

The Threats Of Humanism #1

Introduction. It has been unfortunate that Christians historically have been reluctant to recognize threats. In some cases, Christians often do not recognize danger until the enemy has inflicted great injury upon them. This happens because we lack watchfulness and because we, like the proverbial ostrich, stick our heads in the sand and hope the danger will disappear.

Brethren have also often resented the persons who tried to warn them (Amos 6:3; Ezekiel 12:27). It is easy to say, "I see the danger, but it will not be a problem in my lifetime." What a selfish attitude! What about your grandchildren or other people's children? I pray that brethren will not take this attitude toward humanism. The stakes are much too high! Infidelity exists in many forms, but in no form more appealing to and devastating for man as humanism.

The first major confrontation Christians had with humanism was in the teaching of evolution in the public schools. The infamous "Scopes Trial," held in 1925 in Dayton, TN, was the beginning of a lengthy struggle over the teaching of evolution in the schools and was a pivotal issue to humanism. Because of the great danger of humanism, this lesson and the next will examine humanism in detail.

I. **What Is Humanism?**

- A. Humanism is defined as, "A philosophy that rejects supernaturalism, regards man as a natural object, and asserts the essential dignity and worth of man and his capacity to achieve self-realization through the use of reason and scientific method -- called also naturalistic humanism or scientific humanism."
- B. Paul Kurtz, past editor of *The Humanist*, the official voice of The American Humanist Association says, "Humanism cannot in any sense of the word apply to one who still believes in God as the source and creator of the universe. Christian humanism would be possible only for those who are willing to admit that they are atheistic humanists. It surely does not apply to God-intoxicated believers."
 1. Charles Potter, signer of the *Humanist Manifesto* and author of *Humanism: A New Religion*, wrote, "So Humanism is not simply another denomination of Protestant Christianity; it is not a creed; nor is it a cult. It is a new type of religion altogether."
 2. A former president of the American Humanist Association, Lloyd Morain, stated, "Down through the ages men have been seeking a universal religion or way of life ... Humanism shows promise of becoming a great world faith. Humanists are content with fixing their attention on this life and on this earth. Theirs is a faith without a

- god, divine revelation, or sacred scriptures. Yet theirs is a faith rich in feeling and understanding.”
3. Robert G. Ingersoll stated, “When I became convinced that the universe is natural, that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell. The dungeon was flooded with light and all the bolts and bars and manacles became dust. I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world, not even in infinite space. I was free -- free to think, to express my thoughts -- free to live my own ideal, free to live for myself and those I loved, free to use all my faculties, all my senses, free to spread imagination’s wings, free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope, free to judge and determine for myself ... I was free! I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously faced all worlds.”
- C. The *Humanist Manifestoes I and II* and the *Humanist Manifesto 2000* constitute the humanist creed. They affirm over and over the four basic presuppositions that lie at the foundation of the humanist philosophy; namely, (1) atheism, (2) evolution, (3) relative truth, and (4) autonomous man. Note the following quotations:
1. “Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values.”
 2. “Humanists 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 unproven and outmoded faith.”
 3. “While religions have no doubt offered comfort to the bereaved and dying by holding forth the promise of an immortal life, they have also aroused morbid fear and dread. We have found no convincing evidence that there is a separable ‘soul’ or that it exists before birth or survives death. We must therefore conclude that the ethical life can be lived without the illusions of immortality or reincarnation. Human beings can develop the self-confidence necessary to ameliorate the human condition and to lead meaningful, productive lives.”
 4. “We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.”
 5. “We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species ... No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”

II. ***The Origin And Development Of Humanism***

- A. Humanism originated among the Greek philosophers known as the Sophists. Its founder was Protagoras, who lived 484-415 B.C., and who coined the basic concept of humanism, "Man is the measure of all things; of all things that are, that they are; and all things that are not that they are not." This translates into the humanist concept of no absolute truth and no standard of right and wrong in morals and ethics.
- B. Humanism had a resurgence during the 14th century Renaissance in the work of Francesco Petrarch, an Italian poet. Interest in the study of the classics were rekindled, and Petrarch reaffirmed the principles advocated by Protagoras. The humanist philosophy has been a part of higher education in one degree or another ever since, and through that medium, has spread throughout the world.
- C. The publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin Of The Species* in 1859 is one of the most significant events in the history of modern humanism because it gave humanism a rationale for its explanation of the origin of the universe without God and helped to catapult the humanist movement into its present prominence by means of the educational system.
- D. John Dewey's rise to prominence in American education in the 1920's was the glue that fastened humanist philosophy to our public education system. Paul Kurtz, past editor of *The Humanist* and signer of the *Humanist Manifesto II*, calls Dewey's influence upon American education "revolutionary." Not only was John Dewey active in revolutionizing American education but he was prominent in the founding of the American Humanist Association and its legal arm, the ACLU. While he is rightly called the "father of progressive education in America," he can also be called the father of American humanism.
- E. World War II facilitated widespread acceptance of humanism by the American populace.
 1. The war separated families and put women in the job market as never before in American history.
 2. Womanhood was cheapened and public morals took a downward spiral. Divorce began to escalate. Humanism gave America the rationale it needed for its decadent morals.
 3. Thus, instead of struggling with a conscience that rebelled at the violation of a moral standard in which it believed, the American public suddenly accepted a belief that said there is no moral standard in which to believe.

III. ***The Prevalence Of Humanism***

- A. Paul Kurtz states, "It has been estimated that as many as thirty million Americans -- around one out of every eight -- are of the humanist

mind, but the number is probably much larger. And the world population of humanists may be numbered at close to a billion."

- B. James Gibb Stuart, a leading antihumanist, says, "It is not an idle boast when they claim that their creed is destined to be the social philosophy and the religion of the twenty-first century."
- C. We will never understand humanism until we see it as an all-encompassing life system. In their literature, we find them calling it a philosophy, a world view, a method of procedure, an ethical process and it is referred to in the *Humanist Manifesto* as a religion over ten times. There is no area of human life it does not touch.
- D. Humanism is a well-organized, militant movement with the passion of a religious zealot, determined to convert the world. The first *Humanist Manifesto* was published in 1933 and the American Humanist Association was formed in 1941. Today the AHA is the most prominent humanist organization in America.
- E. It also helps to realize that, as a movement and as a philosophy, humanism has much in common with, and is therefore allied with, Marxist Communism, and many Russian and American Communists are signatories of the Humanist Manifestos.

Conclusion. Humanism directs man in his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23; Isaiah 55:7-8). It is obvious to any careful observer that humanism has made great inroads in our society, but they have not yet won the battle. However, they do have the upper hand in that they have about a half-century head start on us. They were working while we slept! In our next lesson, we will examine the areas of the threat of humanism and take note of some actions we can perform to stop its spread.