



IS SOCIAL CREDIT CHRISTIAN?

by Geoffrey Dobbs

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I have been asked to comment on an article by Mr. Ian Hodge called, IS SOCIAL CREDIT CHRISTIAN? In fact this author finds that Social Credit is not Christian and even that it is a form of socialism. The remarkable way in which he arrives at this conclusion is by having Douglas's book, SOCIAL CREDIT, open on one side and the Bible open on the other and then seeing how presumably different pages, and different bits, quoted from one, fit with different bits quoted from the other. By this means I fear that anything can be proved about anything. It is like comparing a modern picture on a sacred subject, say the Nativity, with an acknowledged Old Master by putting them side by side and selecting odd square inches of them and seeing whether they match.

As a method of studying any writings, especially those of Douglas, let alone the Bible, this cannot lead to any depth of understanding at all: it can only be used to confirm a judgment already made.

The grounds on which Social Credit is judged to be un-Christian is that it is based upon the New Testament and not upon the Old, but surely Christianity is about Christ primarily — only secondarily about Moses and Abraham and the history of the Jews — so that, even if Mr. Hodge has a point to make, he cannot use the Old Testament to show that Douglas and Social Crediters are not Christian: only that they are not Jews; or perhaps, to put it more correctly, that in his view they are in error in respect of Judaism. It is true that Christ and all the early disciples were Jews and that He said that He came to “fulfil the law”, but He fulfilled it in such a radical manner, in such a stupendous and new way, that official upholders of the law, the high priests, felt it necessary to have Him crucified. Mr. Hodge tries to make out that there is no conflict here, but how can he say that there is no conflict?

Think of the Jew, Jesus, weeping over Jerusalem and saying,

“Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You that murdered the prophets!”

OLD TESTAMENT

All through the old Testament there is that spirit, that policy, which murdered the prophets and then ended by crucifying Christ, and all through the Old Testament there is that golden thread of the prophets themselves, which culminates in Christ; but if you just open it at random I think you will find that the vindictive and murderous spirit has an even bigger place than the other.

Douglas did not ignore the Old Testament, but he told us that much of it must be taken as a warning rather than something to be followed. He did not deny that golden thread which, seen in the light of the New Testament, can be seen to be Christian. Witness the fact that his quarterly journal was called *THE FIG TREE*, every issue carrying the quotation from Micah: “They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.” That is Old Testament, not New, and Douglas chose it, but a Christian, that is, a follower of Christ, interprets the Old Testament in the light of the New.

In recent years someone — and it is certainly not the ordinary Christian — has started calling our religion ‘*Judaeo-Christianity*’. There never was such a religion before, and it has led many people to interpret the New Testament in the light of the Old, which cuts them off from the tremendous new message of the New Testament. That is why it is called “*The New*”.

This can have terrible results. Take, for instance, the story of Abraham’s sacrifice — or willingness to sacrifice — his son, Isaac, at the command of God. If the Crucifixion of Christ is seen as merely a version of that, on a cosmic scale, so to speak, the whole thing is degraded. If you look at Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac in the light of the Crucifixion, yes we can see it as a brutal, primitive, distorted forerunner, which, nevertheless, demonstrates the priority of the First Commandment, to love God first.

The God who is revealed by Christ would never demand that a father murder his son, even if He let him off with a ram afterwards. What is missed, of course, is the whole significance of the Incarnation and the Trinity — that the Son who submitted to brutal murder on the Cross was also God Himself.

HOLY TRINITY

Evidently, Mr. Hodge has not studied Douglas enough to realise what a light he threw on the Holy Trinity: on its practical application in the modern world. Christianity is the religion of the Incarnation: that is, God made man, on this earth. Oh, yes, the man was a Jew, and that is quite important, but not of primary importance, as Peter was shown in his vision, the incarnation was for all men, not only for Jews. Christianity is also the religion of the Holy Ghost, and thus of the Holy Trinity: of God Who is not only a unity but also comprises diversity; of Love that is not only love of Himself but love within the Godhead. That makes all the difference in the world; and, in that sense, Social Crediters strive to be Christians: to express that religion in practice in the current world.

I dare say we go wrong: we are very far from perfect; but that is what we are attempting to do, and even if we cut out the Old Testament altogether, that would be a deficiency, but nothing compared to the other way round — trying to interpret the New Testament in the light of the Old.

The Incarnation and the Trinity are revelations about God. Therefore, they are enormously, almost infinitely, more important than anything else, including the history of the Jews, without denying that the history of the Jews is of great importance.

