

newrestalrig

an evangelical church of scotland

Minister:
Rev. David Court

Session Clerk:
Mr. Harry Witherspoon

Address: 1a Willowbrae Rd, Edinburgh

Phone: (0131) 661 4045
Website: www.newrestalrig.com

PARISH NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2006

FROM THE MINISTER

Dear Friends,

Last month witnessed the broadcasting, on Channel 4, of a two-part programme entitled 'The Root of All Evil.' This was the latest offering from that well-known champion of scientific atheism, Professor Richard Dawkins. The National Secular Society heralded the programme as 'a powerful and timely documentary.' But was it?

On the basis of the evidence of these two programmes the answer must surely be no. Seldom can we have witnessed such a shoddy, lazy and intellectually bankrupt piece of TV documentary. Indeed, the word 'documentary' is a complete misnomer. Let us be crystal clear on this point -- this was evangelism. This was Dawkins in his media pulpit preaching his gospel of Scientific Materialism. This was Dawkins the fundamentalist atheist frothing at the mouth and decrying the evils of religion.

The main thesis of Dawkins's argument appeared to be that Christianity, Islam and Judaism are the source of much, if not all, of all the bad things that happen in the world. If only we were rid of them all, then the world would be a much better and happier place. He accuses religion in general of inciting violent hatred, defying the clear and assured results of scientific enquiry, perpetrating the abuse of children and of stunting the mind's capacity for understanding.

Shamefully, Dawkins targets some of the most extreme examples of religious fundamentalism in order to 'prove' his case. He conveniently avoids engaging in any real philosophical debate with mainstream Christian academics and scientists. For Dawkins's thesis to hold water he is compelled to look only at the extreme end of the spectrum, the so-called 'loony fringe'. One of the telling

things about Dawkins is his unwillingness to debate openly and publicly with scientists who are Christians, most notably Alister McGrath.

His argument that religion is the basic cause of violent hatred and conflict in the world is superficial and thin. Once again in order to make his case, Dawkins has to omit any reference to explicitly atheistic regimes such as those of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot that caused so much horrific bloodshed in the twentieth century.

His accusations of 'child abuse' and 'indoctrination' against religious education are simply puerile. His idea that no children should be exposed to religion until they are old enough to make a choice is illogical nonsense. For how can anyone make any choice without knowledge? How can anyone gain knowledge without being taught? If one defines the teaching of children as

(continued on next page)

UPCOMING SUNDAY SERVICES

5th February

11.00 AM
3rd Commandment

12th February

11.00 AM
4th Commandment

19th February

11.00 AM
5th Commandment

26th February

11.00 AM
6th Commandment
Sacrament of Communion

5th March

11.00 AM
7th Commandment

12th March

11.00 AM
Quinquennial Visit

For the next ten months we are sharing evening worship with our neighbours at Holyrood Abbey. All the services will take place at New Restalrig. The preaching and worship leading will be shared by both churches.

indoctrination then how are they ever to gain any knowledge? It is ludicrous.

Dawkins loves to contrast the assured results of scientific enquiry with, what he calls, 'a process of non-thinking called faith'. He is utterly contemptuous of any faith-based perspective. So profound is his contempt that he cannot even be bothered to properly explore or engage with Christian theology. It is clear from his writings that his knowledge of religion and understanding of faith is confused and simplistic.

The reality is of course that Dawkins's own view, his own Scientific Materialism, his own atheism, is, when all is said and done, just a matter of faith. Dawkins is as much a man of faith as anyone else. Only he cannot see it and so will not put his own belief system up to the same scrutiny that he presses on others. While he accuses religious

believers of 'hidebound certainty' he manifests the self-same characteristic himself.

For all of Dawkins's rhetoric and bluster and polemic against religious faith and fundamentalism, and for all his love of highlighting the loony-fringe, the irony surely is that the picture he paints of religious faith is simply a mirror image of himself -- and it is not a pretty sight!

