

HUMANISM
THE SUBTLE DELUSION

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A Collection of Studies by:

Tony Benson, Bernard Burt, Glynn Cherry, Phil Dwyer, Anna Hart,
Peter Heavyside, Andrew Walker, Geoff Walker, Ray Walker,
Brian Woodall. Foreword by John Watts.

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If, in God's mercy, this book helps to make believers aware of the growing dangers in the ideas of humanism - ideas which have largely triumphed in the western world of today - the work will not be in vain.

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FOREWORD

God has become an irrelevance in our society, and the influence of humanism is all pervasive. This collection of essays, first published in *The Bible Student* between 1982-1984, reminds us of the problems created by the humanist approach. The past fifteen years have seen the tide of humanism rise still further. Those years have also shown even more clearly the futility and ultimate impotence of humanism as we see the consequences of its short and long term efforts to control human experience.

The great post-war humanist experiment of the Welfare State had been faltering all through the nineteen seventies, Regulation, subsidies, over-strong Unions, high taxes, allied with an increasingly uncompetitive British industry were supposed to be the source of the trouble and the humanist remedy was 'deregulation and market forces'. Another humanist experiment began when Mrs. Thatcher's government came to power in 1979. No one can say how things would be now if they had been left alone, different, we may be sure, possibly worse.

It is ironic that the essays are reissued when the experiment of the nineteen eighties has largely been completed and politicians are now struggling with the problems it created. Even more ironic is the growing awareness of the consequences of the much longer term experiment to create high standards of living on the prodigal use of fossil fuels.

One feature of humanism that never ceases to amaze is its inability to acknowledge mistakes. When things go wrong, as they always do, it is not the basic approach that is at fault. Failures are never failures of humanism. The new generation is always confident it has the answer. As with evolution, so with humanism, the approach is a self-evident truth and no matter what nonsense results, the approach cannot be questioned. The

Bible student knows that the material with which humanism is concerned, humanity, is flawed in its very heart, deceitful above all things, desperately sick, torn apart by desires which readily degenerate into greed and envy. It is inevitable that the result of human thinking, humanism, should also be flawed and unworkable.

The Arrogance of Humanism by David Ehrenfeld was first published in 1978. It considered the practical failures of humanist solutions applied to real problems. Time has not weakened the force of the analysis. The early chapters are a powerful criticism of the attitudes and practices of humanism. If the humanist lacks one essential quality above others, it is humility. The mark of real knowledge is an awareness of personal ignorance: how little any of us know of the world in which we live! The humanist seems to lack the grace to accept his ignorance. Convinced his is the only valid approach, he dare not even imagine it will fail. The scapegoat for past failure is 'superstition' or 'religion', never the fault-line in man himself, sin, which so easily takes over.

Ehrenfeld uses many examples, ancient and modern, to illustrate the blinkered way in which the humanist, even within the framework of humanism, approach problems. A problem is usually viewed in its own right, not as a symptom, and then treated in isolation. The result is a 'solution' which in due course creates at least two more problems which are usually worse than the original.

Mrs. Thatcher's great experiment produced several unanticipated and undesirable side-effects. Much of UK manufacturing industry was destroyed; the 'medicine' had killed rather than cured. So many people became unemployed that politicians brought unemployment statistics into complete disrepute by the devices used to conceal the real numbers. A sub-culture of youth and redundant workers was created, some of whom have never worked, probably never will work, and may even not wish to work. Middle aged and older workers were dismissed in millions, handed a dole, and in practical terms, forgotten. As a biologist I can appreciate that if 'market forces' could have been allowed to function without intervention,

the unemployed would disappear by starvation; but that was not politically feasible!

Now we have a new government looking for ways to rectify some of these side-effects. Another humanist experiment has begun. However good its intentions, we can be confident that anything that is attempted will in turn create more problems.

This very limited analysis of the unexpected consequences of Mrs. Thatcher's experiment is not given for political reasons but to remind us that we live in humanist times and experience the consequences. The fact that continental governments, using a different political theory, later achieved similar levels of unemployment, is irrelevant. It is the unanticipated nature of the problems that demonstrates the accuracy of Ehrenfeld's analysis.

These essays remind us once more that humanism must always fail in the medium and long term because it is based on a false premise, that like Jim, a man can fix it. Only the Creator has the wisdom, power and moral character to devise and carry through a workable solution. Unlike Jim, who could select the problems he would 'fix', man has no choice; he must deal with the problems that confront him. The Thatcher experiment succeeded in part because it recognised that human beings are usually motivated by greed, or, if you prefer, the desire to better themselves. At the centre of the problem is our nature, turning so readily to worship Mammon, taught by humanism a loyalty to self only. The National Lottery shows how far public morality has declined in the past fifteen years, government quietly exploiting our desire for something for nothing.

Humanism has been in control at all levels of government, education and science for the past hundred or so years. Innumerable political experiments have been tried all over the world, an amazing range of scientific discoveries has been harnessed to the service of man; and with what results? Pollution, noise, chaos, stress and strain as never before. We have produced an insane world. And all the humanist can say is that we learn by our mistakes. Mr Micawber, like the humanist, was always

waiting for something to turn up, but new solutions only produce different and often worse problems.

The arrogant pride of the humanist prevents him assessing with any objectivity the results of his many experiments. He has had plenty of opportunities to prove his approach - and has failed.

When these essays were written climate change and the greenhouse effect were not high on the agenda. Now the bill for that very long term humanist experiment, the quest for high standards of living for all, is starting to come in. Even the humanists recognize that a workable solution will mean acknowledging that the humanist approaches of the age of technology were wrong.

Humanism has dominated the western world almost exclusively for the past two hundred years. The rhetoric at times may have sounded Christian but the ethic has been humanism. There is however a positive side for Bible students. God has in His purpose set humanism in a position of authority, to create the conditions prophesied for the last days. Humanism is a disaster and a spiritual enemy, but it is also a sign that we stand in the last days. Climate is changing, there is no reasonable doubt about that, and we may begin to suspect from the words Jesus used in Luke 21 that the process will be a terrifying one once it accelerates. The drive for a higher standard of living is indeed producing its unpredicted side effects that herald the moment when God will visibly intervene and send Jesus back to this earth to put things straight.

Humanism is an enemy of light and truth. In Revelation 16 under the sixth vial, Jesus says, "blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments". These are difficult and dangerous times for the believer, there are lies and wonders to deceive even the elect, if that were possible. But we can take heart. Jesus told us that when we see these things begin to come to pass, we should lift up our heads, redemption draws near.

John Watts

P R E F A C E

These essays first published in *The Bible Student*¹ have to do with that way of thinking and life which is presently called "humanism"; we are concerned less with the minor organised societies claiming to be humanist, than with certain teachings which, particularly since the Second World War, have come to dominate to a greater or lesser degree every walk of life in the Western World - teachings which deny God and exalt man. Each chapter will attempt to assess the effect that such attitudes are having on the Christadelphian community and will discuss ways of combating this evil which surrounds us.

We Christadelphians are, by and large, well aware of and well-equipped to deal with dangers which arise from the teaching of the many religious communities. Their doctrines, in general, are well-defined and they have distinctive and recognisable practices which can be assessed by us. These bodies are highly-organised systems and all members (at least in theory) hold to the teachings of their particular church. Much of our literature is an answer to such teachings as it sets out right Bible views on a variety of topics.

Main-line Christadelphian prophetic interpretation projects the Roman Catholic Church as the arch-enemy; and truly there is much direct opposition to the Truth which stems from that quarter. But we know the Scriptural reasons why we cannot acclaim the Pope; we are justly indignant at the way in which that Church imposes her authority above that of Scripture; her mysteries sicken us and we are aghast at the superstitious practices of her people; we are therefore unlikely to be seduced by her sorceries. Similarly, we are on the alert against the ways and doings of all her daughters; we know precisely how Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons will attack us when they knock on our doors.

But there is another enemy, and his ways are different. There is no supporting wealthy dominating organisation. There is no atmosphere and awe of large, pretentious buildings. He does not attract by mystery

wrapped up in sentiment. He appeals, so he says, strictly to reason - just as we assert that ours is a reasonable case, not requiring belief in mysteries. His behaviour, he says, (as indeed we do,) must be underpinned by "truth", which *he* defines as "empirical natural knowledge".² We shall need to know in this study of humanism just where our humanist's reasonableness fails.

The humanist realises he is no saint, and he will freely confess his own limitations. One of the main planks of his philosophy is tolerance. He has no love for the authoritarian Roman Catholic system, and will argue against it as boldly as we might. And yet, in spite of all this, he is no friend of ours. Indeed, it is precisely because of these characteristics that he is so dangerous to us. He can, and often does, take us off guard. This is our reason for looking closely at the inroads being made by humanist philosophy into the Christadelphian position.

The Humanist Foundation

The humanist attacks on a broad front, in many guises. He is not constrained by a body of well-defined doctrines. He has one foundation: "Man is on his own, and this life is all".³ On this basis, and with the ongoing assumptions that everyone is responsible for his own life and for the life of mankind, he has freedom of thought and action such as is not experienced in Church circles. His respect for human values and life offers him the best hope of working towards a world-wide morality founded on human ideas. Here is the expression of the utmost that man can do for himself - and it is in direct conflict with the way of God.

The humanist philosophy appeals to the vanity of the natural man, and its freedom of thought encourages its tentacles to spread far and wide, into corners that can sometimes take us by surprise. Very often people find themselves in the humanist position without deliberately having taken that stance; in fact, they may be in the humanist tradition without ever having subscribed in their minds to the basic "man is on his own, and this life is all". We must seriously ask ourselves whether we, as Christadelphians, have not been so busy warding off Church giants that we have failed to notice that inoffensive little man, always with us, who seems so reasonable and charming.

The humanist *seems* to be with us on so many issues. He, like ourselves, abhors the mysteries of the Roman Catholic Church. His concern is with the earth and with the welfare of its people; his aspiration is total participation in the life of the world. He will have nothing to do with an immortal essence in man or with Holy Spirit possession, but believes passionately in personal choices, individual responsibility and the prudent management of his own life. He is fond of saying: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself", ⁴ which he interprets as love of humanity. It is easy to see how we might find ourselves in step with him at times. His idea is to co-operate in building a beautiful and bountiful world where nature and life are respected and where every human being has a chance of personal fulfilment in a stimulating, caring and civilised society. We will be asking what the humanist means by "personal fulfilment", i.e. what is the role of the individual in society?

The Advance of Humanism

In his modest, quiet way this enemy of ours is having considerable success. His long-standing enmity of God's way is seen in history, but he has made more progress at some periods than at others. We shall consider the lessons that we may learn from his history, and the effects that he has had in past ages in his battles with God's Truth. We could, indeed, turn back in time to the beginning of things and point out (for example) his efforts to build the tower of Babel; but in this study our primary concern is the way in which his *present* manifestation has developed. His modern roots go back to the period of the Renaissance, and he played a considerable part in the revolt against the Roman Church at the close of the Dark Ages. Latterly, he has been the inspiration behind Charles Darwin and Co., who hold that the basic "man is on his own, and this life is all" is strongly indicated by the natural history of man "as now known".

Now he is confident that he is slowly coming into his own, that he will induce men and women in number to espouse his cause. He is on the attack, and the opposition is yielding vital ground to him, so much so that even his arch-enemy, the Pope, valiantly defends the "rights of man". Not, of course, that the Pope would recognise that he is compromising the traditional Church stand. But the seed of humanism is latent in the cultural

tradition which the churches now share, and is able to spring up and flourish within the churches, bearing its characteristic fruit.

Thus the armies of humanism advance. From being the enemy of the people, humanists are today people who propose an alternative view of human life in the world, which, they say, is entitled to be fairly considered. His "endowment", via evolution, is "a potentiality, certain possibilities, and the responsibility for their development".⁵ Ordinary people today who reject religious argument, easily turn to the idea of improving the world and making the best of what it offers. What we have to consider is how far Christadelphians are caught up, however unconsciously, in this present trend.

Humanism and Christadelphians

Already humanism, with the backing of the Theory of Evolution, has made great strides into the territory of that institution which the humanist sees as his greatest enemy, i.e. the Christian Church. After the Dark Ages came the "Enlightenment" which has moulded the age in which we live. This has been the age of learning, both in the sciences and the humanities. Education has always been the cardinal activity and the main hope of the humanist movement. "Enlightenment" means education, which brings freedom from what the humanist sees as slavery to superstition. The question arises as to how far Christadelphian thinking has been affected by secular (often humanist) education. This must be one of the most important questions arising from a study of humanism, and Chapter 3 is devoted to it. We shall consider, also, how Christadelphian parents may best protect their own children. Parents clearly should have these considerations in mind as their children train for and take up employment.

A high proportion of the British Humanist Association (the B.H.A.) are teachers, and a Humanist Teachers' Association has been formed to tackle special problems and concerns. The B.H.A. Education Committee, which includes some leading people in the field of education, is concerned mainly with moral education which, to the humanist, is basically social experience and has no absolute standard. The B.H.A. may be a small organisation, but many of its members are in positions of influence. The parents of Christadelphian children should be aware of such influences.

We shall consider, also, how best we can be seen to oppose this godless teaching. It is, perhaps, a feature that might be thought to be somewhat lacking in our public witness. First of all, we as a body need to be pure from the taint of humanism ourselves. No one among us would be so misguided as to consent to the basic premise. (It is noteworthy that the main humanist attack is directed towards the Roman Church; not one shaft flies close to the bastion of the Truth as it is in Jesus.) Indeed, at the other extreme, we all recoil at that ultimate expression of humanism - the permissive society. However, up to the present public opinion, the basis of secular morals, is not yet totally permissive; it is, rather, confused and lax, and it is amidst such public opinion that the disciple of Jesus Christ lives, and testifies. We shall deal with different aspects of this public opinion in some of the later chapters, dealing particularly with marriage, the family and sex relations. In these fields the "Christian" tradition is in question or openly disregarded. We want to discover how much the arguments used by the humanists to justify their stand-point are permeating the Christadelphian community.

Another field which we investigate covers the impact of the democratic system on our lives - how far we take its arrangements as a good thing, and how far we should protest against its uncleanness. Democracy is, after all, the outcome of the humanist cry of liberty, fraternity and equality. Are Christadelphians losing their enthusiasm for preaching God's coming Kingdom, and maybe also diluting the preaching of that Kingdom, by promoting ideas of making the earth a better place now?

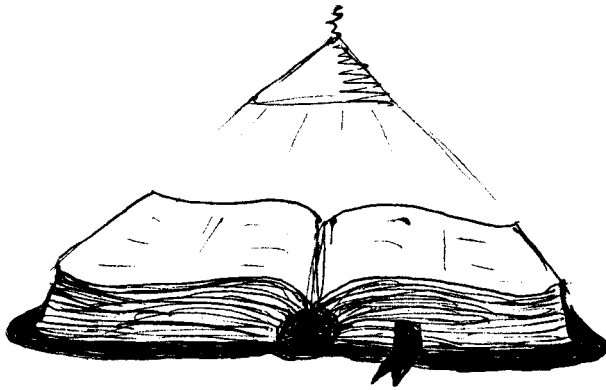
There is a considerable body of opinion within the Christadelphian community today which feels that our corporate witness is lacking. We are setting up this investigation into the impact of humanism on the ecclesias because we feel that any lack of enthusiasm in witnessing may not simply be a matter of indolence (which might be righted by the organisation of more meetings, campaigns, writing of literature etc.) but could be a deep-seated problem due to a gradual change of attitude which has affected the community without it being realised. The Western media continuously and strongly downplay communism while at the same time glorify democracy. This can be an unwholesome influence on our thinking, if we allow it.

Above all, in conclusion it must be said that, in the fraught situation in which the saints of God now find themselves, there is one sure defence against the "enticing words of man's wisdom" (which is what humanism is). This is a mind fully conversant with the Word of God. It is a state which can only develop through careful reading of that Word and meditation.

Geoff Walker

NOTES

1. Vols. 13-15 (1982-84).
2. *Humanism*, H. J. Blackham, Harvester Press Ltd., John Spiers, 2 Stanford Terrace, Hassocks, Sussex, 1976, p.31.
3. *Ibid*, p.13.
4. *Ibid*, p16, 79.



"... to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is.8:20).

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMANISM

In the preface to this study of humanism, the hidden dangers of humanist ideas to ourselves as Christadelphians were pointed out. This danger is all the greater because so many humanist theories are thought of today as in some way "Christian" - such ideas as the rights of man, the freedom of the individual, democracy and so on. Humanism is thought of as vaguely related to 'humanity', having overtones of tolerance, benevolence and self-reliance. It is easy to think of humanists as generally moral people whose ideas will, at least, do no harm.

Herein lies the great danger of humanism to ourselves. However upright many of those who call themselves humanists may appear, the teaching they hold is utterly opposed to the Word of God, and their moral standards are openly subversive of the moral teaching of true Christianity - as future chapters will show.

"Freedom" is the watchword of the humanist. In seeing man as the highest creature in the universe, responsible to no-one but himself, the humanist replaces divine moral standards and principles with human (variable) opinions. The degenerate state of the Western world today is to a considerable degree the end-product of a long and determined campaign by humanists to have their teachings accepted.

This fact may not be known to many. It is often thought, rather vaguely, that the fall in recent years of moral standards is due solely to the general tendency of human nature to corrupt itself. Of course human nature is a factor; but the *kind* of degeneration we see in the West today has another underlying cause.

Suppose we try to list the moral problems of our country. Perhaps most of our lists would include the following:

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Lack of belief in God and His Word.

Disobedience of the young; failure of parents to discipline their children.

Sexual freedom, including promiscuity and homosexuality.

Greed; putting oneself first.

Dishonesty.

Search for pleasure, drugs etc.

It is true that all these problems are rooted in human nature and are not exclusive to the Western world of today. But in other, earlier days, and in other areas today, the evils listed have been recognised as sinful or wrong. It is only today, in the West, that they have been accepted by many as perfectly valid and reasonable behaviour. For example, sexual freedom is thought by most to be a natural, possible choice; children are encouraged by many educationalists to 'do their own thing' and often to ignore their parents; the freedom to use drugs is campaigned for; the honest person is thought a fool; and religion is largely thought of as superstition. Thus actions God declares to be sin are regarded as valid actions which may be freely chosen. Virtue and self-discipline have become old-fashioned.

If humanistic teachings are thus opposed to God's ways, we need to know our enemy. The following chapters, written by different authors, deal with various aspects of humanism, and will also look at the origins of the particular aspects with which they deal. This general look at history will therefore be very sketchy, and leave many particular matters to be dealt with later. It is hoped that the whole picture will be seen as the different studies are read.

Humanism is a western philosophy, founded on Greek ideas and appealing to the western mind. Its history therefore mainly concerns Europe; not until the present century have its ideals made progress in the East (beginning with the Russian Revolution) and the Third World.

The philosophers' dream

"Even new thoughts have affinities and lines of descent." ¹.

This quotation is, perhaps, only another way of expressing the Biblical truth that there is nothing new under the sun; it expresses a truth that many who know little of history may not realise. No-one - but no-one - thinks up a new idea against a completely blank background. ². New ideas - new

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human ideas, ³ that is, are always developments of, or protests against, concepts which are presented to the thinking mind from outside sources. That is why the historian, delving backwards through a tide of human thought in a limited area, constantly comes upon familiar ideas which are repeated, developed, opposed and rethought time and time again.

Spoken ideas may travel long distances in time, but tend to become garbled as they are handed down. *Written* ideas, however, have a power which far exceeds that of spoken theories; to begin with, they are usually the work of better minds, since poor thinking is not usually thought worth preserving. Secondly, once recorded, impressive ideas can strike home century after century with undiminished impact.

There is an exceedingly influential idea which has persisted through many centuries in the western world. It may be traced back to the pagan philosophies of Ancient Greece, and even further back in time. This idea may be summarised in the following terms:

1. By observation, the world around is a sorry place and appears to have serious flaws in its organisation, e.g. the evil behaviour of many men, violence in animals, occurrence of catastrophes etc.
2. These flaws are not the result of human wrongdoing or divine wrath, but are caused through lack of knowledge concerning the way in which the world and life upon it works.
3. The task of man is to gain knowledge of himself and his surroundings so as to put everything right and bring about a perfect social order.

This theory may be seen as directly opposed to Scripture teaching about the creation of man and the origin of sin (indeed, the theory requires some alternative to divine creation, e.g. evolution). However, when Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher, proposed views such as those stated above, he was not opposing the Bible (which he did not know) but the teachings of superstitious paganism (which said that disaster and evil were due to the machinations of the gods) and his master Plato (who taught that evil could only be overcome by renouncing material things and opening the immortal soul to divine influences).

Aristotle's viewpoint is the recognisable origin of humanism. It rejects the influence of divine intervention in the world (though Aristotle himself

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did not openly say there were no gods - after what happened to Socrates!) for good or evil, and sees lack of knowledge as the source of all ills. Aristotle, therefore, set in train a detailed investigation into the world and mankind on it - what we would call a scientific investigation - and this investigation has continued down the ages to our own day.

We will look more closely at Aristotle's views shortly. The point I wish to make here is that this investigation depends directly on Aristotle's expressed theories; and rational humanist views have been developed and disseminated mainly when Aristotle's written works have been freely available. In the Middle Ages, when limited parts of both Plato and Aristotle's works were available only in poor Latin translations, the Roman Church was able to stifle Reason in the name of Religion.

Aristotle

Many years, therefore, before the spread of Christianity in the West, Aristotle propounded a view of man virtually the same as that stated by today's humanists as "Man is on his own, and this life is all". With this basic belief in mind, Aristotle gave himself to the study of the world as it was, believing that only here could all problems be solved. He produced works on science, philosophy and ethics, working on the basis that one must observe, classify and examine things *as they were* before one could improve them. Because he rejected the view that there were any divine standards of good and evil, he had to work out variable standards in which behaviour or nature was not to be judged against an absolute standard, but was good if it fulfilled the purpose for which it existed to its best extent. A chair was a "good" chair if it was suitable for its purpose; a man was a "good" man if he functioned well as a man, was happy, lived at peace with his fellows and helped them with munificent deeds.⁴ Human good could best be achieved by men seeking knowledge about themselves and the world, so as to put right the disorder which obviously existed, and so bring about the perfect society. Since this life was all there was, and suffering would not be compensated after death, the pursuit of knowledge had as its main aim human happiness in this life.

How then was happiness to be achieved? Plato's absolute standard of right and wrong having been rejected, Aristotle postulated that variable standards for each act and object should be decided by seeing how it worked in practice. The different approaches of the two men in defining

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"good" may be illustrated by imagining each man being presented with an anachronistic watch, to decide whether it was a good or evil thing. Plato would have contemplated it, hoping to receive divine help, and probably theorised on its relationship to the movement of the heavens. Aristotle would have taken it to pieces to see how it worked.⁵

The two views of the philosophers formed the main source of debates on the nature of man, his origin and destiny, through the Greek age and into the Roman. Then a new idea - a totally new idea to western minds - burst on the western world - Christianity.

