Neo-Platonism vs. Christianity, I

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Let us begin with prayer. Our Lord and our God, we give thanks unto thee that thou who art Lord of all things art our God also, that there is nothing too great, nor too small for thee. And so, our Father, we come to thee with our needs great and small, with our hopes and our burdens, great and small; and we cast our every care upon thee, according to thy Word, knowing thou carest for us. Minister to us in thy mercy; relieve us of our burden; confirm us in our joys; bless us in our service; and enlighten our minds, that we might better serve thee and magnify thy holy name. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Our subject tonight and for, perhaps, two more weeks is Neoplatonism and Christianity. Neoplatonism is essentially a Greek philosophy common to the world of antiquity. It gets its name from Plato; and Neoplatonism means the new forms of Platonism that have come up age after age. Neoplatonism has had a great deal of influence on Christianity, and we're going to look for a moment or two at some of the results it has produced. When we go back through the centuries, we find many things that are regarded as holy and saintly that are really shocking to us, very distressing to us as Christians when we encounter them. The lives of some of the so-called saints make really painful reading. Palladius, for example, saw the goal of Christian living as release from this world and the flesh. And he said: "All those who love Christ make haste to be joined to God through these virtuous acts, each day preparing for the release of the soul." In other words, the whole purpose of life was to get ready to die.

Then, when we go to Isidore, the elder, who was guest master of the Church of Alexandria, we are told by Palladius as though this were a great virtue on Isidore's part:

"Up to the very end of his life, he wore no fine linen, except for a headband. He neither bathed, nor ate meat."

Now, the idea that it made you a saint to avoid taking a bath certainly doesn't sit well with us, I can see by the expressions on your faces. It doesn't, certainly, agree with your idea of sanctity. But, this was very common. For example, after a hot journey, when one Christian named Jovinus washed his tired feet and hands in cold water, and stretched out to rest, a woman who was regarded as especially holy, Melania, rebuked him and said, quoting again from Palladius:

"Melania approached him like a wise mother approaching her own son, and she scoffed at his weakness, saying: 'How can a warmblooded young man like you dare to pamper your flesh that way? Do you not know that this is the source of much harm? Look, I am sixty years old and neither my feet nor my face nor any of my members, except for the tips of my fingers, has touched water, although I am afflicted with many ailments and my doctors urge me. I have not yet made concessions to my bodily desires, nor have I used a couch for resting, nor have I ever made a journey on a litter.'"

Now, here was a very well-to-do woman, deliberately avoiding using a bed, or traveling in a litter, or bathing, and doing this, because she felt it was a way of being holy. In fact, we might say that very ob-

viously this kind of sainthood did have an odor of sanctity about it, to use the old expression; but it is not what we would call the odor of sanctity. Killing the body, short of suicide, was a common practice, the body was treated as an enemy.

One ascetic of Thebes, when he was asked:

“What are you doing, Father, killing your body in such a way?”

And he answered:

“It kills me; I will kill it.”

Suicidal self-mortification was called ‘sanctification.’ The body, or the flesh, was regarded as the enemy; and therefore, some of these so-called saints and ascetics would whip themselves, they would roll in thorns on rose bushes (try that for size, sometimes) to enhance their spirituality. We are told, for example, one such saint, Ammonius, that:

“He never pampered his flesh when desire rose up in revolt, but he heated an iron in the fire and applied it to his limbs, so that he became ulcerated all over.”

And there were many who admired this. Now, of course, very obviously, there was a false principle involved here, as though the flesh were that aspect of man which was fallen. But the Bible does not tell us that the flesh fell, but that the whole man was the sinner and the whole man fell, and it is the whole man that is redeemed by Jesus Christ; body and soul. And the resurrection of the body and the new creation culminates the total redemption of man. The doctrine of total depravity tells us that the whole man is fallen, every aspect of man. Thus, to exalt the mind against the body is to exalt, really, to capital of sin, for it is man’s desire to be as God which is original sin, not some bodily urge. It was man thinking: “I want to be like God; therefore, I will disobey God” that was the cause of sin. So to treat the body as though it were the source of sin is to, in effect, say it is the suburbs of sin that are responsible, and forget the capital.

Actually, the ascetics, in all their warfare against the body, revealed a great deal of mental sin and pride. On one occasion, one such acetic named Nathaniel refused to show courtesy to seven holy bishops who came to see him. And the deacons told him:

“You are committing an arrogant act, Father, not escorting the bishops forth.

But he said:

“I am dead both to my sovereign bishops and to the whole world. I have an intention which is hidden, and God knows my heart, why I do not escort them forth.”

Now, this so-called hidden intention was really the sin of Adam we would have to say, the desire to be as God, to transcend creatureliness. The thing they disliked about the body, the flesh, was because they believed, while the soul was supposedly eternal, the body was mortal and perishable; and therefore, they should have nothing to do with it. Their desire was to be more than man, and this, for them, constituted holiness. For example Macarius of Alexandria gives us an instance of this:

“He decided to be above the need for sleep, and he claimed that he did not go under a roof for twenty days in order to conquer sleep. He was burned by the heat of the sun and was drawn up with the cold at night. And he also said, “If I had not gone into the house and obtained the advantage of some

sleep, my brain would have shriveled up for good. I conquered to the extent I was able, but I gave in to the extent my nature required sleep.”

