

# THE ABOLITION OF MAN

by C.S. Lewis



## THE AUTHOR

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland; his father was a lawyer and his mother a mathematician. She died when Lewis was nine, and the trauma eventually drove him to atheism in his teens. He read voraciously from his youth and began writing at an early age. He served briefly in World War I and graduated from Oxford in 1923. He returned to Oxford to teach English at Magdalen College (1925-1954), then moved to Cambridge as Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature (1954-1963). He died on the same day that John F. Kennedy was assassinated - November 22, 1963.

Not surprisingly, reading and conversations with fellow scholars led to Lewis' conversion. Christian writers such as George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton led him to question the arrogance of his atheism, and ultimately the exercise of his imagination along with his reason brought him to Christ. He went on to become one of the greatest spokesmen for the Christian faith in the twentieth century.

Lewis preferred the company of men to women, living for most of his life with his older brother Warren and spending long and delightful afternoons in discussions with fellow writers at the *Eagle and Child* pub in Oxford. The writers who gathered there styled themselves the Inklings, and included J.R.R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield and Charles Williams. He did, however, care for the mother of his college roommate, Paddy Moore. The two had vowed to care for the other's families should either one be killed in the war, and Lewis kept his promise, allowing Mrs. Moore to live with him and his brother until her death in 1951. Finally, and most unexpectedly, Lewis married - having carried on a lengthy correspondence with Joy Davidman, an American Jewish divorcee, the two fell in love when she visited him in England and married in 1953. Their marriage was a happy one, but was cut short when Joy died of cancer in 1960.

Lewis' writings display an enormous range and virtuosity in varying styles and genres. They include the children's stories for which he is perhaps most famous (*The Chronicles of Narnia*, 1950-1956), autobiographical writings (*The Pilgrim's Regress*, 1933; *Surprised by Joy*, 1955; *A Grief Observed*, 1961), his Space Trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, *That*

*Hideous Strength*, 1938-1945), and theological and apologetic writings (*The Problem of Pain*, 1940; *The Screwtape Letters*, 1942; *Mere Christianity*, 1943; *The Abolition of Man*, 1943; *The Great Divorce*, 1945; *Miracles*, 1947; and *God in the Dock*, published in 1970), along with literary criticism and essays on a variety of other topics.

*The Abolition of Man* consists of three lectures on education that focus on the concept of objective value and seek to demonstrate the consequences when such value is denied, especially in the realm of education. The argument centers around what Lewis calls the *Tao*, by which he means the right path of values and behavior that has been acknowledged by all human societies. Though Lewis clearly writes from the theistic perspective, he refuses to make that the basis of his argument, seeking instead to present truth from a variety of cultures that supports his thesis.

## NOTES

### Lecture I - Men Without Chests

Lewis begins with an example from a popular high school text on English composition in which the authors assert that a statement of value concerning a particular object or action (in this case, a waterfall) involves nothing more than an assertion about the viewer's feelings in response to the object or action. He then notes that, while the authors did not say these things in so many words, they have conditioned the unwary student to believe these things as assumptions through which life is to be understood.

Lewis next turns to a poorly-written advertisement panned in the book, largely because its description of a cruise is filled with hyperbole, thus falling far short of truth if taken literally. The writers of the advertisement are merely stirring up emotions for financial gain. But instead of contrasting the poor writing with an excellent literary description that stirs up noble emotions, the authors instead ridicule the significance of any emotions elicited by giving a sense of place. Lewis then turns to another book where a description of horses is subjected to the same sort of prosaic critique, not as bad writing, but as anthropomorphism.

He then notes that the authors of these books are probably not trying to sneak their personal philosophies into the minds of young people in some subversive way, but are much more likely to be taking the easy way out; after all, ridicule is much simpler than rigorous literary criticism, and making fun of poor writing is considerably easier than pointing out why it is poor.

Lewis then goes on to note that the authors of the book face a unique problem. In past ages, all wise men assumed that things in themselves were deserving of praise or censure (he then supports his assertion from widely-diverse sources such as Plato, Aristotle, and Hindu, Taoist, and Confucian thinkers), and that the task of man is to learn to praise what is praiseworthy and condemn what is not, while the task of education is to teach the young how to do so. In other words, right ethics stem from right perceptions and feelings about the world, which he denominates the *Tao*. Without objective value, facts and feelings can have no relationship to one another. He then uses *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* as an example to illustrate the difference between being inside and outside the *Tao*. Lewis then argues that the intellect is powerless to produce right behavior apart from trained and inculcated sentiment. The result of separating fact from feeling is to produce Men without Chests who are incapable of linking the two.

