

## The Foundations under attack

We are looking this afternoon at what is called the secular humanistic view of the world.....  
And comparing it with the Christian view of the world.

Such a subject cannot be a mere intellectual exercise. We are dealing with life and death issues. There is an imperative need for Christian men and women to understand the nature of secular humanism, and be aware of the damage it has already done and is doing in our society today. We need to be aware of its philosophical teachings, what kind of ideas it is seeking to influence and persuade society to adopt, and to know who some of its leading protagonists are in the country today. We need to be under no illusions that it is at this very moment seeking to destroy the foundations of Western Christian civilization.

Ironically secular humanism has been described as the most de – humanizing force of our modern age. Back in 1922 Albert Schweitzer (whom we would disagree with on many things) wrote this very perceptive comment on what was happening to our Christian civilization even at that time.

*The suicide of Western civilization is in progress. What remains of it is no longer safe. It is still standing, indeed, because it has not been exposed to the destructive pressures which have overwhelmed the others, but like the others, it has been building (these last few decades) on rubble and the next landslide will very likely carry it away.*

Nikolai Berdyaev a Russian Christian writing at about the same time wrote in a similar vein in his book, *The Meaning of History*.

*Secular Humanism denies that man is made in the image and likeness of God; that he is the reflection of the Divine being. In its dominant form secular humanism affirms that human nature is the image and likeness not of the divine but of universal nature. It affirms that man is a natural being, the child of the world and of nature, created by natural necessity, the flesh and blood of the natural world; and that he therefore shares all its limitations, diseases and defects. This secular humanism not only affirms man's self – confidence and exalts him, but it also debaseshim by ceasing to regard him as a being of higher and divine origin. It affirms exclusively his terrestrial birth place and origin at the expense of the celestial. In this way humanism helps to diminish man's stature. The result of man's self – affirmation, once he has ceased to be conscious of his tie with the higher Divine and Absolute nature and with the highest source of his life brings about his own perdition. Humanism seeks to dethrone the*

*Christian spiritual principle, which considers man in the image and likeness of God and the child of God and as a being deriving son -ship from God. When the Christian consciousness of man loses its strength;it in turn, gives rise to the self – destructive dialectic within humanism.*

The Meaning of History pp.140-141

Interestingly Berdyaev regarded secular humanism as a spent force. He saw it as offering no foundation for Western society or any other society to build upon. To do so we may say is akin to the action of the foolish man whom our Lord so graphically described as building his house upon the sand.

Other perceptive writers in the 20th century, again not in the evangelical tradition by any means, I mean men such as George Orwell who saw the nightmare scenario of a totalitarian state, and described it in his profound work, *Nineteen Eighty- Four*. Orwell never mentions secular humanism in his book, however we may note that when the Christian perspective is lost in any society, freedom and tyranny are not far away. Aldous Huxley brother of Julian Huxley and grandson of Thomas Huxley (Darwin's bulldog), gives us a vivid and alarming picture of a society build entirely on scientific principles in his book, *Brave New World*. We need to add that Christianity is not opposed to science. Christianity is indeed the mother of modern science. Only in a Christian culture, believing in a God of order, the Creator who is separate from his creation could scientific investigation and discovery properly take root and flourish.

Not only so, but the 20th century has also witnessed times when the most sinister and monstrous manifestations of secular ideologies of various kinds have been imposed upon societies. I am referring to Communism imposed upon Russia in 1918, National Socialism or Nazism which gripped Germany in the 1930s resulting in the Second World War. We can mention the Communism which overtook China in the late 1940s and the many oppressive regimes that have manifested themselves in the Far East and Africa and parts of Eastern Europe.

One of our worst dangers for us today is the insane radical ideology of our own Western governments. Here in Britain a great deal of secular / Marxist thinking seems evident in all our main political parties, together with an ever increasing power of the state over every aspect of our lives.

Anne Glyne-Jones writing in her book,  *Holding Up a Mirror, How Civilizations Decline*, comments:

*In the West today the triumph of secularistic / materialistic philosophers has transformed living standards, but declining moral standards are destroying what has been achieved, as crime escalates and personal relationships (especially between the sexes) turn sour, encompassing the incurable spread of sexually – transmitted diseases and the breakdown of families.*

*In a secular society the arts turn increasingly to sensationalism, until violence and explicit sex coalesce in the amalgam of pornography. Despair and disgust ride rampant and in the final gesture of evolutionary futility, communities ceased even to reproduce themselves.*

Holding Up a Mirror, front flyleaf

### **More closely defining secular humanism**

We can trace the rise of Modern secular humanism to the time of the Renaissance, though if we had time we could trace its origins much further back.

We need first of all to recognize that at the time of the Renaissance, both pagan and Christian influences were active. On the one hand the Renaissance gave birth to the modern form of secular humanism which we are speaking of now. On the other hand, there were strong Christian influences in the Renaissance movement; for example, from this side of the Renaissance came the re-translation of Scripture according to the original languages by Erasmus.

The Renaissance of the 15th century began as a reaction against medieval Roman Catholicism, which kept man's thought in blinkers and his whole life in bondage. The more secular side of the Renaissance threw off this yoke by reviving ancient Greek culture which was humanistic and man- centred. We will see more of this in detail as we proceed. On the Christian side the Renaissance was one of the elements which brought about the Reformation. Spiritual giants such as John Wycliffe John Huss, Martin Luther broke the chains that held back intellectual thought by reviving Biblical faith and godliness and the pointing of men and women back to a truly God centred life. The term Renaissance means "back to the sources", *Ad fontes*. Back to the fountainhead.

