

RESPONSE TO THE NEW AGE

PART I - GREENERY IS NOT NEW AGE

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1. The New Age and Greenery.

I'm in the Green Party, having stood for national and local elections several times over the last few years, and having taken an active role in helping to shape Green Party policy and principles. The Lord led me into this activity by a series of events in 1984 to 1985 which I will not relate here, save to say that I am the kind of person who has difficulty believing that the Lord would be at all interested in such a 'secular' thing as politics. So he had some undoing of my ideas to perform. One of the major instruments he used was Paul Marshall's excellent book, *Thine is the Kingdom*, sadly now out of print, but recently on offer through *Third Way*.

It has been a great joy to me to have the support of many fine Christians of evangelical and charismatic persuasion whom I respect, and to see Green thought gain ground amongst Christians. Not that I see Green as the ultimate truth, but rather that I see that the Bible contains a lot about stewarding God's creation and how to go about it, and that Green politics is the nearest expression of this that we have currently in the secular world.

But two things concern me. The first is that few Christians truly understand Greenery, seeing it as little more than environmentalism. (In fact I suspect this is true not only of Christians!) So the first part of this article attempts to clarify what Greenery is at heart.

The second concerns me much more deeply, and is the main motive for writing this article - that some Christians who are deeply spiritual people are very cautious about the Green movement, much more cautious than they would be about other ideas in the world. The reason? They see the Green movement as being part of, or at least heavily contaminated with, the New Age, and they see the New Age as supremely satanic.

Walter Martin, for instance, who wrote that excellent volume, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, recently wrote a book about the New Age, shortly before he went to be with the Lord. It is by and large a very good book, one of the better books I have read giving a Christian view of the New Age, but it contains the statement, "... outwardly aggressive New Age groups include: a) The Green Party..." He also lumps GreenPeace and even Friends of the Earth into the New Age. I do not see the Green Party as the final solution by any means, but I know it is not a New Age organisation, even though it may have a number of New Agers as members. I believe the Green Party is important, at least as a think-tank for policies and principles, even if it wins few elections, and that God's people should be at the front end of such policy-making. Otherwise we only have ourselves to blame if it does stray from an emphasis that is compatible with Christianity.

What deeply concerns me is that statements like those above will ensure that few evangelical Christians will join Green organisations, owing to their apparent association with the New Age, and will thus ensure that they do stray. I do not believe such self-fulfilling prophecies are from the Lord. So at the very time when God's people above all

should be waking up to their prophetic responsibility to the creation, many of the more vocal and influential Christian writers and leaders are turning away from it, and sometimes hinder or even condemn people who try to be active in this area. Such writers might give lip service to environmentalism, but it is clear that few have truly worked out the implications. This is what happened a century ago with social action, in which evangelical Christianity has still a very bad name. So many of my Green non-Christian colleagues are very sceptical of evangelical Christians, and of their Lord. How Satan must be laughing!

So later in this article I intend to address two issues: what is (and is not) the New Age, and how should we respond? But, since many are not sure where the New Age differs from Greenery, we must first ask the question, “What is Greenery?” in the first part of this article. On the basis of our answer to this question we will be ready to ask “What is the New Age?” and then “How should we respond?” in the second part.

2. The problem.

Why is it that many evangelical Christians are suspicious of Greenery? One reason is doubtless our historical (and arguably unbiblical) separation of spiritual from secular. But there are many other secular things - such as our jobs - that we do not attract nearly so much caution. So there must be another reason. I think the reason is due in part to an internal coherence in Green thinking, and given that there are three steps to the argument.

Step 1: A coherent thread.

Greenery is a way of thinking; it goes deeper than merely cleaning up pollution (though of course it does include that). It is also concerned with the causes of our current ecological crisis, such as the structure of the economy, transport systems, materialism, the treatment of animals, human rights, the structure of society, economics, and much more.

There is a coherent thread running through the Green approach which has aroused the suspicion of a number of New Age watchers. They see this coherence as evidence of an End Time Satanic Conspiracy (ETSC), which can be ‘discerned’ by those so gifted. The argument goes as follows. Jesus is coming back soon. So Satan’s end is near. He knows this, and is filled with rage and fear. So he is having his last great fling of persecution, deception, etc. Since he knows the stakes are high, he doesn’t want people seeing through his schemes, so he hides them carefully. What better way to do this than to be active in a lot of apparently disparate areas, but always working to an overall (or underall) strategy. The only people who have a hope of seeing through this web of deceit and strategy are Christians, and really, only those CHristians with a ‘gift of discernment’. Lo and behold, we look at the world today and are indeed able to see a common thread stretching through many disparate areas. So this common thread must be an ETSC. Some call it the New Age.

Roy Livesey, for instance, in *Understanding the New Age*, seems to have donned ‘New-Age-tinted spectacles’ and see the New Age in nearly everything. To that author, the New Age is THE new enemy, the coming AntiChrist (the sub-title of his book is ‘Preparations for Antichrist’s One World Government’). The New Age is the new bogeyman, in the way Communism was a couple of decades ago.

But I believe that there is another very valid reason for this coherence, for this common thread, and it has to do with world views, rather than with an ETSC. Throughout history people have taken on new ideas that question or overthrow the old ones. This is true today too. As Walsh and Middleton point out in their book, *The Transforming Vision*, people's ideas are not just arbitrary collections of ideas, but fall into coherent patterns which centre around and are determined by a 'world view'. These world views are self-supporting ways of seeing things, and over the past two thousand years most have been dualistic and idolatrous (in the sense of exalting one or other pole of a dualism). From time to time idolatrous world views are thrown overboard because, as might be expected, they do not work, and this is what is happening today. In a time of world view crisis, many people are looking for and some are promulgating, new ideas. We discuss this at greater length below.

Step 2: 'The coherence is Satanic'.

The argument - usually an implicit rather than explicit one - goes further. If we discern the common thread of an ETSC, then we as God's people must avoid it, since it is satanic, and remove ourselves from it as far as we can (consistent with justifying to others that we are 'in the world but not of it'). We are ever so careful not to become in any way tainted with it. The unstated implication of Livesey's book is that there is virtually nothing that we can validly get involved in - unless it is church activity. This is the classic dualism of spiritual versus secular.