## Lecture II - The Way

Lewis begins the second lecture by arguing the inherently destructive character of the approach to education exemplified in the text to which he alluded in the first. He notes that the authors, while they mock values, clearly hold some of their own, though they never state them as such. Those values are the values popular when they were growing up - the values in vogue between the world wars. The authors are thus trying to debunk the values of others in order that their own may triumph. Lewis then returns to the question of sacrificing one's life for one's country and notes that the Innovators can give no possible justification for patriotism; for them, the indicative can never lead to the imperative because no values are in themselves veritable. The Innovators have no choice but to turn to instinct for an explanation for the need to preserve society, but Lewis notes that reverting to instinct automatically rules out concepts of honor, justice, and sexual morality. Yet the Innovator cannot avoid some sense of *ought*, as much as he wishes to do so, since one may not logically conclude that something instinctual must inevitably be done, and even the Innovator admits that some instincts (those that are contrary to the preservation of society) should be resisted. But on what basis, then, should one choose among competing instincts? Lewis further argues that a desire for the preservation of society is not observably instinctual. In fact, only in the *Tao* - the right path as confirmed by all human societies - may justification be found for making choices that show concern for posterity, and only in such presuppositions may any foundation for morality be located. No multiple systems of value exist - only one, and all attempts to create new ones are only examples of the branches rebelling against the tree, and are equally destructive. He concludes the lecture by noting that those who reject all values and openly seek to remake man as they would want him to be are at least more honest than those who would attempt to replace old values with new ones.

## Lecture III - The Abolition of Man

Lewis begins the third lecture by discussing the concept of man's power over nature. Using the examples of the airplane, the wireless, and contraceptives, he argues that man's power over nature is really nothing of the sort, but is instead a power exercised over some men by others using nature as the instrument. He notes that the same concept must also be applied to time - that each generation exercises control over its successors by the choices it makes, and limits the power of those who have gone before to the extent that it rejects what they have bequeathed to the history of the race. The wielders of such power are the educators. Lewis notes that educational theorists of the past have been mercifully unsuccessful in actually carrying out what they wished to accomplish, but warns that the educational conditioners of the present finally have the tools at their disposal to make of man what they wish. Had both the manipulators and the manipulated lived within the *Tao*, this might not have been an entirely bad thing, but when the basis for reshaping humanity is nothing more than the whims of the manipulators, disaster beckons; Lewis has no confidence that the Conditioners will act benevolently rather than simply gratifying themselves.

He proceeds to argue that science, in its conquests of nature, demystifies and takes outside the realm of value whatever it conquers. While such tradeoffs may be justifiable when considering the earth and its resources, turning the same tactics on man and thus rendering him an object is inexcusable and horrifying. He notes that such ambitions are not restricted to fascists and communists, but may be found among the democratic societies as well, even to the point of

penetrating the language (“liquidating unsocial elements” rather than “killing bad people”). To those who claim that he is attacking science, Lewis responds that science from its very outset was a search for power rather than knowledge, a Faustian bargain with the devil, and that only a new science that seeks to explain without explaining away will suffice to save man from his own impulses.

## NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“The schoolboy who reads this passage . . . will believe two propositions: firstly, that all sentences containing a predicate of value are statements about the emotional state of the speaker, and, secondly, that all such statements are unimportant.” (I, p.15)

“From this passage the schoolboy will learn about literature precisely nothing. What he will learn, quickly enough, and perhaps indelibly, is the belief that all emotions aroused by local association are in themselves contrary to reason and contemptible.” (I, p.19)

“Another little portion of the human heritage has been quietly taken from them before they were old enough to understand.” (I, p.22)

“What I have called . . . the ‘trousered ape’ and the ‘urban blockhead’ may be precisely the kind of man they really wish to produce. . . . They may really hold that the ordinary human feelings about the past or animals or large waterfalls are contrary to reason and contemptible and ought to be eradicated. They may be intending to make a clean sweep of traditional values and start with a new set.” (I, p.22-23)

“The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. The right defence against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments.” (I, p.24)

“A hard heart is no infallible protection against a soft head.” (I, p.24)

“But what is common to them all is something we cannot neglect. It is the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of things the universe is and the kind of things we are.” (I, p.29)

“The heart never takes the place of the head: but it can, and should, obey it.” (I, p.30)

“On this view, the world of facts, without one trace of value, and the world of feelings without one trace of truth or falsehood, justice or injustice, confront one another, and no *rapprochement* is possible.” (I, p.30-31)

“For those within [the *Tao*], the task is to train in the pupil those responses which are in themselves appropriate, whether anyone is making them or not, and in making which the very nature of man consists.” (I, p.31)