One element of the Renaissance we might say went back to the source of fallen human nature, the other to the Word of God.

We also need to distinguish secular humanism from what is sometimes called the Humanities. There are those who teach the Humanities. We may see the term Humanities on a school curriculum. Humanities strictly speaking is the study of human creativity, often covering areas

such as art, music, literature etc. This in its purest sense is nothing to do with secular humanism. There is nothing wrong with the Christian being involved in the arts or music: or the production of literature.

Nor is secular humanism the same as what we sometimes call a humanitarian spirit or a humanitarian act. Humanitarianism again strictly speaking is simply a term whereby we describe someone who is concerned for the well-being of others. This again is nothing to do with secular humanism as such.

*According to the 2011 Census, 33 million people identified as being Christian, compared with 15,067 people who said they were humanists, and 29,267 atheists.*

*Colin Hart of the Christian Institute said: "For every 10,000 people only 14 say that they do not believe in God." He added, " The census shows that hardly anyone signs up to the full package of atheism."*

### **What then is Secular Humanism?**

Secular humanism is a belief system and its tenets are identified along the following lines. It believes that science shows religion to be irrational and hostile to human happiness. The thought is that only those who know they are alone, and on their own in the universe, with no God to worship and no concern about the church, will ever take the bold steps that are needed to set their lives straight. From this it is inferred that the way to help people realize their potential is to disillusion them about religion and so free them from inhibiting superstitions and restrictions. Then by rational reflection and experience, a wiser code of ethics can be devised, and a happier generation will arise.

J.I. Packer traces out the ancient roots of humanism as follows. The heart of secular humanism appears as a reaction – reaction it seems born of hurt and resentment at the tenets and track record of organized religion.

*Buddhist atheism rose in the east in the sixth century BC, and here is one of the roots of modern secular humanism. Buddhist atheism (secular humanism) first appeared in the West through Lucretius (by the way he also was an early advocate of evolutionary thinking).*

*Lucretius (Roman poet 98-54 B.C.) first set out his views in a long poem called De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things). The Buddha's atheism was a matter of turning away from a*

*polytheistic type of religion that he said killed the moral concern, through which alone, he claimed, Nirvana (blissful nonexistence, man's final goal) can be reached. Lucretius wrote to free people from what seemed to him the crippling fear that the gods take notice of men, and to preach to them the Epicurean gospel of a quiet, pleasure seeking life, devoid of religious concerns. Here is the spirit of modern secular humanism exactly.*

Christianity the True Humanism p.15

An article in the Peace and Truth magazine by Mr. John Brentnall well sums up and defines modern secular humanism.

*Humanism, as the term implies, is the system of thought and life that concerns itself exclusively with human interests. That is, it is pursued without reference to God or official "religion." Not to be confused with humanitarianism, or concern for the welfare of our fellow men, it puts man at the centre and thrusts God either out to the "irrelevant" circumference, or down to "the ground of our being." It is thus wholly man – centred. The world has seen many varieties of Humanism, but they all have one thing in common, the notion that "man is the measure of all things" (Protagoras), all that "nothing is more wonderful than man." (Sophocles).*

Peace and Truth 2012 vol. 1 p. 31

Some have divided man centred or false humanism into three main types.

- 1.Philosophical humanism.... Believing man's highest goal is to do right to man.
- 2.Scientific humanism..... Believing with individuals like Stephen Dawkins that science, offers the best answer to the meaning of life.
- 3.Religious humanism.... A sort of religiosity, sometimes calling itself Christian, but based on man's inner feelings and thoughts. No sense of the authority of God. God is just there to help man out when he is in trouble. A man centred religiosity.

### **Today Secular Humanism is an Organized and Aggressive Force**

In 1963 the British Humanist Association was founded, at the instigation of the Ethical Union and the Rationalists Press Association. It had and has this stated aim, "*to offer a fresh challenge to the Christian churches*". Its president Sir Julian Huxley explained, "*we want to consolidate*

*and expand the upsurge of humanism that has taken place recently*". Peter Ustinov and E.M. Forster were among the more well-known figures serving on the advisory Council. There were ten Fellows of the Royal Society, including Professor. G. M. Carstairs, the then current Rieth lecture. In the following year the National Secular Society promoted *Secular Education Monthly*, campaigning for the elimination of collective worship from morning assembly in the country's schools, the removal from their curricula of the promotion of the Christian religion and its link to ethics(which they advocated should instead be "socially based."), The abolition of compulsory chapel from public schools, and of all grants to denominational schools. Michael Foot, Harold Pinter and Ted Willis were among the promoters of this programme. Hopes rose for its implementation when, in the following months, no fewer than five members of the newly elected Labour Government refused to swear the oath of office, but chose the alternative affirmation which had become law under the 1888 New Oaths Act at the time of the first avowed atheist M.P. to take his seat in Parliament, Charles Bradlaugh M.P. for Northampton.

### **The Attack on the 1944 Education Act**

The influence of this group has been far more extensive than many people realize. The 1944 Education Act had required religious instruction in schools, and a collective act of worship (from which parents could, if they wished withdraw their children), but had not specified which religion, it being universally assumed at the time that the religion referred to was Christianity.

This Act the secular humanists tried to get rid of. Interestingly woven into the 1944 Education Act was the Christian view of history. It was deliberately put there after the war as the war had made it frighteningly plain what happens when men and women are deluded into believing man is the master of things.