Christianity and Greek philosophy

Christianity taught a message concerning a personal God who involved Himself directly in the affairs of men, and sent a Son to preach news of a coming divine political Kingdom; the way to it was through suffering, death and bodily resurrection. This teaching cut right across the wisdom of Greek philosophy, with its dream of a perfect world-society brought about through knowledge. This new idea, which set a far higher standard of morals than either Plato or Aristotle had propounded, was too hard for most, and only when it became corrupted by both Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies did it triumph in the world. From Plato the Church took the immortality of the soul, the Trinity, the reception of divine "grace" in a mysterious way; from Aristotle it took a system of logic for arguing out theological points, and a vague idea that a Golden Age would one day come about through man's progress. This idea was pushed into the background because of the teaching about heaven-going.

The descent of the barbarians into Rome brought about the end of the study of philosophy for a while. When, later, Christianity reconquered the barbarian peoples of Europe, the priests and prelates established Latin as the language of religion; the Greek language was not studied, and Plato and Aristotle were known only in selected Latin extracts. The Church fastened on the European mind a darkness and rigidity which lasted for well on a thousand years. Texts of the two philosophers still remained in the Eastern Byzantine Empire, and had some effect in the new Saracen Empire in the south and east, as the forces of Mohammed advanced against the Romans in the east and made themselves free of classical texts looted from the conquered cities of the Empire. Here the sciences made most headway;

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Greek mathematics were developed by the Saracens (who also invented algebra).

Early stirrings

The Fourth Crusade (in which Crusaders took and occupied Constantinople) of 1202 AD caused a considerable flight of scholars from the East into the towns, universities and monasteries of the West. They brought with them many original Greek texts of the Greek philosophers and of the Bible. For the first time the minds of Western scholars were presented with ideas new to them, which blew through the closed atmosphere of the intellectual circles like a fresh breeze. It was reading these ideas in their original form that struck so keenly - some texts had of course been previously known in Latin translations, usually of poor quality.

The new-old ideas fermented in the schools and monasteries - new ideas from Plato about the possibility of the individual possessing divine spirit which by-passed the receiving of "grace" only through priestly sacraments; new ideas from Scripture about the brotherhood of believers, the unity of God, forgiveness without indulgences, and so on, ⁶ and new ideas from Aristotle about the nature of the world, the evolutionary origin of man, and the possibility of a new age being founded on knowledge and reason. It is only this third influence with which we are presently concerned.

Aristotle's clear, logical and apparently rational ideas shone with lucid brilliance when compared to the superstitious, unreasonable and complicated teachings of the Roman Church. Certain men of bold imagination and good intellects began to discuss these things in scholarly circles and to make empirical experiments such as Aristotle had once made, examining the things in the world and the heavens above in the light of old Greek theories about the movement of the planets and stars, the chemical nature of elements, and the rightness of political and religious institutions. One such bold mind, living far from the centre of Roman power and so more free to experiment than many others, was that of Roger Bacon in England (1214-1294). His *Advancement of Learning* proposed a version of the 'Philosophers' Dream' of a society founded on reason and knowledge; another version was suggested by Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia* at a later date (1516).

A brief history of humanism

In general, however, the investigations into such matters were carried out in secret for fear of the stake. In certain scientific fields there was no clear line drawn between science and magic; this was particularly true of chemical discoveries, and investigators into the basic nature of things in the world had to watch their step.

The Renaissance

The sack of Constantinople turned the stream of fleeing scholars with their precious texts into a mighty flood. Greek texts were disseminated everywhere, and translated. Within decades the Reformation was on its way and the Roman Church was in retreat.

The Bible and Plato led the great Reform; the advance of Aristotelian Reason was slower. Science was suspected both by Romans and Reformers as being both magical and anti-Christian (and it often was the latter). Nevertheless, in intellectual circles in universities, courts and secret societies, scientific theories and the idea of a rational world-order gained ground. Men debated the possibility of a heliocentric universe, of the evolution of the species, of political ideals based on reason and enlightenment, of the study of man as a rational being, of the nature of elements and so on.

The battle for religious reform was fought in the 16th and 17th centuries; that of Reason came into the open later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, and continued into the 19th. The 20th century has seen its virtual triumph. But let us go back to the time of the Reformation. At this time there were many students of Aristotle who founded secret societies to further their discussions and studies, with the grand aim of working towards a world-order based on knowledge and reason - or, according to their jargon, "Enlightenment". One of these was the original Rosicrucian Society - the Society of the Rosy Cross.⁷ This was a secret society composed of brilliant and prominent men of the time, each one chosen from a different profession, having as its aim the founding of an enlightened Kingdom of Reason and Knowledge in Bavaria. The project (which included the marriage of Frederick, King of the Rhine, to Elizabeth, daughter of James I of England) foundered politically and militarily; but one of the later by-products of the scheme was the setting up of the Royal Society in England (1660).⁸

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From the Royal Society to today

The early years of the Royal Society were dominated by theistic scientists who believed in God and the Bible (Isaac Newton, for example, produced not only the theory of gravitation, but an exposition of the Apocalypse). The 18th century, however, saw the uprise of many scientists who saw Reason and Science as opposed to Religion, and the 19th century became a battleground in which Religion and Reason fought for the minds of men, and Darwin's theory of evolution directly opposed Biblical statements on Creation. In our day the Biblical scientists are in retreat.

We as Christadelphians have joined in this battle, and recognise and attack our opponents. But this is not the only front on which Reason assails us. Scientific investigation has gone on in the Universities, always Aristotle's stronghold, and produced theories on human behaviour⁹ based on the old variable standards of ethics proposed by Aristotle, and have won the battle for men's minds to the extent that almost everyone in our country believes that human rights and human happiness are the only acceptable standards for morality. We see the whole country engaged in a frantic pursuit for men's rights and personal happiness, led by avowed humanists who see nothing wrong, for example, in teaching children that satisfaction of all their desires (including sexual needs) is a good thing. Still believing that human freedom, knowledge and reason will bring about the perfect society, they push the ignorant masses yet further into a morass of sin and broken responsibilities.

Since the influence of humanism in our day penetrates many different areas, the account of its progress in these different fields during the last 100 years must be left to the writers of the scientific chapters which follow.

Ray Walker

NOTES

1. *Mediaeval Humanism and other Studies* by R W Southern.
2. The "feral" child, i.e. a child not brought up by other humans, does not think new ideas; indeed, he hardly thinks at all.
3. Of course divine ideas are always original.
4. What has been said earlier about the origins of 'new' thoughts holds here: it should not be thought that Aristotle's ideas were totally original. Others had already suggested theories along the lines later followed by Aristotle, notably Democritus, Protagoras and Socrates. But Aristotle's was the great mind which reduced these ideas to a logical system, and expressed them with a clarity that has lost little by repetition down the centuries. It was thus Aristotle rather than other philosophers whose works were preserved, and who had so much influence in the West later.
5. Aristotle's views on this are presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.
6. A notable Reformer was John Wycliffe (1320-1384).
7. The historical Rosicrucian Society has no connection with the modern society of that name.
8. See *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* by Frances A. Yates.
9. E.g. those of Yung and Freud.



"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1 Cor. 1:19).

CHAPTER TWO

HUMANISM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

"Will Martin Luther King be in the Kingdom?", asked the 13 year old boy at the youth gathering. "Do you mean Martin Luther King?", asked a slightly older boy when asked what he knew about Martin Luther. The black American Baptist minister, slain by an assassin's bullet in 1968, has become one of the great heroes of our time because of his battle to achieve equal rights for Negroes in America. The remarks quoted above, made by intelligent young people of Christadelphian parentage, illustrate how young people today are being taught in schools to regard Martin Luther King as a very important figure, and the civil rights movement as one of the significant movements of our time. It is not known where the boys concerned gained their knowledge about Martin Luther King and his work, but one would hazard a guess that it was in religious instruction classes at school, where the imparting of knowledge about the Bible has largely been replaced by instruction in the humanist ideology which it is the purpose of this study to combat.

The change in thinking of Christianity

There is significance also in the apparent lack of knowledge about Martin Luther. Although Luther himself was much astray from Biblical truth, and would almost certainly have encouraged the persecution of any who did hold to Biblical truth, there can be no doubt that he played a very significant role in releasing men from the bondage of Roman Catholicism and in bringing about a climate in which men could freely read the Scriptures in their own tongue. However, the Reformation of the sixteenth century has become largely irrelevant in these days when the distinctions between the major churches of Christendom have generally broken down, and Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Non-Conformists alike pursue the goal of human rights for all.

Humanism, democracy and human rights

It is not the purpose of this chapter to deal with humanism and religion, but it is relevant to the present theme to show how the ideals of humanism have permeated the teaching of the churches over this question of human rights. We began by referring to the American civil rights movement, and Reginald Stackhouse, in *The Christian and Politics*, has this very interesting observation to make about this movement:

"Where his religion once seemed a palliative encouraging the Negro to accept his misery on earth because he would eventually be rewarded in heaven, the Negro church is now a dynamic centre of leadership in the civil rights movement".

This illustrates the great swing in emphasis in Church teaching very well. No longer is the emphasis on a better life in the hereafter (albeit a totally false idea of reward being received by an immortal soul in heaven), but on conditions here and now, on changing society from one where some oppress others to a democracy where all have equal rights.

Elsewhere Stackhouse writes of the evils of police states and discrimination. He then states:

"For Christians to think of witnessing to Jesus Christ without helping to resist this evil is to present a Christianity which is not important enough for people to take seriously".

In other words, he says that it is the duty of a Christian to fight for a democratic and just society. In fact, he goes on to say that all true Christians should resist evil things, and actively promote democratic ideals by entering politics.

Another writer, Stanley Evans, in *The Social Hope of the Christian Church*, quotes with approval the following words from a pamphlet by W.G.Coughland:

"The important thing is that people, both in and out of the churches, who care about the future of democratic society, should realise the true and basic role of Christianity and of the churches in politics, namely, to breathe into systems and institutions life, purpose, significance and value".

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Bible teaching distorted

The arguments based by these "Christian" humanists to support their idea that the Christian should pursue democracy and human rights for all involve the most terrible distortion of Scriptural truth. Here are some examples which have been selected from several books:

1. The Bible has, of course, much to say about the Kingdom of God. The "Christian" humanist interprets this to mean a state of affairs where man has achieved a just society, where all enjoy their rights of a vote, freedom of speech, etc. The teaching of the Bible that the Kingdom of God is to be set up by Jesus Christ at his return, and will in fact be a dictatorship (in the best sense of the term, of course) and not a democracy, is ignored, or brushed aside with phrases of theological jargon like "Jewish eschatological expectations".
2. It is argued that God loved the world, and Jesus loved the world, and so Christians must love the world too; and loving the world is then interpreted as trying to improve its institutions, making things more democratic, etc. This ignores the fact that the Bible says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 Jn.2:15). Nowhere does the Bible command believers to love the world; the command to love is generally one to love one's fellow-believers, and the more general commands to show love refer to our attitude towards those individuals with whom we come into contact in our own lives, not to the world at large, and still less to its institutions, which are to be swept away at the coming of Christ.
3. It is alleged that the Old Testament prophets, in passages such as Micah 2 and 3, attacked the injustices of society in their days. This, it is said, is an example to us. The fact that Israel was a nation ruled by a king as God's representative, with a law given by God, and with a divinely-appointed section of the people (the Levites) to teach and enforce the law (no democracy here!), and that the prophets were inspired by God to show the nation where they were astray and to urge them to return to Him, is ignored.

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Instead it is assumed that we are living in just the same kind of society today, whereas the Bible speaks of no such society existing in the interval between the ascension of Jesus and his return, and speaks of his followers as individuals seeking eternal life in the Kingdom to come by trying to do God's will now.

4. Another "Christian" humanist argument is that since according to Romans 13 the governments of this world are ordained by God, the duty of the Christian is to get involved and seek to ensure that they are conducted in the right way. However, the powers ordained by God referred to in Romans 13 were those of the pagan Roman Empire, and were hardly conducted on the sort of principles that the modern humanist would think admirable, and were certainly not susceptible to change by Christians getting involved in them. Furthermore, the purpose of Paul's words in Romans 13 is to exhort the followers of Christ not to resist the powers that be; whereas the modern-day "Christian" humanist wants to see tyrannies resisted and overthrown.

5. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven", said Jesus. According to Stanley Evans in *The Social Hope of the Christian Church*, "the poor in spirit are those who are with the poor, those that are prepared to throw themselves in with the lot of the poor and struggle with them for the kingdom". The distorted idea of what the Kingdom is has been dealt with (see p.12). We are quoting these words here to show how badly one particular verse of Scripture has been distorted. Jesus is undoubtedly referring to the words of Isaiah 66:2 "... to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word". The phrase "poor in spirit" indicates the right way for sinful man to approach God - that is, in full recognition of God's holiness and his own sinfulness. Such an attitude of mind must be shown by any individual who wishes to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life in the Kingdom. Stanley Evans, in his gross distortion of the clear teaching of the Scriptures, is showing just the opposite state of mind; far from being contrite over man's sinfulness, he exalts man's desire to better himself in this life; far

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from trembling at God's Word, he distorts it to fit his own notions of what is right.

These examples show the way in which humanistic ideas of democracy, freedom, equality and justice and so forth have permeated the churches. In fact, these ideas have permeated all society, and it is taken for granted that democracy is a good thing.

The origin and history of democracy

As is well-known to all, democracy began in Greece. Why it began in Greece is another matter. Some argue that it was because of the broken-up nature of the country; its mountains, its long, jagged coastline and its islands led to many small communities coming into existence, communities small enough for the voice of the individual to count.

However, many such communities no doubt existed in other parts of the world. What makes the Greeks stand out as the originators of democracy is the extraordinary outburst of genius which flowered in Greece, especially in Athens, in approximately the period during which the Persian Empire ruled the Middle East. The teachings of the great men who lived then have passed down to the present age so that we today know what they thought and taught 2,500 years ago.

Although the Greeks had their gods, they did not as a rule believe in any revelation from on high. The emphasis was on reason, on what man thought was best. In contrast, the oriental idea was that of a dictatorial head, a king or emperor, who was believed to rule as a representative of the gods. In Israel the one true God appointed a leader for His people, and gave them laws to follow, and great emphasis was placed upon the family as the divinely-ordained unit in society.

To the Greeks the city-state, the *polis*, from which we get our word "politics", was all-important, and the right of the individual to have his say was vital. Family life was played down, women having a very insignificant role, and homosexual relations being exalted over natural relations between husband and wife. Furthermore, the citizens of the city-state only had the time to debate at length affairs of state because of the vast numbers of slaves available to do their work for them. Thus the much vaunted Greek system of things was based on principles completely opposed to those on which God's own kingdom of Israel was based, was riddled with vice, and

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was kept in being through the oppression of the majority (the slaves) by a minority.

The Greek and Roman Empires were based on the old dictatorial principles of the orient; indeed, they would not otherwise have been empires. When corrupt Christianity came to political power under Constantine, the same principle continued; the Roman Emperor regarded himself as divinely-appointed after the manner of Israel's kings of old. Throughout the Middle Ages, when apostate Christianity held Europe in a firm grip, the same principle continued. Only in the sixteenth century, when the authority of the Roman Church was crumbling, and Greek ideas were spreading once more, did democratic ideals come into existence again. Two hundred years later the masses triumphed over their masters in the French Revolution; and from then on ideas of democracy and human rights flooded through the world. Today they are universally acknowledged as being valid; even dictatorships pay them lip-service by calling themselves "people's democracies", or whatever.

A classic work which sets out the principles of democracy and human rights is *The Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine, written at the time of the French Revolution. At the time of writing this chapter a television programme eulogising him had recently appeared, and "The Daily Telegraph" commented in a critical leader column: "He made human liberties a supreme value". This is apparent from the following quotes from his book:

"Men are born, and always continue, free and equal, in respect of their rights".

"The law is the expression of the will of the community. All citizens have a right to concur in its formation".

"The end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and inalienable rights of man".

It is significant that Paine was an atheist, who sought to denigrate the Scriptures by showing that they were full of contradictions and errors.

The chief point to be gained from all this is that the current pre-occupation with democracy and the pre-eminence of man's rights is based entirely on the thinking of man, and does not originate from God. It is humanist teaching, not Christian teaching, and we have seen already how

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badly so-called Christians have to distort the teachings of Scripture in order to accommodate their humanistic ideas.

The danger to the Brotherhood

What dangers are there to the Brotherhood in this modern-day emphasis on democracy, and on human rights in general? Several years ago a young brother remarked casually to the writer that he was not sure who to vote for in the forthcoming election, and seemed surprised to learn that Christadelphians do not vote as a matter of principle. This suggests a certain laxity on this point these days, at least in some parts of the Brotherhood. We are perhaps in danger of losing a distinctive feature of our beliefs - that until the Kingdom comes we are to be content with whatever form of government exists in our country, acknowledging that it exists at God's pleasure and that we are to obey it in everything which does not clash with God's will. There should be no question of trying to change it, even by peaceful means, for we could be fighting against the will of God.

Democracy in Ecclesial life

Very few Christadelphians are likely to think that voting is justified, however. What of other areas where the ideals of democracy may be creeping in? What effect are they having on the way in which we run our ecclesias, for example?

Nearly all will agree that the present democratic method of running ecclesias is, in the absence of the gifts of the Spirit, the only practical one in our present society. (This may not be the case in other types of society, however; for example, in a more primitive third-world community, where few can read or write, a more dictatorial arrangement may be needed, although inevitably there will be dangers.) What should this democratic system mean, however? It certainly means that, in the absence of any divine selection of leaders through the Holy Spirit, it is the duty of an ecclesia to select brethren to arrange its affairs who are best suited for the job. Furthermore, we must surely recognise that it is wisdom gained from God's Word that is the qualification for arranging the affairs of an ecclesia, and that, although knowledge of the Word is necessary before wisdom can be acquired, knowledge of itself does not automatically produce wisdom.

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One suspects, however, that democratic ideals are so much part of the civilisation in which we live that many take it for granted that every brother and sister has an equal right for his or her voice to be heard in the ecclesia. If the 18-year-old can vote and stand for election in local government or parliament, why should he not have an equal say in the running of the ecclesia? If women have equal status with men in the world, then why not in the ecclesia? Yet the Scriptures clearly teach that maturity is necessary before a brother can expect to take a leading role in the ecclesia (1 Tim.3:6; 1 Pet:5:5) and that the role of the sister is subordinate to that of the brother (1 Cor.11:3; 1 Tim.2:11,12). This should not mean that the needs of the young, and of sisters, are neglected in the ecclesia, for all arranging brethren should take care to find out the needs of all members of the ecclesia, and ensure that they are cared and provided for. Once the right brethren have been chosen therefore, is it not reasonable that they should be allowed to arrange the affairs of the ecclesia without the necessity for further voting on such things as filling of other ecclesial offices, or the carrying-on of routine ecclesial business? There remains, after all, a continuing power on the part of the ecclesia to overrule the decisions of its arranging brethren at any time. Wise leadership by a few is much more Scriptural than a system in which the voice of the many invariably holds sway.

More dangerous to the Brotherhood, however, is the practice of allowing youth groups, whether ecclesial or inter-ecclesial, to be run by young people themselves. At the very minimum, no such activities should take place without approval by arranging brethren, and it is far better that sound and mature brethren should actually be involved in organising such activities. The modern-day spirit of democracy demands that the young be allowed to "do their own thing"; but this is not in accordance with Scripture. There is no reason at all why the young should not be catered for in a way interesting and enjoyable for them, and yet for their activities to be under the control of those of maturity in the Truth who are not afraid to join enthusiastically with young people in study and recreation, but who will ensure that the emphasis is on that which is spiritually up-building.

Human rights

To discern the greatest danger to the Brotherhood from democratic ideas it is necessary to think a little more about the modern emphasis on

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human rights. We are all familiar today with the demonstration proclaiming "the right to work", and this is just one area in life in which rights are proclaimed. Women demand rights of equality with men, homosexuals demand the right to be regarded as normal, others demand the right to speak, write or behave free of virtually all constraints.

It does not take much discernment to see how misguided such people are, and the disastrous effects their wrong ideas have when put into practice. Those who are vociferous in demanding the right to work are likely to be those who are disruptive and lacking in diligence when in employment, in disobedience to the clear commands of Scripture. The Scriptures are clear that women are placed in subordination to men in this age, and have their own role to play in life; and the effect of the women's liberation movement has been to produce discontent, divorce, disruption of family life, juvenile delinquency and indeed a whole chain of social evils. Homosexuality is emphatically condemned by Scripture, and the more freedom such are given to practice their vile deeds the more others are corrupted to follow their evil ways. The freedom to publish virtually anything means that people are being inflamed to lust and violence by what they see, hear and read.

Democracy leads naturally to the demand for these false freedoms, which in fact lead only to greater bondage under the yoke of sin. Democracy means the lowest common denominator of behaviour is the norm. What men and women want to do is what they must be allowed to do.

In fact, we have no rights at all, except the right to death, and that not when we choose. That right we all have through sin. All else is the merciful provision of God. It is easy for us to recognise the evils involved in the human rights movement referred to above; it is less easy to recognise the more basic truth that we in fact have no rights at all, not even to food, clothing and a roof over our heads. It is because of this that we daily thank God for all that we receive - yet how sincere are our thanks? - for if we think something is our right anyway, we are not likely to be truly thankful for it.

There is a danger in the modern emphasis on human rights that we shall be indignant at being deprived of things we want, or think we need, instead of thankful for what we have. We may be indignant at the way we are treated instead of recognising the Scriptural principle that the patient

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endurance of evil and hardship is pleasing to God and beneficial to the development of our characters. In short, hundreds of years of humanist philosophy, leading to an emphasis on democracy and human rights, has led to a society in which, if we are not very careful to apply ourselves to Scriptural teaching, we shall be in danger of concerning ourselves more with gaining satisfaction out of this life than in preparing ourselves for an eternal reward in God's Kingdom to come, when democratic ideals will pass away for ever.

Tony Benson



*"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?"
(Is.45:9).*

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATION - THE LIFE-BLOOD OF HUMANISM

Introduction

Scripture says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6); and thus education is sanctioned by God Himself. This chapter seeks to explore how modern education may not be training us and our children in the way we should go, but:

- i. has no intention of teaching divine ways or values,
- ii. is in danger of enticing us to think and walk in ways wholly contrary to God's ways.