“Early one morning when he was sitting in his cell a gnat stung him on the foot. Feeling the pain, he killed it with his hands, and it was gorged with his blood. He accused himself of acting out of revenge and he condemned himself to sit naked in the marsh of Scete out in the great desert for a period of six months. Here the mosquitoes lacerate even the hides of the wild swine just as wasps do. Soon he was bitten all over his body, and he became so swollen that some thought he had elephantiasis. When he returned to his cell after six months he was recognized as Macarius only by his voice.”

In other words, to attain holiness, to obtain perfection meant to transcend creatureliness, to become more than a man. Some of them actually, in order to mortify the flesh, castrated themselves. This, fortunately, was not too common, although among the pagans in antiquity, it was very common. The goal was to be, as the Stoic philosophers held it, like God; and the stoic idea of God was to be passionless, to be above feeling; so that feeling of any kind was decried. Even to have loved, some felt, was to give way to feeling. The monk, Diocles, said that: “desire is beast-like; anger, demon-like.” The goal was to have no feelings about anything material or fleshly.

One very prominent person regarded as an extremely holy man, Sorathia, wore only a loincloth. When he heard that there was a virgin who claimed to have great holiness, he went to challenge her, because he wanted to see if she was living in a high state of passionless life, above feeling, above caring about anything? And so, he went to challenge her. So, this is the exchange that follows:

“He said: “Where do you travel?”

And she said: “To God.”

He asked her: “Are you living or dead?”

She answered: “I believe in God that I am dead, for no one in the flesh makes that journey.”

He said: “So that you may indeed convince me you are dead, do what I do.... Go out and show yourself.... Disrobe yourself and place your clothing on your shoulders and go through the middle of the city with me in the lead in this way.”

(In other words, let’s both strip naked and go through the middle of the town.)

She said to him: “I would scandalize many doing such an indecent thing and they would have to say: ‘That one is insane and demon-ridden.’”

He told her: “And so far as you are concerned, what does it matter that they say you are insane and demon-ridden?”

Then she told him: “If you wish anything else, I will do it; for I do not boast that I have come to this point.”

Then he told her: “See now, do not consider yourself more pious than the others, or dead to the world, for I am more dead in that sense than you are; in fact I will show you that I am dead to the world, for I will do this without shame and without feeling.” Thus he left her humbled and broke her pride.

There are many other wonders which he did also proving his perfect self-control.”

Now, we’re moving, when we discuss such men, into a world not like anything we recognize as Christian; in fact, closer to the modern hippie, very definitely closer, because the modern hippie in a sense is following the same kind of ideal. Remember that he was preceded by the beatnik. The beatnik got his name from ‘beat’ the Italian for ‘beatitude,’ ‘beatific,’ saintly, holy. They were the new saints of the modern age, they didn’t care about material things. And this is why the beats and, after them, the hippies let their hair go; they become dirty and filthy, totally careless about their appearance; in fact, they feel happier in old, ragged, dirty clothing, because they’re holy, they’re above material things, and they despise their parents and all the squares, because there is no spirituality in them; they’re out grubbing for money, which proves they’re such terrible people.

Now, this kind of asceticism, which crept into the church (and I have given you examples of it), we had in its worse form in Greco-Roman culture. And, of course, you find great extremes of this in India. But the examples I have given are really pale, compared to what was commonplace in the world of antiquity. If you travel to India today, you will see far, far more extravagant things than anything I have cited. The origin of this is pagan. All of this came into Christianity through Neoplatonism, and Neoplatonism was not without its influence from India. Now, what was the background of this kind of thinking? It was grounded in the dialectical nature of Greek philosophy and Greek religion, Greek thinking.

Now, what is dialecticism? We hear a great deal of dialecticism today, because the church, by and large today is taken over by dialectical theology. The modern world is dialectical in its thinking, and we'll come in our last lecture to the dialecticism and the Neoplatonism in Marxism and other modern philosophies, just what it means in those philosophies.

Now, dialectical philosophy is any philosophy which tries to hold two things which are mutually exclusive, at war with each other, alien to each other, so that they should not go together; and yet, they feel they have to hold them, somehow, together, because otherwise they would be denying the reality of an aspect of life. For Greek philosophy and thought, as well as for Hindu philosophy and thought, mind and body, spirit and matter are two different substances. Entirely different substances that have nothing really in common. Somehow, they've been brought together by evolution or chaos; so that we are both spirit, or mind, and body. But the two are against each other, they are at war with each other. Doesn't this sound familiar? And, therefore, sooner or later one or the other has to give way; and, of course, the higher is mind or spirit: it is eternal, according to Greek thought; whereas, matter is mortal and perishes. The principle of evil is matter, and the principle of good is spirit. So, man is an unhappy union of good and evil; the good being his mind, his reason, his spirit; and the bad being his body, his flesh, matter. Man is half holy and half evil.

Then, how do you become holy? Well, you live the life of the mind; you pay no attention to the life of the matter. You can do this two ways, and in India, you have the two ways of holiness. You can do it by having nothing to do with the body, as it were, and trying to destroy the body. And you have in India the ascetics, who do everything to torture the body, to suppress it, to destroy it. Then you have, also in India, others who are trying to accomplish the same goal of holiness by saying: "Since the body is nothing, I will abuse it through endless sexuality; I'll treat it as nothing."