However, by the time we get to the 1960s there was an increasing number of humanistic teachers in the schools; partly because of this the Act fell into an effective abeyance.

This process was further accelerated by increasing number of immigrant children in the schools who were not of Christian allegiance or cultural heritage.

Faced with the increasing pressure of multiculturalism, the Synod of the Church of England debated in 1977 whether it could any longer expect the state schools to inculcate Christianity. This was in reality a surrender to the prevailing mood of the times. In the schools, what religious instruction remained had degenerated from time spent in Scriptural instruction of the tenets of the Christian faith to what one described as a "*general canter through comparative*

*religion's history: or a branch of current affairs in which emphasis on the social activism now regarded as the embodiment of Christian religious sentiment which vied with a social criticism which provided a convenient entry point for Marxism and for the denigration of Western culture."*

By 1988 it was reported that most secondary schools no longer held daily acts of worship. When the Education Reform Bill came to Parliament that year, some Christian peers, who it is to be noted were not generally supported by the Anglican Bishops, initiated amendments, which were later accepted by the Commons. This motion in effect required schools to reflect in their worship and education the pre-eminence of the Christian religion, though schools with a predominantly non-Christian attendance were entitled to draw on their own traditions, and parents would have the right not only to withdraw their children, but to require alternative provision; an arrangement which the National Union of Teachers abhorred as potentially divisive. The Professional Association of Teachers, themselves deeply divided on the issue, were told by their founder- president at their annual conference in 1989 that teachers should not be seen to side with one religion. The pervasive influence of the humanistic lobby was taking effect.

This lax and confused situation made it possible for the Ealing Education Authority famously to produce a Religious Education Syllabus which managed to exclude all mention of the Bible, Jesus Christ or God.

In the 1990s attempts were made to encourage the observance of the 1944 Education Act especially its provision for a daily act of Christian worship. These attempts were met with studied resistance from powerful elements within the teaching profession.

In 1994 The School Curriculum and Assessment Executive quietly dropped from its recommendations that 50% of the time in religious education classes be devoted to the study of Christianity. By the summer of 1995 same executive announced that in a recent survey almost half of the 16-24-year-olds questioned did not know what Good Friday commemorated, and seven out of ten did not know what happened on Palm Sunday. Quite apart from religious allegiance such monumental ignorance guaranteed, as commentators were not slow to point out, an "artificial isolation from 80% of Western art. literature and music, and deprived them of the essential key to understanding the past of which we are the inheritors.

### **The de-Regulation of Sunday Trade**

What we witness through this period is the secularist agenda constantly receiving Parliamentary approval. At this time the battle for a secular Sunday was also underway. The objective at first was to remove the 1780 Act restricting Sunday entertainments. Back in 1932 a rally held in Maidstone Kent in support of the Christian Sabbath could boast of letters of support from The Archbishop of Canterbury, Ramsey Macdonald and Sir Harry Lauder. It was a different story in the 1990s when theatre after theatre in London opened on a Sunday. One play *A Passionate Women* opened at the Comedy Theatre on the Lord's Day and the producer boasted that he had done so with the approval of 39 vicars, one canon and a deaconess.

The Wimbledon Finals, Test Matches and the F.A. Cup semi- finals were already being played on Sundays: Monaco- style motor racing came to Birmingham in 1986, disrupting church services which had to be cancelled or re-scheduled; and on 26th July 1992 the Jockey Club began Sunday Racing to gratify public demand, notwithstanding The Gaming and Lotteries Act of 1963 which limited Sunday betting to telephone bids. Politicians argued that Sunday racing would boost the economy! Parliament permitted Sunday racing and betting in May 1994.

We are all aware of the battle against The Sunday Trade Bill, to open shops on Sundays passed under a Conservative Government in December 1993.

### **The Attack Upon Marriage and Family Life**

We need to go back in time to the aims of the British Humanist Association at its founding in 1963. It stated its desire to campaign for a raft of issues that had been on the agenda of 19th Century atheists, namely the removal of legal impediments to abortion and to sexual relationships outside marriage, including homosexual relationships. This was re-emphasised in the Second Humanist Manifesto of 1976. It stated: *short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their lifestyles as they desire.*

These influences manifested themselves when in the Synod of the Anglican church in the summer of 1981, it was moved to permit second marriages in the church of those with former husbands and wives **living**. **Four per cent** of marriages in Anglican churches involved a divorced person with living spouse, the number of such ceremonies increased tenfold between 1976 and 1987.

Various acts of legislation from the late 60's onward blurred the distinction between the married and the unmarried. At this time the designation "single mother " was introduced in place of "unmarried mother". In 1981 both Debrets and British Rail acknowledged the existence of "stable cohabiting couples". It has now become almost common practice to use the term "partner" in place of reference to husband a wife. Any existence of permanency and commitment in a relationship is studiously avoided.

## **Abortion**

Up until 1967 very strict conditions had surrounded the practice of abortion. Abortion was only permissible to save a mother's life. The 1967 Abortion Act widened the grounds, legalizing abortion providing two medical practitioner's certified, either that the prospective child was seriously abnormal, or that the mother's circumstances were such as to render either her physical or mental health at risk, a restriction which was not to prove over onerous.