Later in his book Walter Martin gives a means of telling whether something is likely to New Age or not by whether it cites people like Thomas Kuhn ('paradigms') and James Lovelock (one of the first scientists to be concerned about the Ozone layer), as well as explicitly occult or New Age people like David Sprangler and Marilyn Ferguson. What concerns me is that if Kuhn and the idea of paradigms are tarred with the New Age brush (erroneously) then Christians will avoid a major area of thought and be absent from making any input into it. The idea of paradigms seems to me to accord much more closely with the biblical view of human nature than that which it seeks to replace, namely the rather utopian view of man coming inexorably by his own reasoning and science to a correct knowledge of all things!

Some examples of other concepts that have aroused the suspicion of some Christian writers or leaders are global thinking, Green thinking, critique of materialism, and a stress on community. Since words like *networking*, *values-clarification* and *One World* are used by New Agers many Christians suspect as New Age (and therefore an enemy of Christ) anyone who uses them. But as we shall see the concepts and words are not solely New Age ones, and are in fact in line with Christian teaching. I am happy to support the One World Week in the village where I live.

Therefore I seriously question this further line of argument too. I think it very unlikely that the New Age is the ETSC, but even if it is, this does not mean that we should assume guilt by association. Nor is removing ourselves from the scene of activity in the world what the Lord wants us to do. Now, I agree that everything IS tainted; it is tainted with sin, but is not to be subject to rejection thereby. In particular, Greenery should not be tarred with the New Age brush, even if it seems to share a number of concepts and even aims with the New Age.

Step 3: Good is evil.

The argument has a third stage. Since the devil is a deceiver and we have come to expect him to appear as an angel of light, it follows that he will dress up his worst things to appear best. So anything that is seen as good by non-Christians is suspect, and the better it seems the more evil it must be! This is strengthened by an apparently theological basis, namely that humankind without God can do nothing, and all its righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Greenery is seen as 'good' by people, even by those who aren't green. Ergo it must be the devil's most evil thing dressed up to make it popular.

This third part of the argument I also question. While it holds a certain fascinating logic, it is far from biblical. Throughout the Bible justice is emphasised (often under the word 'righteousness' which has identical Greek and Hebrew translation as justice), even for those who are not God's people. We forget that Jesus told us a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. We are in grave danger of calling evil good and good evil.

Countering a false argument.

As can be seen, the entire argument is devil-centred, rather than Christ-centred. It relies, for its force if not its logic, on considering what the devil is doing and adapting our responses and actions to that, rather than responding to what Christ is doing. It is largely for this reason that I do not believe that Christians should follow it, even if there is a modicum of truth in it.

To counter these three stages of argument, we need to look at the ideas coming in today. In doing so we will be able to see Greenery in its historical and logical context, and to sharply distinguish between Green and New Age. Greenery is not well understood among Christians - indeed it is probably true to say it is not well understood by most people, including Greens. So, before returning to the New Age, let us examine Greenery, its roots and characteristics, and determine just how far it is biblically valid or invalid.

To do so we have to look at the new era we are entering, go back to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, as well as look at human sin. Of course, what is being presented here is only a very small part of the picture; it is merely a skeleton, upon which there is much flesh. But, like a skeleton it gives overall shape to the analysis, and like a skeleton it is not the part that is first seen. What is first seen by those who approach Greenery is the flesh of inter-relationships that exist among the various factors, but it is useful to try to make out the overall skeleton shape by indentifying and distinguishing these factors in order to gain understanding.

3. Human Sin.

People react to what they see of the sin, evil or injustice in others. Christians have long been used to seeing everything in terms of human sin, while secular thinkers have tended to be unwilling to accept the idea of sin, and many have gone to laughable lengths to explain everything in terms that exclude it. Thus, for instance, the AIDS epidemic is explained by Christians in terms of a myriad of personal sexual or drug-related decisions that are generally sinful, while the Government advertising campaign a year or two ago initially promoted condoms as the answer and refused to say anything about changing sexual habits! Even problems like the facelessness of today's society, feelings of alienation and

powerlessness, and increasing pollution have human sin as at least part of their cause, and any analysis that ignores human sin will eventually miss the point.

But human sin is not the only cause of these problems. Some of the decisions that result in problems are not based on any sin. And even those that are are exacerbated by the context in which we act. Since this article is intended mainly for Christians and sin-based explanations are assumed to be well-known, I will turn my attention to other explanations.

There are, I believe, two parts to today's context, and the first is that we are entering a new era. ('New era', I said deliberately, because I do not want to confuse it with the New Age.) The second has to do with world views.

4. The New Era, not the New Age

We are entering a new era. A hundred years ago, when the industrial revolution had been in full swing for a time, a number of problems presented themselves. Two major ones were the destruction of British society as it had been, and the destruction of the local countryside. People left the land for factories, where they were robbed of their dignity. Many were oppressed. And, in response to this presenting problem, Socialism was born. In the UK much of this had Christian roots, with a concern for justice, but it gradually absorbed the prevailing materialist outlook, especially when Marxism appeared. At the same time there was the romantic reaction to the destruction of the countryside and, though it did not become such a potent force as Socialism, it has nevertheless spoken to the human heart throughout the decades since then.

But now we are up against another set of presenting problems: we are coming up against the limits of the planet on which God has set us. We are entering the global village, and are acutely aware of the Two-Thirds World. We are also becoming aware of our need for the natural world and of the dehumanizing effects of much of Western living. This is the new era into which the human race is entering, and it is likely that another force will rise up in place of Socialism: Greenery. If one views the history of politics in recent centuries as a struggle between a concept of justice and the idea, "Let's just get on with living, efficiently and without too many constraints", then one can see that justice is concerned with whatever happens to be the problems resulting from such an ad-hoc approach. Socialism was the justice side of a hundred years ago and I think that Greenery may be the justice side in the next hundred years.