Now you have this type of thinking among your hippies today, because, as existentialists, they are neoplatonic. In other words, the whole neoplatonic view of man is schizophrenic: man is made up of two alien substances. One is the uncreated mind, matter, or reason, which is ultimately going to be reabsorbed into the universal mind. Now, what does that sound like? Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy; and she was neoplatonic to the core. It was pure Neoplatonism. And the other is matter, which is bad, it's evil; and some would say, good Neoplatonists; it's an illusion. So you forget about it. You try to get rid of it.

Now, in terms of the Bible, you do not have anything of a dialectical perspective. Body and soul are alike, created by God; created very good, the Bible tells us. Man as a unity fell into sin. The doctrine of total depravity says that the whole man sinned; body and soul. The whole man is redeemed by Christ, and we cannot say: "Well, yes, there's still sin in me, because I'm not perfectly satisfied. It's in my body, but my mind is pure." That's rubbish! That's Neoplatonism. If your body sins, it's because your mind is leading it there. You are a unity in the Bible, you see. In the Bible the problem is not the body, it is not matter, it is sin; this is the problem. In the Bible, the Savior is not mind or spirit or soul, it is Jesus Christ. But in Neoplatonism, it is mind, or reason or soul that saves man from evil matter.

Plotinus, one of the greatest philosophers of Neoplatonism, who, together with Plato, can be considered the two great minds of this movement, said he was ashamed to have a body. He was a pagan philosopher. This is the essence of Neoplatonism. As a result, the goal of all such people is to escape from the body, to regard the body as man's problem and enemy.

The pagan mystics, the pagan saints and ascetics:

"prayed to be delivered from the flesh rather than from sin. The body was a prison or a tomb, dissociation from which was the soul's one hope."

You see, salvation was to get rid of the body, to control it; finally to be separated from it: that was salvation, not Christ redeeming us from sin.

"Salvation therefore meant relief, if possible, from suffering in this present life, and release from the shame and limitation of the body in the life to come."

You can see why, when St. Paul began to talk to the Greeks in Athens about the resurrection of the body, they turned and walked away, and about a Savior Who would come as their judge: "Oh, no, this is impossible. Why, man's savior is his mind or spirit or reason, to save him from this world of matter, including his own body." And as a result, the resurrection of the body was a very painful thing for these pagans, who became pseudo-Christians, to deal with. They didn't like it. They tried to get rid of it and to say: "Well, we believe in the immortality of the soul." And, of course, in the modernist churches today, they don't talk about the resurrection of the body; they will talk about the immortality of the soul. And, of course, at the same time, they will not talk about Christ as man's only savior. No, the mind of man, applied reason, working through the state, and social action is going to save the world; man's mind, mind/spirit, as against the body.

Moreover, conversion meant the soul turning to seek higher, nobler, spiritual goals, as against material ones. Then, too, some of the Neoplatonists have held that the one emotion or feeling that can be tolerated, you should be passionless, basically, but the one tolerable emotion, which is a spiritual emotion, is love. So, if you're going to be spiritual, you love. But if you get angry and you say you hate communism; then, you hate hoodlums and murderers—oh, you're material, you're fleshly; and therefore, you are not holy. This has been a common strain in many varieties of Neoplatonism.

The Neoplatonists throughout the centuries have attacked Christianity, because of what they call its downward movement, instead of its upward movement. The upward movement is, à la Mary Baker Eddy, everyone being mind or spirit, forgetting the world of matter, and trying to rise higher and be reunited with divine mind. But the Bible talks, instead of any upward movement (there's none of this, none of this in the Bible) it talks, instead, about a downward movement: The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us; the Incarnation. And then Christ saying when he washed his disciples' feet that you are to be servants of men; go down amongst men; work with them. You're not to rise upward to try to escape the world and from problems.

This is why I had a very famous sermon, which I've referred to a time or two in the past six years in speaking to you: Martin Luther, in talking about the Virgin Mary, when the angel came to her and told her she should conceive and bear the only begotten Son of God. Martin Luther said: "And what did she do, retire under a convent, and seek in prayer and meditation to rise above this material world? No, she went on sleeping on the floor, slopping the hogs, and doing all the work that a good girl would do around her father's home." Now, this is the emphasis, you see, it is on the downward aspect. You are saved? All right, you get down to the nitty gritty level of human responsibility, and you'd do your

work.

Moreover, if and when Neoplatonists have believed in prayer, because if it's a divine mind that is not really personal or conscious, how's He going to hear you? But to the extent that they believe in prayer, when they pray, their prayer should be, they hold, a meditation on higher things. And prayer should be very spiritual. And as a result, they have through the centuries been very, very critical of Christianity. "Why, these Christians are so materialistic, they pray, why in the Lord's Prayer, there's a prayer: "give us this day our daily bread!" How crude can you get!?" And look at these Christians who are praying about very material things. They want to get well, to be healed, they want a better job, they want to prosper in this or that thing, and they actually pray about these things! How shocking!" Now, that's the Neoplatonists' attitude.