“In a word, the old [education] was a kind of propagation - men transmitting manhood to men: the new is merely propaganda.” (I, p.33)

“Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism.” (I, p.33-34)

“The head rules the belly through the chest - the seat . . . of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments.” (I, p.34)

“The operation of *The Green Book* and its kind is to produce what may be called Men without Chests. It is an outrage that they should be commonly spoken of as Intellectuals. This gives them the chance to say that he who attacks them attacks Intelligence.” (I, p.34-35)

“We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.” (I, p.35)

“The practical result of education in the spirit of *The Green Book* must be the destruction of the society which accepts it.” (II, p.39)

“Their scepticism about values is on the surface: it is for use on other people’s values: about the values current in their own set they are not nearly sceptical enough.” (II, p.41)

“It will be seen that comfort and security, as known to a suburban street in peace-time, are the ultimate values: those things which can alone produce or spiritualize comfort and security are mocked. Man lives by bread alone, and the ultimate source of bread is the baker’s van: peace matters more than honour and can be preserved by jeering at colonels and reading newspapers.” (II, p.41 [footnote 1])

“That, again, is why the modern situation permits and demands a new sexual morality: the old taboos served some real purpose in helping to preserve the species, but contraceptives have modified this and we can now abandon many of the taboos. For of course sexual desire, being instinctive, is to be gratified whenever it does not conflict with the preservation of the species.” (II, p.45)

“To value anything simply because it occurs is in fact to worship success, like Quislings or men of Vichy.” (II, p.50 [footnote 3])

“What is absurd is to claim that your care for posterity finds its justification in instinct and then flout at every turn the only instinct on which it could be supposed to rest, tearing the child almost from the breast to creche and kindergarten in the interests of progress and the coming race.” (II, p.52)

“If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved. Similarly, if nothing is obligatory for its own sake, nothing is obligatory at all.” (II, p.53)

“Only by such shreds of the *Tao* as he has inherited is he enabled even to attack it.” (II, p.54)

“This thing which I have called for convenience the *Tao*, and which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes, is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgements.” (II, p.56)

“The rebellion of new ideologies against the *Tao* is a rebellion of the branches against the tree: if the rebels could succeed they would find that they had destroyed themselves.” (II, p.56)

“An open mind, in questions that are not ultimate, is useful. But an open mind about ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy. If a man’s mind is open on these things, let his mouth at least be shut. He can say nothing to the purpose.” (II, p.60)

“Whenever any precept of traditional morality is simply challenged to produce its credentials, as though the burden of proof lay on it, we have taken the wrong position.” (II, p.60)

“What we call Man’s power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument.” (III, p.69)

“Each generation exercises power over its successors: and each, in so far as it modifies the environment bequeathed to it and rebels against tradition, resists and limits the power of its predecessors.” (III, p.70)

“For the power of Man to make himself what he pleases means, as we have seen, the power of some men to make other men what *they* please.” (III, p.72)

“Man’s final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man.” (III, p.77)

“Nature, untrammelled by values, rules the Conditioners and, through them, all humanity. Man’s conquest of Nature turns out, in the moment of its consummation, to be Nature’s conquest of Man.” (III, p.80)

“Either we are rational spirit obliged for ever to obey the absolute values of the *Tao*, or else we are mere nature to be kneaded and cut into new shapes for the pleasure of masters who must, by hypothesis, have no motive but their own ‘natural’ impulses.” (III, p.84)

“A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery.” (III, p.84-85)

