

# Humanism, Its Origin, Nature and Menacing Impact

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It has often been noted that there are almost as many philosophies as there are philosophers. The fact that there were no less than fourteen separate schools of philosophy<sup>1</sup> in ancient Greece substantiates that observation. Where the Greeks left off the Romans took over, and philosophic systems have continued to multiply like rabbits ever since.

Though there are philosophies too numerous to number, yet most philosophers would agree with Aristotle and Plutarch that philosophy concerns itself with truth and with the application of one's view of truth to life. In a sense then everyone is a philosopher of sorts since everyone has a view of life. He may not be able to express it, but he has one. It influences his decisions and choices. It affects what he is and determines what he will become.

Prof. J. P. Koehler in the introduction of his "History of the Wisconsin Synod" properly notes that "there are really only two philosophies, or *Weltanschauungen* as he calls them, which come into consideration in history. They are the Christian and the materialistic. "The former," he says, "is inward, rooted in faith, and seeks the things above. The latter is outward, lives and has its being only in man's reason, and has all its roots sunk in this earth."<sup>2</sup> Or one might classify these two world views as theocentric and anthropocentric, God-centered and man-centered. For the one view revelation is the source of Truth; for the other reason is the source of truth. For the one, truth is absolute; for the other truth is relative.

Another name for the materialistic world-view is humanism. The philosophy of humanism saturates almost everything today - the arts and sciences, the schools, the entertainment media, literature, the editorial pages, advertising, music, and even religion - especially religion as a matter of fact. The most influential, opinion-molding people in the world today, the ones who occupy the public platforms and who have the strongest influence on the opinions of people are humanists.

If this is true, then humanism is a subject Christians can ignore only to their own great peril. If all world-views other than the Christian world-view are materialistic and humanistic, then humanism is an enemy of the faith. To combat an enemy effectively, one must know his enemy. To help us know this enemy better is the purpose of this paper. My assignment is to make a study of:

## Humanism, Its Origin, Nature and Menacing Impact

### I. Its Origin

Definitions are in order at the outset. The term humanism is used in a strict sense and in a broad sense. When the term is used in a strict sense, it refers to the New Learning associated with the Renaissance. It was "learning" in the sense that it involved a revival of the study of the Greek and Roman world, especially the literature of those ancient civilizations. It was "new" in the sense that Renaissance scholars studied the classics for their own sake rather than for their value to Christianity. The humanists of the Renaissance age "believed that such studies, rather than religion, were the highest expression of human values and a means to developing the free, responsible individual."<sup>3</sup>

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines humanism in the narrow sense as the philosophical and literary movement which originated in Italy in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and diffused into the other countries

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<sup>1</sup> For a listing of the 14 schools, see Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, (Harper and Row, Centenary Edition, 1970) p. 828

<sup>2</sup> Koehler, J.P. *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, (St. Cloud, Minn., Sentinel Publishing Co. 1970) p. 2

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, (New York: Americana Corp. 1972) vol. 14, p.553

of Europe, coming to constitute one of the factors of modern culture."<sup>4</sup> The Renaissance humanists were men who concerned themselves with *Litterae Humaniores* (humane letters) in contrast to the *Litterae-Sacrae* (sacred letters) of the scholastics. In fact humanism in this sense began as a reaction against the stifling atmosphere of scholasticism. It should be understood, however, that in Luther's day *humanista* was a term synonymous with classicist or classical scholar. The word did not have the connotation then that it does now. It began as something good. But like so many similar things, it developed into something evil.

In its broad sense the word humanism extends backward in time to the age of classical Greek and forward in time to the present. It is variously defined. Generally speaking however it concerns itself with a world view which emphasizes man's autonomy as a self-respecting, rational being who is capable of discovering for himself and within himself what is true and right and good. Humanists recognize no authority above and beyond themselves. Reason is its authority. The good life is its goal.

Speaking of humanism in this broad sense the Encyclopedia of Philosophy says, "Humanism is also any philosophy which recognizes the value or dignity of man and makes him the measure of all things, or somehow takes human nature, its limits, or its interests as its theme."<sup>5</sup> Humanism's interest in man is usually either at the expense of God or to the exclusion of God.

As we turn our attention now to the origin of humanism, we will be using the term occasionally in its strict or narrow sense. For the most part however this presentation will deal with humanism in its broad sense. Really the two are inseparable from each other just as sanctification in its broad and narrow senses are inseparable. Renaissance humanism is merely a chapter within a book. It will be useful to us however in our attempt to understand the genius of humanism today to see the direct line or connection between humanism in its broad sense in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and humanism in its narrow sense in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### Humanism's Real Origin - the Fall

In tracing the origin of humanism it will be necessary for us to go farther back than to the Renaissance, farther back also than to Greece's golden age of philosophy. The Scriptures compel us to go all the way back to the beginning for a proper understanding of the origin of today's humanism.

. It all began, according to God's record of history, when Eve determined to cut loose from God in the hope of freeing herself from dependence upon her Creator in favor of independence. For her a humanistic thought process was the inevitable consequence of entertaining in her mind the validity of the question, "Yea, hath God said?" Why not think for yourself? Why not strike out on your own? She did and she also struck out, - for the whole human race. The first exercise in humanism resulted in a catastrophic fall of fateful consequence for all men.

The first chapters of Genesis depict graphically the hopelessness of man's first humanistic enterprise. The futility of it was indelibly impressed on the minds of Adam and Eve as they lifted Abel's body out of a pool of blood and carried him away to the world's first cemetery. Subsequent developments demonstrate that men were intent on maintaining their autonomy. They were determined to recognize no authority beyond themselves. Consequently "every imagination of man's heart was only evil continually" Gn 6:5. As spokesman for God Moses laments that "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" Gn 6:12.

Pervasive humanism was a factor in God's determination to destroy the world at the time of the Flood. After the Flood it was only a matter of time, however, until humanistic thinking and activity once again dominated the world scene. The Babel episode documents the fact that humanism had firmly established itself as a way of life in the postdiluvian world. We intend to look at the Babel incident in detail later in our study of the nature of humanism. In summary, suffice it to say at this point that the Old Testament era was characterized by the fact that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" Jdg 21:25. And that is another way of saying that humanism was the spirit of the times.

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<sup>4</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967) vol. 4, p.69

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p.70

## The Greek Humanists

Philosophy textbooks understandably trace the origin of humanism back to the Greek philosophers rather than to Eden and Babel. Greek schools of thought were many and varied as we noted previously. Yet all without exception were humanistic in the sense that they looked quite naturally to reason rather than to revelation as the source of truth. We certainly do not wish to leave the impression, however, that the Greeks produced nothing of value. It is common knowledge among Christian scholars that God used Greek philosophy to render an important service to Christianity. In their diligent unending quest for truth Greek philosophers sought out the one permanent element, the highest Being, the law of change, the mathematics of the Universe. Socrates and Plato introduced inductive reasoning and logical definition of words and ideas. They also turned philosophy into a study of ethics. It is utterly astounding to observe how close the Greeks came to an understanding of God and of things divine as well as to an explanation of the relationship between Deity and the universe as such. Unquestionably they laid the foundation for modern learning.

No knowledgeable person would question the fact that "Greek philosophy had an important propaedeutic (preliminary) office to perform for Christianity."<sup>6</sup> The Sophists, for example, gave precision to language without which the interpretation of Scripture would be well nigh impossible. Yet these same Sophists insisted that "man is the measure of all things," (Protagoras, quoted by Plato in Theaetetus) a dictum which expresses the basic ideal of all humanism. It was in part just such "wisdom" which St. Paul had in mind when he warned the Colossians, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" Col 2:8.

In spite of Paul's warning the humanistic germ of Greek philosophy spread and ultimately infected the church. In Alexandria, Philo the Jew, a contemporary of the Apostles, endeavored to harmonize the teachings of the Old Testament with Greek philosophy. Plato's Supreme Being and the Bible's Jehovah were merely different names for the one true God, according to Philo. While Philo apparently wielded a great influence on Jewish intellectuals, the Apostolic church was united in its scorn for and condemnation of the wisdom of the world. Under the influence of Irenaeus and Tertullian, the church in the West continued to resist the subtle humanistic influence of Gnostic philosophy.

In the early part of the third century, however, the catechetical school in Alexandria resurrected the syncretism of Alexandria's eminent first century philosopher. Alexandrian teachers sought to homogenize Christian teaching and pagan philosophy in an attempt to produce a more palatable form of Christianity. Origen, Plotinus and Porphyry lent their considerable talents to the cause. Neoplatonism was the end result. Philosophy became an "ally" rather than an enemy of the gospel, and consequently Neoplatonism entrenched itself firmly within the Christian church for centuries. Humanism's foot was plainly in the door.

## The Italian Humanists

With the advent of the Dark Ages, a fusion was effected between the ancient philosophy and the theology of revelation. As a result scholasticism fastened itself upon the church with a stranglehold. Theology became a dogmatized system divorced in large measure from the Scriptures. An inevitable decay followed in the church. Indeed, decadence was one of the characteristic features of the church during the Dark Ages.

The scholastics of the Western Church were no less humanists however than were the Alexandrian Neoplatonists of the Eastern Church. For they too placed reason on a par with Scripture. The Concordia Cyclopaedia characterizes Scholasticism as an attempt "to discuss. . . doctrines, to comprehend, harmonize, and prove them, not from the Bible, but from reason." It adds, "Though, as thinkers, some of the Scholastics ranked

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<sup>6</sup> Funk and Wagnalls. *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, 1916. See "propaedeutic." The quote is used to illustrate the proper use of the word. The sentence is attributed to Winchell, *Science and Religion*. In full it reads: "No thoughtful person can glance over this summary without being convinced that Greek philosophy had an important propaedeutic office to perform for Christianity.

high; they were not really theologians, since they lacked the one essential of a theologian, the purpose and ability of setting forth nothing more or less than the truths of the Bible."<sup>7</sup>

The scholastic movement began in the 9<sup>th</sup> century with the work of John Scotus Erigena. It reached its zenith in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the person of Thomas Aquinas, a man who was also thoroughly infected with the germ of humanism. Francis Schaeffer asserts that "with the coming of Aquinas, we have the real birth of the humanistic Renaissance."<sup>8</sup> Schaeffer traces Aquinas' humanism to "his incomplete view of the biblical Fall." According to Aquinas, man's will was fallen, but his intellect was not. It was but a short step from that unscriptural view to the establishment of the autonomy of man's intellect.. In Aquinas' system this led to natural theology, or to the notion that theology can be pursued apart from Scripture. Though he was convinced that the truths of natural theology and the truths of Scripture would always coincide and agree and sought to prove it with his system, he nonetheless set the stage for what Schaeffer calls the autonomous principle. "From the basis of this autonomous principle, philosophy also became free, and was separated from revelation. . . Aquinas had opened the way to an autonomous Humanism, an autonomous philosophy, and once the movement gained momentum, there was soon a flood."<sup>9</sup>

The scholastic method of which the system of St. Thomas is a classic example succeeded only in creating an intolerably stifling atmosphere in the church, an atmosphere in which spiritual life could neither thrive nor flourish. A reaction to that stifling atmosphere was inevitable. It came with the development of the New Learning in Italy in the 14<sup>th</sup> century though in no way did the New Learning create an atmosphere in which spiritual life could flourish. Present day humanism traces its origin back to the Italian humanists of this Renaissance period.