And, of course, you can see the influence of this in many areas in the church. In many churches, the people who claim to be super holy are the ones who have a sanctimonious, smug way about them; and who are above being concerned about material things. And their idea of being a Christian is that they can really pray by the yard. And if you've ever had the misfortune to go to a prayer meeting where some of these so-called saints hold forth, they can take over for twenty and thirty minutes, and say nothing, except to be very spiritual and prove how holy they are, you see. Their prayers never got down to the needs of Christ's people. All it's done is to do what the Pharisees did: exalt themselves spiritually. The goal of Neoplatonism is to rise upward above the material things, and to be spiritual; and ultimately to be one with God, to become divine, to merge in the divine mind, and, meanwhile, to be so spiritual in this world before you merge with God that you are actually a rival to God; you're holier than God, in effect.

If you think this is an overstatement, let me quote to you what Ficino a few centuries ago said. After going on along this vein about how the soul should rise above all these things, then he concluded:

"If one with all this before his eyes will not admit that the human soul is a rival of God, he is undoubtedly out of his mind..."

Very baldly, in other words, saying this is the goal: "We're going to rival God, we're going to be holier than God." Now the implications of this were very, very plainly pointed out by Anders Nygren in commenting on Ficino's position, and those of other Neoplatonists, like Ficino:

"Since man is fundamentally a divine being, he cannot bear to see in God any perfection and power which he does not himself possess. He is inflamed with desire to vie with God

So Nietzsche was not the first to think: "if there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god!" ... What is new in this idea is the hypothetical beginning, and the negative conclusion: "Thus, there are no gods." It is not a far cry from Ficino to Nietzsche, who replaces God with the Superman, and to Feuerbach, who conceives God as the projection of man's wish fantasy."

In other words, what Nygren is pointing out, the Neoplatonist says he is divine; he ends up by seeking to rival God; and finally, he proclaims the death of God, and that he is God. And this is precisely what happened.

Neoplatonism infected the life and thought of the early church, and of all Europe. It saw man in schizophrenic terms. It saw the problem not as sin, but as matter. In other words, it reversed the problem. It is the heart of man, of the whole man; body and soul, which is the source of sin. Sin comes out of the whole being of man. It is a willful act of the whole man. Neoplatonism says the mind is pure, but it's just the flesh which is a problem to this pure mind that gets out of hand; and this pure mind has to try

to bring it back into line periodically. In other words, the whole issue is reversed. Salvation is made separation from the flesh, not the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

The effect of Neoplatonism, thus, is very deadly. It is very extensive. We shall be tracing its influence in our succeeding meetings. But Neoplatonism has saturated the church with a false gospel, and where it gets a foothold, ultimately, it ousts truly biblical faith, because if one does see the flesh, matter as the problem, Christ, as Savior, is ultimately excluded, because then the savior is the mind of man. Then you have humanism as your gospel; and you have man, the reason of man, man the planner, as the savior, and somehow able ultimately to transcend the body.

It is interesting that Kenneth Heuer, a British astrophysicist, has said that someday science will actually enable man to get rid of the body; and then man will be able to travel throughout the universe without any problem of a body that needs repairing, and a body that dies. In other words, he fails to see that the real problem of man is not the body, it is the heart of man, the whole man; man the sinner. This is why the hand of Neoplatonism is raised against the gospel, because, as against Neoplatonism with its pride and the pride of man as pure and all-wise, the gospel points the finger at the whole man and says: "Thou art the man, the sinner, thou art the rebel against God. Sin is in you, all of you, and the only Savior is Jesus Christ and his atoning blood."

Let us pray. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we thank thee for thy Word, and for plain speaking. Thy Word is truth, and thy Word is the only corrective against the powers of darkness and the evil philosophies which flood our world today. Enable us so to understand thy Word and to apply it day by day that we may grow in grace and in knowledge of thee, and by thy Spirit flourish in thy service. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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Neo-Platonism vs. Christianity, II

R.J. Rushdoony

Our Lord and our God, again we pause this hour to thank thee for thy blessings. We thank thee, our God that thy Word is a light unto our feet and a lamp upon our way. We praise thee, our God that thou hast not kept us in darkness, but hast given us the light of Jesus Christ. And so, our God, enable us day by day by thy grace, to view all things in the light of Christ and His Word, that we may walk in this world as more than conquerors through Him that loved us. In His name we pray. Amen.

We saw last week as we began our study of the meaning of Neoplatonism, and its influence on Western civilization and Christianity, that for Neoplatonism, salvation is not a divine work, a divine act and miracle, but a human effort. Neoplatonism is dialectical. It believes that there are two things which are in tension, one against the other, that must somehow be kept together, even though they are in tension. These two things are spirit, or mind, and matter. On the one hand, you have spirit, mind, reason, idea, form. On the other hand, you have matter; you have the individual, which constitutes, therefore, something at odds with the world of spirit, which is basically the higher and superior world. When you say the one is good and the other is evil, you have outright Manichaeism, which has often developed.