There is real danger that Society's intention in educating its offspring is to make them conform to the spirit of the age, and that the teaching of even apparently innocuous and supposedly factual subjects can mould our minds to a way of thinking which is alien to the mind or spirit of Christ. And if we do not have Christ's mind, we are none of his (Rom.8:9; 1 Cor.2:16).

We are often exhorted to keep from the dangers of the world, such as materialism, ambition, etc. And yet such exhortations have been - for the most part at least - singularly ineffective: our materialism seems to increase, and our ambition to get on in the world does not appear to wane. Why, then, has this sort of exhortation had such little effect? Perhaps it is because we have been paying more attention to the *symptoms* of living in the modern Western world than to the illness itself.

It is the illness (or one of the illnesses) - humanism - that this book aims to describe, in the hope that we will recognise that it is not so much a case of trying to combat materialistic desires directly, but to isolate the underlying cause of those desires. I use the term humanism to define not

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sin in general, nor worldliness in general, but the particular spirit which provides the motive force of our civilisation. ¹

It would be wrong to give the impression that education is in itself evil. It would be disastrous for our community if we completely cut ourselves and our children off from the outside world in the way that some sects - for example the Amish in America - have done. We have to face the fact of living in an evil world. We can make a virtue out of necessity. We can turn the unparalleled breadth of educational experience offered by Western Society to an advantage. When, for example, have brethren and sisters ever had such an opportunity to learn the languages of the Bible?

Brethren and sisters will be fully aware of the more obvious dangers posed by modern education. Many a child of Christadelphian parents has put up a spirited defence of Creation in the biology class (I mention this subject in a little more detail later). And it is relatively easy to prepare our children for the kind of religious instruction which ranges from higher critical biblical theology to comparative world religions, but which carefully avoids giving evidence of belief in the God of Israel. It is in the greyer areas that we must be on our guard. Underlying much apparently innocuous teaching is a philosophy which we cannot accept. It is that sort of teaching which, unwittingly, we may be allowing to mould the characters of ourselves and our children in humanistic, rather than godly, thinking.

Humanism and education in history

When humanism developed in Europe in the late 15th century, education was one of its key features. In England in that century there was a striking increase in the number of schools founded by the guilds and merchants. Such was the advance of education that in the early 16th century Sir Thomas More estimated that more than half the population of England could read. The whole thrust of humanism in these early days was to produce men of letters, who could learn Latin and Greek, who could turn their minds to the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, and to the metaphysics of Lucretius.

Much of the thinking behind humanism comes from Greek philosophy. In *The Republic* Plato outlined the constitution of an ideal state. An integral part of this was to be an extensive system of education. That may not sound particularly remarkable, perhaps because many of Plato's ideas stood out in two key aspects. First, the education system he proposed was

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to be run by the State; responsibility for training the young was to be taken from parents and given to the authorities. To Plato's fellow-Athenians, that was a major innovation. Secondly, his scheme of education was to go far beyond learning basic skills; his proposed secondary education was to include literature, morals and music. As H.D.P. Lee comments:

"As far as its curriculum is concerned, we may say that after the primary stage, in which reading and writing are important elements, the main subjects studied in school are literary and humanistic." ²

Plato was also the first person to propose what we today would call a university course to cover mathematics, science and philosophy.

Aristotle studied in Plato's Academy for a number of years before Plato's death. Education for him, too, was of great importance. Like Plato, he considered that education should be overseen by the State - that children should be trained in what society considered good. ³

The Renaissance humanists were influenced greatly by the philosophies of both Plato and Aristotle. Other chapters in this book ⁴ have explained how Aristotle's philosophy had made an impression on the humanists, and how Aristotle's proposition that man is on his own has fed through into modern humanism. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536) was a man of many accomplishments, learned and witty, brilliantly satirical. Above all, he was tolerant and reasonable, at a time when many around him were the opposite. It is perhaps his attractiveness which has made his attitudes so influential:

"He began to dream of earthly paradise as being within the reach of mankind - much as Pico (della Mirandola) had dreamed some 25 years before - that world government, the unification of the three great religions and eternal peace would be achieved by the early sixteenth century". ⁵

He led the humanist reform both in theology and in education.

In England Thomas More was a contemporary of Erasmus. In 1516 he published *Utopia*, an entertaining description of an ideal society. The account is certainly tongue-in-cheek, but it is not without a serious side. He envisaged education being freely available for all who wanted it. Men

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and women in his imaginary new world would have unlimited opportunity to attend educational classes in their free time.

The early humanists were instrumental in ushering in a new age of learning, of discovery and of a flourishing of the arts. Their influence has extended far beyond their own day: they provided for the perpetuation of their philosophy by encouraging an educational system that would for centuries to come instruct the young in the tenets of humanism.

It would be wrong, however, to portray Renaissance humanism as entirely black: it also brought benefits to Bible students. The humanists' interest in the classics led them to study afresh the philology of classical languages. Erasmus applied his knowledge to compiling a new critical edition of the Greek text of the New Testament, along with a Latin translation which differed considerably from the Vulgate. The *Novum Instrumentum*, as his new translation was called, appeared in 1516 AD and was the first new Latin translation of the New Testament for nearly a thousand years. The work was welcomed as bringing a "humanist dawn" to lighten the "mediaeval dusk" of the Vulgate. In England, Tyndale based his New Testament of 1525 AD on the *Novum Instrumentum*, and in that way Erasmus' scholarship has fed through into many subsequent English translations, notably the King James' Version.

Humanism and education today

Today, no less than during the Renaissance, education is the medium for passing on the teaching of humanism. It is our education system which inculcates in children ideas about human rights, the freedom of the individual, the importance of democracy, and so on. These are no more based on Scripture than are the savagery, slavery and tyranny to which humanism is opposed. Such is the power of education to propagate humanistic ideas that it is not uncommon to hear of those who regard parts of the Old Testament as unnecessarily bloodthirsty or consider the God of the Bible as unfairly vindictive when He strikes down an Uzzah or an Ananias or a Sapphira. Rather than questioning the character of Almighty God as He is revealed in Scripture, we should be questioning the values of a society which - however reasonable they may seem - cuts right across the Biblical teaching about truth and righteousness.

One of the most obvious examples of humanistic teaching - perhaps even brainwashing - is the theory of evolution. British children generally

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appear to accept evolution as fact and therefore tacitly reject the Biblical account of creation. So-called creationists have fought rearguard actions, but with little success. Children in the Western world are often given little opportunity to make up their minds: it seems that society dare not admit the possibility of the existence of a God who could create the universe. Despite paying lip-service to God, their god is really an imaginary artefact, a powerless invention of minds which believe themselves to be too sophisticated to imagine that there is a Being who is greater than man himself.

But other aspects of humanistic thought are not so overt, and are more difficult to guard against. The teaching of history is a good example. British history is often taught very much from a Western ideological point of view. For example, the evolution of the British parliamentary system is presented as a welcome progression from, say, the Middle Ages (when kings like Henry II and Edward I had considerable power in their own right) to the present time when a democratic parliament rules and the monarchy has little political influence at all. Thus our children grow up considering that democracy is a good thing - perhaps even the best form of government there is. Scripture, of course, tells us otherwise.⁶ Similarly the teaching of history often represents the economic and technological development of the West as desirable. That may seem relatively harmless to us; but it is really another building block of the edifice of humanism. It takes for granted that we all want more and better material provisions and benefits, and in so doing lets down our defences against the dangers. We may end up trying to serve both God and Mammon.

There are other areas in teaching where humanistic ideas can be found. The liberal approach to religious education is one example; the teaching of English literature with its debased word-values and unscriptural outlook is another. The increasing emphasis on teaching sociology-orientated topics also gives cause for concern.

Education and the believer

The question we must now consider is, What can we do about it? Should we withdraw our children from State-run schools and educate them ourselves? Should those at University abandon their courses and start looking for jobs? Should the teachers among us resign from their posts?

Education - life-blood of humanism

Of course not. Keeping from evil does not entail withdrawal from the world. On the contrary, our life in Christ must be lived in the world.

That said, a worrying aspect of the Brotherhood today is the way in which children appear to be *encouraged* to pursue educational objectives. Parents naturally want their children to do well. But should parents who follow Christ want their children to be successful in the ways of the world? Although we are largely a middle-class community, we cannot afford to look on educational achievement as a status-symbol, either for ourselves or for our children. In God's eyes, academic accomplishment in itself is at best no more worthwhile than any other human achievement. At worst, it involves a prolonged exposure to godless ways of thought and conditioning.

If we are to participate in education, we must be aware of its dangers. We do not have to accept all we are taught in schools and universities. That may not always be easy. It may be difficult to separate truth from fiction, unless we approach what we are taught in a critical way. We need not accept everything we hear in class or read in textbooks. We must measure what we learn against the yardstick of what we know to be true from our understanding of God's Word.

Some years ago I attended a course of lectures on Old Testament theology. Many of the students I came across had decided to study theology because they believed in the Bible as God's Word. The lectures, however, were based on the writings of the higher critics, which denied the inspiration of Scripture. Many of the students seemed to accept this new teaching without question, and as a result ceased to believe that the Bible was really the Word of God. I suspect no true believer would fall into that particular trap. But the same principle applies in other areas where we may be more vulnerable. To guard against such dangers, we must make sure that we really know the Scriptures, and we must question and criticise all we hear, testing it against what we know to be true.

True education

Jesus was not taken in like my fellow-students. By the time he was twelve he knew and understood the Scriptures so well that he could dispute successfully with the theologians of his day (Luke 2:41-50). By his perceptive questioning, he must have shown that he was not prepared to accept a teaching just because it was promulgated by professional

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theologians. It is this faculty of critical enquiry - a disbelief of teachings or speculations which cannot be shown to be firmly founded in Scripture - which is so important a quality for the believer today. And it is equally important to engender the same spirit in our children. We do not want them to believe the gospel because *we* believe it, but because *they have tested the Word of God for themselves* and not found it wanting.

Scripture makes it clear that we have an awesome and solemn responsibility towards our children:

"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Under the Law of Moses Israelite parents were to teach their children the history of the salvation of their people (Deut. 4:9) as well as the details of the Law itself (Deut. 6:6,7). The object of this? -

"That they might set their hope in God ... and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God" (Ps.78:7,8).

A child may need correcting as a part of his or her education in ways acceptable to God. It is fashionable to regard punishment (and in particular, corporal punishment) as uncivilised, if not barbaric. Yet "spare the rod and spoil the child" is not a mediaeval old wives' maxim, but a paraphrase of the wise teaching of Solomon (Prov. 13:24).

Perhaps the most telling comment is found in Genesis 18. The angel of the Lord tells Abraham of the impending destruction of Sodom. Abraham is told of it because he is the one to whom great and precious promises have been given (vv.17,18). But the angel goes on to give another reason for not withholding the facts from him:

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (v.19).

Education - life-blood of humanism

The fulfilment of the promises in Abraham's seed was dependent on Abraham instructing his children in the doctrine of the Lord. Because Abraham was faithful in bringing up Isaac in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Isaac too became a recipient of the promises. The lesson holds good for us. If we command our children to keep the way of the Lord, then we and they can benefit from those same promises.

If we concentrate on these positive aspects of education, filling our own and our children's minds with the teaching of the gospel, we need not fear harm from the humanistic tenets of the world's education. But it is precisely because, owing to human weakness, we do not devote ourselves wholly to that gospel, that the humanism in education presents a threat. The real question is whether we are prepared to face up to the problem of humanism, and overcome it by encouraging our children to read and understand Scripture as a first priority.

One final thought. The teaching of Scripture about how to bring up and educate our children is the basis for the way in which God educates us, His children. The writer to the Hebrews explains that, because God loves us, He trains us and if necessary chastises us for our lasting benefit as part of His educational process (Heb. 12:5-13). The object of all this is that we should become more like Him day by day. Let us learn from this supreme manifestation of parental care and follow His example with our children.

Andrew Walker

NOTES:

1. For the purpose of this article I use the term to mean the particular type of thinking which is specific to our age and culture and which espouses the values which are hammered into us by the media, the education system and by social conditions in general. Its hallmarks are almost total godlessness, worship of democracy, human and minority "rights", an emphasis on learning and education, a concentration of social welfare etc.
2. E.g. see *Ethics* 1179b-1180a.
3. Plato, *The Republic*, Penguin Classics p.32.
4. E.g. The Preface and *History of Humanism* (Chap.1).
5. George Faludy, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, p.145.
6. See the second chapter in this book, *Humanism, Democracy and Human Rights*.

CHAPTER FOUR

HUMANISM IN THE CHURCHES

Penetration of the Churches by humanism

The influence of humanism in our technocratic 20th Century lives is often deeper and more far-reaching than we realise. Its leaven has permeated our entire society. It is evident in the language we use, in our institutions, in our repertoire of ideas, and indeed, in the received "wisdom" of our society.

This superstructure of humanist thought is based on assumptions; but it has become so much a part of the western way of thinking that the ideas on which it rests are seen by most as beyond dispute - ideas like the rights of man, freedom and democracy.

Astoundingly, one of the effects of this implicit acceptance of humanist tenets is that the Churches themselves are beginning to promote the very ideas which set out to undermine their teaching and authority. How have the Churches been duped into accepting a philosophy which historically stands in opposition to them - and what lessons does this hold for us?

That the Churches and their members are being permeated by humanist ideas is undeniable; *the* question is, *how?* Is the process taking place from the bottom up, as it were - through politically naive student members of the Churches and a few maverick ministers whose adoption of humanist principles is the result of a fusion of effete "Christianity" and ill-thought-out personal ideals? Or is a more complex change taking place in higher levels; and if so, why?

Radical students and priests

It seems to me that both processes are taking place together. In recent years it has become common for militant "Christian" groups to take a prominent role in anti-nuclear demonstrations in Europe, for example. This militancy has not been confined to extremist groups of "Christian" students.

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Many Church leaders have joined their voices to the secular clamour for an end to the nuclear arms race.

At the same time, in South America the figure of the radical priest has become almost a stock character. The radical priest is a confusing and contradictory figure, at once the bearer of his Catholic "gospel", yet espousing the cause of Marxism. In the past, Catholic priests in South America have been reported as having openly supported violent revolution. True, these radicals are an extreme embarrassment to the Vatican, which denounces their activities in official pronouncements. Yet there is more than a suspicion that it is the Vatican itself which is at the bottom of many of the political manoeuvres.

Humanism and the Roman Church

There are strong indications that changes have taken place at the top of the ecclesiastical tree over the past 15 or 20 years, changes in outlook and emphasis (although the reign of Pope John Paul II began a return to conservatism which reversed some of these trends). The series of meetings between leading humanist thinkers and the members of the Vatican Secretariat for unbelievers which took place in Brussels in October 1970 was just one of many indications that the Roman Church is ready to woo its former enemies into an alliance. Also, Catholic theologians have been busily formulating a "Christian humanism" in order to slot many previously-unacceptable ideas into Catholicism's theological framework. This process follows the time-honoured Catholic practice of swallowing rival philosophies whole, to regurgitate them in a Catholic form. Of course Catholicism is changed in the process, but it never loses its essential elements. It learnt this lesson from the third and the fourth centuries, when 'Christianity' conquered paganism by assimilation rather than opposition - and it has never since forgotten it.

A leading Catholic of his day, Professor Karl Adam, said in his book *The Spirit of Catholicism* (written in the Thirties):

"We Catholics acknowledge readily, without shame, nay with pride, that Catholicism cannot be identified simply and wholly with primitive Christianity, nor even with the Gospel of Christ, in the same way that the great oak cannot be identified with the tiny acorn. There is no mechanical identity, but an organic identity. And we go further,

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and say that thousands of years hence Catholicism will probably be even richer, more luxuriant, more manifold in dogma, morals, law and worship, than the Catholicism of the present day. A religious historian of the fifth millennium AD will, without difficulty, discover in Catholicism conceptions, forms and practices which will derive from India, China and Japan, and he will have to recognise a far more obvious 'complex of opposites'. It is quite true, Catholicism is a union of contraries. But contraries are not contradictions ... The Gospel of Christ would have been no living gospel, and the seed which he scattered no living seed, if it had remained ever the tiny seed of AD 33, and not struck root, and had not assimilated foreign matter, and had not by the help of this foreign matter grown up into a tree, so that the birds of the air dwell in its branches".

This process of assimilation is now under way once more in the Catholic Church, it seems, and the subject of the process is humanism. The Pope, with or without realising the implications of his words, talks of the brotherhood of man and the rights of the individual. There has arisen a vocal core of Jesuits, anxious to forge a new plexus of Christian Humanist thought. Several of these took part in the Brussels meetings. Another, Martin D'Arcy (SJ), has attempted to popularise his branch of Catholic/ Humanist thought in his book *Humanism and Christianity*.

A significant symptom of the more tolerant attitude of modern Churchmen to their traditional opponents is the substitution of "Dialogue" for "Debate". Vatican Council II led to "dialogues" between Catholics and Marxists, Mohammedans, Hindus and Buddhists, as well as the ones already mentioned with Humanists. In a speech at the Pontifical Urban University dealing with the call for dialogue with atheists, Cardinal Marella is quoted as saying:

"The enemy of dialogue is he who denies the existence of true and authentic values in non-Christian religions ... considering the ethical religious patrimony of non-Christian humanity as a realm of shadows and errors" (*Catholic Herald*, 29 Nov, 1968).

This change of philosophical position is beginning to bear fruit in other areas. For example, some Catholics are beginning to adopt a similar

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position to conventional Humanist thought on the teaching of Jesus. J. Gomez Caffarena, a Jesuit priest who took part in the Brussels dialogues, said there:

"Among the many types of humanism that I have met in human history, I have found that of Jesus of Nazareth particularly attractive, although remote in time and open to completion by many more recent cultural elements. It is a humanism of universal, unselfish, brotherly love".

This reappraisal of the teaching of Jesus as an incomplete moral code is interesting, because it shows how the adoption of a different philosophical viewpoint leads inevitably to more fundamental shifts in other areas. What starts by looking like a harmless assent to a broad ideological position can end in a change in the way the gospel is viewed.

The same conference also produced the following comment from Vincent Miano, secretary of the secretariat for non-believers:

"We too, as Paul VI stated at the close of Vatican Council II, are 'cultivators of men'. We can and must collaborate with all men for the promotion of genuine human values (for instance, for the defence of 'human rights', cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 41). Christian Humanism is convinced, however, that the human heart is never fully satisfied with what this world has to offer God alone provides a fully adequate answer to the problems of the meaning of man's life".

This emphasis on 'human rights' is such a change of direction for the Catholic hierarchy that it has to be justified. Catholic theology needs to be modified so that no pronouncements by Church leaders and theological teaching are in direct opposition. One such attempt at reconciliation was mentioned earlier - Martin D'Arcy's *Humanism and Christianity*. This is an attempt by D'Arcy to assimilate some of humanism's classic ideas and arguments into a Christian framework. He attempts to show that humanism is not, and in fact never was, in opposition to Christianity - indeed D'Arcy attempts to prove that humanism borrowed some of its most basic teachings from Christianity:

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"I have already quoted the lines, 'We are all Christ's creatures'. Even the simplest peasant had learned this, and with it had developed a sense of freedom and personal rights - long before the Renaissance. He was protected by common law, and in the Church in the sight of God he knew himself to be the equal of peers, princes and popes. Such a knowledge led on to the later realisation embodied in the cry for Liberty, Fraternity and Equality."

D'Arcy shows considerable mental agility in arriving at this conclusion - but ironically ends up (to our mind) in seeking to show that the three frog-like spirits of Revelation are of Catholic origin!

D'Arcy manages to incorporate many of humanism's most treasured principles into "Christian" thought, showing (for example) how Marxism's dialectic can be Catholicised. He asserts also that, unbeknown to itself, humanism stems in part from God's love. Most importantly, he seems to have swallowed humanism's most basic tenet - that man is on an upward spiral, building on the knowledge and experience of the past to recreate the world anew in every succeeding generation until he reaches Utopia.

At the Brussels meetings Roy Fairfield, associate editor of *The Humanist* and Professor of Social Science at Antioch College in Ohio, exclaimed, "After several hours of discussion on the first day, we looked at one another with some amusement and observed, 'The Catholics sound like Humanists and the Humanists sound like Catholics!'"

At the same conference Hector Hawton talked enthusiastically of the prospect of working together with Catholics in the future.

A fusion on Roman terms

What are the motives behind the Roman Church's change of direction? In making common cause with the humanists, Rome is not giving up her religious influence. D'Arcy, after all his attempts to join the two philosophies together, is quietly adamant that this fusion will be on the Church's terms: "It is confident that a Christian humanism is possible, and that there is NO OTHER abiding form (of humanism)". This is, according to D'Arcy, nothing other than Catholic humanism, into which "we are incorporated into Christ, and thereby, as he is one with the Father and the Spirit, we are sanctified by the Spirit - the link of love in the mystery of the Trinity."

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This humanism is exclusively Catholic in nature; D'Arcy goes on to explain how access to "Christian humanism" is obtained: "The means we know, the life-giving means, which is the Eucharist, the Shekinah, and real presence of Christ. **HUMAN BEINGS FEEDING ON CHRIST ARE LIFTED UP INTO A HIGHER FORM.**" Thus the only real and effective humanism is seen as having as its core the doctrine of Transubstantiation. This will be no surprise to those who know the Catholic Church well. It is unlikely to loosen its grip on the minds of the superstitious and fearful, but wants at the same time to win the humanists over.

Humanism and the Protestant churches

So far, very little has been said of the other churches. This may seem strange, for in many cases the Protestant Church has assimilated humanism more quickly than the Catholics. Indeed, the change has taken place extremely rapidly. Hector Hawton, a leading humanist, said that only 20 years ago "... humanism was seen as a major enemy by those ecumenists who looked to reunion as a means of bringing about a religious revival."

The about-turn of the Churches has surprised, and sometimes embarrassed the humanists. Suddenly, compliments were being paid from a quarter which before had set its face against all forms of humanism.

The change in outlook is illustrated by the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury when reviewing in "The Spectator" the book *The Humanist Outlook* (edited by A. J. Ayer):

"Humanism has come to mean a reverence for man and a concern for his dignity, morality and happiness, linked with a belief that these ends are best served by the advance of scientific outlook."

In the Protestant Churches, however, the advance of humanism has been a somewhat random process, and it is not so easy to pinpoint trends and shifts in a position as it is with regard to the Catholic Church, because there is such a multiplicity of starting points.

The fact that the corrupting influence of humanism is farther advanced in Anglicanism, for example, is proved by its attitude on so many modern issues. The Preface refers to "the characteristic fruits of humanism", and these fruits are beginning to be seen in the Churches which have drunk deeply from humanism. The increasing tolerance of homosexuality and the

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shift in attitudes to women priests in the Anglican Church is evidence that humanism has made large strides in imposing its attitudes on the Churches. Every argument I have read which seeks to justify such attitudes centres on the proposition that the values of 1st Century Christians, and of the Israelites before them, were relative values. It is argued that as something becomes culturally acceptable, it becomes morally acceptable.

