

Winter Tron Times

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The inhumanity of Humanism

Dear Friends,

Most of you will have heard news coverage of the proposal made by letter to the Scottish Parliament jointly from the Humanist Society Scotland and the Church of Scotland to (I quote):

“remove reference to ‘religious observance’ in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, and...send a clear message that no one particular belief system is valued over any other... The change to a more *equal* and *inclusive* ‘time for reflection’ would bring legislation *into line with modern views*...

Both the Church of Scotland and the Humanist Society Scotland also believe that requiring external visitors to schools to *agree with the equality and diversity policy*...would ameliorate situations which have arisen in the past.”
...This suggestion reflects a desire of both the Church and the Humanist Society Scotland...to search for common ground on which they can *journey together*”. [italics mine]

‘Journey together’ not just to remove Christian observance in schools, but, more sinisterly, using the language of ‘inclusivity’ to exclude from schools altogether Christians who teach Jesus is *the* way, the truth and the life. We may be shocked at the national church declaring so publicly its alliance with a body dedicated to creating a completely godless society. But sadly we should not be surprised; the growing ‘common ground’ of rank unbelief is increasingly undeniable, save to those wilfully blind.

Our concern here is not to discuss the Church of Scotland’s position. But what all thinking Christians today must be clear about, and not blinded to by the seductive language of ‘equality’, ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusivity’, is the ruthless (we might say ‘fundamentalist’) secular agenda to try to get rid of God in our society altogether. This agenda is not new, of course. I recently came across a piece by my father in the Holyrood Record from 1965, responding to a TV interview with the outspoken Humanist, Margaret Knight, which struck me as remarkably contemporary even 50 years on. I think it is worth re-reading today. After referring to the broadcast, the piece continued:

"The word Humanist suggests someone who is interested in human nature and human affairs; and this is true, but the real point of Humanism as a creed is that its concern is with human life without reference to God. One of its current catch-phrases (and this is what Mrs Knight is concerned to propagate) is "Morals without Religion", that is to say, the claim is made that God is not necessary to human life or to the establishment of an adequate pattern of morality in society. God, and particularly "the Christian God" is dismissed categorically as an outmoded idea, with some such comment as "Modern scientific thought has no longer any need of that (the idea of God) hypothesis".

Now, the thesis that underlies this kind of confident assertion is that in olden days the idea of "God" was used as an explanation of the many mysteries that confronted men in life, but that with the advance and development of knowledge, particularly scientific knowledge, "natural" and scientific explanations of hitherto inexplicable facts have generally and steadily edged God out as a significant reality, until now, in our present stage of scientific and technological advancement, there is no need to "invent" God as an explanation of matters hitherto thought "supernatural". Science can now explain them in scientific terms.

It was with such an attitude that Mrs Knight began her broadcast. This, to her mind, disposes of God. As an argument, however, this is not very scientific; it is plausible only until you begin to think about it; then its inadequacy begins to be seen. For one thing, it betrays a confusion of thought which fails to distinguish things which are different. If, in fact, this were how matters stand between Science and the Christian Faith, if – to use C.S. Lewis's words, "the picture so often painted of Christians huddling together on an ever narrowing strip of beach while the

incoming tide of "Science" mounts higher and higher" were true, then of course Humanists would be right. But in fact this is a misunderstanding of the situation. The Christian Faith is not disturbed by the advance in scientific knowledge; nor can any number of advances, however spectacular and decisive, ever have the effect of "leaving no room for God" in the universe, for the very good reason that the two kinds of "evidence" are on entirely different planes, and cannot affect one another.

It would be possible for Science to explain the universe even more completely than it has yet been able to do, explain it in such a way that everything became explainable in scientific terms, without in the slightest altering the Biblical contention expressed in the words "In the beginning God". For, in fact, when Science says its last and best word about the universe, we are still able to say, as the Christian Faith has always done, that there is another explanation to the universe – not, indeed, an alternative one, as if to suggest that it set itself up against the scientific – but additional one, from a different standpoint, which is deeper and fuller, and which also happens to explain science as everything else.

