This month, rather than reviewing a series of new books I have decided instead to provide an extended review of a single book first written in the 1950s because I think it is a highly significant book that teaches us things that we still very much need to learn today.

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<th>Author</th>
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<td>Harry Blamires</td>
<td><em>The Secularist Heresy: The Erosion of the Gospel in the Twentieth Century</em> (London: SPCK, 1981), out of print, but readily available.</td>
<td>Despite being written for another era, Blamires’ message is highly relevant to today. Today – as then – society is preoccupied with the natural and the finite, rather than the supernatural and eternal. For most people, a good life means living as happily as possible in the here and now – and the Christian gospel seems irrelevant and possibly hostile to that aim. We must keep the Christian message free of corruption by today’s views and priorities, which are fundamentally hostile to the gospel.</td>
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**Learning from Harry Blamires**

Harry Blamires (1916–2017) was an Anglican theologian, literary critic and novelist. He was taught by C S Lewis at Oxford and subsequently became head of the English Department at King Alfred’s College Winchester (now the University of Winchester). Alongside his teaching career, he also wrote novels, books of literary criticism and works of theology.

One of his most important theological works is his book *The Secularist Heresy*, which is now out of print, but which is readily available second hand.¹ In this paper, I shall outline the argument put forward by Blamires in this book and explain why what he says remains very important for Christians today.

**The argument of The Secularist Heresy**

As Blamires explains in his Preface, the issue which he addresses in his book is how to keep ‘the Christian message free of corruption by twentieth-century habits of thought which are fundamentally hostile to it.’ (p 9)

**The Contemporary Situation**

In chapter 1, ‘The Contemporary Situation’, Blamires begins by observing that Christian apologists need to address not only the issues raised by those who doubt and question the Christian faith, but also the issues raised by the growing number of people who are simply indifferent to it.

He then notes that what those who are indifferent to Christianity have in common is ‘a failure to recognize the finitude of the finite, and especially failure to accept man’s own finite status for what it is.’ (p 13). What Blamires means by finitude is the fact that every human being is ‘a dependent creature with a limited and temporary existence in a limited and temporal universe.’ (pp 13–14).

According to Blamires:

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¹ The book was originally published by SPCK as *The Faith and Modern Error* in 1956 and was then re-issued by SPCK as *The Secularist Heresy* in 1981. It is available online at https://archive.org/details/secularistheresy00harr/mode/2up (registration required).
At the heart of the problem of twentieth-century man’s indifference to religion lies the fact that the challenge of finitude is suppressed. Intellectually man seeks a coherent meaning within the closed finite order, and builds humanistic, mechanistic, and positivistic philosophies which treat the finite order as absolute and ignore its contingent and transitory status. Morally, man seeks final securities and satisfactions at the terrestrial level, and pursues earthly power, possession, and pleasure, as though they could never be withered by the hand of time or swept away by the hand of death. In short, man treats the finite as though it were infinite. He adjusts his mind and his will, not to the finite as it in fact is, but to the finite as he would wish it to be. (p 34)

For the Christian, writes Blamires, the reason for this disconnect between the reality of finitude and man’s attitude to his finite existence is because man was not created to be a merely finite creature:

Man is a creature called to eternity: he is destined for infinity. It is right that his mind and his will should be adjusted to the infinite. What is wrong is that the finite should be disguised in a habit of permanence and security, thus to become the object of aspirations and strivings which it can never satisfy nor set at rest.