This is a humanist argument. In fact, one of the principal 19th Century humanist arguments against "Theism" (as they called a belief in God) was that there is no such thing as the absolute where morals are concerned. The Church had pointed to moral behaviour as a reason for believing in a Creator (morals had to come from somewhere, and where else but from God?). The humanists replied that there was really no such thing as morals in the traditional sense - just a set of rules everyone agreed to stick to because they seemed to work. As these rules were not fixed and were therefore not absolute, they could not have come from God.

This is precisely the argument used by the Church's liberal reformers. They may not come fully into the open and argue that all moral codes are arbitrary and relative - but they might just as well do so, for their argument destroys the positive moral authority of Scripture.

How long will it be before humanism's other "characteristic fruits" - euthanasia and abortion - join the growing list of symptoms now evident in the Church - divorce, feminism, political activism and homosexuality?

The effects of humanism

It may seem unlikely that the Catholic Church will alter its moral standpoint, particularly after the recent hardening of attitudes on contraception and abortion. But the testament of history is clear. The adoption of humanism's doctrines inevitably has a practical outcome. Humanism affects the morals, and therefore the practical behaviour, of anybody espousing it, and it is difficult to see how any of the Churches can escape these effects.

We can learn a valuable lesson from this. The Churches feed upon the thoughts and ideas washed ashore from a host of philosophies. Its members may take in untold mountains of the word of man, and, as we have seen, they become infected by them, and the foul corruption spreads.

The alternative is plain. Let us feed on the Word of God -

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"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you " (1 Peter 1:22-25).

Phil Dwyer



"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Is.40:8).

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTADELPHIANS AND SOCIAL REFORM

Introduction

We are generally aware, as saints in the Lord Jesus Christ, that separation from the thinking and practice of the world is essential. Our awareness of this requires our constant vigilance to prevent the entry into our hearts and minds of its corrupting principles. In this spiritual warfare, two major factors leading to corruption of heart and mind with consequent malpractice are the *plausibility* and *all pervasive* (yet unspectacular) character of that which ought to be rejected. In this chapter, the humanist philosophies dealt with are some of those which are increasingly adopted in the Christadelphian community. The reasons for their adoption probably lie in the two factors mentioned.

Some humanist philosophy is plausible inasmuch as it can masquerade as "Christian" principles. There are two reasons, at least, for its doing this:

- (i) Modern humanist philosophy was born during the period of the "Christian" reformation, and understandably there was a cross-fertilisation of ideas, sometimes catching a deficient understanding of the spirit of Biblical revelation. ¹
- (ii) In addition to the modern reflection of (i), "Christianity", having borne the humanist attack, has absorbed the more prominent ideas of humanism in order to overcome it (in much the same way, for example, that the theory of evolution has been "Christianised" into theistic evolution).

Because humanist philosophy catches some echoes of Biblical revelation, albeit a deficient sense of that revelation, we can be deceived into ascribing Scriptural authority to some of its ideas, instead of rigorously testing them with the Scripture. It is also observable that some

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Christadelphians have been paying a growing and undiscerning heed to "Christian" teaching which has absorbed humanistic ideas, including that related to social issues.

We live in a democratic society, and democracy is a foundation principle of humanism. Not surprisingly, a society which has been built with a humanist principle as a foundation will reflect humanist values. Indeed, such philosophies as those on "human rights" have, for the modern man, taken on the characteristics that bread and water have as food and drink. Our upbringing in a society where such principles are seen as "normal", and abound in every sphere of life, can (unless we are critically aware of the danger) lead to glib acceptance and imperceptible growth of these values in our hearts and minds. It is to some of these values of the democratic society that we first turn our attention.

From revolutionaries to reformists

"In recent years there has also been some indication that Christadelphianism might follow the path formerly taken by the Quakers ... to a more reformist position. Some Christadelphians have become increasingly concerned about social problems, refugees and famine relief." ².

This quotation, which will be familiar to some readers, serves to illustrate that a change in outlook has taken place in the Christadelphian community, a fact observed by an independent and presumably objective assessor. Over 20 years have passed since these words were penned, and I think few would deny that this period has seen further trends in, and consolidation over, social problems. It is surely not without significance that one humanist has stated:

"The essential difference between Christian and Humanist ethics is that while on the Christian view morality is concerned with the relation between man and God, on the humanist view it is concerned with the relation between man and man." ³

Not only is this concern about the relation between man and man found to be held in society, but also the difference between the humanist view and the "Christian" view has found expression in the humanist attack on

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Christianity, an attack based on what humanists see as the failure of Christian doctrine (e.g. the doctrine of the after-life, usually understood in terms of Christendom's teaching) to deal directly and effectively with the problems of humankind.

The Christadelphian shift towards a greater concern over social problems may be in response to this attack, remembering also that the Scriptures speak of the requirement to show justice and mercy in dealings between men. Yet if we (Christadelphians) have a Scriptural view of sin, we of all people should be aware of the full ramifications of that sin - social problems, refugees, famine etc.:

"For we know that the whole creation (this should be understood as "mankind" since an identical phrase is found in Mk.16:15) groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom.8:22).

Does this require, though, that we respond with the increased *involvement* in social reformation that has been seen over the recent history of the Christadelphian community?

Social reformation as it is known in the world has its roots in the humanist human rights movement. We should go to Scripture to ascertain what our attitude should be to such things. Consider the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:20-22 (RV) in relation to the modern agitation over human rights:

"Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called. Wast thou called being a bondservant? care not for it: but if thou canst become free, use it rather. For he that was called in the Lord, being a bond-servant, is the Lord's freedman: likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's bondservant."

In this section of the letter, the Holy Spirit is dealing with what might be regarded as the "social status" of those called to be saints. To those who received the call of the gospel whilst slaves (bondservants), the instruction given is that they should "care not for it". This they would be encouraged to do, recognising that they should cast all their care upon God, "for he careth for you" (1 Pet.5:7).

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Slavery is regarded as an abominable practice by human rights campaigners which, at its worst, it certainly is, since it would fall into the category of man-stealing (Ex.21:16). In the issue of man's relationship with God, however, the fact that a man may be a slave or a free man has no bearing on his acceptability. This is summed up by Paul in the words, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing" (1 Cor.7:19). It is true that the Spirit advises, "If thou canst become free, use it rather",⁴ but it should be noted that the tenor of the passage is that the freedom is passively received, and not gained by social agitation or pressure. Account should also be taken of the command to "use it rather"; clearly, the freedom offered would only be of any worth if the saint used it advantageously in the service of Jesus, recognising that "he that was called being free, is Christ's bondservant. Ye were bought with a price" (1 Cor.7:22,23 RV). Considerable weight is added to this line of thought by the fact that throughout the whole of the New Testament we find the inspired writers were never directed to address themselves to the "rights" of slaves. The thing that matters is "the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Cor.7:19); and in this we learn that God's care towards us is not expressed in a preoccupation with our temporal status, but in those things which are eternal. As Paul continues, "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein *abide with God*" (1 Cor.7:24).

In the light of such testimony, we do well to remove carefully any tendency we may have towards involvement in social issues which has human rights as the motivation. This is not to say that we should have no concern for the world's problems, but that we should strive to align our thoughts towards the world in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. Then, having done this, we should learn from those same Scriptures what God regards as our appropriate response. If we have an attitude that seeks to improve the lot of mankind because of their human rights, then we fall into the error of Job. God plainly taught him, that no matter how "righteous" a man is, his only right before God is to fall under the curse of Eden: the sole escape man can hope for is in the gracious mercy of the Lord. It is in contemplating this mercy that we discover how we should view the world and behave towards it. To "love thy neighbour as thyself" is described by Jesus as "like unto" the "first and great commandment" (Matt.22:38,39). The apostle John states: "We love him (God), because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19); when this is considered together with the

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words of Jesus quoted above, we may conclude that loving one's neighbour is to manifest the characteristics of the Father in all we say and do to our neighbour. Jesus said, with regard to our being "the children of our Father which is in heaven", that "He (the Father) maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"; and "be ye therefore perfect, *even as* your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (see Matt.5:43-48). Thus the concern we are to have for the world must flow from the quality of the Father's love dwelling in our hearts and minds, impartially expressed.

Undoubtedly, the response of God to our estrangement from Him (in consequence of sin) has been the provision of the means by which we should be reconciled to Him. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, mankind is offered the blessing of eternal and perfect fellowship with God in His Kingdom, and beyond. If this is the response that the Father deems most appropriate to the problems of the world, then it must also be ours, and our concern for the world must find expression in the preaching of the gospel. Such is the teaching of the apostle Paul about himself and those who preached with him:

"Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men", and
"(God) gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation ... We are
ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ" (2 Cor.5:11,18,20 RV).

Paul then pleads that the Corinthians and all in Achaia should follow the same faithful ministry:

"And working together with (God), we intreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (6:1 RV).

In this context, it is worthwhile reflecting on some other comments made by Bryan Wilson:

"Although they remain Adventists, some of the intensity has also gone from Christadelphian advocacy ... There has been some shift from pre-occupation with the Kingdom to more emphasis on the cross." ⁵.

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Two points should be noted from Bryan Wilson's comment. The first point is that, contemporaneous with the increase in concern over social problems, there appears to have been a decrease in our endeavour to preach the gospel. Sufficient study has not been undertaken which would conclude that these two contemporaneous trends have a direct relationship; but the second sentence quoted above seems to suggest that they have, and that the redirection of our attention from the Kingdom to the cross in the presentation of our faith to society (the subject matter of our private, individual and ecclesial devotions is another issue) illustrates a failure on our part to perceive that the Kingdom is the *only* solution to the problems of the world. It is a feature of the manner in which God reveals the gospel in the Scriptures, that the aspect presented at a particular time is that which is relevant to the circumstances (see for example 1 Cor.15). It is right, therefore, in seeking to preach the gospel with due regard to world problems, that the Kingdom should be proclaimed. The preaching of the cross of Jesus ought to seek to show that he is the means by which God has purposed that the Kingdom should be brought into existence.

Related to this is the fact that, in one respect, it is inappropriate to the preaching of the gospel under the existing order of things, that the lot of mankind should be improved. Man has been subjected to the curse as a punishment for sin. This subjection also serves to bring men to a realisation of their position before God, and to direct them to seek to be reconciled to Him (see for example Rom.8:20, Ecc.7:2, Isa.55:2 - space forbids that this theme should be enlarged upon). Furthermore, to seek to reform the world by becoming involved in social reformation is to accept the inherent basis of society - sin. When Jesus stated "My kingdom is not of this world", he indicated that before he would become the world's king, the present sinful world order would need to be completely overturned - such is the *revolutionary* teaching of the Kingdom of God.

This topic has been dealt with more extensively than will the succeeding topics; this has been done in order that the pattern of Scriptural analysis adopted in this chapter may be clearly seen.

Democracy is best?

We come now to the second point arising from Bryan Wilson's comment. We have given one reason why it could be that Christadelphians have moved to a position in which the Kingdom is less earnestly preached.

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A further reason can be found in the impact on our thinking of democracy as a political system.

For democracy to be a workable political system, it is necessary that "the people" be prepared to vote. For this reason, pressure is often brought to bear by society in asserting that all have the *responsibility* of voting. This pressure, coupled with the misguided desire to improve society, has led some brethren and sisters to vote in national and local elections (I know a number personally in my own local area). That some Christadelphians have begun to feel a responsibility to participate in the democratic system may be the result of a belief that democracy is the ideal political system, coupled with the pressures mentioned above. Alas! the criterion used to determine this conclusion is that under such a system the rights of mankind are given full expression and remain inviolate. We have already seen the folly of such thinking.

Scriptural testing of the essence of democracy reveals still more unsound foundations. To affirm that the rule of the people is the most excellent political system is to reject the rule of God as the most just and merciful dominion possible. This is clearly unscriptural. Democracy is dealt a further blow when the kind of rule established by God in His Israelitish kingdom is considered. Then, the monarchical ruler was commanded by God to rule with justice and mercy. In so doing, the king would be reflecting in a small way the attributes manifest in the kind of rule God exercises over His people - God desires rulers "after his own heart" (Acts 13:22). The pattern of God's desire is parodied in democratic rule, for in voting people are seeking to appoint rulers who are after their own (sinful) heart.

In this respect, democracy can be seen revealed as nothing more than corporate licentiousness, or consensus sin.

It is not surprising that some Christadelphians should have been deceived into ascribing honour to democracy, since the Western, democratic and "Christian" world (in which most of us live) is continually indulging in self-commendation for their promotion of human rights. In such an environment, the gospel of the establishment of the Kingdom in the terms such as are found, for example, in Psalm 2, is largely unpalatable to the westernised man. Indeed, it has been my experience that work colleagues have described the future rule of Jesus as taught in Scriptures as "Hitlerian" (notwithstanding the just and merciful nature of Jesus' reign).

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Are these further reasons for our growing reluctance to preach the gospel of the Kingdom?

Free speech or gangrenous sores?

Freedom of speech is without doubt a cardinal principle of a humanist society. ⁶ This principle features in the objection to the Lord's future rule as described above. Margaret Knight writes that she once held that, although deluded, Jesus was "nevertheless a great moral teacher, and a man of outstanding moral excellence" ⁷ - this being based on her perception of what she describes as the "traditional 'gentle' Jesus". As a result of ecclesiastical criticism, she undertook a few years' "diligent" study of the Bible, from which she concluded that she was previously wrong. Instead, she suggests that Jesus' "practice fell short of his precepts", and she continues:

"Like most fanatics, he could not tolerate disagreement or criticism. Towards the Pharisees and others ... he was often savagely vindictive. Any hint of criticism, any demand that he should produce evidence of his claims, was liable to provoke a torrent of wrath and denunciation. Most of chapter 23 of St. Matthew's gospel, for example ... is what on any other lips would be described as a stream of invective."

Our objective is not to highlight the errors in Margaret Knight's analysis, but to recognise at work in our midst the spirit of what she says. No Christadelphian has gone so far as to take this position about Jesus (to my knowledge); but this spirit has been evident in relations between ourselves. This can be seen, for example, in correspondence columns in some Christadelphian magazines in 1983. No doubt some of what some brethren have said or written against false doctrine can be classed as "invective" with justification; however, it is not always so; and yet there has been an increasing clamour of brethren and sisters crying "inhumanity" and the like at any expression of disagreement with regard to false doctrine. Underlying such cries is the humanist spirit of toleration, which has as its basis the individual's right to assert his viewpoint so that a social consensus may be reached. The saint has nothing to do with such a philosophy, but must "hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught ... " (Tit.1:9). The

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Scriptural view of false teaching is that it "will eat as doth a gangrene" (2 Tim.2:17 RV). To continually allow the expression of a viewpoint which is astray from the Truth can be seen to have very serious consequences.

The discussion of the value of our first principles has grown quickly over the past few years, and what has been written above is not to suggest that those in our midst who have a genuine doubt should hesitate in approaching elders in order to attain to a wider Scriptural appreciation of the respective subjects. Rather it is directed against:

- (i) those who seek to destroy our first principles by teaching other philosophies, or by claiming that the first principles are not important, and then insisting that the Christadelphian community should have a sufficiently wide perspective to accommodate their own view, and
- (ii) those who, whilst not teaching false doctrines, claim that these should be accommodated in a spirit of toleration and humanity - equating this spirit with the Christian ethic. They also advise that false doctrines should not be contended with lest there be a "rocking of the boat".

Contrariwise, the teaching of Scripture is that their "mouths must be stopped" (Tit.1:11), which is unequivocal. Thus it must be admitted that the claim that false doctrines should be tolerated has no Scriptural warrant; indeed, positive effort to counter such teaching is *commanded*. Lest there be those who feel this will promote a reaction which could be classed as "invective", it is worth reminding ourselves that the Scriptures also teach in relation to contention with false teachers, that we "must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing ... ", bearing in mind the purpose of the exercise - "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim.2:24,25).

A practice deserving scrutiny in this respect is that of the use of "discussion groups" (which are increasingly adopted during Christadelphian meetings). The outworking of these groups most often seems to be an airing of views (sometimes of the "gangrenous" nature mentioned above), which are often adverse to Scriptural analysis - whatever intentions lie behind the holding of the groups. It is appropriate therefore to examine the motivation behind organising such activities. If it be in the spirit of

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seeking a consensus opinion and/or a fostering of toleration of "the other viewpoint", then clearly (for the reasons outlined above) we ought to refrain from holding them. If they are organised with a view to analysing issues collectively and Scripturally, well and good. When organising discussion groups with this intent, perhaps more careful attention should be given to the appointment of discussion group leaders, and consideration given to the suggestion of selected Scripture readings for each group; in this way the underlying motive would be less likely to be overruled by unspiritual members of the group.

Further issues

Although space forbids the examination of further issues, it may be useful to mention a few which come to mind so that readers can think about them for themselves.

1. How much do we assert our "rights" to social services, etc.?
2. How do we view sin with respect to an individual's social background?
3. To what extent does Benthamism (a utilitarian philosophy based on the aim of the greatest happiness for the greatest number) feature in the formation and organisation of (e.g.) Young People's Gatherings?
4. How much do we (over) encourage our young people to high attainment in the humanist's "principal thing" - secular education?

Conclusion

Sufficient has been advanced to show that Christadelphians *have* been affected by humanist philosophy, and that adversely! The subtlety of the philosophy requires our urgent and earnest attention, so that we may counter its influence, lest we be found to be relying on humankind rather than upon our heavenly Father. It is not a new problem:

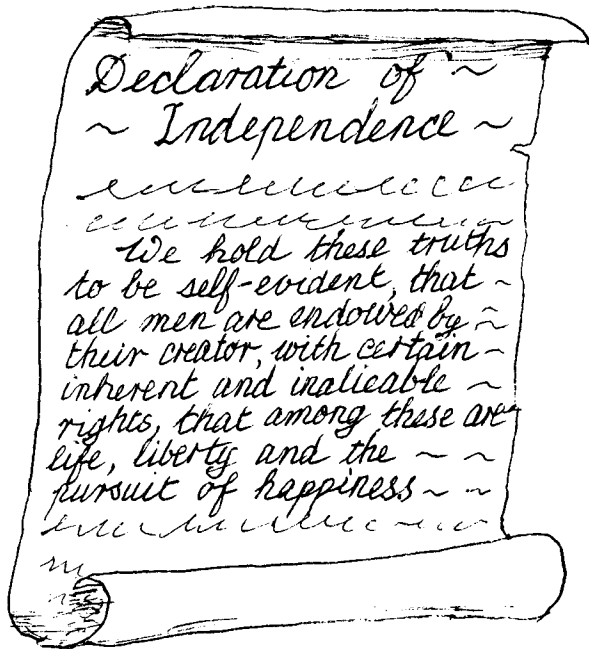
"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD ... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is" (Jer.17:5,7).

Peter Heavyside

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NOTES

1. See for example, A. G. Dickens' *The Age of Humanism and Reformation* (The Open University Press 1977) - Ch.3 sec.5 and ch.4 are particularly relevant.
2. Bryan Wilson, *Religious Sects* (World University Library 1970) p.239.
3. Margaret Knight, *Morals without Religion* (National Secular Society, June 1975).
4. The Good News Bible has a marginal rendering: "but even if you have a chance to become a free man, choose rather to make the best of your condition as a slave". The NEB and RSV have similar marginal renderings.
5. See note 2: Ibid.
6. *General Principles*, (The National Secular Society Ltd.).
7. Margaret Knight, *Christianity: The Debit Account* (The National Secular Society Ltd).



**"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death"
(Prov.14:12).**

CHAPTER SIX

HUMANISM AND THE EXPLOITATION OF THE EARTH

Never before in the history of the human race has the earth been as exploited as it is today. Most of us live in cities, where every inch of the ground bears the mark of man-made environment. If we travel out to view the "unspoilt" countryside we find a landscape which historians tell us is almost totally un-natural, the result of centuries of use and change by man. Even the farthest reaches of the most remote and wild places of the earth have felt man's influence - either as providers of raw materials for his prosperity, or because they receive the waste product of his activities.

The result of this exploitation is that a larger number of people than ever before "*enjoy a very high standard of living*", to use a typical modern "civilised" expression. (I will examine the implications of the italicised words later in this chapter.) It is true that since the fall of man selfish people have always sought to have the most for themselves in this present life; but until relatively recently real wealth, luxury and ease were solely the preserve of the ruling élite. Today the common man in the civilised West enjoys luxuries unknown in earlier times, and which even the wealth of kings could not have purchased - such things as advanced medical care, high-speed transport, instantaneous distant communication, pampered shelter from the weather, a very wide variety of foods and a constant supply of entertainment.

This state of affairs has, however, not produced universal happiness; indeed, it has become increasingly acknowledged in recent years that something is very wrong. Within the "developed" world prosperity has brought an alarming increase in crime and the breakdown of many institutions previously thought to be essential to a stable society. Over two-thirds of the world's population - nowadays referred to as the "Third World" - is still living at or below starvation level; and concerned people in the West have come to realise that their own prosperity has come not only

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as a result of the exploitation of the earth's resources, but also through the exploitation of millions of its peoples. Add to that the damage caused by the polluting effects of man's consumption of resources, and many thinking people see a crisis coming not far ahead. Words are now in common use which until a few decades ago were hardly ever used, except by specialists; words such as "environment", "eco-system", "pollution", "energy-crisis" and "conservation". Books and films have been produced with titles that give a disturbing view of what lies ahead, for example, *Blueprint for Survival* ¹, *Eco-Catastrophe* ², *We're using up the World* ³, and *Hell upon Earth*. ⁴

This scenario is, of course, only too familiar to us, and we rightly make use of it as a starting-point for many of our preaching endeavours. But have we thought about it as carefully as we should, and are we trying hard enough to detach ourselves from the humanistic thinking which lies behind the current situation? As previous chapters in this book have shown, the humanistic position is that man should aim for the greatest good of the greatest number; and by this is meant getting the fullest prosperity and enjoyment out of life. The churches, as has also been shown, have aligned themselves with this view, and have supported moves to improve the lot of the peoples of the Third World because they believe that man has a human right to lead a pleasant life.

How is Humanism to blame?

While it is fairly obvious that the basic reason for the present situation is man's sin and his seeking to get the best out of life for himself, it will be useful to see how it is humanism that has *caused* the crisis to develop at *this* point in history and not before. For this purpose I will take in turn the subject matter of each of the previous chapters in this series, and briefly mention the particular connection in each case.

History (p.1-9) Humanism encouraged scientific experiment. It was after the Renaissance that the re-emergence of Greek ideas opened the floodgates to the increase of scientific investigation. The new science of printing meant that men could build their knowledge on the foundations laid by others, and so "advancement" of knowledge about the world could take place.

