

The sixth vial and the world today (4)

Geoff Cave

The Lord Jesus Christ warns his followers in the Gospels, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Mk. 14:38). One of the greatest temptations today is to follow the ideas of humanism, because they are so appealing to the flesh. In this final article, the ways in which the froglike spirit can affect believers, and how this can be resisted, are considered.

IT WAS NOTED earlier in this series how the teaching that emerged from the French Revolution has had such an impact on social and political life. It is worth reminding the reader of the first article in the series ([Aug. p. 304](#)), which stressed the importance of looking closely at the description of the events of the sixth vial (Rev. 16:12-16). These five verses are of particular importance to believers in the twenty-first century. They are the only verses in the prophecy to give a specific warning (howbeit in symbol) for the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ living today; we therefore should give the more earnest heed to them.

The spread of humanism

The spirit of humanism, which has spread around the world since the days of the French Revolution, has radically changed the way in which people think. The needs of human beings are at the centre of all thought and action; nothing is considered unless it advances human happiness. Those advancing these ideas are very good at promoting 'the cause'. The statement made by the Lord Jesus Christ is very relevant here: "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Lk. 16:8).

To apply the principles of this statement to the subject under consideration, the "children of this world" (that is, the humanists) are better at promoting their cause than are the believers in promoting their cause (that is, their own salvation). The humanists know that everyone must be subjected to their teachings from an early age and so they use the education system as the way of promoting their destructive doctrine. The following statement shows their aims:

"I am convinced that the battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classrooms by teachers who correctly perceive their role as proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call the Divinity in every human being. These teachers must embody the same selfless dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new—the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith".¹

Our children, and anyone involved in the education system, are thus at particular risk of being exposed to these subtle ideas, which on the surface appear to be wholly reasonable because they appeal to the human mind. From a human viewpoint the philosophy is good, because it elevates human desires, but it will accept no authority which opposes it. But Jeremiah writes, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (17:9).

The teachings and resultant outworking in society of the humanist have brought tangible benefits to certain groups when previously their voice was not heard (for example, those with handicaps, and members of Third World countries). This may be seen as a good reason to accept the philosophy in total, which would be a grave mistake. Part of what the serpent said in Eden was true, but accepting the teaching as a whole resulted in the fall of the human race. Accepting the teaching of the frog spirits (that is, humanism) will result in the destruction of much of the human race.

Ecclesial life

It would be naive to think that these ideas cannot affect ecclesial life. The following, it is hoped, will help to identify how ecclesial decisions and actions may be affected. The purpose here is not to pass judgement on ecclesial life but to encourage readers to consider carefully what forces may be

1. New Age leader John Dunphy writing in the Jan./Feb. 1983 issue of *The Humanist* magazine.

at work in our midst without our realising the implications.

- 1 When deciding who should speak at an ecclesial gathering, what is the most important criterion? Is it the ability of the brother to open Scripture in such a way that the audience learns the true teaching therein, or is it the ability of the brother to 'draw the crowds' and be popular with the audience? The other side of this coin concerns the brother who is speaking. What is his first priority? Is it to tell people what they wish to hear, or is it to speak forth the teaching of Scripture, which so often is not pleasing to the human mind?
- 2 Following on from Point 1, are ecclesias given a balanced diet from Scripture? It is possible to give a one-sided view, selecting certain passages of Scripture whilst ignoring others. The result of this is a message which, for example, leaves the audience with a comfortable feeling that God is merciful, forgiving, longsuffering; and all we need to do is to sit back and wait for Him to give us the Kingdom. This is one half of the gospel message, and alone it cannot save. Solomon said, "Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before Thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with Thee" (1 Kgs. 3:6). Scripture clearly teaches we shall be judged according to our actions. This is the aspect of the mercy/truth balance that can easily be left unsaid because it is not palatable to the human mind. Mercy will always be shown to one whose way of life is directed to pleasing the Father's will, but who falls because of the infirmity of the flesh. Mercy will not be extended to one whose way of life is directed towards pleasing self and ignoring what pleases the Father.
- 3 When making a decision regarding one who is wilfully and persistently walking contrary to the teaching of Scripture and the commandments therein, what criterion is uppermost? Is it sympathy for a fellow human being or is it respect for the Word of God? Is this why some ecclesias do not withdraw fellowship from those who 'walk disorderly'?
- 4 Humanist philosophy teaches that everyone is equal and the point of view of all must be taken into account in any matter. Hence discussion is important and must continue until a consensus is achieved. It is possible for these ideas to spill over into ecclesial life, with discussions in which everyone is encouraged

to say what *they* think on a certain matter. If those who take part are not in tune with Scripture, disastrous results can occur. Discussion among minds that have been exercised by the Word of life is a different matter; such should be beneficial to all who listen.