The time limit of 28 weeks was intended to reflect the earliest age at which a foetus could be viable outside its mother's womb, which in effect made the morality of the operation dependent not on any absolute sanctity with respect to a potential human life, but on current medical techniques. Following medical advances in keeping premature babies alive, the time limit was, in the face of considerable opposition reduced to 24 weeks in 1990, but at the same time a loop hole was introduced for terminations, without any time limit in case of abnormality. A further liberalization was achieved in 1991, when the Department of Health licensed the use of a drug whose sole purpose was to induce miscarriages.

Humanists remained dissatisfied with this situation, since the power to offer or withhold abortion still lay, at least nominally, with the medical profession, and crucial to the humanist's demand was the underlying ethic that a woman should have the right to determine what happens to her own body, a view in direct opposition to the traditional Christian precept that we do not "own" our bodies, which are first and foremost temples of the Holy Spirit.

## **Homosexuality and Lesbianism**

Modern secular humanism advanced even further when using the same arguments from "science" so-called it began to enter into the realm of homosexuality and lesbianism. In 1948

an American Alfred Kinsey published *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* and followed five years later with *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*. These works claimed to be scientific works. without going into detail these studies and others like them were used to foister upon society the so called sexual revolution which first became openly manifest in the 1960s. Sadly one by one the mainline Church denominations have accommodated themselves to these views. In 1989 the American Anglican, Bishop Spong ordained a professing homosexual in the "fervent hope that his life could offer hope to the homosexual population of our metropolitan area a model of holiness, fidelity and monogamy with which we could counter promiscuity and other forms of predatory or casual sexual behaviour."

Such has been and **still continues** to be the destructive and debasing influence of secular humanism at this time.

Adapted from Holding Up a Mirror, Anne Glyn -Jones 407-428.

### **Our Present Political Leaders**

These views of course have had a profound effect upon the thinking of the majority of all recent and present political leaders. Most of them have grown-up immersed in such secular thinking, they have never heard or studied or in many cases looked into anything else. Many of them have a profound ignorance of human nature as revealed in Scripture, many of them have an Olympian ignorance of, or any deep understanding of British history and an almost universal ignorance of genuine Christian teaching. One newspaper columnist (Peter Hitchens) recently described them as *untouched by hard experience, and an obsession with man-made global warming, where their morals ought to be.*

Under their leadership, "equality and diversity", terms now devoid of their original meaning and connotations, together with "political correctness" are concepts which now replace Christianity and English Law as the guiding principles of our national life and the ultimate test of "good".

All of these people are in effect dancing to the secular humanist tune.

**Humanism is a framework of thinking that has become dominant in our day and age in Western society**

All the things that have come into our country and which have troubled us so much are the inevitable results of this worldview. If this worldview is accepted, it is inevitable that man believes that that is no source of knowledge outside himself. This knowledge can never be certain, and there can be no value system, no system of morality, except that which is devised by man himself.

There thus becomes no firm or stable basis of law. The decision of a small group of people, and what they decide at some given moment and is therefore as they say "for the good of society," become law. These so called laws so often are applied with great vigour as we have seen with the recent "laws" relating to homosexual/ lesbian marriage. The reason why that today people seem able to accept what would have been an abomination a decade ago is simply because there is no concept of an ever abiding principle of right and wrong. It is why the abortion rate seems to be growing at a frightening rate and becoming increasingly more like infanticide, and that we are drifting headlong into the sanctioning of euthanasia and the legalizing of drugs etc. etc. All these things are "goals" which have been the long term aim of the leaders of the secular humanistic movement for decades.

### **Looking at some of the principal elements of the Christian worldview, in contrast to the secular humanist worldview**

#### **The Christian world view.**

God exists

The universe is created

God has a plan and purpose for the universe and mankind.

Man is significant, made in the image and likeness of God.

That there is absolute truth. This he set out for us in the Scriptures, The Holy Bible. The Word of God.

There is a way of salvation. The way of salvation through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

#### **The secular world view**

God (probably) does not exist.

The universe is a product of chance.

There is no plan (all is chaos).

Man is not significant.

There is no absolute truth.

There is no way of salvation.

Humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created. Humanists believe that man is part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process called evolution. Humanists claim that man's religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and his social heritage and will eventually pass away. Man will come of age and leave such childish things behind him. Many of them believe that man has now come of age.

When we set things out like this we see why it is a fact of modern secular society that so many people sink into doom and despondency and say "what is the use of carrying on?" or sink into the abuse of alcohol or drugs just to blot out the depressing meaninglessness of it all. Underlying the social and individual breakdown that we see so prevalent today is the debilitating effect of secular humanism.

Bertrand Russell perhaps the most eloquent advocate of the secular point of view in the mid-20th century enables us to see most clearly the wasteland that secularism of all kinds leads us into. He wrote.

*That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labour of the ages all the devotion, all the noonday brightness of human genius, is destined to extinction, in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins.*

### **Some notes on Bertrand Russell's life**

Bertrand Russell died on 2 February, 1970, aged 97. He led a long and active life, often controversial in his attachments and commitments, and he had a profound effect on the way we think about truth. Is famous for his work on mathematics and philosophy, and was a pioneer of "logical positivism". He was a man who was certainly consistent in the out workings of his beliefs – he argued that human beings are not monogamous, opposed the laws against homosexuality as well as endorsing sexual relations between unmarried people. He was married four times, and engaged in several extra – marital liaisons, including one with T. S.

Elliott's wife Vivian Haigh – Wood.

From the introduction to Bertrand Russell's Lecture, *Why I am not a Christian*.