“The regenerate science which I have in mind would not do even to minerals and vegetables what modern science threatens to do to man himself. When it explained it would not explain away.” (III, p.89-90)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. To what extent is Emotivism, the ethical philosophy of A.J. Ayer, the source of the educational approach deplored by C.S. Lewis in the first lecture of *The Abolition of Man*? What are the consequences of such an ethical philosophy? Use your knowledge of Emotivism and the content of the lecture to show the deplorable results of putting such a philosophy into practice in the realm of education.
2. Discuss the meaning of the phrase “Men without Chests” in C.S. Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*. Use quotations from the first lecture in the book to develop your understanding of the matter and illustrate the concept from your own experience, both literary and relational.
3. In Lecture II of C.S. Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*, the author argues that modern educational philosophy has no way of deriving an imperative from an indicative. What does he mean by this? He uses the example of sacrifice for the good of the community as an example to illustrate his point. Choose three others and use them to demonstrate the validity of what Lewis is trying to communicate.
4. Discuss the role of Darwinism in the deplorable condition of education described in Lecture II of C.S. Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*. Consider the approach Lewis takes to the use of instinct to justify certain desired forms of behavior and debunk others. Assess his arguments and conclusions from the standpoint of Scripture.
5. In the first two lectures of C.S. Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*, the author uses the phrase *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* as an example to illustrate the ethical consequences of modern educational theory. Compare Lewis’ treatment of the phrase with that found in the poem *Dulce et Decorum Est* by Wilfrid Owen. Does Owen’s take on the phrase fit under the critique given by Lewis, or does the poet use it in a different sense? Support your conclusions with quotations from the two works.
6. To what extent does the critique of education found in C.S. Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*, written in 1943, continue to apply at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Has education changed significantly since then, or do his arguments continue to hit the target? Cite specific examples from your experience to support your conclusion.
7. In Lecture II of C.S. Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*, he states, “What is absurd is to claim that your care for posterity finds its justification in instinct and then flout at every turn the only instinct on which it could be supposed to rest, tearing the child almost from the breast to creche and kindergarten in the interests of progress and the coming race.” Why does Lewis argue that the push for entrusting the education of children to the state at an increasingly young age is contradictory? Would you argue that it is also unbiblical? Why or why not?

8. In Lecture II of C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, he says, "If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved. Similarly, if nothing is obligatory for its own sake, nothing is obligatory at all." Why is knowledge impossible apart from presuppositions? Does morality follow the same principle - that no moral standards may exist if nothing is right in and of itself? Support your argument using the book, your own logic, and Scripture.
9. Evaluate the concept of the *Tao* in C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*. Is Lewis right to argue that the right path is to be found and affirmed in all noble philosophies and religions of mankind? Why or why not? Support your conclusions by quotations from the book and from Scripture. How would a rejection of his argument affect his conclusions, if at all?
10. Francis Schaeffer argued that the Western world was "living on borrowed capital." What he meant by this is that only by accepting the fundamental presuppositions of a Christian worldview can the secularist even go so far as to argue against Christianity, and that Western society could not be characterized by the things the secularist values apart from the ideas he rejects. Compare Schaeffer's argument to that found in C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*. Would Lewis agree with Schaeffer on this point? Why or why not? Support your argument with quotations from Lewis' lectures.
11. In Lecture II of C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis notes that, though he is a Christian, his argument about the nature of values does not require a Christian or even a theistic base, but can be derived from Practical Reason. Do you agree? Can one have a system of values apart from a Christian base? How would you respond to the frequent citations he makes from non-Christian thinkers to support his arguments?
12. In Lecture II of C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis notes that, though he is a Christian, his argument about the nature of values does not require a Christian or even a theistic base, but can be derived from Practical Reason. Suppose you were to present his arguments from an explicitly Christian base. How would you do it? Outline in your essay a specifically Christian approach to the major issues covered in Lewis' three lectures.
13. In *Summa Theologica* by Thomas Aquinas, the author presents Five Ways - five proofs for the existence of God. The fourth of these arguments has to do with values. Aquinas notes that, when people assess something as relatively more or less good, true, or beautiful, they are assuming the existence of something that is absolutely good, true, or beautiful. Compare this argument with the concept of objective value found in C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*. Consider both the contents of the two arguments and the uses to which they are put by the authors.
14. In Lecture III of C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, he says, "What we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument." To what extent is the same author's novel *That Hideous Strength* an exposition of the same idea? Compare the two works and explain how the one illustrates the basic ideas of the other. Be sure to use quotations from both works in supporting your arguments.

15. To what extent may George Orwell's dystopian fantasy *1984* be seen as an exposition of Lecture III in C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*? How does the novel illustrate the basic ideas of Lewis' lecture? Be sure to consider ideas such as manipulation of people by those in power, the nature of education, and the destruction of humanity.
16. Use the principles and arguments found in C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* to discuss the nature and uses of propaganda. Consider the question both in the light of the presuppositions underlying propaganda and the ethic of power that determines its use. Be sure to include quotations from the book to support your arguments.
17. Discuss the idea that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" in the light of Lecture I in C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*. Why does Lewis object to such a statement? Does it have any truth in it at all, or ought it to be summarily rejected? Use both Lewis' book and the Bible to support your answer.
18. John Keats' poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn* concludes with the words, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty — that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." Would C.S. Lewis have agreed with this sentiment? Use Lecture I of his *The Abolition of Man* to answer the question. How would the two writers have differed in their understanding of the relationship between truth and beauty?
19. Natural Law was a popular idea among the Deists of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Discuss the relationship between the Enlightenment concept of Natural Law and the concept of the *Tao* enunciated by C.S. Lewis in *The Abolition of Man*. When Lewis mentions Natural Law as a manifestation of the *Tao*, does he mean the same thing by it as was meant by the thinkers of the Enlightenment? Why or why not? Support your answer with specific quotations from Lewis' book along with your knowledge of Enlightenment thought.
20. Though C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* begins as a discussion of education, the author really says little about it beyond Lecture I, yet the implications of his arguments for the field of education are enormous. Discuss the extent to which the book could serve as an apologetic for Christian education, particularly in its classical form, despite the fact that such was not the author's intention. Use quotations from the book to support your arguments.
21. While Lecture III of C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* is sometimes criticized as an attack on science, what he really attacks are the social sciences. Would you agree with this assertion? Why or why not? What does he find objectionable about the application of the principles of science to humanity? Use Scripture to evaluate his argument.