All man’s endeavours to find the wholly good within the finite order thus bear testimony to man’s vocation to the infinite. It is a bitter irony that the human pretensions which fabricate the false materialistic and humanistic philosophies of our time should arise from that very impulse towards an infinite good that they ultimately seek to suppress or destroy. It is an irony even more bitter that man’s pride, covetousness, and last for pleasure and power, should be perversions of potentialities for fulfilment and glory which are man’s peculiar blessing and inspiration. It is man’s especial tragedy that the God-given impulse to transcend and transfigure the infinite should be perverted into a demonic zeal for disguising the finite as absolute. Yet the bitter irony is paradoxically our surety and our hope as well. For without that inner demand for security and rest, which in its perverted expression lures us to the feverish pursuit of earthly treasure and pleasure, natural man would be unaware of his high calling. (pp 34–35)

Because ‘the challenge of finitude’ is thus ‘the key which opens the door to faith,’ (p 36) it follows that the calling of Christians is to place the issue of finitude before people’s minds. For example, education is only truly Christian if it ‘introduces at every point the facts of the transience and contingency of finitude, and the absolute demand to transfigure and transcend the finite order.’ (p 36)

Evasion of the Gospel

Blamires begins chapter 2, ‘Evasion of the Gospel’, by declaring that the Christian message is ‘wholly rooted’ in the supernatural. (p 41) He gives two examples of this fact: the personal challenge of Christianity to the individual and the Christian account of the human situation.

First, he writes:

The personal challenge of Christianity is the call to baptism and regeneration through grace. It is the call to repentance and self-surrender. Each of these five crucial words – baptism, regeneration, grace, repentance, and self-surrender – bring us face to face with the supernatural. A call to altruistic behaviour and humanitarian effort does not necessarily involve the supernatural at all. One may desire to live well and strive to do so, without reference to the supernatural. But baptism is from above, regeneration is rebirth into a life dominated by the Spirit, grace is the gift of the Holy Spirit. You cannot be born again except into a new life; you cannot repent except before some Person; you cannot surrender yourself except to some Will. The Christian moral challenge is summed up by the vocation to do the will of God. A life of obedience to the Will of God is a life guided and inspired from the supernatural. (pp 41–42)

Secondly, considered as a ‘description of the human situation,’ the Christian message:
...is equally permeated by the fact of the supernatural. For the faith teaches more than that Christ in history died and rose again. It teaches Redemption as a present fact, transcending the sequence of historical time. The conquest of sin has been achieved. A new Covenant has been established, the gulf between God and man bridged in the incarnation and the sacrifice of Christ ... Christianity teaches that what happened uniquely and supremely in the historical events of Christ’s life is yet happening all the time. The fact that God gives himself in atonement for human sin is a fact which transcends the sequence of historical time. In the Church survives the fact of Incarnation, and she calls us daily to give ourselves in repentance that we may share the grace of atonement. The Church therefore witnesses to – even manifests – the impingement of the supernatural on the natural order as a present fact. (pp 41–42)

Because the Christian religion thus concerns the breaking in of the supernatural into this present world, it follows, argues Blamires that we must avoid the heresy of viewing Christianity as what he calls a ‘corroborating religion’.

A corroborating religion ornaments the moral life with a supernatural sanction. Christianity does more than this: it transfigures the moral life with a supernatural penetration. A corroborating religion promises a life after death for a natural course dutifully played out. Christianity offers more than this: it offers here and now the entry upon a life of the spirit lived within the reality of the eternal. Again, a corroborating religion offers a motive for humanitarian labour, service to the community and the generations which will follow. Christianity offers this and more: it permeates every personal striving for the good of mankind, declaring it an obedience to the Divine Will and the manifestation of an impulse from the Holy Spirit. A corroborating religion asserts that our good deeds have the blessing of God. Christianity goes much further: it declares that man’s good deeds are willed by God, inspired by God, and ultimately, indeed, effected by God. Finally, a corroborating religion gives the support of orthodox dogma to the discoveries of the intellect and the visions of the imagination: whereas Christianity reveals every truth and every uncorrupted dream of man as symbolic of some element in the nature of God. God is not just the remote end nor the remote first cause, not just the sanction, the explanation, nor the excuse. God in Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If there is life at all, truth at all, progress at all, there is the Spirit of God – not only calling, guiding, sanctoning – but indwelling at the very heart of the human impulse and aspiration. (pp 43–44)

Blamires then goes on to identify five characteristics of the dilution of the supernatural character of the Christian’s message.