The Renaissance humanists endeavored to open the windows and to dispel the stale air of the scholastics by reviving the true classical spirit. Ancient learning had been denatured by the medieval scholastics, the humanists correctly insisted. The church had repressed classical learning. It had restricted the use of classical literature to collections of inoffensive extracts. It had placed the emphasis in the study of the classics on grammar and rhetorical form at the expense of substance. It employed allegory to give Christian meaning to Greek philosophy in an attempt to render it harmless. It employed Aristotle's logic to develop a Thomistic system which called for an unquestioning faith. (Rome's *fides implicita* or, as Lutherans facetiously termed it, *carbonaria; Koehlerglaube*).

The solution proposed by the Italian humanists to this intolerable situation was a revival of the true classical spirit. Under Petrarch the movement began innocently enough as an educational enterprise with the goal of studying the ancient classics for the purpose of improving literary and rhetorical skills. Hence the name, "The New Learning." The Encyclopedia Americana makes the significant observation that, "It was distinguished from medieval learning in its approach to classical literature for its own sake, in historical perspective, and in its belief in the efficacy of such studies as grammar rhetoric, poetry, history, and ethics to develop the individual character."<sup>10</sup> (Underlining, mine). This concern for "individual character" suggests dissatisfaction with the kind of individual character produced by the church as an institution. Humanists then, like humanists today, were seeking a means to produce a whole, integrated, autonomous man. The situation which prevailed in the church was in part responsible for the fact that their efforts led away from the Scripture rather than back to the Scriptures. A full-blown humanism which dethroned God and enthroned man was the ultimate and inevitable result.

It remains for us to summarize briefly some of the paths of learning pursued by the Italian humanists and to note some of the significant consequences of those pursuits affecting the church either for good or for ill. The new interest in the Greek philosophers led to a renewed study of Greek in the early 1400's. Secular historians point to the translation of the entire works of Plato from Greek into Latin by Marsilio Ficino as the

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<sup>7</sup> *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1954) p.958

<sup>8</sup> Schaeffer, Francis. *Escape from Reason*, (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968) p. 10

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11f.

<sup>10</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol 14, p. 553

"crowning achievement" of that renewed interest in Greek. The Lord of the church of course had something quite different in mind. We would say the crowning achievement of that new interest was achieved at a place called "The Wartburg" where Martin Luther used his knowledge of Greek to translate the New Testament into the language of the people.

History also became an object of interest for the Italian humanists. They had a passion to recover the story of the past. They learned the importance of viewing things from a proper historical perspective. Along with their interest in history, they developed a concern for authentic texts, a concern which led in time to the development of modern textual criticism. In their day it led to the Erasmian text of the New Testament from which Luther made his German translation. Given a few more centuries to develop along rationalistic lines, it also led to higher criticism of the Bible, and then to the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation. We intend to pursue the impact of that facet of humanism a bit further in our treatment of the menacing impact of humanism today.

Of particular importance to our study is a consideration of the impact of Italian humanism on philosophy and religion. While the humanists were disparate in many ways, they were "agreed in their belief in man's power of reason, freedom of choice, and innate ethical sense, but they recognized his fallibility and weakness, and the limitations imposed by life's uncertainties Their aim was to reconcile those opposites to achieve a harmonious ordering of human life in all its manifestations."<sup>11</sup> (Emphasis mine) This is also an apt-statement of the objectives of humanists today, especially if one adds to the last sentence the phrase "apart from God." During the Renaissance period the influence of the humanists was spread especially in the schools and the universities (just as it still is today).

Many wealthy families in Italy, in Mantua, Florence, Venice, Naples and Rome, patronized the humanists, the Medicis for example. Humanists infiltrated positions of influence in the chancelleries, the republics and the church. Indeed the humanist Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini rose through the ranks of the church to become Pope Pius II. In this respect the humanists have not changed their *modus operandi*.

### The Reformation Humanists

Needless to say the humanist movement played a prominent role in the Reformation of the Church. In fact one could even say that without it there would have been no reformation such as we know it. When it was transported northward across the Alps into Germany and the Netherlands, the New Learning was often employed more in the interest of ecclesiastical goals than in the interest of secular pursuits. It was viewed particularly as an instrument useful for the reform of the church. Northern scholars were more interested in the study of Christian antiquity than in the study of classical Greek antiquity. A new interest developed in the study of Hebrew as well as of Greek accounting for the fact that the leaders of the Reformation were at home in both Biblical languages. For these reasons the humanist movement outside Italy has been designated as Christian humanism.

The roster of Reformation humanists, Catholic and Protestant, includes such influential men as Calvin, Zwingli, Reuchlin, Thomas More, and most importantly of all, the man known as "the prince of the Christian humanists," Desiderius Erasmus, surely one of the best known and most influential men of his century. Erasmus was no less interested in the reform of the church than was Luther. Erasmus was convinced however that enlightened reason would ultimately serve to rid the church of superstition and unscriptural abuses. He believed that if scholars of the church would return to the sources of Christianity reform would follow as a matter of course. It was that conviction which led him to devote his considerable talents to a revision of the Greek text of the Bible and to a new Latin translation based upon it.

The Swiss reformers were also tinged with humanism's spirit as is apparent particularly in their misuse of the maxim "*Finitum non est capax infiniti*" (the finite is not capable of the infinite). For Zwingli and Calvin as for Luther, Scripture was the only authority in religion. But for the Swiss reformers reason was the final arbiter of what the Scriptures taught. Koehler says, "Zwingli's reform movement was based on his logical

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p.553

criticism of popery's excesses, which was the common sense of all Humanists." His humanism revealed itself in the fact that he was "willing to compromise . . . without settling the issue."<sup>12</sup>

Philip Melanchthon holds the dubious distinction of introducing traces of humanism into the Lutheran Church. He was a scholar's scholar. Luther genuinely appreciated his linguistic skills. Melanchthon was equally at home in the ancient philosophies as he was in classical language. The extent to which philosophy was brought to bear on the construction of Lutheran thought is attributable to him. Unlike Luther, who was convinced that the role of philosophy must be limited to that of handmaid of Christian theology, Melanchthon allowed his philosophical/ humanistic inclinations to influence his understanding of faith. Gnesio-Lutherans have properly designated that influence in the church as the "Melanchthonian blight."

The humanism of the Reformation age, J. P. Koehler insists, "is nothing but Alexandrianism," (a homogenization of Christianity and paganism). He insists that humanism was an agency "to usher in barefaced paganism." He summarizes the effect humanism had upon the times and concludes, "that was materialism, pure and simple."<sup>13</sup>

### Post Reformation Humanists

In the pre-Reformation period the humanism of the Renaissance movement had helped to prepare the way for a rediscovery of the Christian faith. In the post-Reformation era it gradually worked to undermine the faith and led finally to the enthronement of reason. It would be impossible within the scope of this paper to single out all the influential individuals who furthered the humanist movement following the Reformation and to summarize their thought and influence. We propose to single out only a few whose thought and life-work helped to set the stage for the triumphs of humanism in our time.

The post-Reformation period is basically one in which the authority of the Bible was gradually undermined in the thinking of the people. Holy Scripture was transformed from a source of infallible divine truth into a historical record of what ordinary errant humans thought about divine truth.

Koehler's summary of the conditions which prevailed in Europe at the outset of this period is worth sharing at this point, particularly because he makes reference to the same areas of activity to which we shall give our attention when we consider the menacing impact of humanism today. Koehler says:

For the time being, the masses of the European world still accepted the fundamentals of divine revelation: the creation of the universe by God, the redemption of the world by Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, the revelation of God in the Bible, and its authority for the conduct of human life. And this attitude was still a power in the life of the European peoples. Acceptance of the Scriptures till end of the Thirty Years War was still more or less axiomatic in all walks of life. In science the belief still obtained that God created the world and keeps it; in civic and governmental life it was a foregone conclusion that God has ordained the powers that be, in judicial procedure the Ten Commandments were still the fundamental law; in family and social life the Fourth Commandment was respected; in business and trade the word "Thou shalt not steal" was still the maxim; in school life these general truths were still the foundation of all education; in poetry and art its disciples still sought to exalt the truths that the Gospel proclaims.<sup>14</sup>

Koehler continues with the observation that "change was not far in the offing." Astronomers Copernicus and Galileo shortly rocked the church with their controversial theories. While their theories were not unscriptural, many in the church thought they were. Galileo was compelled by the Pope to retract his view that the earth moves. Those who studied the theories of the men of science and found them to be valid were convinced the church was in error in the position it took. And since the position of the church was assumed to

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<sup>12</sup> Koehler, *op. cit.* p.7, column 2

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p.5, col 2

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p.8, col 2

be the position also of the Scriptures, the Bible itself began to be suspect in the minds of scholars. It was only a matter of time until the historical record of the Bible was attacked, and science was elevated in rank to a position equal with the Bible as a source of truth. Humanism had gained a vital victory. In France, humanist philosopher Montaigne (1592) was now free to insist, while remaining a member of the church, that no one person, group, church or religion possessed the whole truth.