In Manichaeism, the spirit is good, and matter is totally evil. Now, Neoplatonism tends towards Manichaeism, but it doesn't fall entirely into it. It doesn't come out and speak of them as absolutely good and evil, although it regards them more or less as good and bad. The essence of salvation for Neoplatonism is that man's spirit, reason, idea, form, or plan (and here you come to the political aspect of it) saves man from the world of body or matter or material necessity, or capitalism. Because this is the world that you must be saved from.

Marx and Engels spoke of it as moving from the kingdom of necessity, matter, and of capitalism to the kingdom of freedom, the kingdom of spirit / mind. Matter, in other words, is at the very least for the Neoplatonist a lesser thing and unimportant. It's only the crude man who is interested in things material. This naturally means that anybody who is a capitalist, or anyone who is interested in a good home and good clothes, and a good appearance, is obviously a sensual, low character.

The same is true of particularity, or individuality, or individualism, because the world of spirit is the world of universal mind - Mary Baker Eddy, here. And the world of matter is the world of individuals. Now, Mary Baker Eddy went so far as to say they're an illusion. Neoplatonism doesn't yet take that step, and Mary Baker Eddyists did; but they're not good. So, you see, being an individual, emphasizing the individual, is not good. You should emphasize the collective, to put it into political terms. And so, totalitarianism is the goal. And you try to destroy the individual who is crude and materialistic in that he puts the emphasis on myself, my property, my possessions, my will. Individualism, thus, is not important. And, Sir Thomas More, in portraying his 'Utopia,' did not feel it was important to think when he married about the individual. After all, marriage was a purely material thing, a very physical thing. Therefore, when it comes to the material, one piece of material is as good as another; one hunk of meat is as good as another. So his attitude was, the way to marry is to strip all the women and let

them take their choice - the men. And of course, this is exactly what he applied with his daughter, when Sir Thomas Roper wanted to marry one of his girls, and he just had him take a look at both of them and take his pick. After all, it was the crude world of matter; and he was above that sort of thing.

Of course, this goes back to the origins of Greek thought. Aristotle said that women are misbegotten males, because they are more material, more materialistic; they have less soul than men. In fact, Plato went further and he actually questioned whether you could call women 'rational' or 'reasonable' creatures. Now, of course, you can see where a great strain of thought that ran through the Middle Ages, and you still have today, comes from; and where the hostility to women, as supposedly lower, originated. This is why, with this idea of women, the ascetics, as well as many modern thinkers, can think of women as somehow sensual and materialistic and flesh-oriented, seducing men to a lower way of life.

And you have this opinion in Islam. Now, of course, Islam is a very masculine religion. It was invented by a man, Mohammed; polygamy was made a part of its paradise, as a dream of unlimited women for the faithful of Allah. But somehow, through all of this, they preserved the idea that men are somehow rational and spiritual creatures, and the women are coarse, sensual, and material. The capacity of men to delude themselves is really enormous. But, the idea of the inferiority of women, their inability to be rational and reasonable, goes back to Neoplatonism.

Now, the Bible has no such idea. The Bible makes it very clear, for example, in Proverbs 31, how competent a woman is. And there, she is portrayed as someone who operates farms and industries, indulges in foreign trade, manages a sizable business empire, while her husband sits in the gate, which means (not that he's lazy and just sitting around), but that he was a member of the town council. In other words, he'd gone into politics, and she was running the business empire and the farms, and everything. That was the Biblical idea and practice, with respect to women. The only thing the Bible says is that women are not to have dominion in the house, or to have authority within the church. It doesn't say anything about them being inferior, or more materialistic, or more sensual, or anything like that.

Now as we have seen, the superior realm for Neoplatonism is the realm of ideas, of reason, of spirit. This is the world of causality and determinism. Karl Marx said that there should be a transfer of determinism from nature, where it still exists, to mind; and that this is the evolution of history. That so far in history, the problem has been that the world of matter, the world of capitalism, the world of economics has too much determined things, when it should be mind or spirit or reason that should rule. And the progress of history is from the kingdom of necessity from this coarse, material world to the kingdom of freedom, this mental world, where mind rules, and mind imposes its determinism and its predestination on everything. Now, the realm of mind, whether it's in Marx or in Mary Baker Eddy, or Plotinus or Plato, is not the world of individuals. As a result, the socialist paradise has no room for individuals. The individual is a particular; he is something material and limited. But mind is universal mind; and so, the goal is to suppress the individual.

This is why in socialism the goal is really to obliterate the individuals, to end what is called "alienation," which is your self-consciousness as an individual; and it is actually pictured by some socialist writers as an ant hill society. You have your worker ants and so on, your soldier ants; and none of them are self-conscious and saying, "Now, why am I a worker ant," or "why am I a soldier ant." No, the hive or the ant hill rules all the members, thereof; and each one does his function automatically. They're governed, you see, by an idea, supposedly. And this is the goal for society, for you to forget that you're an individual. And if you're too material to overcome your materialistic, your bourgeois, your capitalistic, your Christian training, then you have to be liquidated, so that the world of mind, the spirit of geist, can rule.