A simple illustration will help us here. It is possible to explain with the greatest scientific precision, let us say, the picture that we see on a television screen (or a masterpiece hanging in the National Gallery) in terms of electrical and radio impulses on a cathode ray tube (or, in the case of the masterpiece, in terms of colour pigments, and so on). But the most complete explanation in scientific terms does not even begin to discuss the reality that lies behind the picture, namely, the decision of the television producer to create the programme (or the artist the picture). Is it not absurd to imagine that, provided you could give a complete technical and scientific explanation of

the phenomenon of television (some scientists could), you would thereby completely squeeze out the very thought of the man behind its very existence?

Yet, this is what the Humanist argument seeks and claims to do. It is too easy a way of getting rid of God! And this, in fact, is about all that such reasoning amounts to. It does not start with scientific evidence; it starts with an objection to God, and by a process of rationalisation transfers the antipathy towards God to so-called scientific arguments against his existence. This is what I meant earlier by saying that as an argument this is not very scientific, any more than another noted scientist, Professor D.M.S Watson, is, when he says: "Evolution itself is accepted by zoologists not because it has been observed to occur, or....can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible". Well, well! So this is science. This is keeping God out with a vengeance! It scarcely commends "the scientific attitude" however, to thinking people, and it gives us leave to question whether the "assured results" of modern science are always as assured as they might be.

This brings me to another point. It has become almost a "stock-in-trade" argument with Humanists that Christian "experience" – God's providential care for us, his guidance in perplexity, his answers to our prayers, and so on – can be "explained" in purely naturalistic terms or as psychological phenomena which need have no reference to a supernatural Being at all. But this brings us back to our earlier illustration of the television picture. Even if it were possible to explain, say, an instance of Divine providence in a Christian's experience in terms of a purely natural chain of circumstances and coincidences (I suppose it could be done), science has

not really said anything from the higher, or deeper, standpoint. Does God not use natural circumstances? Who created them, but He?

This is a tiresome habit that many psychologists have got into. One becomes a little wearied at having one's experience of God explained away as concealed wish-fulfilment. It does not seem to have occurred to anyone that the psychologists, the sceptics and the agnostics and atheists might themselves need to be psychoanalysed, to have their scepticism and agnosticism "explained" to them, and shown to be, not a scientific attitude, but a specious rationalisation of a heart-rebellion against the God they do not like to retain in their knowledge. Why should their views be any less likely to be the result of psychological complexes, when they exclaim so vociferously that ours are?

That is a point worthy of far more serious consideration than has ever been given it. But there is something even more thought-provoking and it is this: the position held by scientific Humanism, when taken to its ultimate issue and conclusion, is a logical absurdity. For, to be consistent, someone who denies the existence of God must make human reason his absolute (this is what the Humanist does). But that same consistency must make him hold (according to his theory of life) that reason is simply the chance,

unforeseen and unintended product of mindless matter, with human minds (as we know them) dependent on brains, and brains on bio-chemistry, and bio-chemistry on some "fortuitous concourse of atoms". But if this is so, then the thoughts that such minds think about the existence of God are just as likely. All that Mrs Knight is entitled on these grounds to say – and this scarcely qualifies her to be an authority on matters of belief – is that she cannot be sure about anything.

Which is what Paul found out about the first Humanists, the Greeks, long ago, when he said "the world by wisdom knew not God" and found in Athens, for whose ancient civilisation and culture Humanists have such admiration, an altar with the inscription "To the Unknown God". This was Greek Humanism's confession of failure and need, a humility which its modern counterpart can scarcely be said to share. Indeed, it is modern Humanism's refusal to acknowledge a need for God that makes it so fundamentally anti-Christian, in spite of its many humanitarian qualities. For it is of the essence of the Humanist that he refuses to yield himself into the hands of any God, but on the contrary maintains his own independence. And the desire and determination to become independent of God is the heart and tragedy of sin, and, paradoxically, sin

robs the Humanist (and us all) of humanity.

It is not possible to be human (or humanist, rightly understood) without being saved into humanity by the God Who gave Himself for us in Jesus Christ. The Cross that is foolishness to the Greek (ancient or modern) and a stumbling block to the Jew is still a power beyond Mrs Knight's scientific calculations and understanding, and one that has been put to the test scientifically by countless men and women who have passed quite beyond the realm of hypothesis to that of verifiable practical experience. Those who taste and see that God is good prove that they are truly blest that trust in Him."