A powerful and timely documentary? Only in the sense that it exposes the desperate lengths to which Dawkins will go in order to make what looks like an increasingly weak and ineffectual case. Only in the sense that it reveals the intellectual bankruptcy of scientific atheism.

In His Service,

David L Court

FRIDAY YOUTH CLUB

The Youth Club on Friday nights has now started again after our Christmas break. God has really blessed us over the past few months and we have seen many new faces coming in through our doors. If all the young people were to turn up on the same night we would have more than 70 9 to 15-year-olds, in our hall. A number that we would have real difficulty coping with.

The layout is similar each week. The evening starts at 7.00 PM, the young people have a choice of activities—snooker, pool, table tennis/football. There are board games and other supposedly quiet activities. There are also a cookery group, manicure group and an occasional craft group.

Midway through the evening we have our 'God Slot'. This takes the form of an informal talk, usually lasting about 15 minutes. We have the young people sitting down and go through some biblical truths week by week. For some, this is the only Christian input that they will get in their lives. It has been really encouraging over recent weeks to see some young people go from being reluctant to listen to the God Slot to now sitting down 5 minutes before time asking when is it going to be time!! We are currently going through the Bible looking at Chapter 3 and verse 16 of different books. Each week one of the young people chooses a book of the Bible and the following week we look at the verse and the impact that it can have on their own lives. This has proved challenging—in every sense of the word—look up some 3:16's to see what I mean. We break for burgers and juice at about 8:15, then return to similar activities with the addition of some tiring out games in the lower hall. We finish at 9 PM (8.45 PM from end of January).

We would really value your prayers for this area of God's work in our church. Please pray for the young people; there are some real needs here, and some kids really searching (speak to any of the leaders to get some 'real names' for your prayers). Pray for the leaders—Brian, Stewart, Irene, Sheila, Evelyn, Claudencia, Paul, David, Paul, Linda, Andrew, Rick and Tim. Pray that God would give us wisdom, vision and a continuing passion to do His work and to reach these kids for Christ. Pray for more leaders to join us, even on an ad-hoc basis whenever they (you?) can. Pray especially that we would have an impact on these young lives—that they would be able to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

Thanks for all your prayers and support.

Tim Russell

CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED

Christianity Explored is an eight-week course that explored what Jesus said about Himself, why He came, and what it means to follow him by considering the words of Mark's Gospel. Participants are not asked to pray, sing, or read aloud, and there is plenty opportunity to ask difficult question. Or, if you prefer, you can come along and simply listen. The setting for the course is informal; each evening starts with a meal, includes a video presentation and has discussion in small groups.

We are planning to run a Christianity Explored course at New Restalrig from 15th February to 5th April.

We ask for your support and prayers in this outreach effort.

Please consider who you might invite to come along. This is an excellent opportunity to invite a non-Christian friend to consider who Jesus is.

If you have any questions or are interested in enrolling on the course or in helping, then please speak to Stewart Hamilton or call him on 661 2771.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

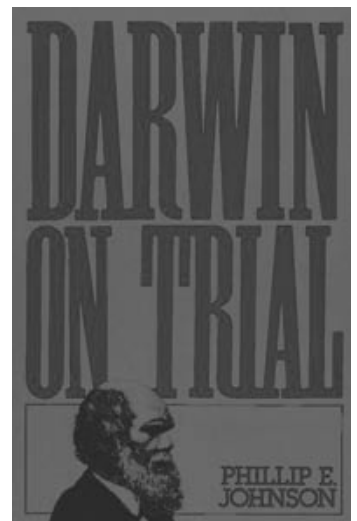
Darwin on Trial, by Philip E. Johnson. 2nd edition

published 1993 by InterVarsity Press. £7.42.

Is Darwinian Evolution an established, scientific fact? Everyone from school science teachers to media reporters would have us believe so. Yet in *Darwin on Trial*, Professor Phillip E. Johnson demonstrates that the evidence supporting Darwinism is far more uncertain than most people realise. Prof. Johnson is a lawyer, not a scientist, and his book deals not so much with the scientific data as its interpretation.