### What are we to do about all this?

In the war against secular humanism Christians appear to be losing. Anyone who has lived five decades or more can testify that our society has changed radically during this time. While many reasons may be given the following are self-evident.

1. Many Christians have generally been unaware that humanistic ideas have infiltrated our society and have therefore not resisted them.
2. Many Christians have been unaware of the use humanists have made of the school system to teach their principles to the rising generation.
3. This is particularly the case in the Universities and many of our political leaders and those in public life have passed through these institutions and have imbibed their ideas.
4. Many professing Christians, have accommodated themselves to humanistic beliefs, often through ignorance of basic Christian teaching.
5. We need to be aware that our Western Christian civilization is built on the foundation of Christian truth. This indeed is a good foundation and the only foundation for a just and truly humane and society. A few months ago Charles Moore wrote in the Daily Telegraph, an article entitled *A society that persecutes Christ is heading for terrible trouble*. What he was warning of was without the underpinnings of Christianity we will inevitably and certainly lose the great moral and ethical virtues and hopes that make life in this fallen world bearable and indeed hold free societies together.
6. We need to be well taught in the way that our Christian doctrines affect the way we live. Take for instance the doctrine of the **Second Coming**.

Professor Thomas Huxley often known as Darwin's bulldog was one of the first in modern times to challenge belief in the Second Coming. The coming of Christ he said was nothing more than a prodigal error of the Church, and mere delusion. The reason being he claimed that 1900 years had gone by and Christ had not returned. It is strangely ironic to claim that 1900 years was too long a time for the purposes of God to be worked out, when his hero Darwin, was literally claiming that it took millions of years for his theories to be worked out.

The delay in the Lord's coming, was not really something that the self-proclaimed, clever sceptics of the 19th century, were the first to think of. There were those in the Apostle Peter's day who raised the same issue.

*Where is the promise of his coming? For, from the day of the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

2 Peter 3:4

Belief in the Second Coming is a belief that all things are working towards a goal and a purpose. Scripture affirms that there is a beginning and an end of time. We learn from this that history is linear and not cyclic. The Hindus and others believe that history just going around in circles continually repeating the same things. But we believe that God is working his purposes out as year succeeds to year, and therefore all has meaning and significance. History is not just going round in meaningless cycles. God's purposes are working towards their final goal, a goal that shall surely be achieved. As Calvin once put "God will win".

Belief in the Second Coming is a belief that righteousness shall prevail.

**There is a certain conditionality about the coming of the Lord.** From the point of view of God's absolute knowledge and purpose, no doubt the day and time of the Advent is immovably fixed. But as God knows all the circumstances that precede that event and has ordained that it shall come through his people's prayers and labours, there is a responsibility on his Church to work towards that event. This again reminds us that our labours in the Lord are not in vain. We are told to pray and to labour that, *thy will be done thy kingdom come in earth as it is in heaven.*

We also know in Scripture that are many times that the Lord comes to us. He comes to us in revival time blessings, he comes to us in judgments, trials and troubles.

But all these things remind us that his hand is upon the tiller of time. When there is the least

appearance suddenly the Lord appears.

*Sometimes a light surprises,  
The Christian while he sings.  
It is the Lord who rises  
With healing in his wings,  
When comforts are declining,  
He grants the soul again,  
A season of clear shining,  
To cheer it after rain.*

William Cowper

The doctrine of the Second Coming gives a sense of purpose to life, quickens our conscience, stamps significance on all we do.

It stimulates us to action nothing is futile, we learn to suffer in silence, we make sacrifices, we labour long knowing that our labour is not in vain. Nothing is left or lost in the service of God. A cup of cold water given in his name always has its reward.

It stimulates hope.

It produces creativity. The patience of hope and the labour of love.  
We could speak of Puritan maturity.

It was said of the Puritans that Christian maturity and Christian hope produced in them a compound of, wisdom, goodwill, resilience and creativity. It is said of them that they were visionary and practical, idealistic and realistic all at the same time. They too were goal orientated and methodical, they were great believers, great hoppers, great doers, great sufferers. They fought the good fight of the Christian life.

Ian Murray writing in his famous book, *The Puritan Hope* commented on this regarding its influence on Lord Macaulay and Winston Churchill.

From the standpoint of Scripture, Macaulay's thought was certainly mixed, yet it is plain that his was a view of history strongly affected by the perspective which came from the 17th century. Nor was Macaulay the last great historian to hold that view. In the darkest days of 1940 Churchill whose outlook had been thoroughly influenced by Macaulay, saw history as

directed by the hand of God and believed that the world would not go under. Perhaps the saddest picture of Churchill's closing years, after the Second World War, was that his hold upon this truth seemed to become increasingly tenuous. The appearance of the post-war world – the Iron Curtain, the hydrogen bomb, the 400 million shut within China-all seemed to make the old belief in Providence impossible. *I am bewildered by the world the confusion is terrible,* and two years later as his great Parliamentary career came to its end, he spoke with pathos of his fears for those who should live in the future "*If God wearied of mankind.*" *What ought we to do if God wearied of mankind*". That commented Lord Moran, *was the question that tormented him as he came towards the end of his journey.*

Though this is comparatively recent history, the wider effects of the "great decay in belief" which Churchill observed, and the truth of his words, "**it is bad for a nation when it is without faith,**" have been widely evidenced. The loss of National purpose, the loss of will to advance, the indiscipline and futility of permissiveness, all these are the symptoms of an age in which the dominating mood is one of cynicism and pessimism. To the modern mind, history is not under any control.