The book, SOCIAL CREDIT, which Mr. Hodge seems alone to have studied of Douglas, was written in 1924. There are another twenty-eight years during which Douglas grew in intellectual and spiritual magnitude. I would ask Mr. Hodge just to show a little more patience and thoroughness and to go deeper. He will discover the spirit of the New Testament, the spirit of the Christ Who came to bring us “life more abundant”, which is what we Social Crediters are trying to apply in practice in what we call our policy, or long-term objective.

It astonishes me that anyone, at this date, should still refer to Social Credit as if it were some sort of an economic scheme or plan, which Social Crediters are trying to impose upon the community, considering that Douglas spent a large part of his

public life in pointing out that this was not what he was trying to do. Oh, yes, he put forward suggestions, various schemes and plans, appropriate at various times, just as an engineer, he might draw up a specification for a bridge at a particular point for a particular purpose. That did not mean that he had a universal plan for a special sort of Douglas Bridge to be imposed on the community under all circumstances.

When we come to Mr. Hodge's accusation that Social Credit is a form of socialism it is clear that he relies, as with his judgment of the Bible, on selected words or texts, drawn in the main from Douglas's scheme for Scotland, which is the appendix to the book, SOCIAL CREDIT; but he has not even taken the trouble to discover what his proposals mean — what they are. He has even ignored the whole main thesis of Douglas concerning the vast unpurchaseable surplus of productivity which is earned by past invention or technological advance and, therefore, is not specifically owing to any particular one of us; and he actually says that, "Gone is the idea that those who work should keep the fruit of their labour". This is almost incredible for anybody who pretends that he has even glanced at Social Credit.

It is all due to thinking in words, and a few words at that. He pins this idea of Douglas, of merely redistributing wealth, to what he calls his rejection of rewards and punishments; but Douglas does not reject rewards and punishments: he rejects the imposition of the Old Testament doctrine of rewards and punishments, which still has some validity, over the New Testament conception of Grace and of life more abundant.

Mr. Hodge quotes the expulsion and condemnation to death of Adam and Eve for disobedience, but has he not heard that, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive"? And could he not, perhaps, if he probes deeper, be able to see that modern science and technology originally arose out of Christianity, though they have long departed, for the most part, from their origin; and that this abundant plenty which they can provide if only we will use it properly is not merited by any one of us; and that when a man's productivity is multiplied a hundred times by devices and solar energy, then, although some men must still work to produce what we all need, an increasing number could be released, and if

they are not released from useless labour to get money, then their lives are wasted?

Salvation from this fate, as well as the squandering of the earth's resources to keep them working to produce what is not wanted, is to be found in that element of Grace, of giving us what we do not merit; but which is there, and to waste it is to deny the generosity of God.

Yes, this is a New Testament and not an Old Testament view; for when Christ is denied there is nothing to fall back on but rewards and punishments, and when the Trinity is denied we have nothing left but the God of the Jews, the God of rewards and punishments.

Misunderstanding Social Credit

As for the accusation that Social Credit is some form of socialism, it is based on a misapprehension, not only that it has anything to do with socialism but that it is any sort of economic scheme at all. Mr. Hodge would have to read more deeply in Social Credit to discover what we mean by the word 'policy', but Social Credit is a policy, an attempt to apply Christianity, by which we mean the following of Christ as prescribed in the New Testament; and from time to time, if anyone challenges us as to what we actually propose, we have proposals to make. This is quite another matter from having to sell a scheme.

As I hope he knows, we are not a party: we do not seek power, to implement a scheme or for any other purpose. Schemes are methods, and it is results we seek: we are not attached to methods but are prepared to design or devise methods for any particular time and occasion. Douglas's scheme for Scotland, if studied carefully, does illustrate what his objective is. It most certainly is not to deprive people of the reward of their labour. Obviously there would be no product at all, as the basis of the dividend, if such a thing were put into practice.

It involves no interference at all with the ordinary principles of economics, but it does interfere with the idea that money must be created as irredeemable debt only to be met by incurring further debt. That is why it interferes not with economics but with finance, which is a different matter.

I was interested that, at one point, Mr. Hodge referred to the

economics of Adam Smith and of von Mises as being nearer, in his view, to a scriptural economics. I do not entirely disagree with him. Perhaps he may be interested to know that I had an interesting contact with what is called nowadays ‘the Austrian School’. A few years ago, as a Social Crediter and follower of Douglas, I was awarded a fellowship in California at the Institute of Humane Studies, paid for by the Liberty Fund. The official title of the award was rather embarrassing: “Distinguished Visiting Scholar”; but I have to admit I was taken down a peg when my time there overlapped with that of another Distinguished Visiting Scholar who really was distinguished. That was Professor Friedrich von Hayek, undoubtedly the leading proponent of the Austrian (or von Mises) school of economics. He was unfailingly courteous to me as a Social Crediter, which is more than I can say for some of his younger followers.