Indeed. Humanism is just one name for what the bible calls sin, "not a scientific attitude, but a specious rationalisation of heart-rebellion against God." And therefore it is the most dehumanising force of all, not just anti-Christian but inhuman.

Let us be clear, then, about the true inhumanity of Humanism. Far from 'journeying together' with it, let us devote ourselves to the propagation of true humanitarianism, the biblical gospel which alone restores to true humanity in Jesus Christ.

Yours,

William J U Philip

For those who want to read more from James Philip, we are glad to say that our website now includes the James Philip Archive in our Resources section. This includes his Bible Notes on every book of the bible, which have been treasured and widely used by many preachers and bible teachers all over the world, and also the vast bulk of his preaching ministry from Holyrood Abbey over 40 years of ministry there. It has been a great effort by some of our members to accomplish this, and we do hope that it will be a useful resource for many.

Family album

Matt and Tam Yeaman
with Nathaniel



Paul and Stephanie
Brennan with Jessica



Strength for the week

God is the Lord of our whole week. The Tron is a church that values the six week days as much as the Sunday on which we meet together. Work applies to those in paid jobs, at home, in education, unemployed, at home or retired. We are all workers in the world. Working to extend the kingdom of peace in our daily life, in times of harvest and through thorns and thistles. To all of Glasgow ... and beyond

A six-day workout for Christians

•Monday

I **God meant it for good**: In the beginning man was made to work and it was good. Genesis describes Adam as a labourer, an academic and a creative artist. Working the ground, studying and naming the animals. And it was good. Work was not a means to an end, it was the end in itself.

Q: **What is good about your work?**

•Tuesday

II **Pain in toil**: The world's view, and our experience is one of anxiety, stress and frustration. Our excess or lack of work upsets and causes conflict. The Bible's explanation of the fall describes this eloquently. Knowing why, at root, work is hard enables realistic expectations about work. This itself is refreshing!

Q: **In what ways is your work frustrating and difficult?**

•Wednesday

III **Jesus is the goal of our work**: Jesus did the work of salvation that we may rest in that amazing act. But rest is active and we must work this kingdom through the world in all aspects of life. All spheres of human endeavour are open to Christians. He says go!

Q: **How can you best serve God in your place of work?**

•Thursday

IV **There is dignity in work**

All work is God-given and has inherent dignity. Peeling a potato if done well is honouring to God. We need not think any forms of work are somehow beneath us. All work, whether with the mind or hands has dignity and can bring glory to God.

Q: **What types of jobs do you see as being undignified? How does the Bible challenge your view?**

•Friday

V **Rest is an important part of work**

Some people rest to enable them to work, others work to allow them to have rest. But according to the Bible, work is good and rest is good. Trusting in God's provision for all our needs allows us to balance work and rest over each week. Taking time to grow our relationship with the Lord is vital to be fully human.

Q: **How can you nurture this relationship with the Lord? What pressures are there for you to work more than you ought?**

•Saturday

VI **A mission field**: The access each Christian has to different areas of society is unique and precious in God's sight. The workplace for example is a great context for Christian witness. It may be the only place our colleagues come into contact with the gospel as we live lives and speak words that commend and proclaim the Christian message.

Q: **How might you respond to the question: what did you get up to at the weekend?**

The church is tiny and weak.
But like hidden yeast in an
expanse of flour it works its
way through the whole batch
little by little.

Matthew 13:33

Our work has
power

in God's
economy

**Whatever you
do, work at it
with all your
heart.**

Colossians 3:23

Now go ➔

Wednesday small groups and prayer meeting offer a welcome oasis in a busy week. Students and young workers can last till Thursdays, clearly.

Recommended books:

Ten At Work
John Parmiter

Every Good Endeavour
Timothy Keller

Home news

compiled by Ruth Hodgson

Overseas investments? Might be risky! As a church we invested part of the tithe from our original building project in a property in **Ranchi**, N India which has now become a satellite Bible Ashram of Delhi Bible Institute and is directed by **Ram Raj David**. Now, two years on from the official opening **Rupert Hunt-Taylor** and **Paul Brennan** have returned from a Pastors' Conference there and have reported the amazing transformation in the property's development. Travelling to Delhi was expensive, but now these pastors from Jharkhand State can meet in the upgraded conference room while in an adjoining room, as part of an outreach programme, women are being taught to sew and use sewing machines. We thank God for the share we invested in that property in Ranchi and the encouragement of seeing DBI's vision of a Bible Ashram in each of the twelve northern states by 2025 being gradually realised.