The book is comprised of chapters addressing the major 'doctrines' of evolutionary theory. A particularly useful chapter on natural selection—the theory that 'only the organisms best adapted to their environment tend to survive and transmit their genetic characteristics in increasing numbers to succeeding generations, while those less adapted tend to be eliminated'—explains that Darwinists hold the theory not on the basis of scientific evidence, but because of a logical necessity. In other words, if natural selection is false, the only alternative explanation for the proliferation of life is the existence of an Intelligent Designer; but this conclusion is simply unacceptable to naturalists. It is clear, then, that belief in Darwinism on the basis of natural selection is no less a tenet of faith than belief in God on the basis of divine revelation.

Darwin on Trial is not short on technical detail. Yet it is written with a wide audience in mind, and will be accessible to anyone wanting to better understand the issues surrounding evolution.



YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTRY REPORT

Dear Friends,

I hope you had a good Christmas and a great start to the year.

'The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad'. Psalm 126:3

Christmas

Our Christmas party was a great success with over 50 children present. It was so wonderful to see the children's faces as they enjoyed their party. We had around 20 adults for the carol singing after the party.

The family service went so well. The children sang beautifully and it was so nice to see some parents at the church for the first time. I would like to say a big thanks to all those who helped with the preparations for the party and the service.

Campaigners Becomes C4U Club

For some time now the leaders have been thinking about how we do things on Thursday nights. For a variety of reasons and with the approval of the Session, we have decided to break with the Campaigner organisation. This means that the club on Thursday evening will no longer be called Campaigners.

The new name is C4U Club (Christ for You). Apart from the change of name there will be very little difference. We will still meet at the same time 6.30–7.45 PM. There will be three groups – 4 to 6 1/2 years, 6 1/2 to 9 1/2 years and 9 1/2 to 13 years. T-shirts with a new logo will be available soon.

Tuesday Club

This club, run by the Edinburgh City Council, meets every Tuesday from 6.30–8.30 PM for children ages 8-12 in the lower hall. It is going well and numbers are increasing. After the Christmas break it was so nice to see 13 children attending including 5 who came for the first time from Piershill Square.

The Scripture Unions

The 12.40 Club meeting at the Royal High Primary School has been great and we give thanks to God for the children's enthusiasm when they come along on Tuesdays at lunchtime. Before Christmas, members of the Parsons Green SU had a great time attending the film 'The Lion, the Witch and Wardrobe'. Please pray for both of the SU groups.

Future Plans

We are planning to have a trip to the zoo on 25th March. We are looking for helpers on that day as we intend taking children from C4U club and Sunday Club. If you are able to help, then please speak with me as soon as possible.

Dates for this Session

Sat. February 25th @ 1.30 PM: Leaders meeting
Sun. March 19th: Fun Day "Narnia"
Sat. 25th March: Trip to the Zoo

We really appreciate your prayers for our children in all their different weekly activities. May God bless you throughout 2006 so at the end of this year we can look back and say with Samuel, 'Till now the LORD has helped us.' 1 Samuel 7:12

Claudenicia Piedade

ANNOUNCING...

THE GUILD

The Guild meets on 6th Feb. when our speaker will be Mr. John Rennie, who will tell us about John McCormack, the Irish Tenor. We will learn about the Disease Prevention Organisation on 20th Feb. Both meetings are at 7.15 PM.

There will be a coffee morning on Saturday 25th Feb. from 10.00–12.00 in the upper hall. There will be home baking, jams, bric-a-brac and gifts on sale. Tickets £1.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Wilson Memorial Church is hosting this year's service on Friday 3rd March at 7.30 PM.

MARCH NEWSLETTER

The March issue of the Church Newsletter will be available the first week of March. Please deliver any submissions to Bryce Hales by 19th February or email editor@newrestalrig.com.