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Democracy and Human Rights (p.10-19) Whereas in the past any benefits gained by increased knowledge would have been only for the rulers, the humanistic spread of democracy led to the view that all should have a share in the new-found wealth. This has greatly hastened its effect on the world, as many millions more have sought to have a pleasurable life.

Education (p.20-27) Humanism has encouraged mass education and concentrated on "useful" subjects, those which make it possible for man to lead a "happier" life, such as science and technology, so that knowledge of *how* to exploit the earth has increased. This education has been made available to all, so that the pace of exploitation has quickened.

The Churches (p.28-35) The churches' acceptance of humanism has meant that, far from preaching that men should be content to suffer in this life, they have supported the cause of "fair shares for all" and "human rights" and have helped to hasten the consequent greater use of the world's resources.

Social Reform (p.36-46) The utilitarian philosophy of the greatest good for the greatest number has again been responsible for the great *spread* of wealth and prosperity among many millions, with the same result.

Sometimes the very scientific advances which were thought to bring benefits have caused the ensuing problems. A good example of this is the increase of medical and sanitation knowledge which has been a major factor in the Third World's population explosion.

We reach the conclusion, then, that man's desire to exploit the earth for his own gratification has reached its peak, and its desperate crisis, in our day. Furthermore, we have seen that this has been made possible by humanism, and in particular by the humanistic doctrines of scientific investigation and democratic human rights. Taken together, far from producing happiness and prosperity, they are threatening the very continuance of life on this planet.

The lesson of Eden

Although we know the story very well, it will be profitable to look again at the account of the events in Eden in a slightly different way,

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because I would like to suggest that here we see where scientific investigation began.

At the culmination of the record of Creation we read, "And God said, Let us make man in our image ... and let them have dominion over ... all the earth" (Gen.1:26). At the very outset of His dealings with men, God put before them the awesome prospect that He would delegate to them the rulership over the things He had created. That this did not apply straight away we can see by comparing Psalm 8 with Hebrews 2. In Psalm 8 David comments upon God's glory in creation, and then asks what man's role in all this is to be: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:4). The Spirit tells him that God "madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put *all things* under his feet" (v.6). ("*All things*" seems to be a phrase which, whenever it is used in Scripture, refers to this plan of God that man should rule over His created things.) In Hebrews 2, after quoting this Psalm in verses 6-8, the writer says, "But now we *see not yet* all things put under him" (v.8). So any apparent ruling over the earth that we see man doing through history is not the true rulership that prophecy tells us will one day take place. How then is man to rule the world?

This is where another look at Eden is so valuable, because surely what we see there is concerned with rulership and what the promise of that rulership meant to the newly-created couple. When Adam and Eve were created, they no doubt looked like young adults. But unlike all subsequent people, they had not had a childhood. They were newly-formed, naive and lacking in knowledge. Yet God had made the wonderful declaration that man should rule over His world. How could they? They had no knowledge of *how* to rule God's world. What was needed? It was obviously a programme of divine education by the Creator, who alone knew the operating principles of His glorious creation. So to begin with God placed them in a safe and protected place where everything they required was provided, and where their early development could be lovingly controlled: "The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food" (Gen.2:8-9). (The German educators of the last century had much the same idea, though with very different aims, when they called their nursery schools 'kindergarten' - children's gardens.) Here, no doubt, God would

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have taught Adam and Eve all they needed to know, so that eventually they could have dominion over His world.

But the first essential requirement was a willingness to be taught of God, and so we meet the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. It was a simple test for simple people, yet how telling! Knowledge was the thing they most desired, because it was the key to this rulership God had promised. It seems to me that the stark simplicity of this test, and the serpent's part in it, which to modern critical ears sounds so unacceptable and even silly, rings true to the naiveté of their situation. As they were so lacking in knowledge, they needed a third party to put the issues before them. On the one hand, there was the prospect of a long and slow process of education before God; and on the other, the fruit of the tree of knowledge beckoned, with its allure of instant knowledge. The serpent, reasoning no doubt from the situation the angels were in, argued that by becoming knowledgeable one would automatically become immortal. Against that Eve had to place God's definite words "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen.2:17).

And so Eve made what I can only describe as the first scientific experiment - she would take of the fruit of the tree and see what would happen. The result was disastrous. The consequence was that man was ejected into a cursed world, to fend for himself in a world he largely failed to understand because he had never received the training programme. Presumably the knowledge imparted by the tree of knowledge was enough for man to live a basic everyday life; but the inner details of the world's working remained unrevealed. Is it any wonder then that we see history as a sorry succession of man's failures? The whole of history from then to now is surely a divine demonstration of the truth that by himself, man will never be able to rule the world. Of course, over the centuries men have been able to discover some wonderful glimpses into God's beautiful creation. But taken as a whole, humanism and man's much-vaunted methods of investigation (revered nowadays as the 'scientific method') are surely to be seen merely as the dabblings of ignorant man, who at times is able to stumble upon a small part of the glory of God's creation, but who, more often than not, brings consequent trouble by his clumsy and self-centred investigations. Isaac Newton perhaps summed up best the attitude of a humble human who recognised this fact, when he said, "I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like

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a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and again finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me". ⁵.

As we know, the true rulership of the earth can only come through the Lord Jesus Christ, the only man who has submitted himself to God's programme of education, and who has therefore reversed man's fall in Eden, and become worthy of the title "son of man". Philippians 2:5-11 is surely a comment on the Genesis story.

Man in Genesis

Jesus, the true man, in Philippians

1:26	God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness.	2:6	being in the form of God
3:6	she took of the fruit	2:6	thought it not robbery (RVm Gk. 'a thing to be <i>grasped</i> ')
3:5	ye shall be as gods	2:6	to be equal with God
2:16	the LORD God commanded the man, saying ...	2:8	became obedient
1:26	let them have dominion ... over all the earth, and over every ... thing ... upon the earth	2:9 2:10	God hath highly exalted him at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.

So, as we know, man can only rule by being "in Christ", who has become the second Adam, the one to whom the expression "son of man" (Psalm 8) applies, because he alone has fulfilled God's plan for man. Being in Christ involves a time of probation and subjection now in this life, that we might rule in the world to come. No attempt, then, by man to rule the world in his own way can succeed. Paul concludes from his study of Jesus: "*Wherefore ... work out your own salvation ... for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*" (Phil.2:12-13). As followers of Christ, our role is one of preparing *ourselves*, and bringing our minds into subjection to God, rather than one of applying ourselves to the problems of the world.

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Mankind's role after Eden

How then should man have lived after Eden? What was the extent to which God authorised his use of the world's resources? The record of the curse put upon Adam, "Thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" and of his expulsion from Eden, "God sent him forth ... to till the ground" (Gen.3:18,19,23) suggests a peasant's life. This has, of course, been the way of life for the majority of the world's population for most of history, and it is notable that such a life is, within the limitations of the curse, in harmony with nature. It is in balance, so that the world is being neither over-exploited nor over-populated. Such a life is fairly rigorous, with much hard toil, and without the conspicuous ease and consumption of resources of today's 'civilised' societies. Under such a regime men are led, if they will learn, to see their dependence upon the Creator, and to rejoice in His ways upon earth. Such a spirit flows out from some of the Psalms; for example:

"He watereth the hills ... the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Psalm 104:13-14, 23-24).

Under the Law of Moses, the yearly cycle with its seasonal festivals was used to bring men to a harmonious recognition of their life under God's good hand (Deut.11:10-16).⁶

By contrast, we see that it was those who turned away from God who built cities, and all the early references in Genesis to cities have evil connotations; Cain (Gen.4:16-17), Nimrod (10:9-11) and the builders of the tower of Babel (11:4-8). In the last example, God deliberately confused their languages to frustrate their purpose. One can only guess at what evil would have befallen the world even so long ago, had not God intervened. It is when men begin to live in cities and organised 'civilisations' that their demands upon the resources of the earth start to grow apace. A pop song of a few years ago spoke of man as an 'urban spaceman', implying that he is dependent for his life-support on a vast global network of resources brought in to supply him. A visit to a

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supermarket today has been likened to a world tour, as we select products from a world-wide choice.

This brings us back to the sentence I said I would analyse. Today people in the West say they "*enjoy a very high standard of living*". These words reveal what men see as important in life. It is a humanistic view to say that a "high standard of living" means a self-centred consumption of resources. Some years ago in my own city we had a Government-sponsored "Quality of Life Project". This was taken to mean improvement in the pleasures of life, and was not linked in any way to a recognition of the need to be servants of God. When Harold Macmillan said, "You've never had it so good", he was using "good" in a very different sense from the way that word is used in Scripture. The American Declaration of Independence (July 4 1776) stated:

"We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inherent and inalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Despite the reference to "the creator", much of the thinking behind this document came from the humanist Thomas Paine (mentioned in ch2 p.15). By contrast, Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly". "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". (John 10:10; 17:3).

Our response to the present situation

Let us now turn to the practical question of how all this may affect us, and what our reaction ought to be.

Amongst thoughtful people there has grown up in the last 40 years or so an 'ecology movement'. This includes groups such as 'Friends of the Earth', 'Greenpeace' and political 'Green parties'. Concerned and disgusted by the headlong rush to consume more and more, these people have called "Halt!", or at least "Slow down!". Since Christians are surely (it is said) against greed and the misuse of the world, there is the tacit assumption that Christians will view these movements with favour, and indeed support them, although of course many in the ecology movement are not Christians,

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and may be anti-religion. We may personally feel a great deal of sympathy with the views of the ecologists, and indeed, as we said at the outset, we often use their statements as introductions to our preaching lectures. But ought we to become involved or not? I think a review of some of their statements will give us the answer, as we weigh their words against the attitude of a God-fearing man such as we described earlier.

The ecology movement began in small ways, with local protests such as the one in which thousands of non-returnable glass bottles were deposited on the doorstep of the manufacturer to highlight the waste involved. As a result, many of us now live in cities where re-cycling of waste materials is officially encouraged. It might seem to be perfectly harmless, and indeed good for us to be involved in such local work. But the principle is really no different from what is now being done on a national and international scale; and here we can begin to see the real dangers for us. Nowadays it is realised that the problem is global, and demands more drastic 'solutions'. So-called "Green" parties have gained political power in some countries, and governments, and indeed the United Nations, have tried to tackle the problem.

In 1972 the UN Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm. A flood of publications was produced at that time. I will now make a few quotations from some of them, so that we can assess whether we are able to associate with these attitudes.

1. *Only one earth: the care and maintenance of a small planet*

(Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos, 1972)

From the publisher's publicity: "Man has been washed up on an island, like Robinson Crusoe. How is he to survive?"

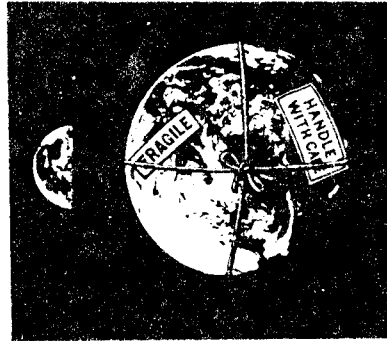
Only one earth sets the key for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment to be held in Stockholm in June 1972. The report ... has been read and revised by more than 150 expert consultants from many countries and many fields ... it is only one earth that man inhabits. What must he do to be saved?"

P.31: "Ambassador Adlai Stevenson clearly had in mind the overpowering influence of man's role in determining the quality of the environment and therefore of human life when before the Economic and Social Council in Geneva in 1965 he referred to the earth as a little spaceship on which we travel together, 'dependent

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on its vulnerable supplies of air and soil'. The careful husbandry of the earth is a *sine qua non* for the survival of the human species, and for the creation of decent ways of life for all the people of the world ... the limitations of spaceship earth ... compatible with the continued flowering of civilisations."

(I might comment at this point, that probably one of the most potent images of modern times is the photograph of the "good earth" seen from space. On Christmas Day 1968 the Apollo 8 astronauts were on their way to the moon. In a moving broadcast to the world from space, they read out the opening words of the Bible; "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth ... " However, for many people, a more common response is to see man as a lone voyager on "spaceship earth". Notice how the ecologists are making free with terms that should only be the province of the Creator and owner of this world. Posters with slogans like "Support your local planet" and "Earth, fragile - handle with care", while no doubt very well meaning, are the very stuff of humanism, and take it as axiomatic that man is on his own to solve the world's problems.)



p.66: "Our errors point to our cures and, on the basis of man's survival up to this point, it is not wholly irrational to believe that he can learn from his mistakes."

p.290: "The new insights of our fundamental condition can also become the insights of our survival. We can begin with knowledge. The first step towards devising a strategy for Planet Earth is for the nations to accept a collective responsibility for discovering more - much more ... "

(So 6000 years after Eve, man seems to be about the same level of progress as Eve!.)

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2. *Blueprint for Survival* (The Ecologist 1972)

p.10:"Our *Blueprint for Survival* heralds the formation of the Movement for Survival, it is hoped, the dawn of a new age in which Man will learn to live with the rest of nature rather than against it."

(These ambitions and too-hopeful ideas from 1972 had done so badly by the end of the decade that a new initiative was desperately (?) begun in 1980 - the World Conservation Strategy.)

3. *Turning the Tide: Why we need a World Conservation Strategy*

(David Munro, 1980 - Director General of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and National Resources - in conjunction with the United Nations.)

p.2 "It is the first time that governments, non-governmental organisations, and world experts have combined to prepare a global conservation document." "Conservation is on the brink of a massive failure. Paradoxically, it has a better chance of succeeding now than it has ever had before." (Subsequent events have not borne this out.)

4. An accompanying book launched at the same time is entitled:

***How to save the world* - strategy for world conservation**

(R. Allen, 1980 World Wildlife Fund.)

Publishers' information: "How to save the world examines what is most threatening to human survival and well-being ... More important, it shows you what can be done to overcome these problems ..."

5. *The Environmental Handbook* by Friends of the Earth (1971)

p.325:"Something needs to be done at once in order to avert the final catastrophe."

"Action is required ... "

"We are not just idealists, but we do have ideals. Our earth is threatened and needs every friend it has."

"We believe (in) the proper application of science and humanity ..."

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(You may be interested to know that both references 1 and 5 in the above list contain useful introductory sections setting out the historical roots of our present crisis, which support much of what I said earlier.)

Since I originally wrote this chapter in 1983 the environmental movement has come to pervade all aspects of our lives. At one end of the scale there have been a number of prestigious and highly publicised international conferences attended by Heads of State. These usually make some alarming predictions, such as the dangers due to global warming or the depletion of the ozone layer, and then go on to set targets for the reduction in practices believed to be major contributory factors. Often, however, certain governments either fail to sign up to agreements, for self-serving reasons, or fail to carry them out anyway. It is not uncommon to find that the problem addressed has become worse, not better, a decade later.

At the other end of the scale environmental education has entered into most of our lives. This is particularly so in schools. In England, for example, it is now a compulsory part of the National Curriculum and all the issues are commonplace even to quite young children. I have inspected the topic books being used in one Junior School, and they reveal the insidious humanistic message which much of education today promotes. Who, many would say, could object to the discussion of topics like recycling, cutting down on energy use, saving the whale, and being more green? But the background assumption of all the books I have seen is that man is on his own, to solve these problems himself. Here are a few quotations:

1. A series of books has been produced with the general title *Save our earth*. In the volume *The Greenhouse Effect* children are told: "it is vital to all of us that we fully understand the complex relationship between the atmosphere and the earth".⁷

Surely, what we have demonstrated in this chapter is that man does *not* understand his world, and needs God to reveal it to him.

2. In a book *Our world in danger* we read: "very often it is people who harm nature. So we are the ones who must think of ways to care for our world".⁸ God, of course, is not mentioned.

Humanism and the exploitation of the earth

3. David Bellamy, a Scientist and campaigner with a great deal of charisma and media popularity promotes a friendly and caring message that it seems almost churlish to criticise. In one book of his, *How Green are you?*, the title page invites children to "use the Friendly Whale's action plan to make the earth a better place for us all." On the back cover it asks, "Can you help to save the world? Yes, you can, - if you're 6 years old or more. You can save energy, protect wildlife, join in ... etc". The book ends by saying " ... now its up to you." ⁹.

Thus children are being taught, with the best of motives, often by concerned and caring people, that it is up to *us* to save our world. Thus the humanist approach is taken as axiomatic.

It is interesting to see direct evidence as to why humanism must fail, when you notice how children are actually behaving who have been brought up on these ideals. Schools are deeper in litter than ever before, despite despairing efforts by staff. Young people and adults still want to maximise their own personal consumption of resources and enjoyment of life, despite all the piously worded posters and displays they produced as children.

Another modern phenomenon is the glib and facile use of green topics to promote a 'feel-good' image. For example, on the back of buses we might see, "Travel by bus doesn't cost the earth", or on supermarket carrier bags, "Recycle this bag and help save the world". While human nature remains sinful, such trivial actions will do little or nothing against the whole tide of humanity taking the world ever downhill. It is the folly of humanism, however well-meaning, to promote the belief that man, by himself, can save the world.

Surely, what emerges from all this is that man is repeating the very mistakes of Eden, and trying to rule the world in his own way - indeed, attempting to dethrone God. In an interesting article entitled "Friends of the Earth" in "The Daily Telegraph" (11.12.82), Paul Johnson, himself a Christian, (albeit regarded as having extreme views), takes the churches to task for getting involved in worldly matters. Much of what he says we could support, for example:

"The Christian Churches ... are increasingly unwilling these days to warn us about the next life at all. All they are interested in is evoking

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our 'concern' about this one. I am worried ... (by) their drift into sheer materialism. In their obsession with politics they are falling into the most fundamental error of all: the belief that the world matters.

"The recent Anglican publication, *The Church and the Bomb*, is not really a religious, let alone a Christian, document at all. It is simple materialism. It is concerned with what happens to us in this life, and what happens to our planet. God, unfortunate fellow, scarcely makes an appearance ... Christ's message, we are told, called "Christians to an active moral concern for their fellow men and women and for events in the world". Oh, I see. Poor, muddled Christ got it wrong again. When he said, "My kingdom is not of this world", what he really meant to say was "My kingdom is of this world".

"The Bishop of Salisbury wrote of the Christian 'principle', which he defined as responsibility for the planet, not just for human life but for all life. Now this, it seems to me, is the kind of materialism which finds expression in a variety of pagan beliefs ... We are not responsible for the planet and all life upon it: that is, and can only be, the responsibility of the Creator. The notion that man is the custodian of the earth, with rights of ownership ... is to my mind an unspeakable arrogance.

"Our only responsibility is to obey the will of God. What happens to the earth is not our business, but God's, and we shall not be held accountable for it. It is not our role to be "friends of the earth" but to be friends, or rather servants, of God."

I think we can largely agree with what he says. If we are tempted to support the friends of the earth, whether organised movements or just a general attitude, we ought to remember: "The earth is the *LORD'S*" (Psalm 24:1) and "Ye are *my friends*, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

However, let us emphasize that we *are* interested in this world. "The meek shall inherit *the earth*". (Psalm 37:11, Matt. 5:5). We aspire to be among those who will be privileged to rule over the world in the Kingdom Age. But those who will be in that company are the ones of whom JESUS said: "They shall be all *taught* of God. Every man therefore that hath *heard*, and hath *learned of the Father*, cometh to me." (John 6:44-47).

Humanism and the exploitation of the earth

It seems to me that there are two dangers facing us. One is that because we are concerned about the selfish greed of this world, we will be tempted to join one of these movements. But surely to do so is to reject God's "Blueprint for Survival".

The second danger could be that because we know God will intervene in world affairs, we become blasé about the present problems. Is there any danger of our community falling into the error of "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow God will save us anyway?"

Many people in the movement for world survival are prepared to endure great personal hardship for the things they believe in; the women at the Greenham Common anti-nuclear Peace Camp and the anti-whaling Greenpeace sailors have been just two examples. We believe our duty is not to change the world, but to become changed *ourselves*. In this endeavour, shall we let ourselves off more lightly?

"What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not ... And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1,3).

Glynn Cherry

NOTES:

1. *Blueprint for Survival* (1972); The Ecologist and Penguin Books.
2. *Eco-catastrophe* (1969) by Paul Ehrlich; Ramparts magazine.
3. *We're using up the World* (1969) by Suzanne Harris.
4. *Hell upon Earth* (1968) by Lord Ritchie-Calder.
Note: Items 2-4 are quoted extensively in *The Environmental Handbook* (1971); Friends of the Earth and Pan Books.
5. From *Memories of Newton* (1855) Vol.II ch.27, by Brewster.
6. This theme was developed in an article *God, Man and the Land* (Logos Vol.26 No.12, Aug. 1960) by Bro. Edgar Wille, part of an interesting series.
7. Save our Earth series. *The Greenhouse Effect*. Tony Hare; Aladdin Books 1990.
8. *Our world in danger*, Gillian Dorfman, Worldwide Fund for Nature, with Ladybird 9 Books, 1989.
9. *How Green are You?* David Bellamy, Frances Lincoln, 1991.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM PART I: - AND THE BIBLE

Introduction

Over the past few centuries the relationship between religious belief and scientific theory has completely changed. In Mediaeval times the role of science was seen to be proof of the veracity of the Scriptures, and consequently to be justification of Christianity. In some cases this led to the public denunciation of those whose claims were in opposition to what men thought the Bible taught. Nowadays the onus is the other way round. It is generally accepted that science is "proven" and anyone with different, for example fundamentalist, views is urged to provide evidence for his position.

The humanist

Today the prevalent and supposedly enlightened (and therefore respectable) view is that of the humanist. The term encompasses many "humanisms", but the basic premises are the same. All believe that man is on his own, in control of his destiny, and at the heart of an evolutionary process of intellectual, biological and moral development. Humanists want to know the truth about the human situation before they decide how to live. They depend for knowledge exclusively on propositions of the kind which scientists are engaged in establishing, and which remain open to question and public checks.

Science

Science is a human problem - the problem of knowledge. It is concerned with theory, proof, observation, experiment and verification. Absolute proof is difficult. Given certain assumptions, it is possible to make logical conclusions which are observable, and deductions are pro-

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posed as laws. Proof is essentially mathematical. Even so, the basis is that of proving consequences given certain assumptions. These assumptions are often not explicitly stated, even if they are known. Violation of assumptions renders the conclusions invalid. For example, Newton's "Laws" stood for years, and are still valid in certain circumstances. Einstein enlarged the framework and provided a more complicated theory; this theory may not be the entire truth of the matter. "Laws" are continually revised and refined as more experimental results come to light.