Another great cause of thankfulness to God was the Sunday evening last term when thirty people, from many parts of the world, committed themselves to our fellowship by taking the vows of church membership. There were thrilling stories of how some had come to faith — the desire to find out what the bible really said, the apparent chance

invitation from a work colleague to a carol service, the prayerful influence and example of godly parents, and so much more.

Weekends away for **Tron Youth** and **RtW** provided good opportunities for getting to know one another better and for growing in love and understanding of God's Word. Meetings where **Internationals** can learn English and also study the bible have grown and have been encouraging as people reach out to their compatriots and invite them along. The **Ladies' Bible Study** which **Isobel Murray** leads has had to move to a larger room and the **Ladies' Fellowship**, too, has seen a big increase in numbers. The **Seniors' Christmas Social** was a very happy event with the usual splendid feast organised by **Joyce Miller** and her team, and several notable musical performances including a one-off appearance of the Pastors' Quartet! Fortnightly Friday mornings attract good numbers of mothers and toddlers for 'mainly music' where there is opportunity for mums to participate and also, for new folk, to find out more about the christian gospel. A **Ladies' Bible Study** led by **Jacqui McMahon** meets on alternate Friday mornings.

We warmly congratulate **Matt** and **Tam Yeaman** on the birth of **Nathaniel** in December and **Paul** and **Stephanie**

Brennan on **Jessica's** birth in January. Congratulations, too, to **Laura Kerr** and **Andy Ballingall**, **Fiona Porter** and **Oliver Morrison**, and **Anna Dews** and **Graham Osmond** who have all become engaged. Fiona and Oliver plan to marry in July and the others in August. We were saddened by the deaths of three of our older members, **Dorothy Begg** and **Sophie Lowe** in December and **Betty McPherson** in January and we remember their families and those who miss them most. **John Morrison**, a faithful member of our Wednesday lunchtime congregation, died after a short illness and we uphold his sister, **Mairi Slessor** who cared for him. **Olive Campbell** has made a good recovery but sadly, while she was still in hospital, her mother, who Olive and her husband cared for, died. A number of our members continue to be unwell and we lovingly remember them and their families: **Duncan Munro's** condition is still baffling but he is much better and he and **Jenty** have been out to church on several occasions: **Ian Constable's** treatment is long and slow but he too, along with **Susan**, is frequently able to be in church: **Annabel Mason's** treatment is now thankfully almost finished, and **Robina Moar**, though still tired since surgery, is recovering well and is about to start further treatment.



were
you
there?

Pictures : Vincent Wake

Ploy Pittaya Klongkratoke

Claire Hamilton

SPOTLIGHT on

Tom and Doreen Allison



Every child needs a family

I thought I lived a pretty fast-paced life until I caught up with Doreen Allison recently. At 8.30 in the evening she had just finished a twelve hour shift in the labs at the Southern General Hospital when we popped round for a cup of tea.

This is on top of the respite foster care responsibilities Doreen and her husband Tom have taken on, providing up to ten children per month with much needed emotional support.

The Allisons have been partners of Barnardo's for ten years providing short-break care to a broad range of children over a weekend or for two to three weeks at a time.

Doreen said:

'We initially provided respite care for families who had children with disabilities and one of these children was in need of foster care and it was this experience that led us to feel called to speak to Barnardo's about providing respite foster care on a more permanent basis. We have seen many children come and go over the last ten years and our own children, Philip and Emily have played a major part in befriending and getting alongside these kids so the whole experience has very much been at the heart of our family life.'

Despite recent stories in the media about some Christian couples having difficulties with some fostering agencies the Allisons have had no such issues.

'When we applied to become foster parents we went through the detailed approval process and this involved going through every part of our lives and we were very clear about our faith and our intention to bring the children that would be staying with us at the weekend to church and Sunday school. We have always been upfront with carers about this and none have opposed while Barnardo's have also been very supportive.'

