

they would be called upon to worship the one true God and Him alone, and to dedicate themselves wholly to Him. It is because of this, as well as because of the sheer wonder of the miracles that God performed and the horror of the Egyptians' demise, that the Exodus is in many

ways *the* foundational event in Israel's history, an event which is referred to time and again in the later books of the Bible. The Exodus is a picture of deliverance from the power of sin and death to the high calling of membership of God's chosen people.

(To be continued)



Principles, Preaching and Problems

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The devil called humanism

2. The respective aims of Christianity and humanism

Geoff Walker

The Christian aim

THE CHRISTIAN has one all-consuming aim. His appreciation of God's power and wisdom means that he must work for God to be honoured throughout the earth. The fulfilment of the Christian's dream will be the earth full of the glory of the Lord (Num. 14:21), its inhabitants submitting to His will, the Creator's earth ruled in the way which He knows is for the good of all its people. No more sorrow and crying, no more death, is the ultimate realisation.

Such a state of affairs, as the Christian sees it, can never be achieved by men's unaided efforts; only in the Kingdom of God, established by God's power, can it be realised. It must involve a dramatic change in the thinking and activities of the peoples of the earth. They must be ready to do God's will. The Bible promises that such a change will indeed take place: "many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:2).

Here is presented a very down-to-earth scenario; in it there is nothing that the humanist could object to as mysterious or having superstitious overtones. Only on the score that it is to be

God's work and not man's might the humanist demur.

The Christian believes that, if God's will is to be enforced in the world, then the earth itself must of necessity be a beautiful and bountiful place. And he expects to play a part in this work of God. Yet it has to be asked how such a situation can come to pass when, over centuries of time, man has been unable to effect such a change. And the Christian does not see magic and mystery involved. So how can he help this process forward?

Jesus Christ in God's plan

The answer lies in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God necessarily has to work in an imperfect world. His aim is to restore that imperfect world to its original perfection. To this end He sent His Son into that world. This Son proved himself to be a true Son of his righteous Father, morally righteous. He trusted his Father completely, and was ready and able to accept his Father's plans to put the world and its inhabitants right, and to cooperate totally. He was the very opposite of a humanist. He said: "I came . . . not to do mine own will, but the will of Him That sent me" (Jno. 6:38).

For this reason, God, his Father, after acknowledging him as a worthy Son, promised him "the uttermost parts of the earth for [his] possession"

(Ps. 2:7,8). God saw in him the future King of the earth.

The work of Christians in God's Kingdom

Moreover, the Christian is assured in the Scriptures that in Jesus's reign over the earth he will be supported by those who acknowledge him in their present lives: "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). To the Christian the possibility of assisting Jesus, his Master, to rule over the world of the future to bring justice and peace to the world is attractive and compelling. He sets his sights on it.

Exciting though this prospect is, there is yet more to it, because it will involve for him a resurrection to a deathless existence—"if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" (v. 11)—in which he will be able with perfect moral character and unflinching strength to teach men God's righteous laws. This is where, as he sees it, his aim is so much more realistic than that of the humanist, whose best efforts to bring Utopia to the world must be limited, not only by his flawed character, but also by his ever-weakening physical powers.

The Christian's discipline

With this thrilling prospect before him, the Christian recognises the need to seek earnestly to enter the coming Kingdom. In order to rule the world as an associate of Jesus Christ the Son of God, ruling on God's behalf, there is clearly, to his mind, a need in this life to develop godly habits. This is what he sets out to do.

He knows that it is not within his capacity to right the world now, but he strives to shape his character now, so that in the world to come, with unending life and unimpaired strength, that goal will be within his grasp. He does not join societies or political parties, with their promise of reforming this present world. In the circumstances in which God chooses to place him in this life, he examines his own ways with a view to pleasing his God, thus developing his character.

To the Christian it seems that the humanist has no such assured hope as this.