First of all:

...dilution of the gospel message is usually accompanied by an undue emphasis upon the historicity – as opposed to the transcendence – of the Christian Revelation. It cannot be too strongly asserted that Christianity is distinguished from all other religions by the rich factual records of God’s entry into history. But if we lay exclusive emphasis upon the birth, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ as past events in history, and neglect them as expressions of God’s present Love for us, then we undoubtedly weaken the Christian challenge. (p 54)

Secondly, there is:

...the frequency of exhortations to moral improvement by self-motivated endeavour. No Christian needs to be told that he cannot make himself into a full man by the force of his own unaided will. Nevertheless, there is much preaching in our midst which implies that such self-improvement is possible. Once again, the call to moral striving towards the good life, when it is unaccompanied by the call to self-surrender and acceptance of grace, is a call which divests the Christian message of its
supernatural meaning. The call to the self to improve the self does not reach out to the supernatural. (p 56)

Thirdly, there is:

...vagueness and confusion about the central doctrines so clearly proposed in the creeds. It is not surprising that this vagueness should appear. For we have seen that the central doctrines of the Church are one and all wholly supernatural in their emphasis, and any attempt to whittle down the supernatural basis of the Christian Message must inevitably blur the clarity of credal propositions. (pp 56–57)

Fourthly, there is: ‘neglect of the Church as a divinely established body’ (p 59). The church, writes Blamires:

...is a Divine Society, and its significance is rooted in the supernatural. What does it mean to belong to a society which is rooted in the supernatural? Membership of such a society is plainly unlike membership of any purely earthly organisation. It involves something more than just accepting a particular message and a particular set of rules and principles. It involves living with your roots in another world. Where the Christian message is plainly and honestly proclaimed, there will be no attempt to dilute or soften this utterly astonishing and shocking claim. (p 60)

Finally, there is ‘the restriction of the Christian demand, particularly in the intellectual sphere’ (p 62). The reason this is a serious error is because:

The Christian challenge is a most comprehensive one. It demands that all experience and all thought take cognizance of the fact that the full life is entangled in the supernatural at the roots ... wherever in human thinking a judgement is made that reflects upon the nature of the human situation, then at that point a comment is called for in the light of the Christian synthesis. If then a statement is made about the proper end of human life and about the satisfactions which it is proper for humanity to seek, that statement will be either true or false by reference to Christian doctrines of man’s nature and destiny. The same applies to statements about what is proper for men to aspire to, to strive for, to fight for, to give themselves to. Judgements passed on particular actions in the past and exhortations to particular courses of action in the future are alike susceptible to approval or disapproval from the Christian point of view. Analyses of the workings of the human mind, whether technical or imaginative, psychological literary, can scarcely hope to be free of philosophical implications which can be judged true or false in the light of Christian doctrine. Again, any survey of human behaviour, which overtly or obscurely recommends certain habits, attitudes, or principles of conduct, can be treated as answerable to the morality of Christendom. (pp 62–63)

The Language of Religious Thought

In chapter 3, ‘The Language of Religious Thought’, Blamires begins by noting that ‘language is not an individual inheritance – like a man’s own body – but a communal inheritance, like the civilization into which he was born’ (p 72). Words are a shared tradition of meaning handed down from one generation of human beings to the next.