There is therefore a groundswell of public opinion whose root is a recognition of the limits of the planet, and this is probably unique in human history; it is indeed 'new' and we are indeed entering a new era. But this new era is not the same as Christians and New Agers call the New Age. New Agers may think that this groundswell belongs to them, but it does not, as I want to show now by looking at world views.

5. The Modern World View: Renaissance and Enlightenment

The limits of the planet and our ignoring of them is not the only problem we face. It may be a surprise to an environmentalist, but not to a Green nor to a Christian, that I'll suggest it's not even the main problem. This is because Greens seek causes rather than symptoms. Perhaps the main problem lies in idolatrous world views. This is the second part of today's context.

This comes out when Greens talk about such things as sustainability, intuition, interconnectedness, holism, community, spirituality, decentralisation, etc. A diverse jargon has evolved, and the words and concepts used reflect Green thought and feeling. Many - the vast majority, I believe - reflect a reaction against what has been called the Modern World View. We should not be put off by the words used, but seek to understand the wider meaning behind their use. In particular we should not, as some Christian writers do, label them as New Age words; they are words chosen by mainly secular people to try to encapsulate a number of newly-important ideas that congregate around their distaste for the Modern World View which developed largely out of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

The Renaissance had several key themes, some of which were: (1) the triumph of art or man over nature, (2) the supremacy of the individual, and (3) the rise of commerce. And these deeply affected European thought down to this very day. A little later the Enlightenment added three other key themes, (4) rationalism, (5) materialism, and (6) reductionism. Also, from (2) liberalism developed. From further back in history comes dualism, and Lesslie Newbiggin explains well in his excellent little book, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, how today's basic assumptions are impregnated with dualism, largely in the form of a dualism between public 'facts' and private 'values'.

Similarly, Walsh and Middleton, set out the components of what they call the Modern World View. They trace it back to Greek dualism - hence the common thread - but show how the Renaissance and Enlightenment have shaped that, to bring about the mess we are in today. The Modern World View, they say, has three components: scientism, technicism and economism. It is an idol, and as is their wont, idols never deliver what they promise. Instead of becoming free we have become slaves. Instead of providing real prosperity, they have led us into the situation where our very existence is threatened.

(Of course, the Renaissance was by no means all evil. It itself arose out of the presenting problems and injustices that then pertained, such as a corrupt church and a de-emphasising of the individual. With the Renaissance we were freed of a worship of respectability. But this just shows that what Humankind tries to do on its own, divorced from a continuing Christian influence, eventually turns sour, even though at the start it may be scripturally valid. The Reformation, which arose out of the same problem situation, fared better, and did not lead to quite so many problems. We should perhaps remember this with Greenery, and take warning, but since Greenery is still in its formative stages, this possible long-term corruption is not at present such a problem.)

Another excellent analysis of these world views is presented by Herman Dooyeweerd in his *Roots of Western Culture*. Written just after World War II, and aimed at making a case in the Netherlands for a distinct Christian stand in politics, it nevertheless gives a full and lucid account of how we got here. If anything, this book gives the fullest analysis of the three, and stretches back to Greek dualism.

6. Greenery

The interesting thing is that if we look at the key ingredients of Green thought, they correlate very closely with the key themes of the Modern World View. But the correlation is negative; most of the key themes in Greenery can be seen as reactions against the

distortions and havoc wreaked by that world view, and it is only now, in this new era of global limits, that the reactions have been seen as credible.

6.1 Harmony with nature versus triumph over nature.

First in Green thought is the idea of harmony with nature instead of triumph over it. (While environmentalism says that we must do something to look after nature better than we have been doing, Greenery goes deeper.) Though the biblical idea of 'dominion' is often blamed for the current disastrous attitude to nature, and indeed must take some of the blame for it because of misinterpretation, I believe that most of the blame rests at the feet of the Renaissance, and its explicit championing of human domination. At that time, nature was the 'bad' or 'lower' of the sides of the nature-grace dualism, and in people's lives nature was the cause of many diseases and other problems that we do not face today. We can hardly blame the majority of people then for seeing human 'triumph' over nature as a valid aim. But it was a misreading of scripture, coming, as Dooyeweerd points out, from the original mistake of trying to merge Greek dualism with God's revelation of a created, integral universe.

6.2 Interconnectedness versus independence.

A development of the idea of harmony with nature is the idea of *interconnectedness* or *relatedness*, much used in Green literature. It expresses our essential oneness with, on the one hand, the rest of creation, and on the other, with other people in a way that leads to responsibility (see below). It is a key theme that leads to many others mentioned here. We are all caught up in the 'web of life'. Some Greens go to an extreme, into pantheism, and so to many, Eastern religious ideas are attractive. But that, to me, is amorphousness rather than relatedness and interconnectedness. Nevertheless, it contrasts markedly with the Renaissance view of the supremacy of the individual and with the liberalism that emerged later, and its descendant, libertarianism. To many Greens, interconnectedness is the very essence of Greenness and most of the other major themes flow from it. It is also the main reason why the Green Party is not the Liberal Party under different guise. There are two main ways in which interconnectedness is important: interconnectedness with the rest of the creation and interconnectedness with other people.

6.3 Responsibility for the creation.

The above two themes lead to a view of nature that is very close to the biblical view of stewardship; indeed, many Greens use the term, stewardship, with very much its biblical meaning. We see that human beings have a special responsibility to the rest of the creation, and should never take a purely utilitarian approach to it. The utilitarian approach comes directly from the Modern World View. (There are many Greens, of course, who do not like the idea that humankind has any special role of steward.)

6.4 Community versus individuality

Greens stress the importance of community, over against that of the lone individual. We are seen as part of communities rather than islands entire unto ourselves. This contrasts with the emphasis on the individual that was key in the Renaissance, and the subsequent emphasis on liberalism. (But see libertarianism, below.) Some Greens even go so far as to denigrate the individual, and welcome eastern religions where individuality is seen as an

evil, but, as above, they then reduce relatedness to amorphousness. This, in my view, is as bad as individualism.

