

You are in: [UK](#)[Front Page](#) Wednesday, 17 May, 2000, 08:34 GMT 09:34 UK[World](#) **Prince warns of 'playing God'**[UK](#)[Northern Ireland](#)[Scotland](#)[Wales](#)[UK Politics](#)[Business](#)[Sci/Tech](#)[Health](#)[Education](#)[Sport](#)[Entertainment](#)[Talking Point](#)[In Depth](#)[AudioVideo](#)

Prince's speech may prompt further rift with the government

Prince Charles, a long-standing opponent of genetically-modified food, is to warn the scientific community that tampering with nature could cause great harm to the world.

The Prince of Wales is to voice his concerns during a contribution to the Reith Lectures, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on Wednesday night.

He speaks of the need to "work with nature" and will warn of the dire consequences of ignoring the "essential unity" of the living and spiritual worlds.

The 2,300 word essay was written by the prince during a recent pilgrimage to a remote Greek monastery.

He says his concerns are rooted in the need to safeguard the divinely-created Earth. But the prince's swipes at biotechnology may prompt a further rift between St James's Palace and the government, which continues to support GM technology.

'Nothing held sacred'

The prince will argue it is because of humanity's "inability or refusal to accept the existence of a guiding hand that nature has come to be regarded as a system that can be engineered for our own convenience".

He will go on to say: "We need to rediscover a reverence for the

“ We need to rediscover a reverence for the natural world, irrespective of its usefulness to ourselves ”

Prince Charles

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natural world, irrespective of its usefulness to ourselves, to become more aware of the relationship between God, man and creation.

"If literally nothing is held sacred any more - because it is considered synonymous with superstition or in some other way 'irrational' - what is there to prevent us treating our entire world as some great laboratory of life with potentially disastrous long-term consequences?"



Tampering with God's work?

He welcomes a "precautionary approach" to scientific advances and mocks those who portray this as a sign of weakness or an attempt to halt progress.

Mankind 'part of nature'

"I believe it to be a sign of strength and wisdom," he says in the lecture, which was recorded three weeks ago at his home, Highgrove House in Gloucestershire.

He counsels against reducing the natural world to a mechanical process.

"In this technology-driven age, it is all too easy for us to forget that mankind is part of nature and not apart from it, and that this is why we should seek to work with the grain of nature in everything we do," he says.

Science, he says, should be used to understand how nature works but not to change what it is.

"Only by rediscovering the essential unity and order of the living and spiritual world will we avoid the disintegration of our overall environment," he concludes.



Prince believes in divinely-created Earth

The prince's lecture will be discussed on the programme by the five Reith lecturers, former Hong Kong governor Chris Patten, former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, BP Amoco chief executive Sir John Browne, Indian ecologist Vandana Shiva and Tom Lovejoy, chief diversity adviser to the World Bank.

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