The Puritan Hope p. 225

7. We need to be well taught in the way that say for example the Reformation effected and enhanced the lives of nations and individuals.

See J.A. Wylie's History of Protestantism p. 465 Vol. III

8. We need to understand the teaching of Scripture. Take for example the Psalm 11. If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?

This Psalm and indeed the whole of Scripture teaches that God is the upholder of the moral order upon which the life and security of the world depends. The foundations as laid by God are sound. Although Psalm 11 asks the question: *if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?* It gives an answer which clearly implies that this is something which ultimately, cannot really happen. 11v 4-5).

He who has this confidence will hold in contempt the advice of the timid, that he should flee as a bird to the mountains till the day of calamity past (v.1)

A man of faith, especially if he holds a position of leadership and responsibility, will stand his ground, for he knows that he is backed by God and the whole righteous order that God has established. God is never indifferent, whatever the appearance maybe; and the adversity to which the allows men to be exposed serves as a test of their moral quality.

The wicked may despise the righteous and threatened and threaten and oppress them. But God whose throne has justice and equity for its foundation will not fail to vindicate those who have been wronged.

In a world, so planned and governed by God, *there* is constantly at work a process of retribution. Evil returns upon itself, not by accident but by God's decree. Men and nations who defy His will have against them all the forces which he has built into the universe. Scripture says, *Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap*. Always remember right is on our side. God is on our side. As Calvin said, *God will win*.

9. Go on the offensive against wrong. Remember one with God is a majority. Dare to be a Daniel.

The cross was the greatest fight in the world, it seemed when fought that all lost. It was not lost and is the decisive victory of all time.

## PART 2

### Psalm 11

*In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? v1*

*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? v 3*

This Psalm of David was clearly composed when he was in great distress. Whether this distress was caused by the rebellion of Absalom, or when he was in trouble at the time of Saul, is debated by the commentators.

Whatever was the cause, it is plain that David was writing in a time of deep distress and anxiety. He felt utterly helpless and perplexed by the troubles that had overtaken him.

We get a sense of what appeared to be the utter impossibility of his circumstances, by what we can derive from the advice of his friends. They advised him in the first verse of the Psalm to "*Flee as a bird to your mountain.*"

In other words, there is nothing you can do, the situation is impossible, therefore flee, runaway it is your only hope.

**In passing we can say several things about this advice.**

On the one hand we could spiritualize this, *fleeing as a bird to the mountain*. We could see it as many people have done as a picture of the sinner, overwhelmed by his sin and condemnation, fleeing as one who realizes their helplessness, to Calvary, the place of forgiveness and refuge from accusing conscience and the judgment of God.

Flee as a bird to your mountain,  
Thou who art wearied with sin;  
Go to the clear flowing fountain,  
Where you may wash and be clean:  
Fly though the avenger is near thee;  
Call, and the Saviour will hear thee;  
He on his bosom will bear thee,  
O thou who art weary of sin,  
O thou who art weary of sin.

He will protect thee forever,  
Wipe ev'ry falling tear;  
He will forsake thee, oh, never,  
Sheltered so tenderly there;  
Haste now the hours are flying,  
Spend not the moments in sighing,  
Cease from your sorrow and crying,

The Saviour will wipe ev'ry tear,  
The Saviour will wipe ev'ry tear.

Mary S. B. Dana, Author and composer

Also we may note that it is not always easy for a good man to decide when it is time to flee, or when it is time to resist.

*It is by no means always an easy question for the good man to decide when he shall flee, and when to resist, the storm of immorality and irreligion that may be prevailing in the community to which he belongs. He may err as widely in precipitating the time for doing the thing as he can and allowing the time to pass by unimproved. It is as much a part of a good general to know when to halt as when to advance; when to retreat as when to attack; when to save life as when to cast it away. The only question for him to settle is which course for the time being will, in the end, best promote the cause he has in hand.*

*Our Lord both spoke and acted on this principle, counselling His disciples at one time to save themselves by flight, at another to remain at their post, even though at the cost of their lives. He counselled them to determine their line of conduct, not by its consequences to themselves, but to the cause in which they were identified. If flight would best promote its interests, they were to flee; if remaining at their posts, they were to remain; and, if needs be, die there.*

*Many a leader in the primitive church and at the time of the Reformation did this; fleeing, so long this flight could best serve their Master's cause; but when it demanded the surrender of their lives, giving themselves up freely to martyrdom.*

*David for years after he had been divinely designated to the throne of Israel, fled before his persecutors like a terrified bird. In this Psalm his affairs are no longer as they had been. The time has come when the cause with which he has identified himself can no longer be promoted by his flight. It demands champions and defendants, and it may be martyrs.*

David Caldwell M.A. The Biblical Illustrator Psalm 11

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But this little Psalm is not rightly understood until it is recognized that the first three verses constitute the cowardly advice given by his supporters to David.

The rest of the Psalm, not forgetting the opening affirmation, "*In the Lord put on my trust.*" Is the triumphant answer of David, the man of faith, trusting in God, in spite of all the troubles that faced him and were threatening to destroy him.

Society is being shaken to its foundations; it's worthier members, "*the upright in heart,*" are losing hope; their opponents are powerful, ruthless, subtle in their deceptiveness and treachery, they will stop at nothing to get their way.

This Psalm it is rightly said, belongs to a period of social anarchy. Some with good reason recognize a grouping within the Psalms, which they designate, "*The Persecution Psalms.*" These are Psalms 3-7, 9-14 and Psalm 17.