6.5 Intuition versus the supremacy of reason

Greens also value intuition as opposed to reason, which was, of course, the pet theme of the Enlightenment. With Reason humankind would be able to do anything; no god would be necessary. Indeed, Reason is powerful since it is part of God's creation, but it has been made an idol to which science, technology and economics have to bow. Today we are seeing the results of this. From Reason came also the ideas of specialisms, categorized knowledge, reductionism, and the division that we have today between 'public' and 'private'. Newbiggin explores this theme well. Intuition, which has much in common with what the Bible calls 'wisdom' has been denied. Greens recognise the limits of Reason and favour Intuition over Reason or at least want to restore it to its rightful place. At least, that is the theory, but it is not always followed in practice: some still cling to rationalism especially when trying to argue a point, while others reject any rational analysis altogether.

6.6 Holism versus reductionism and dualism

Linked to rationalism is reductionism, the path which science has followed for the past couple of centuries. Reductionism says, in effect, that we can fully understand an entity if we fully understand its parts. A common version is the idea that psychology can be reduced to biology, which can be reduced to chemistry, which in turn can be reduced to physics. But reductionism also reigns in normal and business life. In business everything is reduced to financial indicators (note the links with commerce below), while 'private' life has become over-compartmentalised and fragmented. Greens yearn for integration in life. This is holism: the treating of various aspects of life as non-reducible to each other. But Greens also abhor dualism, in which life is divided into two irreducible parts, such as body and spirit, private and public. The outcome of most dualistic thinking is that one pole effectively suppresses the other. Some Greens have reacted with Monism but most yearn for an integration of all aspects of life: true holism.

6.7 Spirituality versus materialism

Linked with intuition and holism is the emphasis Greens place on spirituality, in contrast to the Enlightenment's materialism. In present-day politics, business life and planning, spiritual criteria are not recognised - except as things to make money out of! Spirituality is relegated to the 'private' realm, and is only important in business or politics if a sufficient number of people all share a certain desire or view. That is, spirituality is only important if it is a large market or constituency, not because humankind is made in the image of God. Greens recognise that spirituality is important in its own right, and thus a proper subject for politics. The danger, of course, is that most will be driven to a New Age form of spirituality rather than a biblical one, by the very fact that so many Christians too quickly reject Green interest in spirituality.

6.8 Green economics versus commerce and finance

Rationalism and reductionism has entered economics and business. Rightly understood, economics is the activity of wisely using limited resources: just what we want in the new era. But today it is usually taken to mean finance and commerce. In these, usury has

removed the resource limitations to a large extent, and allowed money to gain a dominant place as the measure of all things. This, together with the emphasis on the profit motive, is supremely rationalistic and reductionist: we reduce business decisions to financial ones, and it is very convenient to do so as they can be treated mathematically. The oft-quoted plea, "Business is business," has reductionism at its root. Greens generally see through this, and wish to return to the healthy disciplines of true economics, and to restore non-financial aspects to their rightful place. What value is money to 'the man who has everything'? As we become richer in the West money becomes an increasingly distorted indicator, hence the move towards such things as environmental audit. Two watchwords have gained prominence in Green economics thinking: 'sustainability' and 'Small is Beautiful'.

6.9 Sustainability versus economic growth

Just as reductionist economics has a main goal, so does Green holistic economics. That of the former is economic growth; that of the latter is sustainability. Economic growth is essentially a financial idea, and leads to short-term thinking and neglect of other important areas of life. In particular, in practice, economic growth has always been accompanied by ecological destruction and increased consumption of non-renewable resources, and is thus totally unsuited to the new era. The economics of the new era, suggest the Greens, should be guided by the idea of sustainability: we should sustain resources at the level we hold today. Greens are often accused of wanting a 'zero-growth' and therefore stagnant economy; rather they want a 'steady-state' but dynamic one, in which sustainability rather than increasing GNP is the key. Sustainability links with the idea of responsibility - to future generations - and is summed up by the famous saying, "We do not inherit the earth from our parents; we borrow it from our children." Thus we see that, though introduced under the theme of reductionism, sustainability also links with that of interconnectedness.

6.10 'Small is beautiful' versus economy of scale

Conventional rationalistic business thought leads to economy of scale and large corporations. The misdemeanours of large corporations are plain for all to see, whether in polluting our waters and land or in their high-handed approach to much of the Two-thirds World. Though many are starting to put things right now, most Greens believe that their very bigness is a root cause of problems and that these will not disappear until the large corporations are no more. Large corporations (whether private or public) also seen as faceless and unresponsive. Though, again, during the Eighties many large firms have become much less faceless especially to their employees, many are still unresponsive to the needs and wishes of those outside and especially of the non-human inhabitants of the planet. So Greens take as almost a fundamental tenet that 'Small is beautiful'. This is a catch-phrase, made popular by E.F. Schumacher's famous book of that name, that embodies in one concept a reaction against rationalism and materialism.

6.11 Peace versus war-making

Another of today's idols that arose out of the same world view is national security. Bob Gouzewaard, in *Idols of our Time*, points out how something becomes an idol when it is given prime place and other things are sacrificed to or for it, and that this is true of Western attitudes to Defence. Rationalism puts forward the strong argument that if we neglect defence, then we might all die or at least lose our liberty to Communism or whatever, and

so nothing else must be allowed to restrict its demands. Ergo, national defence must come first. (In practice, of course, we have several idols, including economic growth, and their demands sometimes conflict. But all of them conflict with the demands of biblical justice.) Greens reject this line of argument, have strong links with the peace lobbies. (Though many Greens are pacifists, the Green Party does recognise the need for true defence - but not the need for the UK to be the world's policeman. It would end the arms trade - a major cause of the strength of Saddam Hussein.)

6.12 Local and global versus nation states

Greens even question the sanctity of today's nation states, an idea which arose out of the Renaissance. Instead, they place emphasis on global and local communities. Some interesting and radical ideas are emerging, such as breaking the UK down into a number of 'bio-regions', though there is perhaps a tendency to forget the importance of historically formed culture and sense of togetherness that is at the base of nationalism. So, for instance, the Greens' view of Iraq and Kuwait is that Kuwait is a rather artificially created state and not sacrosanct - and even Iraq comprises at least two nations, one being the Kurds.