The period between the Thirty Years War (1648) and the French Revolution is marked by "the dethronement of God, conscious and determined . . . and the practical shelving of the Word of God."<sup>15</sup> A list of names of those responsible would have to include Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Leibnitz, Lessing, Kant - to name only men active in the realm of philosophy. Artists, politicians, writers, poets and even churchmen also contributed their part to God's dethronement and the shelving of His Word during this era.

In a sense the emergence of humanism in the post-Reformation period . the rise of rationalism. While rationalism assumes a variety of different forms ranging from acceptance to rejection of revelation, nevertheless humanism, as Koehler insists, is a common element in every form of rationalism. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century churchmen and others attempted to demonstrate that reason and faith do not conflict because Christianity is a reasonable faith. John Locke for example produced a work entitled "Reasonableness of Christianity."

Reason however is not usually content to share honors with revelation. Once it had its foot firmly planted in the door, it demanded in and it dominated. The transition to deism followed. Deists insist that revelation has nothing higher to offer than reason, an attitude which is tantamount to a rejection of revelation. Deism finds its "truth" in the five doctrines of "universal religion" rather than in Scripture.

The next step along the way of rationalistic development was the rejection of all dogmatic assertions. There is no such thing as propositional truth. The only thing one can be sure of is that he cannot be sure of anything. Hobbes and Hume along with a host of others had promoted this skepticism. It has led predictably and inevitably to atheism and mechanistic philosophy of a type that dominates thinking in intellectual circles in our day. The irony of it is that German rationalism along with its two first cousins, Deism in England and Naturalism in France are commonly termed in history books as "The Enlightenment." Not only do "men love the darkness rather than the light," (Jn 3:19) they cannot tell the one from the other.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Immanuel Kant crippled rationalism with his "Critique of Pure Reason" insisting that reason has its limitations in spiritual matters. Schleiermacher furthered the decline of the old rationalism by identifying religious belief with religious feeling. While these men may have hastened the end of the Age of Rationalism, they made important contributions to the promotion of humanism, particularly Schleiermacher with his misplaced emphasis on subjective feeling.

In many ways Schleiermacher is the man who ushered in the modern era. Perhaps as much as any other man his thinking dominates the religious scene outside of evangelical circles today. For him religion is nothing more than "the taste and feeling for the infinite." His "Reden ueber die Religion" is said to have influenced modern theology more than any other single work. His subjectivism pervades the thought world of today like a London fog or a Los Angeles smog. His view of the faith is in many respects identical to the religion of humanism today with its emphasis on doing your own thing as long as you are convinced it's the right thing to do and it satisfies you. He compels us to take a closer look at the nature of this pervasive evil.

## II. Its Nature

It would be quite impossible to trace historically the origin of humanism without simultaneously revealing something of its nature. In what we have said about the origin and development of humanism from Adam to Schleiermacher, essential elements of its nature have emerged. Oversimplified a step by step picture looks something like this:

**God** - supreme

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p.11, col 1

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Man - dependent

1. a recognition of the absolute authority of God
2. a rejection of the absolute authority of God
3. a questioning of the authority of God
4. a questioning of the existence of God
5. a denial of the existence of God
6. an assertion of the autonomy of man.

**Man** - supreme

Man's attempt to assert his autonomy and to declare himself supreme is not just a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon as our point by point enumeration might suggest. Actually it is an age-old idea which appears to have come of age in our time. In the first book of the Bible Moses graphically describes it for us in the account of the tower of Babel. Then in the last book of the Bible St. John symbolically describes the culmination of the humanistic enterprise in his account of the fall of Babylon and Armageddon. Both accounts give important insights into the nature of humanism.

### Insights from Babel

Chronologically the familiar Babel story immediately follows the account: of the Flood. The Flood had provided a graphic demonstration of the tragic consequence of sin. Now God was giving the human race a chance for a new start. As the world repopulated itself, however, it was patently apparent that men intended to persist in their vain desire to play God.

Moses introduces the account with the statement that "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech." (11:1). Men intended to keep it that way. They liked the idea of "one world." There is certainly nothing wrong per se with a one world philosophy. In their case it was the reason behind their desire for togetherness which was wrong. The unfolding of the story makes that clear. God seeks to unite men with each other by uniting them with himself in the body of Christ. These people were interested in their own kind of union. They had been told by God to "subdue the earth." They responded by saying, "O.K. We'll not only subdue it, we'll proceed to be its masters according to a plan of our own devising."

As a unifying agent they determined to build a monument to their own ingenuity. "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven" (11:4). They included a city in their plans. The city would help to insure the preservation of their culture and their ideals. Museums and libraries to house and preserve the evidence of man's progress and ingenuity were doubtless included in their plans. But the outstanding feature of their enterprise was to be a tower, an architectural symbol of their greatness, which would dominate everything else. They were not interested in creating a monument to the glory, the grandeur and the greatness of God as were the builders of the great cathedrals in Europe. They were interested only in something which would enable them to say, "Look how great we are!" They made their purpose quite clear. "And let us make us a name" (11:4b). These words provide the clue to the understanding of the entire incident. These people fashioned themselves as the world's first supermen. They were the first to chant, "We're number one." It was this attitude that brought down God's wrath upon them.

The Babel builders gave further expression to their purpose by saying, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (11:4c). There is a suggestion in these words that in their heart of hearts they knew this project was improper. It was not in keeping with God's intentions. He wanted them to cultivate and fashion the world according to His Master Plan and to do it as His representatives - in His name. The pursuit of learning, the practice of the arts, crafts and sciences was all well and good as long as it was done to the glory of



God. When men pursue these things for that purpose they remain close to the Source of all things. But the Babel builders were in effect saying, "We are free people. We are our own masters." God will not tolerate such defiance for long.

"The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded" (11:5). According to the Psalmist God holds in derision all such attempts to defy Him. He laughs at man's puny efforts to make a name for himself rather than for God. He dashes the monuments of men in pieces like a potter's vessel, Ps 2:2-4 and 9. In a sermon on the Babel story, Helmut Thielicke notes the irony in the words, "The Lord came down," and amplifies it. He says, "From the real heaven it looks too small and God can't see it with the naked eye. And certainly it must be terribly tiny, this tower, if even the all-knowing God cannot see it without glasses and a telescope. So he takes counsel with his heavenly court and resolves to take the extra trouble to come down and make a local inspection on earth . . . Here these men thought they had built a structure so colossal that it would take God's breath away. They thought: Here we, mad Promethean fellows that we are, have broken into God's domain with our tower. But from the real heaven all this looks like something built by brownies, goblins or Lilliputians, so tiny, so microscopically small that it cannot be seen with the naked eye."<sup>16</sup>

Every Bible reader knows how God put a quick end to this humanistic endeavor. Not every reader of Scripture, however, is equally familiar with the word of prophecy God spoke as He intervened and terminated that particular project. "And the Lord said, Behold. . . this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do." (11:6b). The King James loses something of the original Hebrew. A literal translation brings out the prophetic content of the verse. "This is merely the beginning of what they do, and now from nothing they devise to do will they desist." What God says (this they begin) is suggestive of a disposition in the heart. Though God intervenes and puts a stop to this nonsense, man remains incurably a humanist at heart. Therefore similar enterprises will follow this one. The words are prophetic of the future as well as descriptive of man's attitude.

The Babel incident is part of the salvation story. Its purpose is to demonstrate that man is in desperate need of divine help. By intervening as He did at Babel, a gracious God shows that He is not about to let man perish in his own folly. God undid the confusion of tongues at Babel when He gave the gift of tongues on Pentecost for the proclamation of the good news of man's reconciliation with God. That "tongue" has the power it takes to bring men together in the unity of the Spirit in the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. Now while humanists are still intent on building a new Babel, God's people are intent on building Christ's church.

### Insights from Revelation 17-19

True to God's prophetic word, Babel was only a beginning. Men have ignored God's command to cease and desist just as He said they would. Secular history is the record of that fact.

What is recorded in the book of Genesis as prophecy is recorded in the book of Revelation as fulfillment. In a vision John saw "ten kings" ally themselves with the Beast in the last period of the world's history in an attempt to do in the Lamb and His kingdom. (Rev 17:12-14). The kings in all probability are not persons as such, but rather influential ideas which begin to dominate in the thinking of men. The number ten does not suggest that there are literally ten such ideas. Ten is the symbol number for the Gentile age or for the New Testament period. These powerful, influential ideas operate independently of each other until the end time. Then for "one hour" (v 12) they unite with common cause in the service of Satan, the Beast.

In the previous chapter (16:12 and 16) John pictures these forces allying themselves together on the banks of the Euphrates River, the ancient marshalling grounds for forces which opposed God's Old Testament people. In John's vision the waters of the river dry up preparing the way for the onslaught of the ten kings against the Lamb and His followers on the battlefield of Armageddon. When the smoke has cleared and the dust

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<sup>16</sup> Thielicke, Helmut. *How the World Began*. (Philadelphia; Fortress, 1961) p.279

settled after the last great conflict, the Lamb stands victorious while the Beast and all his allies are vanquished forever.

One of the particularly significant things John says about the "ten kings" is that "these have one mind" (17:13). They think alike, they have one common purpose. While many other things in Revelation may be obscure, that one common purpose is unmistakably clear. The "kings" are united in their determination to overcome the Lamb - or in other words to dethrone God. That is precisely the objective of all who say, "Let us make us a name." Pythagoras would say, "Let's make man the measure of all things." Henley's "Invictus" is more crass, but equally to the point, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul."

If the "ten kings" represent the realm of antichristian ideas in the New Testament age, one would naturally look for them in the all-encompassing fields of politics, economics and religion. It is more than of just passing interest that in all three of those areas of human endeavor, a movement toward union is increasingly apparent in our day. In the political arena nationalism is on the wane while internationalism is on the rise. Politically we appear to be moving in the direction of one world. In the field of economics the same thing is true. Giant multinational corporations may presage a world-wide common market with an economy controlled by a one-world government. On the religious scene the same trend is apparent. The ecumenical movement has in it the seeds of universalism. And universalism is simply another name for the religion of humanism.