The church of Jesus Christ has known many periods of severe persecution and often had to live under times of great rebellion against God and hostility towards his people. In Scripture the first chapter of Isaiah describe such a period.

*Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone the way backward. W.4*

*From the sole of the foot even on to the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. v.6*

*Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. v.7*

*Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. v.10*

In the New Testament, the Book of Revelation is a vision of hope, in the midst of severe persecution. It was written as we know by John in the concentration camp which was the Isle of Patmos.

Here in England, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle begun it is said by the good King Alfred, Alfred

the Great and continued after his death by others, the last chapter being written by the monk of Peterborough in the time of King Stephen (1097-1154). The last chapter records the terrible persecution and oppression meted out upon the good people of the land by the Norman barons whom the Chronicle describes as, *insolent and avowed materialists.... All their thoughts are, there is no God.*

David was living in such a day and so are we  
But here in the Psalm 11.

One brave, strong man, amid all the welter and confusion of the times, stands firm as a rock, and repudiates with indignation the faithless and cowardly counsel of his supporters.

The source and basis of his confidence we have seen here expressed in the very first words of the Psalm. *In the LORD (that is Jehovah) I put my trust.*

That was why he scorned the council to flee, to the mountains like a bird. For centuries the mountains have been the refuge of the persecuted; it is said that the Celts fled to the mountains of Wales at the time of the Roman invasion of England. But here in the psalm, David stood his ground, because he felt himself already secure in God. Flight would have meant infidelity. Even the graphic picture of the cruel and treacherous designs of his enemies is powerless to make him swerve from his post or his God.

For, see! The wicked have their bows and arrows ready to let drive at his honest heart. But look again, God is in his heaven, and the psalmist is sure that he will protect the man who puts his trust in him.

*Nil desperandum auspice Deo.* Never despair while God reigns is a noble motto.

The last appeal of the cowards is the subtlest of all. They point out that the foundations, the pillars of social life are already being torn down, and depress David with their sad earnestness, reminding him with faithless logic that after all, what has his righteousness and those things he has stood for actually accomplished so far, and what hope is there of accomplishing anything in the future against such powerful forces? They go on to further depress him by saying that, so far was righteousness from being victorious that it did not even have the power to avert the disaster they were now in. The only wise course was now to admit defeat, and save their own skin.

**In the face of such discouragement even from his own supporters, David must**

rest on God alone, and so doing his courage rises and he triumphs by faith.

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Let us look point by point at the Psalm to see the sources and elements of David strength.

## 1. He is aware of the Sovereignty of God

### v.4 *The Lord is in his holy Temple*

God may seem to have deserted the earth and abandoned his people but he certainly has not and never will.

Here the Psalmist turns our attention from the creeping councils of his faithless supporters, men who see but half of reality and that being the lower regions of gloom and doom, to the full picture. *The Lord is in his holy Temple*, or as Browning once put it, *God is in his heaven; all's right with the world*.

David opposes the picture drawn by fear, with the vision of the open heaven and the throne of God. To the eye of faith that vision ever shines and puts all earth's sorrows, dangers and difficulties into their true perspective.

The poet John Greenleaf Whittier put it like this:

*And in the maddening maze of things,  
When tossed by storm and flood.  
To one fixed ground my spirit clings.  
I know that God is God.*

Martin Luther put it better.

*A safe stronghold our God is still,  
A trusty shield and weapon;  
He'll help us clear from all the ill  
That hath us now o'ertaken.  
The ancient Prince of hell  
Hath risen with purpose fell:  
Strong mail of craft and power  
He weareth in this hour;*

*On earth is not his fellow.*

*And were this world all devils o'er,  
And watching to devour us,  
We lay it not to heart so sore;  
Not they can overpower us.  
And let the prince of ill  
Look grim as e'er he will,  
He harms us not a whit;  
For why? His doom is writ;  
A word shall quickly slay him.*

*God's Word, for all their craft and force,  
One moment will not linger,  
But, spite of hell, shall have its course;  
'Tis written by his finger.  
And though they take our life,  
Goods, honour, children, wife,  
Yet is their profit small:  
These things shall vanish all;  
The City of God remaineth.*

Martin Luther 1483 – 1546 Thomas Carlyle translation

## **2. Moreover he sees the moral majesty of God**

### ***If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do v.3***

God is the upholder of the moral order upon which alone the life and security of the world rests. Those who believe that the whole system of things has been built by God on indestructible and invincible righteousness can never regard themselves as victims of chance. The foundations as laid by God are sound and ultimately indestructible.

*When the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?* The clear implication here is that this is something which cannot really happen in the ultimate sense. (vv. 4-5).

Whoever has this confidence will like David hold in contempt the advice of the timid that he

should *flee as a bird to the mountains* till the day of calamity is past. A man of faith, especially if he holds a position of leadership and responsibility will stand his ground for he knows he is backed by God and the whole righteous order that God has established. God is never indifferent, whatever the appearance may be; and the adversity or trouble to which he allows his people to be exposed at times, serves as a test of their moral character. We've just observed that this Psalm was the inspiration for Luther's immortal hymn. *A safe stronghold our God is still*, or as some versions have it, *A mighty Fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing*.

It is this same faith that is often reiterated in some of the best – known incidental verses of the Psalms, for example:

*Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever*  
Psalm 12: 7

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth of over.*  
Psalm 23:5

*Clouds and darkness are around about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*  
Psalm 97:2

The wicked may waive their fists at the righteous and indeed at God himself, but the God whose throne has justice and equity for its foundation will not fail to vindicate those who have been wronged.