6.13 Decentralisation versus centralisation

The emphasis on local action and responsibility leads to the need for local power, and thus decentralisation of power. Decentralisation of supply and demand is also important: for instance, local supply of local need means fewer lorries thundering along our motorways. A number of such issues come together in a key Green theme: decentralisation. It can be seen also as a reaction against centralisation of power into the state and big corporations - both of which are products of rationalism. But, as discussed below, decentralisation has become to many Greens an 'ism'. There are of course many causes for the centralisation of society other than traceable to world views. Some of these are to do with plain human sin (for instance the pride of empire-building), fear or laziness (the desire for convenience) and for these the answer is well-known among biblical Christians. In many ways centralisation is the feeble way the godless have of trying to overcome some of the results of the Fall: it was Cain who first built cities, in an attempt to escape the curse of being a wanderer.

6.14 A whole world view

So we see that at least a dozen major tenets of Green thought and feeling arise essentially from a dislike for the Modern World View derived from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, combined with the awareness of the new resource-limited era. Walsh and Middleton show how the tenets of the Modern World View are not separate but link together to form a whole world view, in which scientism, technicism and economism support each other. In the same way, these dozen Green tenets link together, forming a largely self-supporting whole, and this whole is the world view that I call Greenery. These tenets are the skeleton, and their complex interweaving, with each other and with other strands mentioned below, is the 'flesh' that the observer normally sees. This gives a starting point for understanding Greenery and its 'place in history' and why it has come about.

There have been a number of other reactions against various aspects of the Modern World View, such as romanticism, but none has been so complete as Greenery. Nor has any been so timely and relevant, in the sense of speaking to the new era. It is the Modern

World View that that is behind the ecological crisis, and so that crisis is empirical evidence in support of Greenery. So I doubt very much if Greenery is just a passing fad.

Below, we will examine each of these tenets to see if they are biblical or anti-biblical. But, first, we must examine three other major strands of Green thinking that cannot be so easily seen as based on a dislike of the Modern World View.

7. Other strands of Green thinking.

Not everything can be explained in world-view terms, of course. The thinking, the culture of a people has historical as well as logical roots. A lot of (apparently) Green culture contains other strands - many very much in evidence at Green Party conferences - which have arisen purely historically. I find Dooyeweerd's clear distinction between the logical and the historical or cultural very helpful here. The first Greens came from liberal and libertarian camps, probably because it was just such people who were used to 'alternative' thinking. In those days only such people could make the paradigm shift, and many such even enjoy doing so.

7.1 Alternativism.

So one strand is alternativism, the pride in being alternative, the desire to be alternative. This is fuelled by the very plausible argument, "They've made such a mess of things; nothing short of a complete change in lifestyle or culture will suffice." You will also find its brother, anti-establishmentism: a feeling of aggression towards anything connected with the establishment and an uncritical welcoming of anything that is eschewed by the establishment. Some of this is understandable, seeing the perverse, reactionary attitude the British establishment has had for so long to anything Green. But for some Greens you are considered a traitor, or at least irrelevant, if you take part in anything of the establishment.

7.2 Decentralism

Another is decentralism, the elevation of decentralisation to a dogma and even to an idol, which has happened in many Green circles. This is not completely explained by the world view analysis above. But it does follow very easily from the liberal view of the supremacy of the individual over against the (centralised) state. While alternativists see lifestyle or ways of thinking as the solution, decentralists concentrate on the structure of society. Their solution is "empowerment", since their basic problem analysis is that people are under-empowered in the political sense (though the idea also spills over to other spheres of life). Anything that even smells of centralisation is eschewed, even such things as national coordination within the Green Party. To such people the Green Party should be merely a loose federation of local parties, and so should all of society.

7.3 Libertarianism

The third strand is libertarianism. Greenery is unashamedly feminist (though I always qualify this, to say that we adopt some of the non-aggressive tenets of feminism rather than what is popularly thought of as feminism). But some Greens do take feminism much further, to include 'deep feminism'. Many in the Green Party also support the conventional civil liberties issues such as abortion-on-demand and gay and lesbian 'rights' (in fact going far beyond rights to philosophy).

7.4 Historical rather than logical roots

But, to me, these three strands found in the Green movement are not at the core of Greenery. The situation with Greenery is rather like that in Christianity. Just as if you go into many churches you will find something much less than biblical Christianity and the gospel almost completely absent, so when you go to many Green meetings you will find something much less than true Greenery. The three strands add little that is new, and are based on a different foundation. In my view libertarianism is the very antithesis of Greenery. It is by no means all Greens who attach themselves to these three strands. When I stood up at Conference recently and pointed out that many Greens believe abortion-on-demand is fundamentally ungreen, I was applauded in a way most speakers were not. If this is true, why are many Greens attached to these strands? If interconnectedness is important, why do some Greens seem to major on its opposite, libertarianism, which says, “Me; I want total freedom for Me”?

The answer, as I mentioned above, is historical rather than logical. Their presence in the Green movement is largely an historical ‘accident’. In the early days, the only people who were bold enough to be radical in their thinking and question the status quo were the hippies and, as mentioned above, some liberals who had no vested interests in the Establishment. A little later, a number of left-wingers, disillusioned with the Labour Party, also joined. These groups brought some of their ideas with them, and these are the three strands above. It is a great shame, in my view, that it was not Christians who took the lead in radical politics.

Of course, this is very much an over-simplification, but to me, libertarianism and Greenery mix like oil and water; they will eventually separate out. Libertarianism is very much part of the Modern World View and, even though it may not be part of the Establishment, it has no real place in true Greenery. It is largely the oil in the water that causes the current confusion. There is therefore this contradiction in the Green movement at present, stemming from its historical roots, but there is no contradiction in Greenery itself.