On top of that, universals, ideas, reason is ostensibly passionless; whereas, man as a materialistic physical thing is passionate. Now, the word passion comes from “pasco,” to suffer, which is very interesting. The Greek idea was that feelings meant suffering. Therefore, to eliminate or to escape from suffering, you had to eliminate the ability to feel. You had to be a Stoic. And the goal of the Stoic was to be able to hear that his house had burnt down, and his wife died in the fire, and his children had all been killed, and not to allow it to ruffle a hair, to go right on with a philosophical discourse, to be a completely passionless person, pure reason. Incidentally, the word “pasco” should not be confused with (the Greek word) with the Hebrew word “pasca;” Passover. They are two different words in two different languages. Now, passion means any and every form or degree of feeling. And this is why, ultimately, when you have the neoplatonic emphasis, they’ll begin by saying anger is bad; hate is bad. But ultimately, love and everything is ruled out. No feeling; pure reasoning to govern all things.

Thus, man is seen in neoplatonic psychology as an unstable union of mind and body, of passionless and passionate elements. The psychology of Platonism thus says that when a man sins, he is driven to sin by his body, for as his mind is pure. So it’s allowing his body to gain the better of him. And, of course, this is utterly false from a Christian perspective. Man; body, and mind is a unity; and sin begins from the heart out of the unity of his being, and it affects his whole being, body and soul.

Again, for Neoplatonism, law is an impersonal, mechanical force. It definitely is not seen as the will of God. It’s like a machine, a clockwork; whereas freedom and the individual are passionate, lawless impulses. As a result, freedom is a problem. You may recall that some time ago, I mentioned the fact that, having spoken at a forum in San Jose, a schoolteacher came up (a public schoolteacher) afterwards, and told me that I was deluding the people in talking about freedom. Why? “Because in the modern scientific world, freedom is obsolete,” she said. Freedom is obsolete. And, of course, the thinking behind her statement was that the idea, the neoplatonic idea, the plan, makes freedom irrelevant. Freedom is the coarse sensual desire of the particular, of the materialistic individual to say “well, I want my way,” when all that should prevail is pure reason; the plan; the word, as given by the scientific god; the manifestation and incarnation of mind in society.

Now, of course, you have this, beginning with the French Revolution and the revolutionary movements of modern time; the planned destruction of freedom, all in the name of man. In the French Revolution, you had the reign of terror to eliminate everyone who stood out against the mob; or, in their terms, against reason. Remember, they worshiped the goddess, reason, the revolutionary leaders. They had public services in her honor, and everything was done in the name of ‘reason;’ The impartial, the objective, impersonal, passionless entity; and here are these individuals, wanted their own way. They wanted their property. They wanted to carry on old traditions that were being abolished. They were passionate. They were materialistic. They had to be eliminated. Robespierre said in justifying all the terror:

“The Revolution is the transition from the regime of crime to the regime of justice.”

And in the name of justice, they actually sat down and debated: “shall we destroy one-fourth, or one-half, or two-thirds of the population of France?” And, of course, the whole idea in Marxism of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the same idea of reason incarnate, objective reason; liquidating everyone that represented that which was materialistic and individual.

I read today of the attack upon a woman who had written a letter in Red China to the papers. She was a devout Communist. What was she longing for? She said, “Let’s all work together. Let’s reach our goals, and then maybe my husband and wife can have a little place together, a little apartment, and we can enjoy life together and our children, and I can enjoy cooking and that sort of thing.” “Oh, what a terrible materialistic goal,” the editor of the paper said. “She was thinking of herself! It should be

here on this pure level of reason' impersonal, without any passion or feeling. Why, what a terrible offense; thinking about her own little apartment, her husband, her child! She was hopelessly bourgeois."

Now you see, this is what Neoplatonism does; and you can see how a world saturated with a neoplatonic mentality is going to sacrifice everything material and everything personal. It's going to sacrifice man, in other words. Its goal is the rule of reason: Plato's philosopher-kings. The men of science, the men of reason were above being attached to anything material.

But, you say, Plato's Republic had sexual communism and all the best women available for the philosopher-kings: of course, but on a totally impersonal basis. Why? It was nothing, of course, to have all the women that were at all desirable there like cattle for the philosopher kings: that's exactly what Plato called for in his Republic. But the idea of them getting attached to anyone of these women, and of wanting to settle down with any one of them, that would have been immoral. You see, if they'd just had the woman casually, and unfeelingly picked them up out of a line, and that was it, they were still living on this high level of reason and catering to the flesh to the extent that it was barely necessary to keep it from being a problem for them. But to get attached to one woman? Why, that would destroy them! Then, they would descend from this high level, and would become material, sensual in nature. They would be seduced by that woman into thinking of something besides highly rational, reasonable things. In other words, a personal relationship was the worst possible thing. A woman, if she were lovable, could chain a man down; and no claim by a woman on a man could be tolerated.

This is why Alexander the Great, who was a world conqueror and was a pupil of Aristotle, hated to eat. He avoided eating as much as possible, because it was a very unhappy concession to the fact that he had a body, and he wasn't pure reason. For that same reason, here he was a world conqueror, he avoided sex. He had a boy, because he needed someone to succeed him, but it was very unpleasant to think about. He wanted to be pure reason, above sex and above eating. It really troubled him that he had to do either. And, of course, for the Neoplatonist through the centuries, one of the most insulting things imaginable, and there are reams that they have written about this, what a horrible thing, and that's why they can't believe in a God, they actually have to go to the bathroom! What an insult for man! Oh, any god who could have thought of that was just unspeakable! It reminds man that he is flesh, you see, and this they will not tolerate, they will not tolerate. They want to think of themselves as pure reason.