Hegel foresaw the development of the one-world in politics, economics and religion as a result of what he termed "the inevitability of gradualism." Given time, he said, it is inevitable that we will develop into a one-world community Babel. God foretold man's continued striving for this goal, and John recorded some of the details of its fulfillment so we would know what to look for. Its characteristic feature is humanism. According to St. Paul, it is "after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." He warns us to "beware" of it. It is a "philosophy" he says which makes a prey of men. However it is nothing but empty deceit (Col. 2:8).

### Focusing the Picture

Thus Scripture presents us with a clear and comprehensive view of the nature of humanism. Its objective is a materialistic, secularistic, one-world society of supposedly autonomous men. The means of achieving that objective is man's own ingenuity as a rational creature, - his reason in other words. The motive is vain glory. Man is still intent on making a name for himself. His pride is indomitable. The manner involves a disavowal of the role God assigned man as a bearer and reflector of His image together with an espousal of a self-chosen role which places a premium on ego trips.

Humanism therefore requires the elimination of God from man's thinking, or at least of man's accountability to Him a la Freud and evolutionists. It requires a demolition of the Scriptures as a source of truth and a guide for life a la Schleiermacher and the higher critics. And it requires the preparation of man for a controlled society a la B. F. Skinner and the social engineers of today.

The postulates of a humanistic life-view are primarily two, confidence and tolerance. Humanists have an unshakable confidence in man's ability to shape, change and improve his world. In other words they substitute faith in man for faith in God. Note for example how that confidence is expressed by Pico della Mirandola (d. 1494) in the blasphemous words he puts into the mouth of God in his famous "Oration on the Dignity of Man."

I have given you, Adam, neither a predetermined place nor a particular aspect nor any special prerogatives in order that you may take and possess these through your own decision and choice. The limitations on the nature of other creatures are contained within my prescribed laws. You shall determine your own nature without constraint from any barrier, by means of the freedom to whose power I have entrusted you. I have placed you at the center of the world so that from that point you may see better what is in the world. I have made you neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor

immortal so that like a free and sovereign artificer, you might mold and fashion yourself into that form you yourself shall have chosen.<sup>17</sup>

This supreme confidence in man's capability perhaps more than anything else distinguished the new humanistic view of man from the medieval view of man. As we shall see later, Pico's view of man is still the view of man set forth in the Humanist Manifesto II of 1973.

A second important postulate of humanism is an attitude of tolerance. There is a right kind of tolerant attitude and a wrong kind. The religious wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, notably the Thirty Years War, taught men the need to be tolerant of the religious convictions of people of other faiths. Catholics and Protestants had to learn to coexist peacefully, tolerant of each other's convictions, without necessarily respecting them. For humanists however, tolerance means something quite different, Humanists are convinced that there is a fundamental unity underlying all religious beliefs. There is therefore a possibility of universal religious peace (recall John's prophetic vision) and of a one-world religion.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century humanists believed that philosophy and religion were in essential agreement with each other. St. Paul and Plato were not really at odds each other. Platonism was the cocoon, Christianity the butterfly. Thus Pico was convinced that all the religions and all the philosophies of the world be homogenized into one. In his "Oration on the Dignity of Man" he attempted to demonstrate that Platonism and Aristotelianism could be reconciled. So could cabala (Jewish-philosophy), magic, the writings of the church fathers, ascicism, you name it. Humanists were certain that all beliefs came from an original single source, and that the various religious and philosophic systems gave expression to the truth in a partial, but not in a contradictory way. Thus combining the elements of truth in all systems one could theoretically arrive at the whole truth. That combining, however, according to humanists, cannot be accomplished without a spirit of tolerance. Christians who press the exclusive claims of Christ (Mk 16:16; Jn 8:31-32; Jn 14:6) are therefore really the enemies of truth.

Erasmus was sympathetic to Pico's idea. Sir Thomas More dreamed a similar dream in "Utopia." And humanists today are still dreaming it. It is part of the essential nature of humanism. Its widespread popularity in our day, also within the church, is alarming. It reminds one of Jesus' comment about the great deceit which would permeate the world in the end time.

We need to take a moment at this point to note that as humanism moves transitionally from the age of the New Learning toward the one-world united in its antagonism to Christ as envisioned by John in Revelation, it manifests itself in a bewildering variety of forms. For many people it seems inappropriate to call these various forms humanistic since some of them are apparently contradictory. Contradictory opposites cannot be comprised of the same essential ingredient, their logic tells them. That is precisely what Satan wants people to think. He uses it to his own great advantage.

Let me attempt to clarify that. Humanism is a term used to designate a number of different doctrines. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy notes that communism, pragmatism, personalism (or spiritualism) and existentialism are all humanistic doctrines. Communism is humanistic because it seeks to abolish man's alienation from himself which supposedly results from private property and capitalistic society. Pragmatism is humanistic because it makes man the measure of all things. Personalism is humanistic because it insists that man has the ability to contemplate eternal truths and enter into a relationship with reality beyond himself (cf T.M.). Existentialism is humanistic because it claims each person must decide for himself what to do without any objective norms to guide him.

Thus persons who appear to occupy positions at opposite extremes are often both humanists at heart, for example a Robert Welch and a Herbert Marcuse, or a Neo-Pentecostalist and a Zen Buddhist. Satan has always successfully employed the strategy of setting up two opposite extremes, one obviously evil and the other supposedly good because it is its opposite, - and then trapping those who react to the obvious evil by getting them to espouse the supposed good. Humanism suits his purposes to a T in this respect.

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<sup>17</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, op. cit.* p.70

## On the American Scene

In America two separate movements, both religious, have promoted the development and the spread of humanism. They are Unitarianism and Modernism.

Unitarianism in America traces its origins back to the free thinkers in the Congregational churches of New England in colonial times. In 1805 a split occurred between Trinitarian and Unitarian Congregationalists resulting in the establishment of a Unitarian church body. The Lutheran Cyclopedia says of Unitarian doctrine, "They are agreed in denying the Trinity, the deity of Jesus, the sinfulness of mankind, the authority of Scripture, in fact, all specifically Christian doctrines. Unitarians are outspoken humanists and believe in the essential dignity and perfectibility of human nature."<sup>18</sup> Following World War II the Unitarians who believe that man is too good to be damned united with the Universalists who believe that God is too good to damn anyone. They could find no compelling reason for not compromising their one doctrinal difference in the interest of merger. In recent years these people have promoted humanistic associations in larger cities and have provided the impetus for the drafting of Humanist Manifesto II.

Modernism has been much more influential in fostering humanistic ideals than has Unitarianism, particularly during the last fifty years. Modernism in America traces its origin back to liberalism in Germany at the end of the last century. Schleiermacher initiated it by substituting pious God-consciousness for written revelation as the source of truth. Troeltsch insisted like Pico that truth could be found only in a comparative study of all religions. Their differences were minimal. They agreed on the fatherhood of God, the immanence of God, the brotherhood of man and perfectibility of man.

If man is perfectible, then it must be the mission of the church (or the school or the state) to proceed with the task of perfecting him. Modernism's goal became the establishment of the Kingdom of God as an ethical and moral community of men - a great new society. The good news was transformed into a social gospel; from a power for integrating fallen man with a forgiving God into a system for integrating man with himself (getting "it" all together as the "now" generation puts it) and with his fellowman.

Thus modernism is responsible for two ideas which are part of the essential nature of humanism today. One is that man's religious experiences are the source and the standard of truth. The Bible is nothing more than a record of such experiences. All religious concepts, sin, redemption, heaven and the like, must all be reinterpreted in the light of present day experience. The other is that man's growth toward fulfillment or integration of personality is possible if he will follow the biological and psychological laws of the universe. This growth is furthered, not by the Holy Spirit, but by some vague "cosmic force" in which a person must "believe." This cosmic force is nothing more than the personality evolving process. And that is what people once called "God." In short, modernism ditches theology in favor of psychology and loses God in the process.

In an article on Humanism in Baker's recently published *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, Gordon Clark asserts, "Humanism is the result of a consistent application of Schleiermacher's principles by which everything Christian is repudiated."<sup>19</sup> Clark then proceeds to show this ultimate repudiation from the argument about God. The German liberals were men who believed in God. They may have doubted His personality, but they believed in Him. They introduced a leaven, however, which ultimately robbed them of God. Psychological analysis of one's feelings does not lead to anything that can unequivocally be called God. The honest, consistent thinkers then began to ask, Why should we retain the term God when nothing of its commonly understood meaning remains? Tillich and his disciples still speak of "god," but that is really a kind of double-talk. Altizer and his radical colleagues put it on the line. "God is dead," they announced a decade ago just as superman Nietzsche had said a century earlier. It just took the theologians a while to get their courage up to say out loud what they were thinking to themselves.

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<sup>18</sup> *Lutheran Cyclopedia, op. cit.* p. 1082

<sup>19</sup> *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, edited by Carl F. H. Henry, (Grand Rapids: Baker and Canon, 1973) p.302

So what's left to believe? Lutheran J. Schoneberg Setzer asks the same question in a book by that title.<sup>20</sup> His answers indicate he has not yet come full cycle, but he is sure that the Bible is not completely reliable. Humanists have an answer to Setzer's question. Since God is dead, have faith in man! Look how far he has come on his "immense journey" up the evolutionary ladder.

What can be retained after God has been dethroned is a set of ethical values, humanism contends. Among them are truth, love, beauty, friendship. The highest value on the humanist's scale is the integration of personality. Or one might call it the discovery along with Lucy of what "happiness is." It is what a person is looking for who asks the question, How can I get right with God? but who cannot ask it because he has been told there is no God. That is the futility of humanism. It candidly recognizes the need for "integration" but refuses to accept the fact that the reason integration is necessary is because the creature has cut himself loose from his Creator. He is like a fish out of water refusing to get back into the water because he steadfastly maintains there is no such thing.

### Humanism's Creed

It has been necessary to say many uncomplimentary things in our polemic against humanism. Have we been fair? After all, humanism has made significant contributions to our modern world, certainly not all of them bad. It must get the credit for unshackling the minds of men from medieval tyranny both as a prelude to the Reformation and to the modern era of discovery and technology. If it could once serve the gospel as it did, is it really and totally antichristian today? To answer that we shall allow the humanists to speak for themselves. As we do we shall see that the unshackling of the mind only led from one form of tyranny to another, from medieval to modern. In effect, all the unshackled minds have done is to exhume Jabal, Jubal, and Tubalcain.