8. The validity of the groundswell

8.1 Human responses: reaction and repentance

Having uncovered the skeleton of Greenery, we are in a position to examine whether that skeleton is biblical or not. As mentioned above, some Christians seem to take the view that if unregenerate human beings, and especially a large swathe of them, desire something then that thing must most likely be evil. After all, does not the Bible say that the human heart is deceitful above all things, and is it not true that the devil is a great deceiver coming as an angel of light? While the heart is deceitful in its individual activity, I still believe that public concern (though not public taste or fashion) is usually a reasonable indicator of what is good or evil, especially when young. While the devil is indeed a deceiver I reject the idea that the devil should be our guide as to what is right or wrong. I discuss what I call devil-centred Christianity in Part 2.

I take the uncontroversial view that we are created in the image of God. But while the first Covenant is explicitly replaced by the new one (Jeremiah 31:31-34), nowhere does the Bible say that the image has been totally removed or corrupted to such an extent that

what people in general want is completely evil. The Christian concept of 'Total depravity' refers to the fact and universality of sin, and does not mean that people cannot like good. (I further note that while the heart may be deceitful, minds are merely darkened!) So unregenerate human beings can still recognise, yearn for, love, and seek true justice and righteousness, even though their pride and selfishness may often hide that fact and even though human beings on their own have no hope of being able to sustainably attain it unaided. I have no qualms about accepting that even unregenerate people can have a valid feeling that something is 'not quite right'. And this is what Green concern is, and it should not be ignored by Christians as either misled or demonic.

But the not-quite-rightness is not a random mish-mash of sin and evil such as we might expect if there were no such things as world views. As we have seen above, it has a coherence, a definite direction, determined by the prevailing world view. Dooyeweerd, in *Roots of Western Culture*, shows how this has arisen from the dualistic ground motives that have shaped Western world views for the last two thousand years and which, by their very nature, mitigate against the integrality of the creation. Hart (1984) distinguishes between dualities and dualisms. There are many dualities in the creation which are opposite poles in some spectrum or other, such as individuality versus relatedness, and we are called to hold them together if we are to maintain the integrality of creation. But dualisms occur when one pole is elevated at the expense of the other and made an absolute, an idol. Idols always let us down, and so such dualism leads to problems that the collective human heart feels.

It may be some time before the problems are either recognised or admitted, partly because of the pride of human beings who hold the world view and do not want to admit it is wrong or incomplete, and partly because the causal processes that lead to harm are often very slow in acting. But problems do appear. And if the predominant world view stresses the poles of several spectra, then the problems can be that much greater. In our case, the pole of dominance over nature has gradually led to a massive environmental crisis. The pole of stressing the nation state over the local community has led to a feeling of powerlessness. The pole of nation state over a global view has contributed to Third World problems. The pole of rationalism over intuition has led to a state where politicians will not act until there is 'scientific proof'. The pole of economism enhances the power of large corporations and makes money the only valid measure. And so on. As Third World relief agencies like Tear Fund have come to realise, these all reinforce each other. They all point in one direction, and that direction leads to the current ecological crisis.

Once a group of people recognise that current thinking is at one pole, there are two possible human responses: reaction and repentance. Reaction says, "They got it wrong; we will do the opposite." Repentance says, "We got it wrong; we're sorry, and we will from now on hold both poles in harmony," and might add, "For the immediate future, though, we must stress the opposite a little in order to generate momentum towards it and redress the balance." Repentance is the response recognised in the Bible. (Repentance is not the same thing as moderation, though, since the latter can be held proudly.) Reaction merely leads to going over to the other pole in one or more spectra, and after a time problems occur from the idolization of that pole. As James said, people are blown about by every wind of doctrine. What this means is that it is not the Green concerns themselves that are right or wrong but rather people's response to them.

In my movement around Green circles I see a mixture of reaction and repentance. And nowhere more than concerning the Gulf War. I see it as part of my mission as a Christian among Greens to move people from reaction toward repentance, and to draw the repentant gaze Godwards, to the only Source of forgiveness and true empowering.

If we cannot say that just because people have concerns these concerns must of necessity be either right or wrong, we must examine each of the concerns themselves.

8.2 Harmony with nature versus triumph over nature

Genesis 1:26,28, the Cultural Mandate, in which we are given dominion over the fish, birds, animals, etc., has long been misunderstood as sanctioning our pillaging of nature, and our attitude of “It is ours; we can do what we like with it.” Many Christians now recognise this to be a misunderstanding, and the idea of a war against nature to be non-biblical. But does the Bible go so far as to advocate harmony with nature? In one sense, no: humankind *is* special, though Hart (1984) and others argue that this specialness has been misunderstood. Some would argue that with the Fall nature itself became fallen, “subject to decay” and to futility, and so they might question whether the redeemed person can really live in harmony with it; it itself has no harmony. But, just as the presence of sin does not mean that sin should be present, so the presence of disharmony. I do not believe that we can argue that harmony with nature is something that Christians < I > ought < D > not to seek. If by harmony we mean the removal of all distinction between humankind and the rest of the creation, then this is not biblical. But in another sense, yes, in that we are very much part of creation and came from and will return to dust. While the Bible does not support pantheism, it does support the idea that we are called to work and live in harmony with nature rather than against it. The lion, calf, wolf, lamb and child will all lie together, led by the latter. That is harmony, and that is what God has promised. So it is not wrong to desire it. What is wrong is when our desire leads us to idolatry or to sin.

8.3 Interconnectedness versus independence

Both Newbiggin and Walsh and Middleton emphasise that relating is fundamental to the biblical view. We do not live alone, we relate to each other - and the period since the Fifties has seen a vast acceptance of this among Christians. This is precisely what Greenery calls interconnectedness. But there is one difference: the biblical view adds one vertical relationship: that with God. Greenery is agnostic about this. However, relationships with the creation and with others, and the responsibility that this entails, are very much in line with biblical thinking, and also mirror quite closely the developments in evangelical thought since the World War II.

8.4 Responsibility for the creation

Instinctively most Christians will applaud the stress on responsibility. But is it biblical in this context? The answer can be found by looking at just what the Bible means by ‘dominion’ in the Cultural Mandate. Do we have the right to do with creation whatever we want? The Hebrew word used is *radah*, meaning ‘to keep in order’. This is used in only a few places in the Bible. By looking at it in its context it is clear that *radah* means ‘to keep in order’ in a way that is not harsh. Ruling for our own convenience or as though we are the owners is specifically ruled out in its usage in Leviticus 25:43, 46, 53 and Ezekiel 34:4.