The believer

Job could say, "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth", because he was speaking about revealed truth. The basis of Christadelphian belief is the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, revealed by the One God. They are the Word of God who "changeth not", and as such they do not need verification or experimental proof. God's truth is absolute and, unlike man's understanding, does not alter. Obviously, certain states change, e.g. the statement "Jeremiah is alive" was not true before he was born or after he died. However, God's statement that He made man from the dust of the ground does not represent man's understanding of the method of His creation, but is a fact. If God, "which cannot lie", says something, then it is true. This necessarily places God's Word above anything else which the believer has, including his own intellect. (The only exception to this would be further revelation or inspiration; but this would not contradict the God-breathed Scriptures anyway.)

Science versus humanism

All forms of humanism are based on the same non-belief. The question is, How has science influenced the development of humanism?

Mediaeval man's idea centred on the concept of an earth created by, and ruled by, an omniscient and omnibenevolent supernatural being. He attributed anything which he could not explain or understand to a divine being. Consequently, he was very superstitious about fire, earthquake, illness etc., and attempted to explain them as the work of spirits and gods. Paul's inspired argument in Romans 1 shows that it is natural for man to deduce the existence of a divine Power from nature. What man cannot do is to deduce the nature and morals of that Being - that is only revealed by the God Himself.

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The fifteenth century was the Renaissance, which brought upheaval in both science and the arts. It brought the revival of many Greek philosophies, including humanistic ideas. The tremendous interest in science brought about more and more theories of how things happened and "natural" explanations of phenomena in the physical world. Together with the philosophical ideas, this led some to conclude that propositions of natural religion (established by "reason") were more important than doctrine revealed in the Bible. This change in ways of thought is crucially important. Those who held these views did not presume that religion was dead, but that in effect man, using his intellect, can deduce more than God has chosen to reveal. This is in fact the reasoning of the serpent. He, endowed with some logical powers, observed facts and drew wrong conclusions in direct opposition to the Word of God. Anyone following the serpent sets human thinking in opposition to divine truth.

The growing hunger for knowledge in answer to the question "how?" led to active research testing, finding, and in particular, doubting. As science became less superstitious and more formal, it adopted the standpoint that things should be assumed false until proved true. By the end of the 18th century there had come about a complete revolt against accepting any statement on an authority which could not be challenged. There arose a belief that the reason for existence was located in society and could be deduced by man.

The natural progression from this is the belief that man is the ultimate authority; he only believes what he is able to prove - and that neatly dispenses with the need for a God. A believer accepts Scripture because "God said"; the sceptic rejects it because its only authority is God, who cannot be proven to exist.

Many "mysteries" were "explained" by the scientists. These include gravity, classification of plants and animals, the chemical ordering of the elements. Science was explaining "how", but never "why?" By far the most important contribution to scientific thought was that of Darwin. The theory of evolution placed man as an animal in a wholly evolutionary system. Darwinian theory was (correctly) seen to be irreconcilable with Genesis; and after much debate, the religious view of the nature and origin of man was accommodated to the biological understanding. This marked a remarkable change in attitude. The conclusion was that unscientific man had in the past created God for his pleasure and convenience. Man now

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elevated the creation above the Creator. The evolutionary concept was extended beyond Darwin's original biological ideas. Man's knowledge and understanding were also seen as evolving and developing. Man now thought he was in control of his destiny and contributing to the evolution of an enlightened world.

Nowadays the physical, biological and social sciences are usually viewed in this context. Psychological theory has "explained" emotion and the mind; it has even explained, and dispensed with, primitive man's need for a God. Genetics and evolution "explain" heredity and invalidate the idea of sin in the flesh. Medicine has advanced at a phenomenal rate. In particular, control of reproduction and the extension of life lead some to believe that ultimately man will discover the secret of life and bring about his own immortality. The theory of statistics describes variation as natural and random, thereby demonstrating to some that there is no God in control of everything. Recently the idea of artificial intelligence - making machines think - suggests that man can even create a mind. He is conquering body, mind and life: he is responsible for himself and his own destiny. The humanist appears to triumph.

The place of humanism

This has been a somewhat critical overview of scientific development. We cannot deny that man has reached an elevated level of knowledge, and many of the results are beneficial to us. But knowledge is not wisdom, and "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God". Science cannot explain "why?", neither can humanism: God can.

Reason has been given to us by God, and He appeals to it. He argues logically in His Word and uses His prophets to demonstrate His power and truth. He reasons with His people, asks them to "try the spirits", and begs them to follow His reasoning - but ultimately He asks for faith based on the evidence He has produced. He asks us to believe His Word and obey it.

Science is not bad in itself. What is fatal is the elevation of science above the Bible. If this happens, then we must deduce that religion evolves, that the Bible can be re-interpreted to suit human needs, and that man is in control. In short, it turns a believer into a humanist.

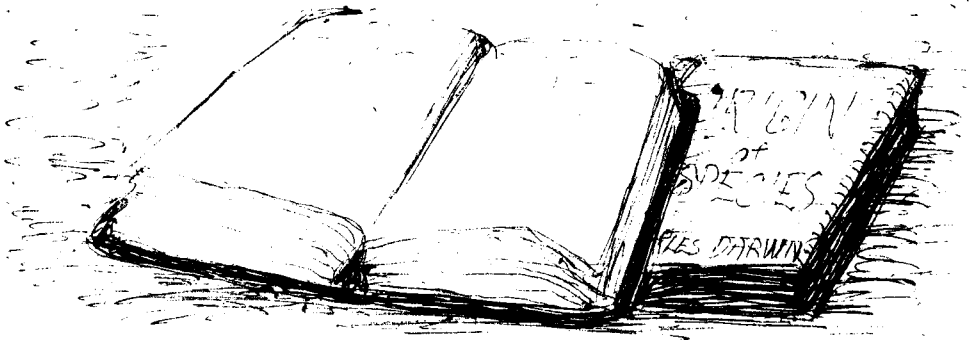
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Conclusion

The foundation of Christadelphian faith is the truth of the Scriptures. If this book has done anything, then it should have shown the importance of this. Either the Bible is the Word of God, or it is not. If it is not, then we only have science, and the humanist is right, because man is the ultimate authority. If it is the Word of God, then it was written by a power far superior to man. He has perfect understanding, whereas we have imperfect understanding. On the evidence we have now, there may be things which we cannot explain: so be it. If we have the choice between man and God, we always believe God. We must not interpret the Bible in the "light" of science; we believe the "Light of the world". Even scientists have doggedly stuck to beliefs which no-one else accepted, and devoted their lives to proving themselves right; and some were proved correct after their death.

We must not compromise. Those educated by the world's standards are educated in the things of man; those educated in the Scriptures are learned in the things of God. Let us not place our trust in man who perishes, but in the living God who is able to save.

Anna Hart



*"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"
(Ps. 14:1).*

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM
PART II: - DARWINISM & UTOPIANISM

"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:13).

In these words the Apostle Paul explains how the Law of Moses - the Commandment - brought the consciousness of sin to ancient Israel; the Law was designed to show men how sinful they were in God's sight when they broke His rules. The Law of Christ is not like the Law of Moses in this respect: for us, righteousness does not consist in doing the works of the Mosaic Law, but in faithfulness towards Christ as our conscience directs us according to our measure of understanding of the Scriptures - in which Christ is displayed as the example of perfection. And yet an appreciation of the sinfulness of sin can help us keep our position with regard to the Almighty in the right perspective. It is such an appreciation that this book on humanism has highlighted; for in studying humanism we are studying the sinfulness of the mind of man in a multitude of different forms.

The teachings of scientific humanism are seen in many ways in our everyday life; a number of chapters have mentioned the theory of evolution, as it is clearly a direct assault on the divine account of Creation. But the impact of humanism does not end there; not only does it pervade every branch of science including psychology, medicine, anthropology and archaeology, but its effects have fed through into politics, theology and the arts. As such we cannot - whether we like it or not - be completely immune from its influence.

This section looks at two specific aspects of scientific humanism:

1. Darwinism; and
2. Utopianism

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1. DARWINISM

The theory of evolution has, rightly, been singled out as a major threat to godly thinking. Much time and effort has been spent in the Brotherhood over many years in arguing against evolution, thus seeking to establish the truth of the biblical creation account.

Charles Darwin did not invent the theory of evolution: others before him had put forward evolutionary ideas, but they had not gained general acceptance. In 1859, Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, in which he propounded the idea that evolution had taken place by natural selection.¹ The book very quickly aroused interest and it was not long before it was widely accepted. At a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Oxford in 1860, the Bishop of Oxford attacked T. H. Huxley, a proponent of Darwinism, in an attempt to defend the biblical account of creation.² But the established churches eventually abandoned this position as untenable.³ Science, it seemed, had done away with the need to regard the Scriptures as reliable, and it had provided a rationale for rejecting the existence of God Himself.

This is the crux of the matter. Once the Almighty could (as was thought) be safely ignored, science could progress unencumbered by religion.⁴ Darwinism, therefore, was an important influence in bringing about a number of developments in our culture both scientific and non-scientific. Its effects go far beyond the question of the status of the early chapters of Genesis.

Darwinism and anthropology

By the time Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, geologists had come to the conclusion that the origin of the earth and life on it was much earlier than the date - 4004 BC - suggested by Bishop Usher in the 17th century. After Darwin, anthropology (the scientific study of man) came into its own.⁵ The acceptance of natural selection gave anthropology the impetus it needed, and in 1859 Charles Lyell announced his conversion to the view that man had existed for much longer than the Bible suggested; and in 1863 he published *The Antiquity of Man* which set out this view in some detail. Later, the Oxford scholar Edward Taylor used Darwinian theory as the basis of a general anthropological theory. Since then, most anthropological theories have relied heavily on Darwinism in seeking to find explanations of modern man's behaviour.

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The result is an approach to the understanding of human behaviour which is directly at odds with Scripture. Our understanding of the origin of sin and its perpetuation is simple enough; the various kinds of evil we see in the world around us are not the product of an evolutionary development from some primeval past, but the result of Adam's sin and our subsequent inheritance of human nature. But the anthropologist sees war, for example, as a modern equivalent of an ancient hunting instinct, ⁶ and adduces the example of the behaviour of rhesus monkeys in support of this view. Other aspects of human behaviour are likewise seen in terms of Darwinian evolution.

"Human brains are constructed so that events readily evoke feelings and images from a prehistoric world; an appreciable proportion of time is spent thinking in flashbacks as it were, behaving and reacting as early man lived long, long ago." ⁷

Even mental disease is said to have an evolutionary background. ⁸ And the anthropologist thinks his "understanding" of the development of human behaviour puts him in a position to decide his own future development. ⁹

But the edifice of anthropology is shaky. Those who remember Richard Leakey's television series *The Making of Mankind* in 1981 ¹⁰ will appreciate how much wild speculation anthropologists indulge in. And if Darwinism is refuted, anthropology falls with it.

Darwinism and psychology

As with anthropology, psychology owes much to Darwin. Darwin had, he thought, closed the gap between humans and animals: the difference between the mind of man and of animals was one not of substance, but of degree. Thus in effect he rejected the scriptural teaching of an intellectual and emotional capacity (called the "spirit of man" in 1 Cor.2:11) which separates man from the animal kingdom, and makes him capable of responding to God. One of Darwin's ideas was "the principle of serviceable associated habits", illustrated, for example, by the sneer of disdain in which the top lip is raised to reveal the upper canine teeth; this was seen to be an evolutionary vestige of an animal baring its teeth to deter an aggressor. In the *Expression of the Emotions* he endeavoured to show that many

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psychological phenomena could be explained in genetic or evolutionary terms.

Not all Darwin's ideas on psychology are accepted today, but his influence on the development of this godless science has been considerable. Not least, his works influenced the founder of the psycho-analytic movement, Sigmund Freud.

Darwinism and theology

Since the late Middle Ages, when Wycliffe said that the Law of Christ handed down in Scripture was by itself sufficient to bring a man to salvation, ¹¹ and translated the New Testament into English for the common man, a tradition grew up in English theology of a reliance on Scripture rather than on the tradition and authority of the Church. This influenced the course of the Reformation in England, and subsequently paved the way for the spirit of enquiry into the Scriptures in the 19th century. It was perhaps partly because of this that Darwinism, although it was born here, found acceptance less quickly among theologians in Britain than in continental Europe. But when it did gain acceptance its effect was devastating. Acceptance of the truth of the Bible had hitherto been the basis of theology, and the "progressive" ideas of Higher Criticism had had little effect. As late as 1864, the "Oxford Declaration", signed by 11,000 Anglican clergymen, reiterated confidence in the complete inerrancy of the Bible. Darwinism helped to change that, for it was purely naturalistic; it made no use of any argument of design or purpose in life on earth. Clearly Darwin had cast grave doubt on the literal truth of Scripture.

The effect on theology was two-fold. First, from about the end of the last century, establishment theology laid itself open to the influence of the higher critics, and very quickly abandoned its former allegiance to Scripture. So debased has it become that it is prepared to tolerate views such as those expressed by the late J. A. T. Robinson (then Bishop of Woolwich) in 1963, when he jettisoned the idea of God as a real, super-natural Being, and for it substituted what he termed "an experience at one and the same time of ultimacy and intimacy". ¹²

Popular theology, on the other hand, sought to find a way of accommodating evolutionary theory into some sort of modified view of the "truth" of Scripture: this always entailed seeing the early chapters of Genesis at best as allegorical or symbolic, and at worst as irrelevant. This approach does

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not even have the merit of consistency, as the would-be student is left with no way of telling which parts of Scripture are true and which are not, or which parts are allegorical and which literal. It is most unfortunate that this woolly approach of popular theology - which prefers to accept unproven and changing theories of men rather than the straightforward statements of Scripture - has gained a foothold in our community.

Anthropology, psychology and theology are not, of course, the only disciplines influenced by Darwinism. For the reader who wishes to investigate the effect of Darwinism in other areas such as sociology, philosophy, politics, art and music, I would recommend reading D. R. Oldroyd's book *Darwinian Impacts*.

II. UTOPIANISM

An interesting effect of scientific humanism has been the spread of Utopian dreams. The notion of a Utopia - some happy land, usually a distant island, which is wisely governed and is untroubled by the world's problems - is not solely the product of modern scientific advance; but it is still true that scientific progress since the Renaissance has fired men's minds to imagine the world to become a better place purely as a result of human effort: this is humanism indeed.

Thomas More

Utopianism did not begin with the Renaissance. Plato, in the 4th century BC, had already described his ideal Republic, and had told the story of the island of Atlantis.¹³

It was Thomas More who in 1516 resurrected the genre and started a tradition of utopian writing that has lasted into our own day. More described an island where, in contrast to the Europe of his day, a kind of natural justice prevailed, even though - or perhaps because - they had no organised religion. The Utopian society was egalitarian, even communistic, and moral standards were high. More's purpose in writing *Utopia* has been much debated. Was he (a devout Catholic) recommending religious toleration? Was he (a large property owner) really a crypto-communist? Of course not. His purpose was more subtle: perhaps the book was designed to shame his readers, who regarded themselves as Christians, into doing better than the avowed heathens of the imaginary Utopia. Whatever his purpose in writing, More's tongue-in-cheek account of an ideal world

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demonstrates that he thought man could and should achieve something better for himself.

Johann Valentin Andreae

Later writers took up this theme, and the development of science was often seen to provide the means for man to improve his lot.

In 1619 Johann Valentin Andreae published *Christianopolis* in Strasbourg. As the name indicates, this imaginary city was run on Christian principles, though very much influenced by mysticism and cabala. Here the study of natural science was a religious duty; as the late Frances Yates said, "Their culture is highly scientific; indeed, in one of its aspects Christianopolis sounds like an exalted kind of Technical College." ¹⁴.

Even at this early stage in the development of modern science (Bacon's *Novum Organum*, in which he set out influential rules of scientific method, was not published until the following year), science was recognised as holding out considerable potential for human advancement.

Andreae's ideas were modelled on Campanella's *City of the Sun*, in which mystical priests kept the people in happiness and virtue through their benevolent scientific magic. The city itself was a kind of encyclopaedia of learning, incorporating an ingenious memory-system for remembering its contents. ¹⁵. But Andreae's "Christianopolis" was the first of these ideal cities really to rely on utilitarianism - the application of scientific knowledge for the improvement of man's estate, encouraging the myth that it is ignorance, and not sin, which is the cause of human problems. It is this aspect of utopianism which illustrates so well how men seek scientific discovery and advancement to provide hope of improving their condition - forgetting that the Creator is the only one who can offer any lasting improvement. Andreae and his group tried to put their utopianism into effect by the foundation of the "Societas Christiana" - a society devoted to Christian and intellectual renewal. But it was short-lived.

Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* was published in 1627, the year following his death. Like Andreae's Christianopolis, his utopian city (called Bensalem) was a centre of learning - particularly scientific learning - which was intended to bring greater human fulfilment. In the middle of

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this utopia lay an institution called "Salomon's House". Its purpose was "the knowledge of causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible".¹⁶

Much of Bensalem's workforce was dedicated to science in one way or another; and among the inventions of this new Atlantis were foreshadowed such things as aircraft, submarines and telephones.

The idea of an institute for the advancement of science caught the contemporary intellectual imagination. Thus the Royal Society was conceived and came into being in 1660, with the aim of engendering scientific progress. It was thought that it would fulfil Bacon's notion of a better world through science¹⁷. - as Anthony Quinton says, "It is generally agreed that the idea of Salomon's House was at work in the minds of those who founded the Royal Society".¹⁸

The Royal Society went on to foster the talents of some of Britain's greatest scientists - John Locke, Robert Hooke, Edmund Halley, Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle and many others.

Modern Utopias

Since the foundation of the Royal Society, science seems to have opened up just as many opportunities for doing evil as it has for doing good. And the benefits science has brought have arguably been outweighed by the problems it has caused. Yet scientists continue to look for a utopian age ushered in by scientific advance.

Island by Aldous Huxley (grandson of T. H. and brother of Julian - both leading exponents of scientific humanism) was published in 1962. It represents Christianity as evil, and looks, as ever, to science to solve man's problems. But science has so far managed to bring that idyllic state no nearer.

In a book dedicated to Aldous Huxley, Denis Gabor gives a description of how the modern scientific utopia is to be achieved. His prescription is frightening - for example, everyone has to be indoctrinated into thinking in the same way; and eugenics - the improvement of the human stock by genetic manipulation or restrictions on breeding - would be practised to save humanity from petering out "in an overwhelming flood of feeble-mindedness". He believes that this programme will not fail to breed "a mentally and physically healthier humanity, more capable of achieving happiness in the world to come. They will not all tower above us

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intellectually, but all can have clear eyes, lithe bodies, and quick muscles rippling under a sunburnt skin".¹⁹

Quite apart from the Nazi overtones of this prescription, it has failed to come to terms with the real problem of the world - human nature and its consequence, sin.

These utopian ideals are a long way from the Scriptural teaching about how happiness can be achieved. Happiness, says Jesus, comes not from the kind of mental and physical health described by Gabor, but from meekness, mercifulness and peacemaking (Matt.5:3-12). Such blessedness comes from being the children of God, and looking forward to the time when they shall inherit the earth. Scientific humanism is at odds with this teaching and scientific utopias look pale in comparison with the age of glory the Scriptures foretell.

Conclusion

I have painted a picture in blacks and whites. Certainly not all scientists believe in eugenics, nor necessarily that science can bring about a utopia. A knowledge of science in itself does not preclude a belief in the gospel of Christ; indeed, some scientific theory may be positively helpful²⁰ in combating some of the errors of the world around us. But science is just as much a part of the humanistic tradition - with all its inherent dangers - as are the other aspects of humanism which have been examined in this book. Science, and in particular Darwinism, has had a tremendous influence in turning men's minds from the Truth and, even when at face value it appears harmless, thoughtless acceptance of scientific theories may, particularly if they affect our thinking about Scripture, be detrimental to our spiritual health.

Andrew Walker

NOTES

1. i.e. the survival of the fittest. This view contrasted with earlier ideas (e.g. Lamarck's) that organisms evolved by adapting to new environments.
2. It was at this meeting that the Bishop of Oxford is said to have asked Huxley whether it was "through his grandfather or his grandmother that he gained descent from a monkey". Huxley replied, "If the question is put to me 'Would I rather have a miserable ape for a grandfather, or a man highly endowed by nature and possessed of great means and influence, and yet who employs these faculties and that of great influence for the mere purpose of introducing ridicule into a grave scientific discussion', then I unhesitatingly affirm my preference for the ape." (Quoted in D. R. Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, p.194).
3. "After Darwin, the Evangelical position was never quite the same again." (Carter & Mears, *A History of Britain* p.909).
4. "(A) drastic reorganisation of our pattern of religious thought is now becoming necessary, from a God-centred to an evolution-centred pattern" (Sir Julian Huxley, writing soon after the publication in 1963 of J. A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* (quoted in *Essays of a Humanist*", 1964, p.224).
5. One writer said, "Anthropology is the child of Darwin: Darwin makes it possible. Reject the Darwinian point of view, and you must reject anthropology also" (R. R. Marett, quoted in D. R. Oldroyd, op.cit. p.298).
6. John E. Pfeiffer, *The Emergence of Man*, p.417; Richard Leakey in *The Listener*, 25th June 1981.
7. J. E. Pfeiffer, op.cit. p.419.
8. J. E. Pfeiffer, op.cit. p.422.
9. Richard Leakey in *The Listener*, 25th June 1981.
10. Transcripts published in *The Listener*, 7th May to 25th June 1981.
11. "Nonne lex Christi in Scriptura tradita per se sufficit?" - De Veritatae Sacrae Scripturae 20.
12. *Honest to God*, p.131.
13. Plato, *Timaeus* 20d - 27a; "Critias", 108c - end.
14. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p.188.
15. Described in Frances Yates' *The Art of Memory*, p.289.
16. *New Atlantis*, p.277.
17. Bacon's work was not the only influence on the Royal Society in this respect. The late Frances Yates has shown that Andreae's *Christianopolis* and Samuel Hartlib's *Utopian Description of the famous Kingdome of Marcarcia*, published in 1641, were equally important.
18. *Francis Bacon*, p.68.
19. *Inventing the Future*, p.128. Interestingly, Julian Huxley also advocated eugenics as a way of improving the human race: his prescription relies heavily on Darwinian natural selection - see *Essays of a Humanist*, p.262-9.
20. e.g. the late Professor Sir Karl Popper has some sensible things to say about rationalism and objectivity.

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USEFUL BOOKS

D. R. Oldroyd:	Darwinian Impacts (Open University)
J. E. Pfeiffer:	The Emergence of Man (Nelson)
Keith Thomas:	Religion and the Decline of Magic (Penguin)
Robert Mandrou:	From Humanism to Science (Penguin)
Thomas More:	Utopia
Frances A. Yates:	The Art of Memory (Penguin)
Frances A. Yates:	The Rosicrucian Enlightenment (Paladin)
Anthony Quinton:	Francis Bacon (Oxford)
Aldous Huxley:	Island (Granada)
Sir Julian Huxley:	Essays of a Humanist (Penguin)
Bryan Magee:	Popper (Fontana)
David Miller (Ed):	A Pocket Popper (Fontana)
Sir Peter Medawar:	Plato's Republic (Oxford)



"...after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor.1:23).