For a century following Schleiermacher's death in 1834, the tenets of religious humanism remained largely unarticulated. During the era of optimistic liberalism in the first part of this century, humanists increasingly felt a need to express in explicit form the main principles of humanism. The task fell to Roy Wood Sellars, professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan. The result of his labor appeared in the May-June 1933 issue of *The New Humanist*. It was appropriately titled "A Humanist Manifesto," and contained a prologue, 15 theses, and a brief epilogue.

In the prologue Sellars suggested that a world come of age was in need of a new religion consistent with the new world view. He defines religion as a means for realizing the highest values of life. With a tip of the hat to the old religions, he declared, "While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present." He then proceeded to draft the creed of religious humanism.<sup>21</sup>

We herewith share with you some of the key theses from the Manifesto.

- First: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.
- Second: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process.
- Fourth: Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization. . . are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage.
- Eighth: Religious Humanism considers the complete' realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion
- Tenth: It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.

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<sup>20</sup> Setzer, J. Schoenberg. *What's Left to Believe*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968)

<sup>21</sup> The quotations from the Humanist Manifesto are taken from *The Story of Philosophy*, Paul Kurtz, Macmillan, pp. 368-371

Thesis thirteen calls for restructuring the ritualistic forms and ecclesiastical methods of the church. Fourteen calls for an abandonment of capitalism's profit motive and a transition to a socialistic economic order. In the epilogue Sellars concludes, "Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement."

The original Manifesto was signed by 34 people, many of whom were Unitarian ministers. Most prominent among the signatories was the name of John Dewey of Columbia University, father of progressive education in this country. Humanism is the philosophy that underlies progressive education.

The original Manifesto served its purpose well though its framers admit that it was too optimistic, a child born ahead of its times. On the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Manifesto, the American Humanist Association determined that an updated version was in order. In the September/October 1973 issue of *The Humanist*, the revised version appeared under the title "Humanist Manifesto II." It is apparently the product of the magazine's editor, Paul Kurtz, and editor emeritus, Edwin Wilson.

Humanist Manifesto II purports to be "a positive declaration for times of uncertainty." It contains a preface, a prologue, 17 theses grouped under the headings: Religion, Ethics, the Individual, Democratic Society, World Community, and a conclusion titled Humanity as a Whole. In the preface Kurtz observes, "As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith. Salvationism, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means for survival." The prologue asserts that, "Humanism can provide the purpose and inspiration that so many seek; it can give personal meaning and significance to human life." The "positive principles" set forth in the Manifesto Kurtz says, "are a design for a secular society on a planetary scale." What follows is a blueprint for a 20<sup>th</sup> century tower of Babel.

The first group of statements recognizes the importance of "religion." Religion is presented as a means "to inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals." Thesis one continues, "We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species . . . As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity . . . we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species . . . no deity will save us; we must save ourselves."

Thesis two begins, "Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful." Modern science discredits the notion of a human soul. "Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces . . . There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body."

Yet humanists believe in good and bad and affirm that a person ought to be decent for the sake of his own personhood and for the good of his fellowman. A humanist prides himself in his ethical behavior, though he is hard put to present a rational defense for the notion of "ought." The second section is entitled Ethics. Thesis three states, "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. (Shades of Schleiermacher) Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction." Apparently it needs only the sanction of the author and those who agree with him. Thesis four substitutes reason for Scripture as man's authority for all matters of faith and life. "Reason and intelligence are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses . . . The controlled (?) use of scientific methods, which have transformed the natural and social sciences since the Renaissance, must be extended further in the solution of human problems."

Elsewhere the Manifesto espouses "the right to birth control, abortion and divorce." Homosexual practices should be tolerated with individuals "permitted to express their proclivities and pursue their lifestyle as they desire." It is committed to the "extension of participatory democracy in its true sense, to the economy, the school, the family, the workplace and all voluntary associations." The World Community section deplors nationalism and advocates "the development of a system of world law and a world order based upon

transnational federal government." The concluding theses present a preview of the planned new world community which is nothing other than the age old Babylonian dream of heaven on earth.

Perhaps more alarming than the Manifesto itself is the list of signatures appended to it. The list includes names of congressmen, scientists, teachers in influential positions at colleges and universities in various parts of the world, newspaper editors and editorialists, financiers, industrialists, military leaders, clergymen, rabbis, foundation heads - in short leaders who shape and mold opinion from their positions of authority and seats of influence. Originally the framers solicited the signatures of 180 distinguished leaders throughout the world and received "approximately a dozen declinations." Since then the Humanist Association has announced a campaign for one million signatures.<sup>22</sup> The list includes the name of Joseph Fletcher, Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics at the Episcopal School of Theology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and author of "Situation Ethics" - the significance of which we shall point out later.

There was a time when humanism was little more than an ivory tower disease easily ignored. No more. The germ has gotten out and is causing havoc everywhere. With the triumph of secularism Babel is rising anew. Its impact is a menacing one.

### III. Its Menacing Impact

Humanism must be recognized and opposed for what it is - an enemy of the gospel of our Lord and of His Church. Luther recognized it as such. He was no less determined in his opposition to humanism than he was in his opposition to Romanism. The humanism of Erasmus posed as great a threat to the gospel as did the Pope according to Luther. One represented a frontal attack on the gospel, the other a sneak attack. Luther's *sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide* was an emphatic rejection of the religious implications of humanism which direct a man to find fulfillment in his own resources.<sup>23</sup>

Even Erasmus, committed humanist that he was, was apprehensive about the potential danger humanism posed for the future. He once said, "My chief fear is that with the renewal of Greek literature there may be a revival of paganism. There are Christians who are Christian in name, and are Gentiles at heart."<sup>24</sup> Though his chief fear took four centuries to be realized, Erasmus was correct about a revival of paganism. We are surrounded by it.

Very few people seem to be aware of the pervasiveness of the humanistic influence in our modern world. In this respect J. P. Koehler was a man before his time. He was aware of that pervasiveness. In a particularly insightful observation, he wrote:

The Renaissance was said to have achieved - and thereby to have ushered in the modern era - that the layman, the individual as such, man as man, has been enthroned, freed from his ecclesiastical and social fetters, with the Reformation in the church and the democratic movement in political life as the sponsors of this transformation. . . The popularizing of these false ideas about civilization no doubt has spelled the collapse in the past twenty years of our boasted civilization. So few people are alert to the fact that all the education and other endeavors of the day tend toward the materialistic *Weltanschauung* (in reality are fathered by it) that many blissfully join in the various programs the ultimate success of which will destroy their own professed beliefs.<sup>25</sup>

It would be difficult to imagine a more apt statement of humanism's menacing impact on contemporary society. Koehler's observation reminds one of Aesop's fable of the Eagle and the Arrow in which he illustrates

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<sup>22</sup> See *The Humanist*, Nov/Dec 1973 issue, p. 5ff.

<sup>23</sup> For a fuller treatment of Luther's position, see *Martin Luther Speaks to Our Generation*, Robert Brinsmead, Australian Forum Topic No. 7, available from *Present Truth*, P.O. Box 1311, Fallbrook, CA 92028

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950) vol 5, p.402

<sup>25</sup> Koehler, *op. cit.* p.6

the moral that people often give their enemies the means of their own destruction. Koehler's statement is a sobering one which ought to put us on guard lest we blissfully join in programs the ultimate success of which will destroy our own professed beliefs.

### Areas of Impact

Humanism's influence reminds one of the tentacles of an octopus. Nothing is safe from it. Francis Schaeffer traces the steps by which it spreads until it has fastened itself with a stranglehold on virtually everything. It begins as a philosophy, in this case the philosophy of existentialism according to Schaeffer. It spreads "by disciplines . . . philosophy, then art, then music, then general culture, which could be divided into a number of areas. Theology comes last."<sup>26</sup> In art it began with the impressionists, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cezanne followed by the post-impressionists, followed by modern art. In music Debussy provides the entree; in general culture men like T. S. Eliot; in theology, Karl Barth.

In a fascinating and penetrating manner Dr. Schaeffer traces the way in which **ART** reflects the humanism introduced into Western thinking at the time of the Renaissance. While I make no claim about being knowledgeable in the field of art, I have enough of an eye to have observed while touring the galleries of the Smithsonian Institution that art has undergone a complete transition from an age in which it reflected the glory of God to an age in which the glory of God is ignored by the artists who interpret the culture of the times.

Contemporary **MUSIC** is another area in which humanism's menacing impact is apparent. Some of it clearly proclaims a utopian message, the ballads of Bob Dylan, for example. One might classify them as songs of hope promising a better tomorrow if only man can learn from the past and apply the lessons learned to the future. A unifying theme appears to be the thought of "finding where it's at" and "getting it all together." Then life will be swell in a humanistic paradise where to live is to love and to love is to live. Other music promotes hedonism as a way of life. It encourages everyone to do his thing. That's the way to find yourself. But "finding yourself" is also an idea fraught with humanistic overtones as we shall see when we take a look at modern psychology.

I read the lyrics of a number of contemporary rock and hard rock compositions in preparation to write these lines. The words are often impossible to understand. One could just as well be reading Chinyanji or Cantonese. But that mindless jargon is also indicative of something. Listening to this music is an "experience." One listens to it for the same reason some people take drugs, "in order to try to have a direct mystical experience that has no relation to the world of the rational."<sup>27</sup> The one note that keeps sounding over and over above the din is a note of despair. Life has lost its meaning. The future is without hope and the past is all just a big mistake. So what's left to celebrate other than the present?

Humanism has also stamped its imprint on **ARCHITECTURE** as Koehler attempts to demonstrate in the introductory chapters to his history of the Synod. He says, "The Renaissance and Humanism were the agencies just before the Reformation to usher in barefaced paganism." He goes on to summarize these agencies and to note that they advanced the "use of the mind" at the expense "of the heart." He then concludes "That may best be shown by a study of Renaissance architecture."<sup>28</sup> We are not interested in developing his thesis here, only in noting it. Perhaps it is also worthy of note that until recent times the skyline of many cities in our Western world was dominated by church spires and in Europe by the towers of magnificent cathedrals. Today those same spires are dwarfed by skyscrapers which stand as monuments to man's ingenuity and as witnesses to his paramount interest in things other than the glory of God.