And so the goal is to be rational, passionless, devoid of feeling, and, we would say, inhuman. This is why it's not an accident that revolutionaries, Neoplatonists, all of them, are so inhuman. It's not something, as some try to say, "Well, when these revolutions like the Russian Revolution and the Chinese Revolution settle down, it'll be alright." But they don't become more human. They only become more inhuman as time goes on, because this is the logic of their position. This is what they're trying to be; passionless.

I was very interested when I was doing the work on *The One and The Many*, of course, there was so much of this throughout, as I read some of these philosophers, but it was off the subject, but I do think I recorded the experience of Walter Kaufmann, professor of philosophy at Princeton, who is one of the most widely recognized scholars, as far as Hegel is concerned. I don't know whether any of you have ever read Hegel's *Phenomenology*, but it's about as deadly, dull, stupid, insipid a book as you could find to read. Kaufmann read it in 1942, after his wedding, in a honeymoon spirit. Well, of course, Hegel is pure Neoplatonist. It says something about Kaufmann, you see, that this to him was the bliss, rather than his wife; a book about pure reason, about mind being above matter; the book that was, in fact, the fountainhead of Marxism. But, of course, if you are an intellectual like Kaufmann, whose goal is to be pure reason, to be passionless, you're going to find your joy in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, rather than the girl you just married, and God have pity on her!

This is why in these intellectuals, the concern will not be a personal concern with the poor man, but with the idea of poverty. There will not be any personal concern for the negro or the Indian, or the Hindu; but it's with the idea of man. It's always the idea of man; it's never the reality. They don't want to get involved with reality. They want to be up here on the level of pure reason, pushing buttons and bringing about vast changes. They will not allow themselves to get involved in thinking about the individual. So, the sufferings of the individual do not bother them. In the name of alleviating man's condition, they will murder man, readily. As George Bernard Shaw said: "If they won't be convinced, we will liquidate them in a kindly manner." The goal is to be in the realm of spirit.

Now, of course, this same trend in the church has been very pronounced, very pronounced. Outside the church, the realm of the spirit, the emphasis, is on reason and on the scientific plan. Within the church, it has tended to be on reason, in the scholastic tradition of the Catholic Church; but in Protestantism, it has tended to be on spirit, on being 'spiritual,' as against being material. And so, it has led to what I term 'pious gush'.

Now, in churches it's easy to spot who the spiritual people are. They are the ones who at prayer meeting will go on and on and on, and hog the whole meeting with a long-winded prayer, which is all pious gush. And the same people aren't worth anything when it comes to the practicalities of life. They will be women who will go on and on at prayer meetings. In fact, they'll shop around at a number of prayer meetings, where they indulge in long prayers to prove how spiritual they are; but try to catch them doing the ironing at home, or cooking for their husband, or making sure he has a clean shirt to wear; that's another matter. They're above such mundane things, you see. They're trying to be spiritual, with pious gush. In other words, it's not faith and obedience that matter with them, but this spiritual gush, being 'spiritual.' Of course, they forget that Satan is pure spirit, that doesn't make him good. And spirit can be just as evil as anything else; that spirit and matter, alike, are fallen outside of Christ, but both can be redeemed in Christ.

And this is why, because of this Neoplatonism, the church today, more than ever is being involved in pious gush, which is leading into what: Neoplatonism, pure and simple, in the form of charismatic gifts. How are you going to prove you're a Christian? You're going to speak in tongues, or you're going to develop all kinds of spiritual gifts; and this is the Jesus Movement. It's the cultivation of spiritual gifts, so-called spiritual gifts, not to do the will of our Father in Heaven. No relation between this pious gush and these spiritual gifts to the Holy Spirit of Scripture.

Remember, one of the names for the Holy Spirit, as well as for as for our Lord, is 'parakletos,' the advocate, the lawyer. How often do people think of the Holy Spirit as the lawyer? But the scripture tells us He is; and he rebukes us like a lawyer. He ticks us off in our conscience when we sin. And, as our lawyer, He pleads with us, for us, and prays within us, with groanings which cannot be uttered, marshaling like a lawyer our appeal before God. But, you see, you never hear of that fact about the Holy Spirit in modern thinking, because it's become a pagan doctrine, not a biblical one. Because the goal of man, you see, is to be an idea, a word, a logos, and to be freed from the world of matter.

There's an interesting statement by a pagan poet, a Roman poet, Claudian, 396 A.D. This is not from a poem. It's in a prose study of his, in which he deals with the problem of evil. Now, Claudian is a man who was very highly thought of by Edward Gibbon, who wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Claudian was dealing with the problem of evil, and he said:

"My mind has often wavered between two opinions: have the gods a care for the world or is there no ruler therein and do mortal things drift as dubious chance dictates? For when I investigated the laws and the ordinances of heaven and observed the sea's appointed limits,

the year's fixed cycle and the alternation of light and darkness, then I thought everything was ordained according to the direction of God who had bidden the stars move by fixed laws, plants grow at different seasons, the changing moon fulfil her circle with borrowed light and the sunshine by his own, who spread the shore before the waves and balanced the world in the centre of the firmament. But when I saw the impenetrable mist that surrounds human affairs, the wicked happy and long prosperous and the good discomforted, then in turn my belief in God was weakened and failed, and even against mine own will I embraced the tenet of that other philosophy which teaches that atoms drift in purposeless motion and that new forms throughout the vast void are shaped by chance and not design—that philosophy which believes in God in an ambiguous sense, or hold that there be no gods, or that they are careless of our doings.”