CHAPTER EIGHT

HUMANISM AND PSYCHOLOGY

The Theory of Evolution, taught so widely in the Educational system, has had over the years a marked effect upon the attitudes and behaviour of people toward one another, religion and the purpose of living. The moral decline in society can be linked to the embracing and following of this pernicious theory. However, along with the Darwinian concept, other approaches to matters related to life have also helped forward the godlessness so prevalent today. I refer to the various schools of psychology whose theories are used to help people face their problems. Some of our young people facing higher education will have been taught about, or at least made aware of, such men as Sigmund Freud, B. F. Skinner and Carl Rogers and their "disciples", all of whom believed that man *unaided by divine instruction* could resolve the intricate problems of life.

It is well to remember that if anyone visits a psychologist or indeed a psychiatrist regarding *non-organic* "mental illness", then the possibilities are that their advice will include concepts derived from the above gentlemen and treatments based on human reasoning and observation.

I would stress that throughout this chapter I am not considering problems relating to people whose aetiology can be placed to bodily chemistry malfunction - that is indeed the real field for psychiatrists. ¹ Our thoughts are directed towards the godless theories of men who set out to solve by clever and subtle concepts the malfunctions of human beings, and to whom sometimes brethren and sisters go for help instead of perhaps turning to the Bible, prayer and *careful Scriptural guidance* from brethren and sisters. ² Sadly, from personal experience, I have seen members advise those "feeling low", "depressed" etc. to see the "Doc" or the psychiatrist instead of *opening the Bible* with them and getting to grips with the problem - very often sinful behavioural patterns of living!

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The Bible

The Bible deals with the *whole* man; ³ therefore within its pages the worries, frustrations etc. which crowd into our mind and affect our behaviour *are* dealt with. For the Scriptures not only deal with the symptoms (for example, marriage disharmony, drunkenness etc.) but also the disease - *sin!* Unless therefore we get to the root of the problem, ⁴ the palliatives will be short-term; and worse, the *real* problems in the individual will not be faced up to squarely. It is therefore vital to look at ourselves in the light of the Word of life, to discover therefrom the answers to the practical issues of life. Let us then note a few searching passages:

- Jeremiah 17:9,10: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (RSV corrupt): who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins..." Thus Jeremiah appeals to Yahweh - "Heal me, O LORD" (v.14).
- Hebrews 5:14: "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who *by reason of use* have their *senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*" So the Word (strong meat) is to be reflected upon and applied in action; only those who do so know the difference between good and evil in the sight of God - good and evil not only in doctrinal matters, but also in the application of those doctrines.
- 2 Timothy 3:16,17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for *reproof, for correction*, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Bullinger observes that the phrase "throughly furnished" has the idea of fitting a vessel for sea. If we are to face the storms of life, then it is essential that we take on board the Bible as the Handbook for practical, Godlike living - and not just a textbook for doctrinal exactness (both, of course, are essential, I would add).
- Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, *piercing even to*

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the dividing asunder of soul and spirit... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If you want your inner self exposed, then the Word will do it; and if you want to be healed the Word will direct you to the Healer (see end of Hebrews ch.4).

All around us people are turning to so-called experts for therapeutic help, to find contentment and peace to troubled minds. What saith the Lord? "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee*" (Isaiah 26:3). Do we really believe God in these important matters?

Theories of Men

Let us then briefly glance at the theories of the men already referred to in this article, compared to God's viewpoint:

	<i>General Approach</i>	<i>Specific Type</i>	<i>Man's Problem</i>	<i>Solution</i>
1	Expert Knowledge	Freudian Skinnerian	Poor Socialisation Environment Conditioning	Resocialisation Reconditioning by Expert
2	Common Knowledge	Rogierian	Failure to live up to potential	Resources in self
3	Divine Knowledge	Christian	Sin against God	Resources in the Word

FREUDIANISM

According to Freud, only the experts can handle human malfunctional behaviour, and they are held in awe (as I have seen during my College studies) by lay folk. To Freud, man's main problem is poor socialisation. The counselled person is regarded as helpless, both in the past and present. Through the process of psychoanalysis, the "expert" takes a long expedition back into the counselled person's past. The latter is made aware of the many forces which have influenced him, as the process of socialisation

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takes place. This process is accomplished by "free association", "dream analysis" and other methods appropriate to the basic assumption. Next, the psychoanalytic expert, now turned psychotherapist, himself becomes or assumes the role of those who influenced the counselled person's past. In this way the therapist resocialises the client. This approach (very briefly described) is based squarely on the assumption that *man is not responsible for what he does*. (Note, however, the grain of truth in Freudianism, in that people *do* exert significant influence upon one another - parents over children, for example. But the Scriptures are clear that *God holds us responsible for our own actions*, and that we are expected as followers of Christ to shake off evil intentions with His help.) I would suggest that some of the present-day disregard for individual responsibility can be laid at the door of those advocating this concept in colleges and even in schools.

BEHAVIOURISM

B. F. Skinner and the Behaviour Modification School provide the other most prominent example of the "expert" approach. While Freud is the "armchair" theorist, Skinner goes into the "lab" and experiments with behaviour. For him man is an animal, the highest yet to exist. Organic evolution is the dynamic behind man for Skinner and his friends; he is the product of his environment and as such cannot be held responsible. While Freudians analyse the counselled person to determine who did what to him in the past, the Skinnerian solution is to discover scientifically the contingencies related to the poor behaviour, and on the basis of the information, rearrange the environmental situation so as to reprogram the counselled person's responses. This is done by the use of rewards and aversive controls. Once again there is an element of truth contained in this approach; we are affected by the environment, and rewards and punishments are Bible concepts. But Skinner's concepts are based on manipulation, without cognitive considerations, and above all without due regard to the standards of God and His Word. As one writer has put it: "Strict adherence to Skinnerian training would, if it were possible, train a man to live like an animal. He would always act to avoid suffering and to gain pleasure. If not animal behaviour, criminal behaviour results: avoid all troubles: get what immediate satisfactions are available".⁵ Is it any wonder that the world is so selfish and godless with such concepts around?

ROGERIANISM

Rogers would contend that you do not need an expert; thus many clergymen and social workers in this country have seized hold of this man's theoretical concepts to deal with human stress and problems. To Rogers, all men have adequate knowledge and resources to handle their problems. In fact, Rogers believed that at his core, man is good, not evil; the task of the counsellor is to unplug the client's potential. Under his system the counsellor does not direct, but becomes a mirror off which the client's own resources are reflected back to himself. By this reflective process the counselled person at length comes to see the dimension of the problems (this method is used extensively in Group Therapy work for the "mentally ill"). To Rogers and his "disciples", God is not needed; but again an element of truth is seen in his approach - he wants man to be responsible for his own actions and behaviour. Alas, he fails to see man as properly responsible in declaring him to be independent of God.

We have had to be brief in our survey of these psychological concepts; but the exhortation for us is to use the Bible to break harmful habits. Generalisations are not enough; it is wise to look into the Word for specific answers to our problems. Before we go to those outside for advice, or even, perhaps, before reverting to pills and tranquillisers to relieve our "feeling low" or using diversion tactics to avoid painful realities, let us go to the Father in prayer, open the Word for answers, and apply *that* medicine in our lives and to our difficulties. Sadly, too many people (I have seen some in my work) are using short-term palliatives for long-term problems; the Lord has the answers!

Brian Woodall

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NOTES

1. So often answers to patients' problems are sought under the "medical model" and thus drugs, E.C.T. etc. are used; but these so often only cover over or temporarily blot out the real problems. So often what is wrong in the patient concerns human relationships and Scripturally-sinful behavioural patterns.
2. There is need for contextual study of the Scriptures, not using the Bible to hang an idea on - a verse pulled from its context.
3. Deut. 6:5.
Lesson of the burnt offering - Lev. ch. 1.
4. How can "outsiders" really help with our problems which have close connection with sin? Release from such depends on (1) Repentance (2) Forgiveness (3) *Change of Life*. Only "within the truth" can this be effected.
5. *The Christian Counsellor's Manual* by Jay E. Adams, Baker House Books.



*"The LORD is with you, while ye be with him;
and if ye seek him, he will be found of you"
(2 Chron.15:2).*

CHAPTER NINE

HUMANISM IN PERSONAL LIFE

Putting man before God

There is a sense in which all men and women are by nature humanists. There is no stereotyped humanist. He (or she) may vary from a peace-loving, caring, sharing, good neighbour to a cunning, desperate and virulent terrorist, so wide can be the personal interpretation and application of the humanist philosophy. Political views may vary from extreme left to extreme right, whichever he may feel is the way towards the supremacy of humanism. Membership of a Humanist society, or an Ethical society, or a Socialist party is not a necessary qualification. Indeed, many a humanist will not have heard of his philosophy by name, nor even know just what it stands for. The common denominator is that the humanist of whatever shade puts his faith in mankind to achieve the ultimate goal, unaided. For most humanists will deny the existence of the superhuman, preferring to think that "the human is super".

Put very simply, personal humanism is the very opposite of the First Commandment, to put the Lord God first in our hearts. This philosophy consists of putting man, either self, or others, in that place in our hearts that should be occupied by our Almighty Creator. It is common to men of every nation, and is as old as the human race. Today, this way of thinking is consciously and proudly held by many, including most of those who wield political power in the world. Contemporary humanism is organised by societies and publications which keep a member informed and supported in his philosophy week by week. It is usual to find that committed humanists are either agnostic or atheistic in their views. Yet a blend of humanism with a form of religion is not unknown. By its very nature, human politics is the practical application of this philosophy.

Adam and Eve demonstrated a simple form of humanist thinking when they disregarded the divine instructions, saying in effect, "We know best".

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All down the centuries every man who has put his faith in man has been unwittingly a humanist. Hence we find the middle verse of the Bible expressing the truth that "it is better to trust in the LORD, than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8). The Psalmist puts this truth even more tersely when he says, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Psalm 146:3). He then goes on to spell out the simple facts of life and death which prevent man from saving himself.

Humanism and moral principles

However, it is not true that all humanists are self-centred, as one might expect. The second commandment to "love thy neighbour as thyself" has been replaced by: "We believe in maximum individual autonomy consonant with social responsibility" (*Humanist Manifesto* p.18). This concept of social responsibility appears to vary according to the views of the individual concerned, or sometimes according to the power he wields. For example, Hitler regarded it as his social responsibility to eliminate the Jews from Germany, and Stalin and Mao destroyed millions of lives on a similar pretext. Yet, on the other hand, vast works of compassion are undertaken all over the world as a social responsibility, irrespective of religious views.

So, while some humanists can be dictatorial, cruel and violent in carrying out what they believe to be "the best for the most", others are undemanding, easy-going, tolerant and reasonably easy to live with. Humanism has many faces; but all of them deny to God the place in each human heart that is rightfully His, as our Creator, Sustainer and Saviour.

The popularity of this philosophy for the individual is mainly based on the supposed rights of humans to self-expression, self-determination and self-indulgence. No wonder the idea is popular! But in practice this can mean that our nice easy-going humanist neighbour may have very loose moral values, and can see no harm in doing just as he pleases, as long as he shows some sense of social responsibility. Indeed, this philosophy seems to be the embodiment of the saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die" (Isaiah 22:13).

If everybody is allowed to "do their own thing", the only result must be eventual anarchy, as Israel discovered when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud.21:25). The humanist curb on such a state developing is to say that since all men are brothers, all must have a

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consciousness of "the common good". So, rather than make a decision on whether a course of action is right or wrong, the humanist's personal criterion may be simply, "Does it work?" By a strange perversity of humanist thought, a mother may demand abortion or a sick person euthanasia, as a human right.

Evolution - an essentially humanist theory

The committed humanist is almost inevitably also an evolutionist. The admittedly great gap between the highest of the animals and the human is explained as the giant stride forward when the "labour ethic" evolved. Thus human labour is seen as a good thing, differentiating humans from all lower forms of life. The humanist is therefore proud to be a "worker", and sees his dependence on his labours as a proof of his development. (Note how this philosophy is the reverse of the divine curse on man in Gen.3:19.)

Humanism's popular appeal

A well-known humanist writer, Corliss Lamont, says, "Humanism is not only a philosophy with a world ideal, but it is an ideal philosophy for the world" (*The Philosophy of Mankind*). In such ways does it make a popular appeal to the individual as being a reasonable philosophy, and the one that is sensitive to man's wants. In the 5th century BC Protagoras taught that "man is the measure of all things" and that truth is relative only to human faculties and wants. In the life of the individual, this often makes for a tolerant, easy-going lifestyle, allowing all men to go their own way and do their own thing, provided that human rights are not contravened. The purpose of human life is expressed in *The Humanist Manifesto* (p.9) in the words,

"Religious humanism considers the complete realisation of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfilment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion."

The humanist's personal attitude to moral responsibility is summed up in a further quotation from the *Manifesto* (p.18).

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"The preciousness and dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value ... we reject all religious, ideological or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull intellect or dehumanise personality."

This personal philosophy makes the adherent politically conscious, and often leads him to what may be broadly termed radical or socialist views, the logical outcome of which is ultimately totalitarianism. Is this a surprising result of the adoption of "an ideal philosophy for the world"? Turning again to the *Manifesto* (p.21),

"For the first time in human history, no part of humankind can be isolated from any other. Each person's future is in some way linked to all. We thus reaffirm a commitment to the building of a world community, at the same time recognising that this commits us to some hard choices ..."

Solving the world's problems

So the individual humanist pins his hopes to a form of universal socialism to rescue the world from the morass into which it is now plunging. The United Nations Organisation planned to accomplish global control by the year 2,000AD. It is almost totally humanist-controlled. This confidence in man's ability to put things right was actually voiced by the late President J. F. Kennedy in words to this effect: "The world's problems are all man made, therefore man can solve them." President Reagan expressed a similar confidence, on his election, in words something like these: "I know we are facing many problems, but we'll fix 'em, we'll fix 'em." The significance of the man who solved Kennedy's problems with a bullet, and of the man who nearly "fixed" Reagan in a similar way, seems to have been lost on all but a very few observers.

It might be assumed that a humanist would never have any religious views, but, strangely, this is not always so. Both of the American presidents referred to held religious views, and in many places a strange admixture of human philosophy and religion has taken place. The strong political stand of the World Council of Churches is very definitely humanist. The new concern of the Roman Church for the world's deprived

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peoples springs from a typical humanist viewpoint. Both the Unitarians and the Society of Friends have combined humanism with their pseudo-religious views. While an atheistic humanist does not recognise God at all, and the agnostic says that he does not know, the Unitarian sees God as an impersonal first cause, and the Quaker is reluctant to be definitive about the matter at all.

It is easy to be critical of others, and point the finger and say that they are humanists; but we must remember that we all start out as humanists of some sort. Traces of the human philosophy remain long after Jesus has called us out to something far better. When we come to think about it, this is a new name, perhaps a more respectable name, for what Paul calls our "old man", which he urges us to "put off" because it is corrupt (Eph.4:22).

The choice before us

The choice before us appears to be a simple one - either to put our trust and faith in man or to put it in God, through Jesus. Too often we may opt for a bit of each. Humanism in our personal life must lead each of us to ask the question, "How much of the human philosophy have I retained?" Our Scripture record is full of the folly of human ways of thought in the lives of individuals, of men who failed to put their trust in God. It is also bright with the records of the comparatively few individuals who did put their faith in God, whose names are written in heaven, and who will share endless life with their Saviour, who gave them cause for faith.

Yet the only one who completely rejected all humanist values throughout his life was Jesus. If we follow him all the way, as he invites us to, we shall not be tempted to cling to any part of the humanist philosophy at all. Only by putting our whole trust in our Lord, by personally giving ourselves, willingly and wholeheartedly, to him, can we be sure of eliminating the human philosophy from our lives and adopting the divine philosophy that leads to everlasting life.

But what can we do for our humanist friend? Can we help him to share the joy of our faith? It is certain that we cannot stem the great tide of organised humanism that is sweeping the world. This can only be accomplished by the Prince of Peace. But in the meantime we must try to reach whom we can. The humanist ideal of One World at peace coincides in outline with the declared purpose of the Almighty. It is the means by which

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this is to be accomplished that differs so much. Perhaps we could contrast the disastrous record of the human race with the very definite and practical promises that our Bible holds out. Another possible approach may be through a comparison of the unproved and unprovable theory of evolution with the amazing facts of life on earth. The yawning gaps of the popular theory can be emphasised, with the very significant admissions of its supporters. This need not be involved or technical, as the principles are quite simple. It must be realised that evolution is the foundation of quicksand upon which contemporary humanism is based, so it is important that we know this subject. Again, maybe the political theme, contrasting the day's bad news with the good news of the Bible, could be a good introduction. Humanists are very politically conscious, yet are totally unaware of the political aspect of the Gospel. Can we show our humanist friend that the realisation of his ideals can only come about in God's appointed way?

The futility of humanism in our own personal lives, as also in the world's political life, is all summarised in the observations of David in Psalm 60:11: "For vain is the help (salvation) of man", and Psalm 39:5: "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Therefore,

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory" (Psalm 62:5).

John V. Collyer

CHAPTER TEN

HUMANISM IN PROPHECY

Previous chapters by the different authors have shown the wide-ranging influences that are abroad in our society, through which man attempts to establish that he is master of his own destiny, and that eventually, through his own efforts, the world will become a secure, peaceful and satisfying place in which to live.

Scripture teaches that God is in control, and that He will fulfil His purposes, and that our salvation is gained through trusting His Word and waiting for Him to act in the world. However, there is the grave danger that we may be misled by human philosophy such as humanism, which permeates all aspects of life and which appears to have achieved so much in terms of scientific progress, and which can sound so convincing.

Accepting that the humanistic ideal presents so great a temptation and trial for God's servants in these last days of Gentile domination, would we not expect the prophecy in the book of Revelation, written for the servants of Jesus Christ, to give them an indication of the way in which things would develop in the earth as they wait for the coming of the Lord in judgement, to contain some allusion to it, and warning against its dangers? We believe that it does indeed depict these dangers.

Mysticism and humanism

Before explaining our ideas in detail, two points need to be sorted out:

- (1) Humanism is a distinctively *Western* philosophy, and has little influence outside this sphere.
- (2) Humanism is, of course, not the only corrupter of truth and danger to God's servants. There is another philosophy, which we may loosely call "mysticism", which has had as much

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influence on Western thought as has humanism. Indeed, it has had greater influence in the past.

Both the philosophies shown above came to the West through the medium of Greek thought; but while mysticism has roots going far back in time, before the advent of Greek influence, and has affected the whole world over the centuries, and still does so, humanism as known today derives only from Greek philosophy and its impact has been felt almost wholly in the West - both in Roman times and since the Renaissance, in particular. It has had little impact on Eastern ways of thinking (excluding, of course, the Russian Empire whose roots mainly belong to Europe).

In the First Century, both these philosophies dominated the scene. Mysticism was the more prevalent, since it held sway not only over intellectuals through such concepts as Neo-Platonism, but also over the common mind in the practice of crude pagan religion. Nevertheless, humanism (represented by such philosophies as Stoicism) kept its hold on a large section of the more educated inhabitants of the Roman Empire.

When Christianity overcame its enemies and became the accepted religion of the Empire, it necessarily became corrupted by the popular thinking of the day, notably by Neo-Platonism and other mystical ideas - but also by the humanistic theories of Aristotle and others. Thus both the main corrupting influences of the truth of the gospel came to Christianity through Greek thought.

The Sea Beast

It is generally accepted by historical interpreters of the book of Revelation that the Sea Beast of Revelation chapters 13, 16 and 17 represents the Western Roman Empire and its successors. There is a clear line of imagery linking the Sea Beast, the Dragon and the fourth beast of Daniel 7, and very clear evidence for believing Daniel's fourth beast represented the Roman Empire. Our understanding of prophecy is based on this evidence. It is this Sea Beast who meets his end in the latter chapters of the Revelation, with that of the False Prophet and, later, the Dragon. The Sea Beast today is thus the last form of the successors to the Western Roman Empire, that is, Western Europe today.

Humanism in prophecy

When we examine the description given of this Sea Beast, we note two important facts:

- (1) While its feet are bears' feet, its body - the main element in its composition - is leopard-like, which immediately shows it to be Greek in character, like the leopard which represented Greece in Daniel ch.7.
- (2) Its eyes and mouth - again deriving from Daniel ch.7 - are the mystical eyes and mouth speaking "great things" against God; symbols which are generally, and we believe correctly, applied to the Platonic-influenced church which developed into Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodox 'Christianity'.

It is no exaggeration to say that, throughout the centuries, the Western political and cultural scene has been dominated by Greek thought. As earlier essays in this book have shown, democracy and other political philosophies, science, the arts and many other Western ideologies are all notably Greek in origin. While Platonic mysticism has ruled in the past over the religion of the West, humanistic philosophy has been more dominant in the political and educational sphere, especially since the Renaissance.

The leopard-like body of the Beast of the Sea, therefore, shows us that the Western world is a political and idealistic "empire" like that of ancient Greece, having similar ideals and institutions, governed by the "wisdom" of the Greeks against which Paul was so condemnatory.

Let those who hold to true wisdom, then, note the last words about the Sea Beast in Revelation ch.13.

"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: *for it is the number of a man*; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six" (v.18).

The eyes and mouth of the Sea Beast

The final manifestation of the Sea Beast is the Scarlet Beast of Revelation 17, who meets his end in Revelation 19:19. If anyone doubts this identification of the Sea Beast with the Scarlet Beast, let him compare

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Revelation 19:20 with 13:14. The Scarlet Beast thus represents the Western world of our day. Remarkably, this Beast is shown ridden by a woman. What does this woman represent?

We wish here to diverge a little from interpretations familiar to those who hold that the woman of Revelation 17 represents solely the Roman Catholic Church. Before we look at her identity, perhaps we can remind ourselves of another generally accepted interpretation - that the eyes and the mouth on the Sea Beast of Revelation 13:5 which spoke great things and blasphemies (this mouth links with Daniel's fourth beast and the eyes and mouth on its little horn - 7:8) represents (first) the apostate Christian Church in the whole Roman Empire, then that same unfaithful church in its two halves, East and West. It was this church that eventually split into two main religious bodies, the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox churches. This identification seems to us to be wholly correct.

Thus we hold that the guiding spirit of the Western Sea Beast is the false religion (divided into Eastern and Western parts, but essentially the same apostate system) which has directed the development of the Western world, and which, over the ages, has moved the political kingdoms and empires of the West to persecute the true brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus.