Because this is the case, it follows, declares Blamires, that words are not:

...wholly at the service of the individual to do whatever he likes with them. A certain humility is required of men when face to face with any great tradition, and tradition of language is no exception. Moreover, a certain loyalty is required of individual men, when they presume to make use of an inheritance whose very survival depends upon communal loyalty. In other words, the individual has no right to weaken an inheritance which depends upon the support of all for its nourishment. (p 74)

According to Blamires, there are two ways in which people can be disloyal to the linguistic tradition which they have an inherited. The first is what he calls ‘linguistic privatism – which excessively restricts the connotation of words, beyond the limits set by the communal tradition’ (p 74). The second is what he calls ‘linguistic
dissipation – which excessively expands the connotation of words, beyond the limits set by the communal tradition’ (p 74)

For Blamires it is important that, when Christians use language in evangelism or theology, they are aware of the need to avoid these two forms of error. As an example of the first error, he cites the way in which some Anglo-Catholics suggest that those who are not in the Anglo-Catholic tradition may be good people but are not Christians. This is linguistic privatism because it unduly restricts the inherited meaning of the word Christian which ‘embraces Roman Catholics and Plymouth Brethren’ (p 75) As an example of the second error he cites the way in which the term ‘Church’ is extended so as to include the ‘the beneficent materialist and the altruistic atheist’ (p 77). This is linguistic dissipation because it unduly extends the inherited meaning of the word ‘Church’.

Blamires next goes on to consider the idea that there is a contrast between the ‘scientific vocabulary’ used by scientists, sociologists and psychologists, which is ‘concrete,’ precise’ and ‘objective’, and the ‘metaphorical vocabulary’ used by theologians which is ‘abstract, vague and ultimately unreliable’ (pp 77–78). He rejects this idea because the study of the development of language shows that all language involves the use of metaphor. ‘The metaphorical element is common to all human utterance. The unreliability, in so far as it exists, is common to all human knowledge’ (pp 83). It is not the use of metaphors that matters but how they are used. Thus, both the description of God as ‘personal’ and the description of him as a ‘dynamic force’ are both metaphors, but the former is a more adequate metaphor than the latter because it suggests that God himself possesses the characteristics of ‘personality, rationality and purpose’ which he then bestows on human beings (pp 83).

Returning to the idea that there should be a proper humility in the use of language, Blamires next explores the idea that Christians ought to be willing to abandon the traditional language of the Creeds and the liturgy on the grounds that it is now out of date. Blamires rejects this idea as well, declaring that:

‘....it ought not to require any very elaborate argument in order to induce a Christian to pause before questioning the language of traditional theological utterance. Is not a certain humility required before language which has satisfied the greatest scholars and saints, not only of history, but also of our own age?’ (p 89)

In the final part of the chapter Blamires addresses what he sees as the real difficulty with theological language. This is not that it is metaphorical or out of date, but that it deals with a wider range of subjects than other forms of study. Theology has to ‘make statements on many different levels’ (p 91) referring both to historical events, such as Christ’s birth and death, and to eternal and supernatural truths, such as the truths that Christ died to redeem the world and that God is Triune.

For Blamires, a problem occurs when a theologian, influenced by the anti-supernatural bias of the contemporary world, ‘devotes himself exclusively to that part of theological data which is wholly contained within history’ (p 93). This results in ‘untheological theology’ because it is ‘the supernatural vision that transmutes history into theology’ (p 94). Theology is only truly theology when it views history in the light of the being and action of God.

Blamires further argues that it needs to be understood that theology is not (as is often suggested) ‘a mass of capricious conjectures, from which everyone is at liberty to choose what he wants to accept’ (p 95). In reality:

The propositions of orthodox Christian theology are guaranteed by an epistemological theory and rigorous and coherent as that of any branch of study. To pick and choose here is as much a mark of stupidity as it is in any other science. (p 98)

For example, he holds that it would be foolish to attempt to hold on to other parts of Christian doctrine while questioning the doctrine of the Trinity. This is because:

The certainty of the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be questioned without repercussions which upset the whole body of knowledge. To question this doctrine is to question the truth of Christ’s words and
of the apostles’ and evangelists’ teaching. It is therefore to question the reliability of the Gospels and of the Church’s tradition. It will lead, like any other questioning of a central doctrine, step by step to the destruction of faith. (p 98)