Now, this is a very interesting statement, because he says: “When I look into the world,” as a Neoplatonist, he felt he should see necessity in the world of ideas, rather than the world of nature. He said: “in the world of nature I see some law, something that points to God; but not in the world of men. Everything doesn't seem to move as by a plan, and the people that don't hop to and dovetail; and everything doesn't work out perfectly.” Of course, you see, he will not accept the fact of sin, of a fall.

Now, a scholar of a few years or a couple of generations ago, Pickman—Edward Motley Pickman—commented on this dilemma of Claudian, and he said:

“This passage reveals the weakness of Stoicism: for it apparently argued the existence of a Providence from the fact that there was justice on earth. Consequently it tacitly admitted the corollary that if there were no justice on earth there could be no Providence..”

Well, that's a very astute observation. You see, what the Neoplatonist does is to say that the ideal man is the only real man; man as an idea; man as abstract reason; man as necessity, determined, moving in terms of a plan; man as I would make him and, therefore, God should make him the same way, you see; creating God in their own image. “I would have all men like an ant hill, or a beehive; and any reasonable God would do the same as I do.” So they make man into an inhuman abstraction; and if they can't find him, there is no God. In other words, Claudian was looking for God in terms of his own rules of evidence. God had to be what Claudian was looking for. Now, I can eliminate all the people in the world and say they don't exist, if I set up rules for their existence and say they have to be what I say, or they're not human. After all, didn't Plato virtually eliminate women from the human race? He came within a hair's breadth of it. He said it was really an open question; that one-half of the human race is not human. Very simple, you see. He had a definition of what constituted humanity; and then he had a definition of women, which really, practically put them out, very simple.

Now, if no God meets Claudian's definition and specification, then there is no God and there's no providence, and you proclaim the death of God, as some thinkers then did. Then, the next step is that man says, “Well, since God isn't around, or is asleep, or dead, and won't do this thing, I have to do it,” you see. “I've said what God must be. He must have a perfect plan for man, in which everybody is in his place and does what he should, and abstract reason rules everything, and God is dead, but there must be a god; and I am the best candidate, aren't I?” “I'm an intellectual, Therefore, I have the plan, and I am God.” It's that simple—it's that simple. And this is exactly what existentialism is saying; man must be the God, and provide the Providence and the Word. This, Marx said, is the duty of philosophy.

Roderick Seidenberg, a contemporary socialist, has said (this is in his book, *The Anatomy of the Future*),

“Rooted in what is conceived to be a fundamental antithesis between instinct and intelligence, the entire span of history may be regarded as a transitional era in a profound metamorphosis during which

mankind has been subject to the deep travail of changing from the once dominant influence of the instincts to that of our rational proclivities. Under the triumphant sway of science and the universal impact of our machine technology, we are approaching, it would seem, a climactic turning point in this metamorphosis.”

In other words, mankind has been ruled by instinct, living like animals; but now, we are developing under the leadership of science, reason, and the technology of reason, so that man can now make his own plan, be his own God. Of course, it's a handful of men, but they will all be elevated, if this handful can run the show, if the world can be ruled by pure reason in the form of the planners, in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the philosopher-kings, or call it any name you will. Not all men are wise enough, you see, to be reason incarnate. So, they will be ants in an ant hill society, ruled by reason or true necessity. And these philosopher-Kings who are above material things, who despise the world of matter and feel that any man who is unduly concerned about things of the body and things of matter, things of individuality and property and the like, is base and low, and an impediment to the future and must be eliminated. These men are going to liberate mankind by eliminating the wrong kind, and making all men conform to their image.

St. Paul spoke very plainly of the evil of this dream of a spiritual man. He knew the evils of Neoplatonism, and he said in I Timothy 4:1-3:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”

This was Neoplatonism in its day. In its every form, it stands condemned; and St. Paul said of those who to any degree practice it: “such depart from the faith.”

Let us pray. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we thank thee that thy Word is truth, and thou hast given us a standard by which we may judge all things, and by thy grace avoid that which is evil, choose that which is good, and prosper according to thy Word. Bless us in Jesus Christ and to His glory. In His name we pray, Amen.

ENDNOTES:

1. J. M. Thompson, *Robespierre and the French Revolution* (New York, NY: Collier Books, 1962), 113.
2. Claudian, In Rufinum, lines 1-19, cited by Edward Motley Pickman, *The Mind of Latin Christendom*, 373-496 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), I, 314.
3. Claudian, In Rufinum, lines 1-19, cited by Edward Motley Pickman, *The Mind of Latin Christendom*, 373-496 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), I, 314, 315.
4. Roderick Seidenberg, *Anatomy of the Future* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 40.
5. 1 Timothy 4:1-3

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