Humanism's impact on **POLITICS** in recent decades is of far greater consequence than its influence on art or on architecture. For political developments touch the lives of many more people than do trends in art or architecture. On the national level humanistic ideals have increasingly influenced political programs almost since the turn of the century. Those ideals have been expressed in familiar political slogans associated with

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<sup>26</sup> Schaeffer, *op. cit.* p.44

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p.54

<sup>28</sup> Koehler, *op. cit.* p.6, col 1



different administrations; the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the New Frontier, the Great Society and the like. All of these programs reflected the basic assumption that man is inherently good and that he can be perfected by perfecting his environment through governmental programs. (In offering this criticism, we none the less recognize that concern for the citizens' welfare and for man's environment are legitimate concerns of government so that we "may lead a quiet and peaceable life" 2 Tm 2:2. In exercising this function, its tool is reason; and its promotion of civic righteousness is valuable and God-pleasing insofar as life in this world is concerned. cf Apology, Triglotta, p 127, 22-24.)

That humanistic goals are inherent in political platforms was acknowledged by no less an authority than the late prestigious columnist, Walter Lippmann, of the New York Times. On the occasion of his retirement in 1973, he was interviewed for the Washington Post by his biographer Ronald Steel. Speaking about man's inherent goodness and the perfectibility of society, Steel asked Lippmann, "Did McGovern represent this philosophy?" Lippmann responded, "Yes, McGovern believed in all the corollaries that go with this philosophy, and he espoused any one of them that seemed to him promising." Steel then asked, "Were the goals of the New Deal and the Great Society rooted in this approach?" Again Lippmann answered affirmatively, "Yes, we have been in the grip of this general view of the nature of society at least since Woodrow Wilson."<sup>29</sup> The heart of this general view of the nature of society" is the humanistic Babel philosophy.

Politics on the international level of the United Nations organization manifests the same humanistic commitment. Again, this is not just the biased observation of one who is committed to Scriptural truth. The same conclusion was reached by the author of a California State Board of Education report titled "Guidelines for Moral Instruction in California Schools." The anonymous author cites R. Brock Chisholm, first president of the World Health Organization of the United Nations, as an apostle of humanism. The goals of the U-N and of WHO, according to Chisholm, were "to abolish war and to redistribute the world's economic wealth through world government. The way to do this is to win the minds of the people of the world to think as world citizens, that is, to embrace Humanism."<sup>30</sup>

In order to point up still further the menacing nature of the goals of humanism, we offer these further quotes from Dr. Chisholm. He observes that the major obstacle impeding the realization of WHO goals is mankind's obsession with the concepts of sin and morality. He said, "We have been very slow to rediscover this truth and to recognize the unnecessary and artificially imposed inferiority, guilt and fear, commonly known as sin, under which we have almost all labored and which produces so much of the social maladjustment and unhappiness in the world. For many generations we have bowed our necks to the yoke of the conviction of sin." Thus the objective for Chisholm is to eradicate this mental disorder by means of an all-out attack against the concept of right and wrong. "If the race is to be freed from its crippling burden of good and evil," Dr. Chisholm added, "it must be psychiatrists who take the original responsibility."<sup>31</sup> Humanists like Chisholm have labored persistently to get the government to espouse their humanistic goals as its own.

Thirty years ago Chisholm assigned to the psychotherapists the original responsibility for freeing society of its notions of good and evil. Psychotherapists have accepted that responsibility and have proceeded posthaste with the task. How far they have progressed was indicated in a recent *Saturday Review* article entitled "A Shopper's Guide to Schools of Psychotherapy" by Morris Parloff. Parloff observes that the therapist today is not only expected to treat mental disorders, "he is also expected to help the client achieve positive mental health, a state presumably defined by the extent to which the patient experiences 'self-actualization,' growth, even spiritual oneness with the universe."

Parloff's article provides a brief guide to the ideologies and techniques employed by the four main schools of psychotherapy. "Humanistic therapy" is one of the four. Parloff describes it in this way: "The goals . . . are self-actualization and the enrichment and fuller enjoyment of life, not the cure of 'disease' or 'disorder' . . ."

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<sup>29</sup> *The Milwaukee Journal*, Sunday, March 25, 1973. pp. 1 & 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Guidelines for Moral Instruction in California Schools*, a report accepted by the State's Board of Education, May 9, 1969, p. 50. The author's footnotes indicate that the Chisholm quotes are taken from *Psychiatry*, February issue, 1946

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p.51

The only reality that merits concern is one's own emotional experience. . Direct gratification of needs is ennobling and good."<sup>32</sup>

What Parloff calls "humanistic therapy" was recently explained in popular terms in a lengthy feature article in the Los Angeles Times. Author Eleanor Hoover in "The New Psychology: New Image of man" writes, "If the new psychology needs a label, 'humanistic' probably fits best." She quotes Dr. Hugh Redmond of Johnston College at the University of Redlands who says, "The core of the new psychology is based on a new image or vision of man - on what he is and what he can do." Hoover adds, "What humanistic psychology has triggered is a growing interest in expanding man's awareness - to enhance creativity, health, learning, problem solving and to produce what one brain researcher calls 'intrinsically rewarding ecstatic experiences'." In a companion article the Times designates Abraham Maslow as the Father of the Humanistic Psychology.<sup>33</sup>

"Transpersonal therapy" is another of the four current schools of psychotherapy. Parloff says in his Saturday Review article that its goal is to help the individual transcend the limits of ordinary waking consciousness and to become one with the universe."<sup>34</sup> The most popular transpersonal. therapy technique on the current scene is Transcendental Meditation. In an excellent analysis of TM in a two part article in *Christianity Today*, David Haddon demonstrates TM's relationship to Hindu monism. He points out that Eastern religions and humanism have a common denominator, man's autonomy. He demonstrates that the basic pre-supposition of TM is humanistic.<sup>35</sup>

Another one of the areas of humanistic impact is the **MEDIA**, both the news and the entertainment media. This was acknowledged by no less an authority than Dr. Carl Rogers, prominent psychologist on the staff of the Center for Studies of the Person in La Jolla, California. In a study of the emerging new humanistic man titled "The Person of Tomorrow," Dr. Rogers says in his introduction, "I have a feeling that the mass media - especially television - have helped him to emerge."<sup>36</sup>

An objective observer who agrees that the news media are biased is political scientist, Edward J. Epstein, author of an in-depth look at television network news, *News From Nowhere*, published in 1973. Epstein summarized his findings for The Reader's Digest in a February, 1974 article, "The Strange, Tilted World of TV Network News." He insists that reporters do not purposely slant the news we see on television, but he admits that "the programs all too often do have a built-in bias that should concern us all."<sup>37</sup> Epstein would probably not label that bias as we would, but he does agree that it concerns our "picture of the society" we live in. The tilt on TV is clearly in the direction of humanism.

Media **ENTERTAINMENT** reveals the same tilt. In analysis on an opening episode of "All in the Family," syndicated columnist Victor Lasky writing for the North American Newspaper Alliance characterized the program as a propagandist for left wing causes. He complained, "All this liberal hogwash is being peddled to the nation's television audiences under the guise of entertainment." What Lasky terms "liberal hogwash" a perceptive viewer sees as a deceptive presentation of humanistic ideals.

In a *Footnotes* column in *Christianity Today*, former editor Carl F.H. Henry cites several social critics who agree that TV's influence helps to propagate a humanistic view of life. Henry writes, "Television's impact, the social critics say, goes far to account for the widening revolt against traditional moral and religious views." Henry then quotes a sampling of the critics books to answer the question: "Where is Television Going?"<sup>38</sup> As

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<sup>32</sup> Parloff, Morris, "A Shopper's Guide to Schools of Psychotherapy," *Saturday Review*, Feb. 21, 1976

<sup>33</sup> Hoover, Eleanor, "The New Psychology: New Image of Man," the *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 1975, section one, p. I ff.

<sup>34</sup> Parloff, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Haddon, David, "Transcendental Meditation Challenges the Church," *Christianity Today*, March 26 and April 9, 1976. Haddon asserts that a regular meditator "is subjecting himself to a rigorous process of mental conditioning that tends to modify his concept of himself and of the universe into conformity with the Easternworld view. Since this view conforms to the basic delusion of fallen man that he is autonomous - a divine being, really - it is virtually irresistible. ... He is confirmed by his meditation in an idolatrous concept of himself as independent of the personal Creator." pp 17-18

<sup>36</sup> Rogers, Carl R., *The Person of Tomorrow*, privately circulated essay.

<sup>37</sup> *The Reader's Digest*, Feb. 1974, p. 142

<sup>38</sup> Henry, Carl F.H., "Footnotes," *Christianity Today*, January 31, 1975

the menacing impact of humanism on the media becomes more pervasive (if indeed it could be more so), the Christian view of man and the God-ordained purpose of life become more and more obscure. The testimony of the Word is all but drowned out by the deluge of humanistic propaganda. It becomes more and more difficult for parents to transmit their Christian convictions to their children. One by one the obstacles to the completion of Babel seem to fall under the onslaught. As one listens to the raucous cacophony of sounds emitting from the transmitters of humanism, one almost wonders at times what chance there is for the "still small voice" to be heard. One can appreciate better than ever before what our Lord meant when He asked rhetorically, "When the Son of Man cometh, will he find faith on the earth?"

Nowhere except in theology is the impact of humanism more menacing than it is in **EDUCATION**. The prevailing philosophy of education in the public schools of the nation has been humanistic ever since the days of Horace Mann. Mann believed as did John Locke that a child enters this world neither inherently good nor inherently evil. His mind is like a blank page ready to receive impressions. He becomes whatever he becomes due to the influence of his environment. The task of the school therefore is to provide a good environment in order to produce good citizens. John Dewey altered the view with his contention that there is in man a measure of inherent goodness, and that the educator's task is to help the child develop his potential for the good life. Dr. Chisholm on the other hand believes the concept of right and wrong is wrong, and that it is education's task to eliminate it, (though if there is no wrong, it is difficult to understand why the concept should be eradicated).