### 3. He recognises the knowledge of God

**v4. *His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.***

God sees all and knows all. From him no secrets are hid. His look penetrates into the innermost nature of all things.

*When we observe the thing closely or ponder over it, we draw the eyelids together in order that our vision may be more concentrated and direct, and become, as it were, one ray piercing through into its object. Thus are men open to the all- seeing eye, the all searching look of God, the just and the unjust alike.*

Delitzsch in The Preacher's Homiletical Commentary

It is sometimes said:

*It is the best general who knows the most of the affairs of the enemy.*

This was said to be the case between Montgomery and Rommel in the great desert fight of the Second World War.

God knows his enemies, and the enemies of his people – all their secrets, subtleties, stratagems and schemes, and in due time he shall confound them.

*Here the psalmist rested; here we may rest. Truth may fail in the church, righteousness in the state: the magistrate may cease to be just, the parson to be good, the rulers to be honourable but God ever liveth, the Wise, the Just and the Good and in him we may rest.*

Preachers Homiletical Commentary Psalms p.45

#### **4. He therefore rests in God**

However, it is not the rest of idleness

**We have the foundational Book** that shall never be destroyed that is the Bible the Word of God. Let us by all means make it known.

**We have the foundational doctrines** that will never be out of date and never be irrelevant. The church has always been at its strongest said Herbert Butterfield, the great church historian, when she has made it a chief priority to make the truths of the Gospel known, that is Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. *Hold the Gospel banner high on to victory grand, Satan and his hosts defy and shout for Daniels band.* The doctrine of justification by faith alone and salvation through the blood of the Lamb has always been at the heart of all true revivals.

**We have in Scripture the foundational morality and ethic of life.** We should be endeavouring in God's strength to live by these principles and to exhibit them in our lives. We should seek to defend them, propagate them with all our strength. Resisting those who opposed them.

**We have the foundational truth which sets us free.** Christianity the true bastion of real freedom. Lose it and we will be slaves.

**We have the foundational hope,** the hope of the Gospel and everlasting life. The world

has no hope as we have seen. It admits it, when you're dead you're dead, it says, life has no meaning or purpose. What can we say:

*Jerusalem the Golden,  
With milk and honey blessed;  
Beneath thy contemplation  
Sink heart and soul oppressed;  
We know not, O! We know not  
What joy is awaits us there,  
What radiances of glory,  
What bliss beyond compare.*

Bernard of Cluny 12th century  
translated, John Mason Neale 1818 – 66

### **We have a great responsibility**

To live in spite of the dark days in which we live, not giving way to gloom and despondency, but to live cheerfully in the light of God.

We have a responsibility regardless of what others may do, to seek to live in an upright and godly way.

Also to help, support and to pray for those who are on the front line of the battle or those who are most feeling the heat at any particular time. We are to, kindly help each other on till each receive the starry crown.

We are to trust in God knowing that all will be right in the end. We have are to keep in close communion with him and to feed upon his Word.

It was said of Torstensohn one of the great commanders in the army of the Swedish King Gustavius Adolphus in The Thirty Years War (1618-48) though shattered by disease and sickness, and had to be carried at the head of his troops, no commander of his day was so resistless and effective in battle. They also said of him, that he never counted his enemies. Let us never fear our foes or count our enemies, but trust in God and do the right, knowing that;

*Though the cause of evil prosper,  
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong:  
Though her portion be the scaffold,*

*And upon the throne be wrong-  
Yet that scaffold sways the future,  
And, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch upon his own.*

James Russell Lowell 1819-91  
Methodist Hymn Book 1933, No.898

That scaffold we may think of as the cross of Christ who said:

*I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Matt.16:18

*Crowns and thrones may perish,  
Kingdoms rise and wane;  
But the church of Jesus  
Constant will remain:  
Gates of hell shall never  
'Gainst that church prevail;  
We have Christ's own promise,  
And that cannot fail.*

Sabine Baring-Gould 1834-1924

Live like those men and women of faith described in Hebrews 11 of whom it was said:

*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him  
endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be  
wearied, and faint in your minds.*

*Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

Hebrews 12 vv.2-4

## Extra notes

We despair at times because it seems to us that we have no plan to know what to do, or how to address the apostasy of our times. We say if we only knew what to do we would do it. However, though it is undoubtedly a good thing for us as churches to have policies, and direction in what we are seeking to do. At the same time, we need to remember God has a plan for remedying the apostasy of our day and therefore we are not to despair that we have no plausible strategy. We are not as it were to stand still and do nothing, God does not bless idleness, but whilst doing all we can, we are *to stand still and see the salvation of our God*.

Likewise, we are not to lose confidence in the power of God's Word. We must not forget Luther's motto; *The Word will do it*. God promises us that *His word will not return unto Him void*.

In the 18th century Immorality as bad as now, the preachers attacked this but followed it up with the Gospel.

We are not to be daunted by the prevalence of scepticism and secularism. The 18th Century was called the Age of Reason, yet Whitefield and Wesley were undaunted by the teachings of Hume and Voltaire.

The Gospel answers the deepest need of mankind, nothing else does.

Ecumenism has done great damage in our day. Malcolm Muggeridge once described it as, "Like a gang of drunken men trying to hold each other up".

Revival is from above, when there is the least appearance it breaks forth in power.