- 5 Following on from 4, everyone's opinion is of equal value according to the philosophy of the humanist. There is a danger that, when a Scriptural truth is presented, it is seen as the opinion of the person speaking and therefore to be given equal status with all other opinions on the same subject. This has the effect of reducing the authority of Scripture to the level of human thinking.
- 6 Humanist thinking places the human being at the centre; everything has to fit around that all-important hub. This is possibly where the main danger lies in relation to the personal and ecclesial lives of believers today. Yahweh, the God of Israel, must remain at the centre of all things. At one time we were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). He has graciously called us to be heirs of salvation. It is He Who has made the way to salvation possible through His Son, not we ourselves. It is He Who has the power to achieve this, not we. It is He Who has the wisdom to make this possible, not we. He is the immovable rock at the centre. Humanist thinking reduces God to our level and deceives us into thinking we can persistently and wilfully do the things which He hates and He will 'turn a blind eye'. This is human thinking. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word" (Isa. 66:2). Do we always tremble at that Word when it directs, or even commands, us to walk in a way which does not suit human thought and behaviour?
- 7 Some ecclesias have 'fellowship lunches' or similar meetings. Scripture teaches that our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Is the conversation at such meetings centred on spiritual matters or is it all about ourselves, our family, holidays, hobbies, homes, jobs, etc.? If the latter is the case, we are deceiving ourselves calling it a 'fellowship lunch'.

These are a few examples of questions we should be asking ourselves as we try to ensure we are

not being unwittingly snared by humanist doctrines.

Warnings for today

Returning to Revelation 16, it must be noted what the Lord Jesus Christ had to say, following his statement about the spirits like frogs going forth: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (v. 15).

The first warning in this verse is to watch. Our Lord gave another warning, which is relevant to our watching and his return, in Luke 12:39: "And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through". The man who was not watching suffered his house to be broken up. Those who are not watching when the Master returns will suffer their lives to be broken up.

Taking the warnings in Revelation 16 and Luke 12 together, the message is clear. Being deceived by human thinking into placing emphasis on this life and its achievements will result in losing life eternal: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mk. 8:35).

The second warning in Revelation 16:15 is about 'keeping our garments', keeping an effective covering for our sin. Humanist thought, with its resultant action, will rob us of that covering if we are not aware of the deceitful and destructive influence it can have on believers. The Lord Jesus Christ has given a specific warning to the household of faith today to beware of the froglike spirits, but sadly many will not even be aware of the warning because Revelation is possibly the most neglected book in Scripture. It is surely incumbent on all who are aware of this warning to sound the alarm while there is still time. The antidote is, of course, to read and meditate on the Word of life:

"Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles, and affections exhibited in the Scriptures . . . The infallible advice then to every man and woman anxious about their salvation, is—READ THE SCRIPTURES DAILY. It is only in proportion as this is done, that success may be looked for".²

(Concluded)

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2. Robert Roberts in the Introduction to the *Bible Companion*.

The woman by the well

An exposition of John 4:1-42 (2)

John M. Forbes

C. The woman with no husband

THE FACT THAT Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman took place at Sychar is significant. It was at Sychar, earlier known as Shechem (according to most authorities; others believe that they were located on two adjacent sites), that God first appeared to Abraham in Canaan and promised that that land would be given to his seed (Gen. 12:6,7). That promise, made to one who was to be the father of many nations, was not restricted to Abraham's physical descendants but applied to those of all nations who would demonstrate belief in the Lord Jesus Christ through the cleansing waters of baptism (Gal. 3:27-29). And, as was the case when Jesus met the woman, the land at that time was under

the rule of the alien, a fact which testifies to the gift of God, the promise of resurrection made to Abraham (Acts 7:2-5).

Sychar/Shechem is described as being in "the plain of Moreh". Strong states that "Moreh" means 'teacher' and 'early rain'. Joel speaks of the two advents of the Lord Jesus in these terms. These rains describe the "teacher of righteousness", who was to appear on two separate occasions, both relating to the times and the seasons. As the "former [early] rain" he was to come to give life to the seed which had been sown. As the "latter rain" he is to appear immediately before the harvest which was promised to Abraham, and to which Jesus refers in John 4:34,35 (Joel 2:23 with mg.; vv. 28-32; Acts 2:16-21).

It was as the early rain that the Teacher of Righteousness, who would "tell us all things"