Significantly, as long ago as 1946 Dr. Chisholm said, "The reinterpretation and eventually eradication of the concept of right and wrong which has been the basis of child training, the substitution of intelligent and rational thinking for faith in the certainties of old people, these are the belated objectives of practically all effective psychotherapy. Would *they not be legitimate objectives of original education?* (emphasis mine) Would it not be sensible to stop imposing our local prejudices and faiths on children and give them all sides of every question so that in their own good time they may have the ability to size things up, and make their own decisions?"<sup>39</sup> Conceptual inquiry teachers and participatory democracy advocates are answering those questions today with an emphatic yes.

Humanism's influence on education is also apparent in the controversial social studies pilot program called "Man, A Course of Study" (MACOS) funded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The MACOS materials have generated textbook controversies in numerous communities throughout the country. The Heritage Foundation of Washington D.C. has made an extensive evaluative study of the MACOS materials and has concluded that the entire course promotes the presuppositions of secular humanism.<sup>40</sup>

An analysis of the effects on contemporary society of humanism's menacing impact on education will follow later. It should suffice our purpose hereto note that a commission appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of California for the express purpose of pinpointing the cause or causes of the breakdown of discipline and morality in the state's schools cited humanism as the primary cause. The educational philosophy of state schools agrees with Alexander Pope's observation in his Essay on Man that the proper study of mankind is man. What else? And what irony that while the religion of divine revelation cannot be taught in the classrooms of public schools, the religion of secular humanism can be.

Surely nothing suffers from the menacing impact of humanism as does **THEOLOGY**. Biblical theology is characterized by a confident "thus saith the Lord." Humanistic "religion" is characterized by a skeptical "what saith the Lord?" Every expression of humanism is either a subtle or a crass undermining of the authority of God's Word. Melancthon's doctrinal compromises represented a subtle humanistic stripe in him. Schleiermacher's speculative theories revealed a crass humanistic bent in him.

Koehler attributes the undermining of the authority of the Word and the supplanting of it with a humanistic view to the conflict between science and the Bible. He traces the conflict briefly and then continues,

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<sup>39</sup> "Guidelines," op. cit. p.51

<sup>40</sup> Write: Heritage Foundation, 513 C St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, price \$2.00

"The next step was that the historical record of the Bible was attacked and the distinction between scientific fact and articles of faith in the Bible was proposed, as though science ranked with faith as the source of truth."<sup>41</sup>

A similar idea is developed by Brendan Furnish in "The Cultural Seduction of the Church." Dr. Furnish says, "With the acceptance of the nineteenth-century science model came an acceptance of a perverse form of early humanism. ... Modern man was able to redefine his conception of both God and himself. Man could be viewed entirely as a product of his environment, and therefore as a being who could largely determine his own destiny." Furnish puts part of the blame for the current state of affairs (the depersonalization of man) on the institutional church. He says, "the institutional church adopted worship forms that suited the then prevalent cultural demands for individual autonomy, and these worked against the functioning of the Christian community."<sup>42</sup>

Liberalism in theology has unquestionably and candidly demonstrated its affinity for humanistic ideas. That isn't surprising. What is surprising to some is that fundamentalism is also tinged with humanism, though unwittingly so, particularly the Pentecostal/neo-Pentecostal wing of fundamentalism. Dr. C. George Fry of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, has demonstrated this in an intriguing way in his essay "Pentecostalism in Historical Perspective." Fry argues that Liberalism and Pentecostalism are in fact "fraternal twins." He demonstrates convincingly that "the two movements are derived from the same sources and permeated with a pervasive humanism."<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps nowhere is the menacing impact of humanism in the area of theology more graphically or more tragically depicted than in the debacle in the LC-MS which began with the disruption two years ago at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and culminated last week in the resolution of the English District to withdraw from the Synod (June 18, 1976, English District Convention, Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois). The issue in the Missouri controversy is the use of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation. That there could be such an issue in the first place is due to the pernicious influence of humanism. Theologians who question the authenticity and the historicity of events recorded in Scripture are, like Melancthon, subtle humanists at heart.

Invariably when the leaven of humanism is allowed to influence a church's theology, a shift in emphasis occurs in the church's mission from saving gospel to social gospel. The first table of the law is played down while the second is played up. And thus the delicate balance Jesus envisioned between the two is lost. Love for the truth is secondary, love for neighbor primary in practice if not in theory. In this respect too the Missouri Synod offers an unfortunate case study. Both its Mission Affirmations as well as its Social Ministry Affirmations misrepresent the mission the Lord gave His church. Controversy over this point has further divided this strife-torn church body. That controversy provides another evidence of the menacing impact of humanism.

### Humanism's New Man

Just what is emerging today as a consequence of the efforts of avowed humanists to promote their life-view? Dr. Carl Rogers answers that question clearly and pointedly in his essay, "The Person of Tomorrow." "I am fascinated," he says, "by what I am convinced is a most significant phenomenon. I am seeing a New Man emerging, I believe this New Man is the person of tomorrow." His treatise is a description of that New Man, and he bears no resemblance whatsoever to St. Paul's New Man who is renewed by the Spirit in knowledge after the image of Him who created him, and who is recreated by the sanctifying work of the Spirit to be like God in righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). The Christian New Man emerges from burial with Christ in baptism to walk in newness of life. He is representative of God's workmanship. Because he is robed in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, he actually looks like His twin brother. He is a new creature in Christ. Dr. Rogers sees a different kind of New Man, a thoroughly humanistic new creature. He writes, "I have seen

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<sup>41</sup> Koehler, *op. cit.* p.9, col 1

<sup>42</sup> Furnish, Brendan F.J., "The Cultural Seduction of the Church," *Christianity Today*, June 18, 1976, pp 4,5

<sup>43</sup> Fry, C. George, "Pentecostalism in Historical Perspective," *The Springfielder*, March, 1976. p. 183

him emerging, partially formed, from encounter groups, sensitivity training, so called T-groups. ... I see him showing his face in the rapidly growing trend toward a humanistic and human psychology. ... I believe the New Man has characteristics which run strongly counter to the orthodoxies, dogmas, forms and creeds of the major western religions - Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism."

After talking about him at some length, Dr. Rogers presents a description of the person of tomorrow listing some twenty features which characterize him. The person of tomorrow disdains educational institutions as irrelevant and futile. He regards traditional education as the most incompetent institution in our culture. Religious institutions are frequently damaging to human progress. He sees morals as shifting, ethics as relative to the situation. He distrusts marriage as an institution and has little regard for its vows of permanence. He feels obligated to obey only those laws which he feels just and to disregard those he regards as unjust. And finally, though this by no means exhausts the list, he has a firm belief in his own potential.

The person of tomorrow is of course the model humanist, created not in the image of God but in the image of man. This is the model of the person the social planners want to inhabit their brave new world. Since he can be seen emerging from encounter groups, sensitivity training sessions and T-groups, the obvious way to produce more of them faster would be to employ the techniques of these groups in the educational process. And that is precisely what has been planned for our schools, something, you will recall, Dr. Chisholm advocated already back in 1946.

### In School

The basic tool humanists employ in schools to produce the person of tomorrow is an educational method called conceptual inquiry. On the college or graduate level conceptual inquiry is the system students employ legitimately in the pursuit of knowledge on their own. They utilize what they have learned as a basis for expanding their knowledge through independent research.

This same teaching method has been adapted for use in classrooms on the elementary level. The teacher who employs this method in a classroom does not function in the traditional way of a teacher. He is not there to teach in the sense of sharing knowledge. He is there rather to facilitate a learning process whereby the student supposedly discovers the truth for himself. The technique is ideal for leaving the impression in the minds of impressionable children that truth is relative. And that idea is essential to the realization of humanistic goals.

Conceptual inquiry is thus a theory of learning logically consistent with the idea of relativism. The old teaching method is one which grew out of and is logically consistent with the Christian notion that truth can be expressed in propositional statements and is definable. In asserting this conviction, we do not wish to leave the impression that Christian educators cannot incorporate contemporary learning theory into their teaching methods without at the same time espousing humanism.<sup>44</sup>

The nature and purpose of conceptual inquiry were clearly shown to be humanistic in the National Education Association Journal in an issue titled, "Special Journal Feature on Teaching and Learning Through Inquiry." The featured article's author is Byron G. Massialas, associate professor of education at the University of Michigan. In explanation of the system, Dr. Massialas wrote, "Teaching through inquiry is the process of formulating and testing ideas and implies an open classroom climate that encourages a wide student participation and the expression of divergent views." In discussing the teacher's role as a sustainer of inquiry, he says, "The teacher's general attitude is that of a fellow-inquirer who has no final and absolute answers to give out. ... all statements or claims to knowledge are to be examined and then accepted or rejected in the open forum of ideas." What the method aims to accomplish is stated in this way: "For the students, the most important result of learning through inquiry is a change in attitudes toward knowledge. As they engage in the dialogue of inquiry, they begin to view knowledge as tentative rather than absolute, and they consider all knowledge claims as being subject to continuous revision and confirmation."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For an elaboration of this point, see the author's paper "Teaching for Cognitive and Affective Outcomes," Professors' Conference, Northwestern College, June 12, 1976

<sup>45</sup> Massialas, Byron, *NEA Journal*, May, 1969. Quoted by Delores Feak in "A Critique of 'Organizing the Classroom for Learning'."

We can envision the possibility of conceptual inquiry functioning in a useful and legitimate way when the area of learning involves a subject in which human knowledge is the final arbiter such as mathematics. But in other subjects such as English, history, social studies we see the system as a useful tool for accomplishing the pre-established goals of humanism. The device is in fact an ingenious one. It has an air of learned sophistication, but it also bears the marks of the subtlety of that crafty serpent who once beguiled Eve.<sup>46</sup>

We know how the end product of conceptual inquiry looks to Carl Rogers. How does he look to us? Consider whether this description is at all appropriate: "utterly self-centered, greedy for money, ... proud and contemptuous, without any regard for what their parents taught them, ... utterly lacking in gratitude, purity and normal human affections, ... men of unscrupulous speech, ... passionate and unprincipled, ... self-willed and conceited, loving ... what gives them pleasure instead of loving God. They ... maintain a facade of religion, but their conduct will deny its validity." (2 Tm 3:1-5 Phillips). That of course is Paul's description of what men will be like in the final age of this world when humanism dominates. The reason it is so uncanny in its accuracy is because it was inspired by One who foresaw then what you and I see every day. Paul's description deals with attitudes and behavior only. If it had also included appearance, the list might have mentioned faded jeans, long hair and the unisex look as well.