Blamires concedes that there is an inadequacy in theological language. However, he contends that this not because theology uses language less well than other branches of study. Rather, it is due to the subject matter with which theology is concerned:

The inadequacy of theological language is the inadequacy of the finite to describe the infinite. There is no standard of adequate human expression to measure this inadequacy. Its only measure is the very infinity to which it reaches out. It is, in short, inadequate before God. But God probably does not need it. And for men we must believe it to be adequate in practice, for it is the language vouchsafed to us. (p 100)

The Drag of Nature

In chapter 4, ‘The Drag of Nature’, Blamires looks at the twin errors of a materialist view of ethics and an individualistic view of human existence.

On the first of these errors, Blamires contrasts a materialist approach to ethics with a Christian one. In his words:

In the Christian ethic an evil act is evil per se. In the materialistic ethic an act is evil because it brings temporal discomfiture and perhaps even an end to temporal existence. The suffering consequent upon an act, which in the materialistic ethic is itself the evil of the act, proves in the Christian ethic to be potentially good, in that it may restore the sinner through repentance to self-knowledge. Moreover, death, if it follows, proves often to be good in the Christian ethic, in that it comes to one (like Lear) whose spiritual pilgrimage is complete, and he is ready now to leave the place of testing. The trial is over. This is a very different scheme of thought from that which posits suffering and death as utterly evil – and urges that sin be avoided because it leads to them. (pp 113–114)

Blamires goes on to say that:

The extraordinary thing about the Christian ethic is its utter evasion of deception and disguise. It points straightforward to the supernatural as the only objective point of repose. To do good is to do the Will of God; to do evil is to act against the Will of God. (p 118)

On the second error, Blamires contends that just as we should reject a materialist view of ethics so we also should reject the idea of the individual human being as ‘an isolated source of creative, purposeful activity and of original thought’ (p 118). Although this idea is ‘stressed everywhere nowadays’ (p 118), it is to be rejected because it goes against the truth concerning the communal nature of human freedom and rationality.

Man is free only by virtue of exercising choice on the basis of judgement and will. But the standards and values, in accordance with which free choice is made, can be known only through the inheritance of that shared consciousness which links man to his fellows in a community of the centuries. In assimilating the endowment of virtue and rationality which this communal tradition offers, man transcended his individual selfhood. in short, there is no freedom in individualness. In individualness there is neither freedom nor rationality, neither humanity nor virtue. A philosophy of individualness is a naturalistic philosophy, for it is grounded in the cultivation of man the animal, unexalted above the life of the senses. All significances of the rational and moral order are attained to by the individual through entry into the communal consciousness, where dwells the shared inheritance of values and meaning. (pp 120–121)

Blamires further observes that the ‘common tradition of meaning and rationality’ which makes individuals human also ‘testifies to the Divine Creation of man himself’ (p 129). Meaning and reason are not to be found
in nature itself, they come from a supernatural source, namely God. It follows that ‘Man, as rational, is rooted in the supernatural as surely as spiritual man’ (p 129).

Pulling his criticism of both errors together, Blamires then writes that individualism and materialism are:

...peculiarly the philosophies of the natural and the finite, shut off from grace, transcendence, and redemption. At the animal level of sensation and appetite man is truly an individual; and therefore individualism is the same as the philosophy of naturalism. At this same level, man seeks only to manipulate and loot his world in the interests of sensual satisfaction and individual survival: and therefore materialism is the philosophy of naturalism. As these are peculiarly the philosophies of the natural, so they are the philosophies of the finite. For time splits up the integrated personality into a discrete sequence of individual experiences of the phenomenal world. Man is human only in transcendence of time’s limitations. Only through the exercise of memory and foresight is man rational and purposeful. Only through the inheritance of the collective conscious traditions which survive the passing centuries does man attain to knowledge, wisdom, and culture. Nature and finitude are, in themselves, hostile to the cultivation of man’s manhood. And especially are they hostile to man’s supernatural affiliations. (pp 129–130)