I can share Mr. Hodge’s admiration for this school of thought, particularly for its main proponent, but there was one point in which we strongly disagreed, which they simply would not face.

How could they advocate a free market and ignore the fact that the proletariat had no part in it? What sort of a free bargain for his labour has a money-less man entirely dependent on employment for a livelihood for himself and his family? How can a market be ‘free’ when a considerable part of it consists, in fact, of slaves? Previously many of these people were on the land, where they had their own livelihood, or they were small manufacturers in their own cottages — the word ‘manufacturer’ used to mean that — making by hand and at home. They were driven off that into the city, with no choice but to accept any sort of servitude for money that an employer offered. To call that a ‘free market’ is a farce! Nowadays, of course, these people, if they cannot obtain employment, receive a handout, Social Security, taken away from the earnings of those who are working.

Now, on Mr. Hodge’s own argument, where is the justice in that, according to his own religion of rewards and punishments? Why punish the worker to reward the non-worker? Yet when I put this up to the proponents of the Hayek and von Mises school they deliberately chose the socialistic handout taken from the worker rather than the dividend which represents the monetised surplus

of production brought into existence by the growth of technology. Though they will not admit it, yet when it comes to it, in a choice between socialism and Social Credit, the free marketeers do not approve of welfare Statism — the grab-from-the-worker-and-handout-to-the-idle state of affairs — but they simply will not face the fact that if we can multiply a man's productivity by a hundred easily and in many ways, we have got to find an alternative to his wages to distribute the product. The difference is that we would say that the surplus due to past invention is owing to everybody, not only to the wage-earner or investor, and your free marketeer refuses to face the fact that our potential for production, using fewer and fewer people, now grossly exceeds any possible sane and sensible need or desire for consumption. There is simply no need for an increasing proportion of people to be employed for any reason except to get money. If, therefore, everybody is still employed, an increasing proportion of them must be employed wastefully, producing what people do not want, or producing what they do want in the most wasteful and inefficient way possible, so as to keep earning wages.

SOCIAL CREDIT MEANS FREEDOM

Ultimately the only solution is war, because war alone has a destructive potential even greater than our productive one. Or another alternative is the total, bureaucratic State, in which a vast proportion of people are controlling and interfering and lowering the efficiency of the rest. I do not suppose the free marketeers want either of those, and if they will not face them they will be unemployed, and, contrary to their religion of rewards and punishments, the people who are actually doing the work will be punished by taxation to pay for those in enforced idleness. Where is the justice in that? Where is the free market in that? That, in fact, is socialism, and the free marketeers, when it comes to it, prefer socialism and the welfare State — the handout which you must make if you are not allowed to put people to starve in face of great surplus — to the dividend which, indeed, is not merited by us personally, but which is an acceptance of the Grace of God which has enabled us to produce this enormous surplus of productivity.

Any other alternative involves desperate squandering of the earth's resources, wasting energy and materials producing what

nobody wants and then wasting more forcing them to buy, by brainwashing. Is that what Mr. Hodge wants? I am sure it is not, but if he will look again, and more carefully, both at the New Testament and at Social Credit, he will see what Social Crediters are at least trying to put forward, ideas which will distribute the unmerited but inherited Grace of God through technological production and will enable everybody to participate in the free market.

It will also even enable the just application of the Old Testament policy of rewards and punishments in so far as the worker will no longer be punished for no fault of his own, for the failure to distribute to all the great increase in productivity so that the unemployed will not starve, so the worker will receive a full reward for his work.

At the same time he will be properly punished if his work does not meet the demand of a free market, which, for the first time, will include everybody.

The transition from the bureaucratic grab and handout of the State to one in which every citizen had his independence, and, therefore, collectively could control the market, would have its dangers owing to the corruption in which we already live. Hence the interim restrictions which Douglas suggested in his scheme for Scotland in 1924 merely to tide over, to prevent people trained in idleness and greed exploiting it until they had learned otherwise; but it surprises me that anyone who is both a Christian and a follower of Adam Smith and von Mises should prefer socialism to Social Credit, and I feel sure that if he would study it a bit deeper he would soon discover where the more truly Christian policy lies.