Certainly not all or even a majority of the products of humanism's schools are disheveled, uncouth and rebellious. Many are neat, clean, respectful and law abiding. But there is one thing they all have in common. Their attitude is characterized by what Dr. S. Becker (quoting Christian Duquoc) likes to call it the inflation of uncertainty and the idolatrous worship of the question.<sup>47</sup> Nothing is nailed down for them. Everything is up for grabs. And that leaves them in a quandry. No wonder they are what they are.

Helmut Thielicke calls the humanist whiz kids the "undisciplined generation." Any teacher with Christian convictions will nod in approval to that. As we noted previously, the lack of discipline and the breakdown of morals was so serious a problem in California schools that a special commission was appointed to find the cause. The study commission laid the blame at the door of humanism. At least one advocate of humanism's philosophy of education is willing to take that blame. Dr. Benjamin Spock, writing in the February 1974 issue of *Redbook* magazine, spoke forthrightly about the "bratiness of some of today's children." He stated that "Inability to be firm is ... the commonest problem of parents in America today." The responsibility for parental submissiveness belongs to the "child psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers, social workers and pediatricians like myself."<sup>48</sup> Of course! If one cannot be certain about anything in an open world system, how can one be firm about anything? While we appreciate Dr. Spock's confession, we regret that he did not opt for a closed system universe, a Creator God, divine revelation and moral absolutes. Dr. Spock is still a committed humanist. The nation's schools are still inflating uncertainty and turning out idolatrous worshipers of the question.

As Christians who are convinced that the Bible is a reliable, inspired, infallible book of truth, and a trustworthy guide in all matters of faith and life, it is self evident that as parents and teachers our task is to settle doubts in the minds of our children not raise them. We do not teach eternal truths with open ended questions designed to make children think and thus to find out the truth for themselves. That approach may sound innocuous, even useful from a motivational viewpoint. But it's not what our Lord had in mind when He told us to speak as the oracles of God teaching men to observe everything He has commanded us. Christian parents and teachers offer only one option. That may seem narrow and bigoted to modern educators, but not to those who recognize the authority of the voice which says "Train up a child in the way that he should go."

## In Society

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<sup>46</sup> For an example of how conceptual inquiry works in a classroom situation, see the author's article "Abigail and Hector," the *Lutheran Educator*, February, 1976

<sup>47</sup> Duquoc, Christian, "Theology and Spirituality" in *Concilium*, vol 19. p-96. Cited by Dr. Siegbert Becker in "A Lutheran Educator in a Secular World."

<sup>48</sup> The Milwaukee Journal, Jan 22, 1974, p.1

Humanists are convinced that everything is relative and that nothing is absolute. They apply that basic premise in all areas of life. Applied to morals it results in what is commonly known as the new morality and more precisely as situation ethics. Thesis three of the new *Manifesto* espouses situation ethics. "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and *situational*, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest. To deny this distorts the whole basis of life. Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. ... We strive for the good life here and now."

What the good life is each person may decide for himself. To the credit of many humanists it must be acknowledged that for them the good life means living on a high moral plain, practicing integrity, engaging in philanthropic enterprises, demonstrating civic mindedness. But it also means that every man is a law unto himself. He may openly flout laws he disdains as unjust. He may scorn God's design for a meaningful sex life. He may freely indulge in open marriage O'Neill style, homosexual or bisexual conduct. He may choose whatever life-style appeals to him. He may advocate abortion in support of zero population control, even break into a psychiatrist's office to steal his files if the cause is a worthy one. What the humanistic ethics of the new morality is doing in modern society is obvious to anyone with his eyes open.

For the situation ethicist, love decides all things.<sup>49</sup> The proper thing to do in any situation is the loving thing. A Christian might well agree with that since the essence of God's law is love. There is a vital difference, however. The difference between Christian ethics and humanist ethics lies in the fact that the humanist determines for himself what love ought to do while the Christian lets God inform the heart on matters of love. He knows that "love is the fulfilling of the law" Rm 13:10. God's law is absolute, unchangeable. According to its third use it functions as a guide for Christian conduct. A humanist loves because he ought to, although no humanist has ever been able to explain why, if there is no God, anyone ought ever to do anything. A Christian loves, not because he ought to, but because he wants to. The love of Christ constrains him. "We love him because he first loved us." 1 Jn 4:19.

### In His Attitude Toward Christian Truth

According to radical humanists, God is dead. Their attitude toward the church and Christian truth needs no comment. There are humanists less radical who still believe that God exists and that He has a mission for His church. That mission is redefined in terms of humanistic goals. A popular spokesman for the church's redefined mission is Harvey Cox, author of *The Secular City*. He says, "The church has no purpose other than to make known to the world what God has done and is doing in history to break down hostilities between people by converting them. It frees people to live with each other despite radically differing ideologies, theologies, and politics, as men with men."<sup>50</sup>

Cox's statement of the church's purpose is identical to that of religious humanism. His view is unfortunately the popular view of the mission of the church in our times.<sup>51</sup> The record of the activities of the World Council and the National Council of Churches is an endorsement of Cox's view. That puts churchmen in the same camp as the schoolmen who maintain "that the schools are the means, the instruments, vehicles, and true church by which salvation is given to society."<sup>52</sup>

The Cox variety of humanism in the church is blatant and obvious. There is a creeping variety which is not usually as obvious, but dangerous nevertheless just as all leaven is. Here is an example: "We call on the church as a corporate entity to use in responsible ways those channels that are open to it to influence other

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<sup>49</sup> Fletcher, Joseph, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, (Philadelphia; Westminster Press, 1966) Fletcher, a former Episcopal seminary professor, was named Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association in 1975.

<sup>50</sup> Cox, Harvey, *The Secular City*, (New York: Macmillan, 1966) p. 199

<sup>51</sup> Furnish, *op. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> Rushdoony, Rousas J., *The Messianic Character of American Education*, (Nutley, N.J.: Craig Press, 1968) p.18. This book offers an excellent in depth study of the humanistic influence on American education. Chapter 27, "Education as Religion," offers a valuable expansion of the "national religion" theme.

structures and institutions such as government, business and labor, to sensitize them to the task of improving the quality of life at every level." No one who knows the voice of the Shepherd will mistake those words for His words. They are mild in comparison to Cox's, yet there is a measure of similarity in what they say about the mission of the church in society. Those words, incidentally, constitute Affirmation VI of the Social Ministry Affirmations adopted by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in convention at Milwaukee in 1971. They express a thought consistent with the thrust of the Mission Affirmations adopted in 1965. Both suggest that Missouri is beginning to adjust its goals to the goals of religious humanism.

Missouri's Mission Affirmations were recently reaffirmed by the present administration in *The Lutheran Witness*. In a special *Witness Special Report*, June 6, 1976 pp 10-16, prepared by the Department of Public Relations, the Witness says that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations has clarified "parts that seem to be ambiguous" and supplemented "the 'Affirmations' as needed, in view of recent developments in Christendom that pertain to mission." But then the Report concludes, "The 'Affirmations' are still valid in the Synod."

When Lutheran churches hedge on the ethical questions of abortion, birth control, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, divorce, as Lutheran Synods have done and are doing in position statements, they are voicing the religion of humanism, not the revealed will of God.

We have already noted that the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation employs presuppositions of humanism. That method is the dominant one in seminaries and schools of religion throughout the land except in those which still uphold verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture. Some of the prominent proponents of that method in Missouri were formerly pastors and professors in our own Synod. When we recall the misery of Missouri today centering around the question of the historical-critical method, we can only say, "There but for the grace of God go we."

### Lessons to be Learned

There is really but one lesson for us to learn from this study. It is an obvious one. Every expression of humanism is an enemy of the truth as God has revealed it to us. Its philosophy, its ideals and its ethics are those of unenlightened, natural man who is ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Tm 3:7. If it is not opposed with every ounce of spiritual strength God's Spirit supplies to us, it will eat away like a cancer at the heart of God's new man in Christ.

Just as in Paul's day there was a power at work restraining the influence of "that man of sin ... who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God" 2 Tm 2:3f, so from the time of the Reformation until the present century, the same power was at work in the Western world restraining the spread of humanism. The reason for the sudden surge and spread of humanism in our times is the fact that so large a segment of the church has lost its sense of mission as an agency for proclaiming the gospel. Many people today who are reacting against the "established church," and their number is legion, do so without really knowing what the gospel is and does. The church has been so busy with other concerns it hasn't told them. We cannot afford to make that mistake.

Our opposition to the menace of humanism ought not to limit itself to apologetics and polemics. If we are to be spared the tragic fate of others, we must continue with the help of God to resist the beginnings. That means we need to look carefully and analytically at what we are doing and how we are doing it in our homes, our classrooms and our pulpits. Where are the emphases in our preaching and teaching? Do we content ourselves with teaching which aims merely at the intellect, and does not at the same time involve the emotions and the will? If so, we may find children in our home and people in our churches beginning to think this isn't where it's at, and that perhaps they ought to be looking elsewhere for answers. Remembering that the humanist's highest value is the "integration of personality" should help us to remember the importance of helping those to whom we witness to see the integrating capability of the gospel. Our task is not just to prepare people for the life to come. An integral and vital part of our task is to equip them and encourage them to live the new life in



Christ now. If we do that, and if we leave our people with a real sense of mission, they won't read the ads of the American Humanist Association in their newspapers and be intrigued by the subtlety of their appeals.

For 125 years God has blessed our Synod with the manifold gifts of His marvelous and amazing grace, not the least of which has been a strength of will to resist the blandishments and the encroachments of the many tempting faces of humanism. I know of no other church body which has been as determined as our Synod has been to unmask, oppose, and resist it. It has taken a mighty effort on God's part to keep us as determined as He has as long as He has. May He keep us in His grace for many years to come from the folly of ever trying to make us a name for ourselves. May He so overwhelm our hearts with the assurance of His forgiving love in Christ that whatsoever we do, we do it all always soli deo gloria. There is no better way for us as Christian citizens to follow up our observance of our Synod's recent anniversary with a God-glorifying observance of our nation's bicentennial in the weeks immediately ahead of us.