With a number of other passages, such as Genesis 2, it becomes clear that a utilitarian approach to creation is wrong, and that a responsible approach is right.

8.5 Community versus individuality

The idea of community, of interconnectedness and relatedness is certainly biblical. I have been involved with the Green Party's policy working group on Human Rights, and we have been moving towards a new basis for Rights that differs from the standard 'liberal' view of Rights. The Green view of Rights is based on relationships, in contrast to the liberalistic view based on freedom for the individual. This gives a sound basis for responsibilities. So it was with great interest that I discovered Lesslie Newbiggin claiming that the basis for a Christian view was relatedness. While the Bible does stress the importance of the individual, it also stresses, as Christians are now seeing, the importance of the community and of relationships and relatedness.

8.6 Intuition versus the supremacy of reason

Support for intuitive ways of thinking is less easy to find in the Bible, partly because for the authors of the biblical books, rationalism had not become an issue. But it is worth noting that a non-rationalist theme has long run throughout evangelical thought. I remember being told, "A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument." Also, traditionally, rationalism has been used by the proud as a weapon against God. Thirdly, the Bible stresses 'wisdom', and its view of knowledge is something far wider than the rationalistic view. So, though not explicitly sharing the Green's embrace of intuition, the Bible does share the Green's dislike for rationalism (eg. I Cor 2:4).

8.7 Holism versus reductionism and dualism

Likewise, there is no explicit support for holism over reductionism in the Bible. But likewise, the whole Hebrew world view assumed a holistic approach. Everything was an integral part of God's creation, and therefore nothing could be validly ignored. Nothing could be reduced to other things. This idea has been given clearer focus during this century in the Dutch Calvinistic idea of Sphere Sovereignty, as defined by Herman Dooyeweerd in *Roots of Western Thinking*. He defines fifteen 'modal aspects' of functioning in the temporal order of creation which cannot be reduced to each other and each of which has its own laws, but which are integrated well with each other. Though I didn't know at the time, the book which got me involved in Green politics had emanated from this thinking; it is perhaps no accident.

8.8 Spirituality versus materialism

It goes without saying that Christianity supports spirituality over materialism! But are they the same type of spirituality? They are not identical, but the Green idea can be seen to include the Christian idea. Green concepts of spirituality are very woolly - and clarity on this is hindered by some Greens' distaste for logical analysis - and at present largely amounts to little more than a recognition of the fact of spirituality and the limits of materialism. Many tend towards the Christian view, others towards a Hindu view, others towards a pagan view, yet others towards a New Age view, and many to a mixture of them all. Whether one view will in time dominate the others remains to be seen, but it is important that the Christian view of spirituality is heard in Green circles.

8.9 Green economics versus commerce and finance

The rise of commerce was denigrated by Martin Luther and other Reformers. I am no economist, but I do know that the underlying assumption is that money is seen as a thing in its own right, and I see a massive worship of it. Jesus warned against this. In saying, “Love for money is a root of all kinds of evil”, Paul was referring to more than Mr. Scrooge; he was warning of the disasters that strike when we make money the measure of all things. Again the Green concern parallels the Christian one.

8.10 Sustainability versus short-term planning

Responsibility to future generations was part of the biblical view, though not in the new-era context of a limited planet. Such responsibility implies a sustainable life-style. Indeed this involved all of life, including food, the natural world, possessions, livelihood, religious ritual, teachings about the living God, family life, and much more. Against this picture of sustainability the current Green view of sustainability, which focuses on biological, ecological and economic sustainability, seems a little thin.

8.11 ‘Small is beautiful’ versus economy of scale

I think the Bible is agnostic on whether small is beautiful. Beauty is seen as having its own value, and Old Testament society comprised small-scale enterprises. But whether large enterprises are seen as wrong is not clear since the option did not manifest itself until the Roman Empire. Probably the biblical view is that bigness is not wrong in itself, but that many of the things consequent upon it in the Twentieth Century are evils.

8.12 Peace versus war-making

Much of course has been written on the biblical approaches to war and peace, and I am not qualified to add to the debate here. The only thing I would say is that I do not find the Green view in any major way contradicts the biblical view.

8.13 Local and global versus nation states

The Bible talks in terms of ‘peoples’ or tribes or ‘tongues’ rather than of nation states as we understand them. Peoples are bound together by common culture, history, traditions and even religion. This is not unlike the Green view.

8.14 Decentralisation versus centralisation

Decentralisation of government and of sources of supply are both biblical. This was the form of society thought better in the Old Testament. When the people wanted to follow the fashion of the day, autocracy, and elect a king to lead them in battle God did not approve. While a decentralised form of society may have been preferred, a centralised form, such as found in Rome in the New Testament, was not greatly denigrated as such, and God allowed the choice of autocracy to figure in his plans. One part of Jewish life was centralised: the temple worship. Yet this was the very part that Jesus Christ did away with: each of us would know God directly (Jer. 31:31-34), and each of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Further, one way in which decentralisation is important is the way in which it fosters a sense of responsibility in the members of a community, a thing Christians would presumably applaud. Thus, decentralisation seems to be preferred, but to what extent centralisation is actually evil is not clear.

8.15 Alternativism

The alternativistic analysis and solution largely ignores the radical nature of human sin. In its current form it largely assumes that if only people come into some kind of alternative lifestyle and way of thinking then few problems will remain. It thus cannot be wholly supported by Christians. God's people *are* called to be a kind of alternative culture in which his love, justice, peace, holism (shalom) pertains, but not to be alternativistic. Whether it is wrong to be alternativistic depends on the motive behind it. It is not wrong per se, and indeed can be a source of some good, but it is wrong if motivated by pride, such as of being different, or rebelliousness.

8.16 Decentralism

While decentralisation of the structures of society as outlined above seems to be in accord with biblical views, decentralism as an ism is not. It ignores human sin, and the solution of empowerment largely rests on the assumption that people are basically good and will use their power aright. The biblical revelation shows the source of ultimate empowerment: indwelling of individual human beings by God the Holy Spirit once the root problem of human sin has been dealt with.