The role is not without its challenges, and taking on responsibility for these children means facing up to some difficult issues. Two years ago Doreen and Tom took in twins, initially for a fortnight but who they have supported at various stages over the past two years. When the boys first arrived they were struggling to settle into P1, causing much disruption in the classroom and showing little attachment or emotion. Exposure to violent computer games and television programmes had shaped their lives so much that when they went to the park and saw a twig they would pick it up and pretend it was a gun. Two years on the boys are much more settled and coping much better at school and home.

'When we first met the twins they had to be in separate classes to try and contain their disruptive behaviour. They also refused to obey instructions at home and

school but by getting alongside them we have slowly and gradually been able to build trust and break down the barriers. Sitting down at night and reading a bedtime story as opposed to watching TV has really helped them develop socially and educationally.'

Being able to share the gospel with these children was the most rewarding aspect of providing this support according to Doreen.

'The biggest joy of this whole experience has been the opportunity to share the love of Jesus with these children who have such very strong emotional needs. Two of the boys we care for just now attend Sunday school and one of them often asks us first whether he can go or not. Then last year one of the boys asked for a bible for his Sunday school prize which was such a blessing and it is our hope and prayer that he reads this and will see who Jesus really is and come to faith for himself.'

Driving home I thought here is a family living out what it means to "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

in conversation with Andrew McIntyre

Other Ministries

compiled by Ruth Hodgson

Trinity Church Aberdeen, where **Peter Dickson** and **David Gibson** minister is still looking for a more permanent meeting place. They have been much encouraged, however, with several new people attending and the appointment of two new elders.

Murdo Maclean in Carmyle and Mt Vernon Kenmure Church also reports new people joining. Relocating their weeknight Bible Study has more than doubled the numbers attending and the formation of a new group calling itself the TLC Group has been a real strength and encouragement to many in the church. Murdo rejoices to see genuine new life in his prison work. The continued help of an American couple and Matthew Todd's work with a children's choir have been invaluable.

Caz Dodds' commitment to UCCF is a constant round of conference planning meetings, regular supervisions with staff workers, visiting CUs, one-to-ones with CU leaders, giving advice on choosing new leaders and small group leaders' training meetings. Last week she was involved with Glasgow Caley University CU Events Week and next weekend she will be at the training conference for new CU leaders — Forum Scotland. We uphold Caz in all her busyness, and she and **Kieran** as together they seek God's will for their future.

Alex Bedford's work as an evangelist in Glasgow city centre is certainly challenging. Weather at this time of year can be quite hostile but onlooker

reaction these days can sometimes be equally so. Still, there are many with whom Alex, and those working with him, are able to engage, and fruitful conversations take place. Alex has preaching commitments in various churches most Sundays, and just before Christmas he completed what has been a worthwhile Christian Life Explained course in a Kilmacolm church.

Kirsty McAuley is due to return from the Ukraine where she has spent two weeks with others who are working on the SU gap year programme. Kirsty is in Edinburgh where she is involved with young teenagers midweek and also helps with school SU groups.

Away news

compiled by Ruth Hodgson



We were pleased to see the **Rowbory** family in mid January when they were home for a family wedding. Since their return to Jos, Nigeria they have moved into another house, just minutes away from their present one, which gives them a bit more space. **David** continues to oversee the work of the translators while **Julie** looks after the girls and home-schools **Rebekah**.

Bill and **Margaret Dunlop** are grateful to God for the five years in which they have been able to teach and minister in the Westminster Theological College in Uganda. Health issues for Bill remain, however, and they have now just returned permanently to Scotland.

Carol Whipp is now settling back into her homeland of Australia. She has found a suitable apartment and, with help from friends, is able to have a car. She is about five miles from her mother who Carol returned to help care for, so can visit frequently though it will take some time to work out her role and routine, and be sure of a church in which she can best serve the Lord.

Scott Murray is back in Thailand having done his annual week of lecturing at Glasgow University medical School — far removed, in every way from the kind of conditions to which he is accustomed in the Kwai River Christian Hospital. **Nok** is currently nursing full-time on top of her other responsibilities because of staff shortages but they are grateful for the temporary help of a doctor from Switzerland. No opportunity for the gospel is missed and they rejoice that more than two thousand people heard the Christian message over the Christmas period.