The humanist aim

THE ultimate aim of the humanist can be expressed in the same terms as that of the Christian: he looks for a beautiful and bountiful world where nature and life are respected. In

such a world, the humanist anticipates, man will have achieved a just society, where all enjoy their rights, such as the right to vote and freedom of speech. Men must come to love the world, improve its institutions and make things more democratic, so that the world becomes a place where every human being has a chance of personal fulfilment in a stimulating, caring and civilised society. Such a future world order would be based on knowledge and reason, which humanists term 'enlightenment'.

Man his own saviour

To achieve this aim mankind must be educated. When humanism developed in the late fifteenth century, education was one of its key features, and education remains the lifeblood of humanism. The humanist believes that children should be trained in what society considers good, in learning, in discovery and in the flourishing of the arts. Men should continually learn from former achievements, and the technical and economic development of the West is presented as a desirable thing.

Today, humanists look back to the Dark Ages, with its unenlightened masses, and blame Christianity for that dreadful situation. They point to the savagery, slavery and tyranny persisting then, and see justification for all their efforts to educate mankind.

In particular, one of the principal means by which the humanist increases his knowledge of the human problem is promoting the scientific method. This method is concerned with theory, proof, observation, experiment and verification. It is argued that, given certain assumptions, it is possible to make logical conclusions which are observable, and then make deductions, which are proposed as laws. 'Laws' are continually revised and refined as more experimental results come to light.

The impact of humanism in the scientific field does not end with the theory of evolution, but that theory pervades every branch of science, including psychology, medicine, anthropology and archaeology. Its effects have fed through into politics, theology and the arts. So, for example, efforts to explain modern man's behaviour have been influenced by Darwin's work, *The Origin of Species*. War is seen as a modern equivalent of an ancient human instinct.

In this way man advances by learning what he is able to do by his own powers and knowledge, and God is thereby demeaned.

Attack on the Bible

Starting from his contention that “man is on his own”, the humanist must aim to destroy the credibility of the Scripture by opposing the complete inerrancy of the Bible. The ‘progressive’ ideas of higher criticism in the second half of the nineteenth century, denying the inspiration of the Scriptures and going hand-in-hand with naturalistic Darwinism, gave great encouragement to humanism.

As late as 1864, the Oxford Declaration, signed by 11,000 Anglican clergyman, had reiterated confidence in the complete inerrancy of the Bible; but Darwinism helped to change that, for it explained the world in a purely naturalistic way, and made no use of any argument for design or purpose in life on earth. Contemporary humanism continues to follow this aim.

Social aims

The humanist has a consummate desire to ‘improve’ society. He is prepared to accept the Christian tenet, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”, but emphasises “loving oneself”, meaning that a man cannot love his neighbour unless he first loves and fulfils himself. The belief that all should be free to ‘do their own thing’ derives from humanism. The freedom of the individual is seen as all-important, as will be clear from a

quotation from the *Humanist Manifesto*: “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” (p. 18).

These ideas also colour the humanist’s political views; he believes that “each person’s future is in some way linked to all”. This conception of the influence of the individual throughout society is now a global belief, expressed in words to the effect that “The world’s problems are all man-made, therefore man can solve them”.

In pursuing his social objective, the humanist reasons that, since all men are brothers, all must have a consciousness of the common good. However, since the humanist has no absolute standards which he can apply to the governance of society, men (in his estimation) must resort to experimentation in the way they live their lives. In this experimentation the humanist is influenced by his strong beliefs in the human rights of self-expression and self-indulgence. All of this seems to amount to “Thou shalt love thy neighbour” while putting “me” first.

One would have thought that common sense, and the evidence of history, would teach us that the humanist’s ideal world will never be achieved by man himself.

(To be continued)

The pearl of great price

The Kingdom of God is like some wondrous gem,
So valued it’s almost beyond our price to get;
And we can but look and hope by some stratagem
We might well obtain it and for other “riches” not fret.

This Kingdom, on offer, is a pearl of great price
For which we must tender all else that we have
To make its prospect ours and thus, in a trice,
We who were lost can lose all, yet still save.

This pearl of great price is my whole treasure now;
Gone everything else for which erstwhile I strove.
This jewel of mine is the way he did show;
He now is my richness, my true treasure trove.

Bill Guy