We should not react against the idea of empowerment, however. There is something very valid in the idea of political empowerment for those who have little power at present. C.S. Lewis is reputed to have said, "I believe in democracy because of the Fall of Man; I suspect that most believe in it for the opposite reason." In the same way, while decentralists of this kind believe in empowerment because they think human beings deserve power, I believe in empowering ordinary people to take more control of their lives in political and other ways, since centralised power is wielded by sinful, fallible people. A friend suggested to me that democracy is better as a brake than an engine, and I think the same is true of political empowerment. It is a matter of where the balance is, and currently in the West it is too far over towards centralisation.

8.17 Libertarianism

Libertarianism stems from an idolization of the individual, which of course cannot be supported by Christians. But there is much that is right with the milder forms of feminism, and we would do well to at least listen carefully to some other libertarians as what they say points out clearly some of the damage done to individuals - who of course are made in the image of God and should be treated with more respect than they are.

8.18 Summary

With this brief analysis we see that the dozen or so Green tenets which are a negative response to the Modern World View are largely in line with biblical tenets, though there are a number of variations. The three strands in the Green Movement that are not related to the Modern World View are not in line with biblical thinking, though can yield fruitful points for God's people to take up.

We now have a framework for understanding Greenery, and can use this to discuss the New Age, which we will do in Part II. Before that, however, the relationship between full Greenery, ecology and environmentalism needs to be clarified.

9. Greenery, Ecology and Environmentalism

Many readers may be surprised to hear that there is a difference between environmental, ecological and green. Greens see one, even though many may not fully understand it. But seeing this can help us understand the New Age a little better.

A colleague of mine recently produced a paper entitled *Environmental, Ecological and Green*. These are three different things, though related. Environmentalism is concerned with our immediate natural environment, and tends to be human-centred. It is a recognition that there is something out there that transcends money, but sees little beyond trees and nice landscapes. This is the 'greenness' of local authorities and the Government. It is a step in the right direction, but is still centred on immediate human concerns. Ecology goes a (large) step further, and embraces a concern for the whole planet on the one hand and the whole ecology of an area on the other. Ecology recognises that we are in a new era. It is ecology that recognises that we have to do something about the problems of Global Warming, depletion of rainforests, etc. An ecological view also begins to recognise that the causes of these problems come from the way we in the West live, and therefore there must be a change. Central Government is starting to be a little ecological. I am currently involved with commenting on the new Cheshire Structure Plan. It is an environmentalist document, and I hope to bring it one step further. But I haven't a hope of instilling full Greenness. Green not only recognises the surrounding environment, not only recognises the importance of doing something about our global problems, but is completely different. Greenery is a new world view which is a decisive rejection of the Modern World View. Green not only values the living world around us, not only recognises the new resource-limited era, but also rejects the world view that has come down to us from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

I am not saying that if your main concern is birds or trees you are only an environmentalist. What I am saying that environmentalism still leaves room for idolatry of money, national security, rationalism, etc. You can be ecological and still think that centralised power (used in an 'ecological' way) is the answer. Some are termed 'eco-fascists'.

So, in world view terms, we can see a progression in the three concepts above. Where we are is the Modern World View: individualistic, materialistic, rationalistic, utilitarian, reductionist and dualistic. All of these are evils. Walsh and Middleton show how there has been a progression over the last few centuries, from scientism, via technicism to economism; money is the measure of all things. Environmentalism is one step away from this, in recognising that there are things of value that money cannot measure, and there are parts of nature that we should not treat in a utilitarian fashion. Ecology goes further, with some rejection of individualism in favour of 'interconnectedness'; if the world is finite then my activity will affect you and in that way we are connected. Greenery goes the whole hog in rejecting the Modern World View - or at least the obvious evils in it - especially materialism and rationalism. Greenery rejects reductionism and dualism. This is why it is easy for both Greens and non-Greens to mistake Greenery for a modern-day romanticism, a harping back to an idyllic (non-existent) past. Since the Modern World View is largely urban in outlook, Greenery tends to value rural values. But these are only surface characteristics; underneath, Greenery has a lot of relevance for the urban situation

since it re-humanises, and it is looking forward, not rejecting the right use of modern technology.

The other three strands found in the Green movement, especially libertarianism, are actually part of the Modern World View, though perhaps not the establishment version. We can see them as a peninsula jutting out from the MWV river bank.

Greenery is essentially a recognition of the evils that have come to us in the Modern World View; it is a diagnosis, and in so being, it largely agrees with the biblical view as far as it goes. It also carries with it some idea of a change of heart, of repentance, though many people, owing to pride, take the line of reaction instead. What Greenery lacks, and what therefore makes it only a step towards the biblical view rather than the full biblical view itself, is an effective prescription. The biblical view adds to it the power to do something effective about it: redemption through Jesus Christ, in whom all things will come together, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, without whom most human activity is doomed to ineffectiveness in the long term.

Now, as I will discuss in Part 2, I see the New Age as also one step on from Greenery. But the prescription it offers, the dynamic and power it offers, are those of occult and false religions. This is what distinguishes it from true Greenery, and also what distinguishes it from biblical Christianity.

So Greenery, in my picture, is an important and necessary step on the route to a truly biblical world view from where we are at the moment, and the New Age is a distraction and a dead end off this route. This means that Greenery is (to some extent) Good, even while the New Age is Bad, and it is vital to understand the difference between them. If we reject Greenery we are unlikely to arrive at a biblical world view and mode of living, and are more than likely to stay with the evil Modern World View even though we may be very godly or Spirit-filled Christians. From the near river bank of the Modern World View, each of Greenery, the biblical view and the New Age seem rather distant and similar to each other. But once you are standing on the Green stepping stone, you can see the difference. The New Age offers a solution, a horribly wrong one, while the Living God offers the right one: Jesus Christ. But for many people in today's world of the new era and of world view crisis, we may have to lead them to Greenery before they see this difference. One of my colleagues in my church has suggested that Greenery may indeed be the key to effective evangelism as we approach the end of the millenium.

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