In saying that the Roman and Greek Orthodox Churches (seen in Revelation 13:5 as the eyes and mouth of the Sea Beast) have persecuted the saints, we do not exclude the Protestant daughters of those churches which have often been as bitter against truth as have the Roman and Greek Churches. It was indeed two of the main leaders of reform, Luther and Calvin, who brutally persecuted, or provoked the political rulers to persecute, those who followed Anabaptist beliefs, causing many to be put to death. And some of these Anabaptists were our brethren.

The question now is this; If the Catholic and other apostate churches are represented symbolically as the eyes and mouth of the Sea Beast, why should there be another, separate, symbol, i.e. a woman, for that same church in the vision of Revelation 17?

The Woman

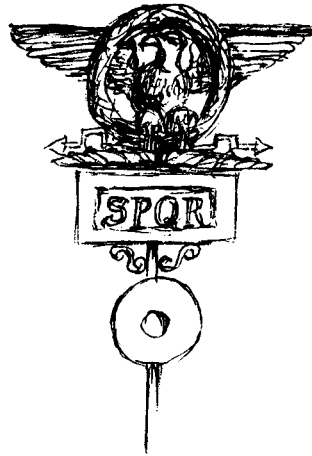
We suggest that the woman is a symbol for something different - that is, for exactly what the angel tells John the woman represents:

Humanism in prophecy

"And the woman which thou sawest is *that great city*, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 17:18).

For John, "that great city" must have been Rome, the city-state which encompassed the whole of the Empire of Rome. In John's day Rome was legally a republic, ruled (in theory at least) by the senate and people, with the Emperor (again legally) appointed by the senate. Indeed, the Roman legions went to war under the standard bearing the letters "SPQR" (Senatus Populusque Romanus), fighting for the Senate and the people of Rome rather than the emperor.

This political position altered some time after John's day, when Rome ceased to be a republic; but John would understand the words of the angel in terms of the political set-up of the Roman Empire of his day. And John would hardly be surprised to see the great city of Rome represented by a woman; was not Rome represented as a woman in the senate, a statue called "Roma" which stood on an orb in the Senate, and to which the senators and tribunes sacrificed before every legislative session?



Even more relevantly, John would know Isaiah's picture of the woman Babylon in his chapter 47. He would recognise much of the picture language in the angel's words as in line with Isaiah's vision. He would know that Babylon of old had been a city state, ruling over the nations of the world, and he would think of "that great city" as a city like Babylon of old, as well as like the Rome of his day. And the woman Babylon was the whole city, not just the idolatrous religion by which its people were enslaved.

John had already, earlier in the vision, been shown a woman, here in conflict with a dragon (chapter 12). Again, he would see this in terms of

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the Rome of his day. He would have no difficulty in recognising the dragon as a development of Daniel's fourth beast, which he would have known to be the Roman Empire of his own day. And would he not have seen that a woman must be a great city, like the city of Babylon of Isaiah 47, and so recognised her immediately as the Roman city-state of his day - especially as the woman of Revelation 12 must have looked very like the statue of Roma mentioned above?

This woman, persecuted by the Dragon, fled into the wilderness (v.6). She was no longer in heaven ruling with the Emperor, but had been deposed. This took place when the Emperor Septimus Severus finally dissolved the Senate and ruled on his own authority without popular consent. The people of Rome had been deposed from the ruling heavens.

It was out of this "woman", the Roman Gentile world, that the new Christian church was born. We know that her child represented the faithful ecclesia, because we are told that it was "our brethren" whom the dragon accused (12:10) when he attempted to devour the woman's man child. Those who see the child as Christ himself, or a single person such as Constantine, have missed the significance of Revelation 12:10.

When later in his vision (ch.17) John saw a woman, also in the wilderness, riding a scarlet beast, he would surely see her as a final manifestation of the woman of chapter 12, representing the Roman Empire of his day - especially when he was distinctly told that the woman "is that great city, which *reigneth* (present tense) over the kings of the earth" (Rev.17:18) - that is, she was ruling over the earth in John's day.

Thus, looking into the future, John would expect the city of Rome which he knew would continue in some form, to be the woman seen later, appearing at the end of Gentile times. It would be a "new Rome", perhaps, but recognisably like the old city state of Rome which he knew.

We postulate therefore that both the woman of Revelation 12, and that of chapter 17, do not represent merely a church or a false religion (though related to both), but a city state, as in other parts of Scripture prophecy. This state is in symbol called "Babylon", modelled on the history of the old Babylonian Empire which took the Jews into captivity.

This adjustment to the meaning of the symbol of the woman in fact makes little difference to the generally accepted historical interpretation of the woman and beast of Revelation 17. What it does do is bring

consistency to the interpretation of the symbol of a woman throughout Scripture. This woman, modelled as we have shown on the symbol of the woman-city of Babylon of Isaiah 47, also has echoes of Aholah and Aholibah, the cities of Samaria and Jerusalem of Ezekiel 23 - all 'city states', cities representing their whole peoples, and, like Babylon, presented in the final stages of corruption as vice-ridden harlots.

In the latter days "Babylon", the great city whose destruction is prophesied in Revelation 18, is not just a false religion, but a great world empire (certainly created by false religion), made up of the peoples living on the old Roman Empire, but now gathered together into a new kind of empire or federation as the "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (Rev.17:15). Such a confederation seems to us to be in course of being created, beginning with the European Union and perhaps taking in eastern Europe and parts of North Africa as well.

The woman rules

Throughout most of the history of the world, men have been ruled by autocratic systems, having emperors or dictators at the helm, and rigid governments with jealously guarded orders of precedence of officials, and total suppression of popular power. These kingdoms of men are symbolised in Old Testament prophecy as wild animals, as, for example, those of Daniel 7 and 8.

There have, however, been exceptions to the usual autocracies of men, a notable one being the city-state of Athens, which experimented with democracy (though not altogether in the modern style). Another was the early Roman republic, ruled by the Senate with tribunes representing the people, and occasional dictators appointed by the Senate to lead the people in crises such as war.

However, during most of history autocrats have held sway over the nations. It has been the (symbolic) wild animals, representing the "kings" of the world, which have ruled over the "Kingdom of men", and the woman, the city state, has represented the subject peoples of the city. Yet here in Revelation 17 we have a wild beast being ridden by a woman.

Is it not remarkable that today, on the territory of the old Roman Empire (with which the book of Revelation mainly deals) the states which occupy that area are almost all democracies, ruled over by their peoples?

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Democracy has mainly arisen in Europe since the French Revolution, so most democratic states are less than two hundred years old. Most are European or closely connected with Europe; some European nations (like the peoples of the Union of Soviet Republics) are very new to democracy.

As shown in earlier chapters, humanism is the strength of democracy. Democracy is the exaltation of the rule of the people (through the ballot box); humanism is the exaltation of man as the highest creature in the universe. It thus has a natural affinity with democracy, while priest-led religion has a natural affinity with autocracy, leading in its support and joining with it to keep the people in subjection.

The 'marvels' of humanism

In our day the alliance of humanism and democracy has had some notable successes in exalting the power of men. Scientific humanism has searched out the secrets of physics and medical science, and manipulated them for the glory and (questionable) 'benefit' of mankind. Democracy has organised the different peoples so as to provide funds and opportunity for these 'advances'.

The evil city-state seen as a woman in Revelation 17 therefore is democratic, since it is she who is riding the beast, enforcing the will of the people on the state; and humanism must play a large part in the blasphemies and abominations which she has spawned. This is not to discount the other blasphemous doctrines promulgated by her; but it is humanism above all which has played so large a part in the 'advances' in science, medicine, politics and economics which have combined to make her so rich and powerful. When the Spirit introduced John to the extraordinary sight of the harlot Babylon sitting on the beast, John records: "I wondered with great admiration" (v.6).

The angel reproved him. "Wherefore didst thou marvel"? He went on to explain to John the mystery of the woman and the beast, and declared of the latter:

"They that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they beheld the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (v.8).

Humanism in prophecy

Those who do not understand the truth do indeed marvel, not only at the woman but also at the beast. For the great achievements of Western civilisation in these latter days seem, to those who do not know the gospel, much to wonder at. All these wonders, almost without exception, have developed out of the Greek humanist tradition, with its enquiring mind and its arrogant belief in human ability. Do we wonder also? We should remember:

"The Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified ... unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called ... Christ the power of God, and *the wisdom of God*" (1 Cor.1:22-24).

We should not, therefore, spend our time reading man's wisdom, considering his scientific theories, becoming brainwashed with his thoughts, wondering if we ought, perhaps, to vote for his human improvement schemes, or staring fascinated at his wonderful inventions. Those who gain the victory over the beast have quite a different attitude, they sing:

"Great and marvellous are *thy* works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgements are made manifest" (Revelation 15:3).

It is imperative that the servant of God meditate continually, from the Scripture, on the glory of God, observable in His marvellous works, chiefest of which was Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Geoff and Ray Walker

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

Reflections

"Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" It was out of such a concern as that expressed by the apostle when writing to the Galatians, that the editors of "The Bible Student" decided to publish the series on "Humanism" which are now printed in this book. Since there is that in all of us which responds to the thinking and reasoning of the flesh as expressed in the philosophies of this world, and since those philosophies are increasingly accepted and even propagated by the apostasy, there must always be a danger that we might become so "foolish" as to be "bewitched", as the Galatians were by Judaism.

Response to the original series in correspondence has on the one hand encouraged us, in that the readers have indicated that they had not before appreciated some of the subtleties of humanistic reasoning; while on the other hand, letters which have defended and approved of some aspects of humanistic thought have confirmed our feelings about the need for such a series.

This final chapter will highlight the principal dangers of humanistic concepts to which attention has been drawn by our contributors, and will seek to summarise the lessons and warnings which have emerged from the series.

What kind of standards?

Aristotle (see page 3) proposed variable standards of morality, a concept enshrined in the modern notion of "situation ethics" - i.e. whether an act is right or wrong, good or evil, depends not on the nature of the act itself but on who does it, when, and in what circumstances. This is in total contrast to God's standards declared in the Scriptures, where (for example)

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blasphemy and fornication are *always* defined as sin, no matter what the circumstances.

Some of the sects of the apostasy have slid a long way down this slope and in the process have denied the truth of the Scriptures. The Methodists' "Revised Report on Human Sexuality", published in 1980, sought to evade the unambiguous teaching of Old and New Testaments by saying, "The words we have in our Bible cannot be directly equated with the words of God", and eventually concluded that: "The quality of homosexual attraction is thus to be assessed by the same basic criteria which are applied to heterosexual relationships".

The ecclesia needs to be constantly on its guard against these sorts of variable standards, where human feeling or the prevailing opinion of the time is put in place of the absolute standards of the Word. There can be no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness, no communion of light with darkness, no concord between Christ and Belial, no partnership between a believer and an infidel and no agreement between the temple of God and idols (2 Cor. 6:14-16). These are black-and-white ways in which God defines things, and if the ecclesia departs from these standards, it will incur the same condemnation as did Thyatira (Rev. 2:20-23).

"Human rights"

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are ... endowed by their creator with certain inherent and inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness",

states the American Declaration of Independence of July 1776. In the present time claims are being made for the right to work, the right to strike, the right to kill oneself or be killed (euthanasia), the right to kill an unborn child (abortion), the right to a 'decent' standard of living, the right to 'freedom', the right of self-expression, etc., etc.. Women's groups claim their 'rights', homosexuals theirs and so on.

There is a need to take a large step back from the whole 'human rights' scene and ask, "Who gave these 'rights', where are they defined and on the basis of what authority can they be claimed?" They are certainly not taught in the Scriptures, and in fact some of these so-called 'rights' are Biblically defined as *sin*. The majority of them are self-centred (if not

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downright selfish) and are the antithesis of the teaching and the life of Jesus (Phil. 2:5-8).

Contributors to these studies have indicated that this is another area which the ecclesia needs to beware. There is particular need for caution in the face of the adoption of apostate "Christianity" of a pro-'human rights' position. The Churches now see human rights as the essence of the Christian message. "The Church", according to one of the documents uttered by the Second Vatican Council, "by virtue of the Gospel entrusted to her, proclaims man's rights and acknowledges and esteems the modern movement to promote these rights everywhere." The World Council of Churches, a decade later, in the more precise language which represents the escalation of human rights ideology, has declared: "The struggle of Christians for human rights is a fundamental response to Jesus Christ. That Gospel leads us to become ever more active in identifying and rectifying violations of human rights in our societies".¹

A powerful factor at work in the above concepts is the idea of 'the brotherhood of men' - a phrase frequently used by the Pope. By contrast, the true children of God are exhorted: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world", and "The friendship of the world is enmity with God". There are abundant signs that these exhortations are needed in the Brotherhood today. There is (as far as this writer is aware) neither example nor precept in the New Testament for ecclesial (let alone inter-ecclesial) organisations devoted to helping the world by way of famine and disaster relief, aid to the Third World or any other such 'charitable' actions, which are really the organised collection of mammon for distribution to the unrighteous. What individual brethren and sisters may choose to do with that wherewith God has blessed them is one thing; to seek to persuade other members of the ecclesia to give such to the world, to solicit money from the world for such purposes, or to suggest that if we are going to continue to bring men and women to the way of life we must be seen to be supporting organisations like Christian Aid, Oxfam and War on Want (as one prominent brother has advocated) are totally different matters, and are contrary to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

Our responsibility is to "do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God (*not* the brothers of men!) without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse

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nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life ..." (Phil. 2:14-16). The emphasis needs to be on man's spiritual needs, not on his alleged human rights, on the bread of life which we alone (under the good hand of our God) can offer to the world and not on an attempt to prove that we are "more charitable Christians" than others.

Education

This was described by Bro. Andrew Walker (p. 20) as "the life blood of humanism", for it is by means of the education system that humanistic philosophy, values and concepts are disseminated to the rising generation. There are certainly "changes taking place in education today", as one of our correspondents put it, but it is neither the purpose of this book nor of this chapter to take sides in "The Great Education Debate". Our concern was (and is) that the children of brethren and sisters are being taught the *philosophies* of men as *facts*, and that the basis of such moral standards as are taught to them is not that found in Scripture.

The majority of correspondents to this section of the original articles, now reprinted here, shared our concern; but two brethren who hold senior teaching positions wrote critically of the articles published and in defence of current educational practices and standards. To be fair to the brethren concerned, it would appear that they somewhat missed the point of our concern in the articles on "Humanism in Education". The writers were not suggesting that all the teaching in schools ought to be from a Biblical (or even Christadelphian) point of view. The warning that the articles on education sought to sound was that since education is now even less based on Biblical values and principles than it used to be, Christadelphian parents, Sunday School teachers etc. have got to work that much harder to impart the positive values of the Truth to their children, because values which are in some cases directly opposite to the Truth are being at least freely discussed, if not actually taught, in schools today.

One of our correspondents suggested that what children need to be taught is not absolute moral standards of the "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" variety, but rather that they should be given such "information and guidance" as will enable them to make their minds up about the issues involved. This argument might carry more weight if our children *were* taught objectively throughout the curriculum; if, for example, the biology

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teacher said, "Evolution is a theory which is accepted by many scientists and here is some of the evidence for it. However, in R.E. you will learn that a completely different concept is taught in the Bible, and some scientists do accept the Bible record. From the two subjects you will receive the information and guidance you will need to make up your own minds on this matter." All brethren and sisters who are parents or involved with young people will know that this is just not how things are done. Evolution is presented as an accepted fact and is the basis for a number of concepts which are taught in the syllabus; in many schools the creationist view does not even get a mention. Thus on this issue there is a very real conflict between the position of the ecclesia and that of the educators, since Biblical standards are based on the absolute right of the Creator to tell His creation what is good for it, while those who accept the humanistic concept of evolution automatically reject the basic concept of absolute moral standards.

It has also been suggested in correspondence that some modern teaching aids (such as very vivid or explicit films) which may upset the children of brethren and sisters who have been sheltered in their upbringing are, at the end of the day, a good thing because it is better that the majority of the class be saved from "a slow death by boredom" than that the minority be shielded from possible emotional damage. This is another manifestation of humanistic thinking, in which the minority is in some cases neglected or ignored in the pursuit of this aim. As with many of the other ways of thinking considered in the series, this is in direct opposition to the teaching of the Scriptures:

"Take heed lest ... this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak ... if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8:9-13).

The weak brother "for whom Christ died" must always be considered, and it is sad to find the view expressed in the Brotherhood that the needs of "our" children should be subjugated to those of the children of this world in our educational system.

Conclusions

Concern was expressed by one of the contributors to the book that "R.E." is, in effect, not taught in some schools today. One of our correspondents expressed the opinion that this is in fact a good thing because "many pupils were turned off Christ permanently after the hypocrisies of school assembly and the attempted brainwashing and muddle of R.E. periods". This, to my mind, is like saying that a restaurant should be closed down because the menu lacks variety and the quality of food is poor - whereas a new chef would solve both problems! It is symptomatic of the general problem in education today, where hard-pressed educators who know not how to "train up a child in the way he should go", beset with problems of the breakdown of family life, competition from the world of entertainment and diminishing resources, seem constantly to be trying "some new thing" in the hope that the situation will improve.

We know that the situation can only "wax worse and worse" and therefore our objective, however we may be involved with the education of children and young people, ought to be to try to ensure that God's standards and His ways, rather than the philosophies of men, find lodgement in their minds.

Friends of the earth?

The aims and objectives of some of the pressure groups who seek to reduce the effects of man's despoliation of the earth might not seem too far removed from the desires of saints who may well be righteously grieved with both man's inhumanity to man and his often pitiless unconcern for the effects of his profit-making on the environment. Yet it is easy to be deceived, for the solutions proposed by the various "green" political parties and environmental groups are humanistic solutions which (even when dressed up in pseudo-'Christian' terminology) are not God's solutions - indeed, they do not even take into account the intervention of the Creator in the affairs of this world.

The concepts of the conservation of the earth's scarce resources, of reducing the pollution caused by man's activities and of improving the environment in which we all live, sound attractive - but they are based on the humanistic notion that man can control his own destiny, rather than on the assurance of the Scriptures that a Divine intervention will result in conditions where: "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the

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top of the mountains", and "the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."

The need to be able to distinguish clearly between man's objectives and God's purpose was brought into focus by Bro. Glynn Cherry, who made the following quotation: "It is not our role to be friends of the earth; but to be friends, or rather servants, of God" (p. 58). He concludes: "We believe our duty is not to change the world, but to become changed ourselves." This is a necessary note of warning in times when some in the Brotherhood are seen to be increasingly involved with organisations which care for the things of this world, and some are even suggesting that unless we engage in these sort of activities, we shall make no progress with our preaching efforts.

The mind of man and the mind of God

Another area which the series examined was the effect upon those branches of medicine dealing with mental disorders of the thinking of "learned men" who were influenced by humanistic and Darwinian concepts.

"Experts" who believe that man is not responsible for what he does, that man is no more than the highest form of animal life on this planet, or that human nature is inherently good, while at the same time being profoundly ignorant of God and His ways, are unlikely to be able to deal effectively with some of the problem cases which come before them. The man who, in measure, has come to understand through the Scriptures the mind and will of God and who recognises man's mortal and fallen state, is in a far better position to give counsel and advice.

Although brethren and sisters, having knowledge and Truth, *ought* to be able to give Bible based help and encouragement to those who are "troubled in mind", this does not always work out in practice. I have had the misfortune to listen to a panel of "expert brethren" giving, in some cases, most dubious counsel - apparently because their knowledge of the Word of God was being regarded as subordinate to their "professional training".

Whilst there are many cases in the ecclesia which wise-hearted elders can help better than some members of the medical profession, such elders have the great responsibility of trying to ensure that the counsel they give is Scriptural, and not just a re-hash of current thinking in the world, dressed up in Biblical language.

Humanism and Science

Our contributors to this section showed that humanism has pervaded every branch of man's "science" and that the views of humanistic scientists are generally regarded as proven, while they frequently dismiss Biblical views as mythology. That scientists have discovered many things about life on the earth and the grandeur of the universe is not to be denied. That the work of scientists has benefited mankind in many ways is unarguable. What needs to be recognised is that humanistic scientists have sought to establish that man can find the answers to all questions about himself and his environment by diligent application of the scientific method and that there is therefore no need for a God - whose existence cannot be proved anyway. Science has answered many "How ... ?" questions; it is incapable of answering "Why ...?" questions - a task which only the Creator, the all-wise God, can undertake.

The theory of evolution in its various manifestations is, of course, a direct attack on the early chapters of Genesis and upon the authority of all who quote them - including Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been generally recognised as such by the Brotherhood, although there have been occasions when individuals or groups have suggested that compromise between Darwinian concepts and the Bible record is possible. It is difficult to follow the reasoning of some brethren who seem prepared to accept the evolutionary time scale as all but undeniable fact, while finding all sorts of reasons why Biblical chronology should be rejected! While one may not agree with all their conclusions, some scientists *have* cast grave doubts on the accuracy of dating methods. Modern scientists were "nowhere" when God laid the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4) and the best that they can do is to make comparisons with existing processes, assume that "all things continue as they were" and extrapolate the results backward into the (so called) remote past. On the other hand, God has indicated that the work of creation was accomplished in a short space of time (Gen.1 & Ex. 20:11) and has given us the chronological data from which the epoch of creation can be established.

Peter's statement could well be addressed to the scientists:

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"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

Epilogue

In the final contribution, attention was drawn to the contrast between the works of man, with all his science and skill, and the works of God which are "great and marvellous". This is the contrast that all the contributors to this publication have sought to make. In the world today, man has so much to say for himself and of himself. He thinks himself to be supremely important and God to be irrelevant. Man imagines himself to be as God, knowing good and evil, just as the serpent suggested he could be.

Those who have been called of God to a knowledge of His saving Truth realise that God is the supreme Being, the supreme authority in the universe. Yet the saints are still in the mortal state, and there remains a danger that: "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so (our) minds (might) be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). These articles have sought to draw attention to areas in which humanistic thinking can threaten the ecclesia or pose dangers to the individual members of it. These are matters of which we all need to be aware, for: "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23), but "the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD" (Ps. 37:23).

Bernard Burt

NOTES

1. Edward Norman, *Christianity and the World Order* p.31,32. In this book, which is the text of his 1978 BBC Reith Lectures, Norman exposes the false nature of these lines of reasoning, shows that such concepts are no part at all of the Gospel message (but are rather the effect of "theologians and Christian publicists adjusting traditional understandings of religious doctrine in order to represent the canons of contemporary moral seriousness as exactly embodying the spirit of the gospels" - p.32) and demonstrates that the true hope of the Gospel is not centred on this present world: "the wise aspirant to eternity will recognise no hope of a better social order in his endeavours, for he knows that the expectations of men are incapable of satisfaction" (p.79).

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