Blamires finishes the chapter by looking at how the meaning of the three fundamental spiritual virtues of faith, hope and love is distorted when they are viewed from a purely naturalist viewpoint. Faith becomes ‘confidence in the security of possessions’ rather than a ‘supreme and utter self-committal to the supernatural’ (p 132). Hope becomes ‘irrational confidence in the future temporal security of the having ego’ rather than a ‘selfless trust’ in God himself (p 132). Love becomes distorted into a demand for ‘fair shares for all’ as an ‘indirect safeguard of the possessive ego’s well being’ rather than a ‘selfless committal to the supernatural’ (p 133).

The Church

Blamires begins chapter 5, ‘The Church’, by noting that the church is generally viewed as:

...a purely human institution with a double function – that of providing certain unnecessary but pleasing ceremonies to mark the turning points in domestic and national life; and that of serving certain humanitarian ends in relation to the sick and needy at home and abroad. (p 138)

He then comments that in order to counter this misconception of the church’s nature and calling:

...continual emphasis is needed upon the fact that the Church is a Divine Society pre-eminently concerned with the preservation and nourishment of the spiritual life, with the revelation of Incarnation, Redemption, and Salvation. No good can come of belittling the Church’s claim or toning down her supernatural purpose. If the Church is to evangelize this kingdom, she must learn again to shock, to stun, to stupify by the enormity and audacity of her claims. If she is not, root and branch, devoted to a supernatural end, then she is devoted to natural ends; she is just another organization for the amelioration of social and material conditions. (p 138)

Blamires then go on to also reject the idea that the church should be seen as an educational institution ‘burdened with the pre-eminent duty to issue moral exhortations in the face of increasing divorce, vice, gambling, and the like.’ (p 143). This again makes the church a means to an achievement of an earthly end (in this case, social improvement). In addition, it ‘assumes in man a capacity for self-perfecting which he does not possess’ and it ‘leads in popular teaching to a disastrous tendency to urge Christians to go out and improve their neighbours’ (p 143).

As Blamires sees it:
Here again the traditional doctrines of the Church exist to keep us on the right path. From the doctrine of Grace we learned that man, in his own right, is incapable either of reforming himself or of reforming others. He does not go to church to learn how to force himself and others into virtue. He goes to Church to repent and to ask for the gift of that life in God by which he may be used in accordance with the Divine Purpose. He goes to root himself in the life of an order beyond the world, to feed on the food of the spirit. The instruction he needs tells of his own unworthiness and the fact of Redemption achieved. He must will to share, not in a grand Crusade to redeem, but in the fruits of an already given Redemption. He must strive to hope – how much against the grain it goes – that he may share infinitesimally in that sacrifice of Love which is mankind’s atonement. (p 144)

Aware that he might be seeming to denigrate the importance of works ‘charity, mercy, and social reform’ (p 144), Blamires explains that:

By pressing the claims of supernatural religion we are not diverting energy from the field of practical charity. On the contrary, we know that by this means alone can new energies be released into the sphere of humanitarian endeavour. Through self-commitment in obedience and worship, Christians will find themselves used for charitable works of undreamed-of scope and intensity. It will be when we come to truly know and experience the Church as the Body of Christ and ourselves as very members thereof, that the Church will become that effective organ of humanitarian service and ministration which, without that knowledge and experience, we strive in vain to make it. (pp 145–146)

Blamires concludes the chapter, and the book as a whole, by emphasising the importance of the church’s calling to present the challenge of the supernatural to an increasingly secular world.