22. Consider the attack on modern principles of jurisprudence, especially as they have been influenced by the social sciences, found in Lecture III of C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* and illustrated in *That Hideous Strength*. While critics today often see psychology as a means of preventing justice by allowing criminals to escape the punishment they deserve, Lewis argues that the opposite is in fact the case - that the introduction of psychology allows the state to punish the criminal without limits. Does the fact that the lectures were given in 1943 affect the substance of his argument? Evaluate his argument, considering the historical context in which it was developed, and illustrate it with examples from your own reading and experience.
23. In C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, the author argues that any attempt on the part of man to construct a new system of values is inherently contradictory and bound to destroy itself in the end. On what basis does he make this argument? How would you support his argument from Scripture?
24. Sociologist Charles McGehee, in response to reading C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, notes that sociologists "take great pains to strip away the facades, the myths, and illusions about society which frequently serve vested interests, but in so doing we frequently destroy students' lives in that they, as persons, are left not only with nothing of value, they also are unprepared to deal with the world as it is." How does McGehee's assertion support the critique of education and the social sciences found in Lewis' series of lectures? What are the practical consequences of shaping "Men without Chests"?
25. In the latter part of the twentieth century, educational theorists argued that, because morality is relative, schools ought not to teach values, since who is to say whose values ought to be taught? The consequence, predictably enough, was schools where cheating was assumed, discipline nonexistent, and violence epidemic. People then discovered that teaching values might not be so bad after all, and started taking community surveys to determine what values might be assumed to be part of a general consensus. Tolerance led the list, of course, but others such as integrity, truthfulness, and respect found general agreement. Discuss this process in the light of C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*. Would you consider Lewis' book prophetic in the light of these developments? Would Lewis have approved of the consensus-driven approach to moral instruction? Why or why not? Support your answer with quotations from the book.
26. The attempt to recover moral values in the public schools has led some to embrace a movement called Values Clarification in which students are encouraged to formulate their own values apart from any external influences or patterns. Develop a critique of Values Clarification using C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, and support your critique from Scripture as well as from Lewis' lecture series.

27. At the end of C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, he advances the argument that "the whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see." What does Lewis mean by this? In what ways does this statement sum up the entire thesis of the lecture series? Why ought Christians to affirm that Lewis' assertion is vital to a biblical view of the world?
28. C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, written in 1943, predicted the destructive consequences of the application of materialistic science to human beings. At the same time, a movement in psychology called Behaviorism was arising, advocating just that. The leading proponent of Behaviorism, B.F. Skinner, wrote two works that put into bold relief the consequences of such a philosophy - the novel *Walden Two* (1948) and *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971). Choose one of these works from the pen of the Behaviorist and discuss the extent to which Lewis' treatment of the consequences of the dominance of the social sciences was prophetic. Be specific, using quotations from both Skinner and Lewis to develop your arguments.
29. Woodrow Wilson, a champion of the Progressive movement in American politics, once asserted that Progressives believed in the need to "interpret the Constitution according to the Darwinian principle." Use the words of C.S. Lewis in *The Abolition of Man* to respond to Wilson's argument. How is Lewis' book relevant to the contemporary debate between jurists who believe in a "living Constitution" and those who champion "original intent"?
30. In C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, he argues for a universal moral code called the *Tao* that is common to all cultures and accessible to all men. He refuses to identify the source of the *Tao* and mounts his apologetic for it without Christian, or even theistic, foundations. To what extent may the practical implications of his conception of the *Tao* be seen near the conclusion of *The Last Battle*, the final book of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, when a young worshiper of the pagan god Tash named Emeth (the Hebrew word for *truth*) passes into eternity and finds himself in the presence of Aslan, then affirms that in Aslan he has found all that he really sought in his worship of Tash? Evaluate this application of the concept of the *Tao* from a biblical perspective.