The Church, as a Body of men and women living the life of the spirit through worship and sacrament, can never judge what is the effect of its practice and prayer upon contemporary life. But the church as a teaching institution, presenting intellectual terms that change of the supernatural to a secular civilization, can certainly measure its success in subverting the false philosophies of the day. The fruits of the Church’s spiritual life can be seen only by God. But the immediate results of the Church’s intellectual appeal can be roughly measured here and now. We have argued that, in this domain, the Church’s message must be presented as an uncompromising challenge from the supernatural to all who are earthbound in the false self-sufficiency of the finite. The Church must be prepared to shock people out of this false self-sufficiency, to shift them uneasily from their shallow roots in the finite, to lift them above Nature and to shake them out of time. Whether, in the long run, the Church will be clearly called to cease to bolster secular civilization by her blessings upon civil affairs and her acceptance of official status, cannot be known as yet. But clearly the call is already upon her to oppose the prevailing naturalistic philosophies which, having corrupted our social and intellectual culture, now threaten her own message and her own status as the Civitas Dei. (pp 152–153)

Why Blamires’ message remains important today

Anyone who starts reading The Secularist Heresy will soon become aware that it is a book written to address a bygone age. The social and cultural, and theological references that the book contains place it firmly in the world of the 1950s. The dangers which he warns his readers against are those of own his age and he naturally makes no reference to the issues of our day. Thus, he refers to divorce are a pressing moral issue, but says nothing at all about same-sex relationships, transgender or racism.

However, even though The Secularist Heresy is a book written for another era, the basic message it conveys remains important for Christians today.

This is because today, just as much as when Blamires was writing, the biggest threat to the Church and to Western civilization is a preoccupation with the natural and the finite rather than the supernatural and the eternal. In our day too, most people are simply indifferent to matters of religion and the reason they are indifferent is because they see this world as all that there is. Consequently, to live a good life is to live as happily
as possible in this world in the years between birth and death – and the claims of the Christian religion seem irrelevant, if not hostile, to the achievement of this aim.

Furthermore, today, just as much as in Blamires’ time, ethics is seen in terms of temporal consequences rather than obedience to the will of God, people are seen as isolated individuals rather than as a part of a community stretching through time, and the purpose of the Church is seen as being to perform certain social ceremonies, to undertake humanitarian activity and to exhort people to live better lives.

This being the case we still need to heed the lessons which Blamires seeks to get across in *The Secularist Heresy*.

As Christians, we need to challenge the prevailing view that this world and our time-limited existence within it are all that there is. The world and we ourselves exist because we have been created and are sustained by the action of God; even after our life in this world is over, we will experience life in the world to come.

We need to explain that the reason that people invest the finite things of this world with infinite significance is because they have been created by God with aspirations and strivings which their finite life in this world can never satisfy.

We need to help people to see that we are only truly human in community because God has created humanity in such a way that knowledge, wisdom and culture are passed down across the centuries by the communities of which individuals are a part.

We need to help people to comprehend that the Christian challenge to the individual and the Christian view of the human situation are alike uncompromisingly supernatural in that they relate human existence to the being of God and God’s past, present and future activity. Furthermore, the Christian view of ethics is also supernatural in that it sees good and evil in terms of obedience to God’s will or rebellion against it – and says that suffering, and even death, are not necessarily evil in that they can be used by God to achieve his good purposes.

We need to make clear that the traditional language of the Creeds and the liturgy are not out of date, that theology is as reliable a branch of study as the natural and human sciences, that theological language is only inadequate in the sense that all language falls short when seeking to describe the being and activity of God, and that orthodox theology is an integrated system of thought which needs to be learned and accepted as a whole.

We need to be aware of the danger of an ‘untheological theology’ that focuses on historical, literary and linguistic studies and fails to relate these to the being and activity of God.

Finally, we need to help people to understand that the church is a supernatural society, created and sustained by God, for the achievement of supernatural ends, and that the purpose of belonging to the church is to root our lives in the life of God by accepting for ourselves all that God has done for us in Christ and wills to do in us through the Holy Spirit. It as we do this that we will be led by God to perform acts of loving humanitarian service to others. It is as we are transformed by God through our participation in the life of the body of Christ that we will be enabled to become people who can transform the world.