

Humanism

Understanding the Mind-set of the Radical Left and Compliant Christians

by Brad Sherman

Defining Humanism

In a nutshell, humanism is a man-made philosophy that seeks to explain human existence outside of God or the supernatural. Secular humanism accepts no belief in a realm or beings which to transcend ordinary experience. Webster's Dictionary defines it this way:

A system of values and beliefs that is based on the idea that people are basically good and that problems can be solved using reason instead of knowing God.

There are many variations of it, even religious ones that acknowledge God, but in a more agnostic or disconnected way. Humanism replaces God with man, creation with evolution, and God's law with human reason. It includes the belief that man is basically good, whereas the scriptures teach that man is basically wicked because of sin - there is none righteous, not even one. (Romans 3:10). It is this basic depravity of man that shows us our need for Jesus Christ, the only Righteous One. But by removing this concept, humanists eliminate their conscious need for salvation through Jesus Christ and His work of atonement accomplished on the cross. Though it is often subtle, this is a huge philosophical issue that underlies and dominates our culture.

The Paradox of Cultural Compassion and Hateful Intolerance

The radical left are some of the most devoted people in the world. Many of the causes they engage in have good elements in them, but it is the underlying philosophy that causes them to go off the rails. Because humanism rejects faith and the supernatural and replaces it with human reason, social justice and philosophical naturalism, its followers tend to find a sense of purpose and accomplishment in academia, political/social action, world peace movements, and in "green" issues like climate change, animal rights, etc. They are often very committed to these causes. This, coupled with the concept of moral relativism (the idea that everyone has the right to determine their own version of right and wrong), causes them to see themselves as culturally compassionate and tolerant.

Yet, when the idea of an Almighty God who establishes absolute truth and moral boundaries for the culture enters the conversation, the entire foundation of the humanist belief system is challenged. When we say that God's values should rule the culture and that Jesus Christ will one day rule the world, the devoted humanist correctly understands that his entire belief system is being challenged and recognizes that the two views are incompatible.

It is at this point that the humanist has a decision to make. He realizes that to be tolerant of Christianity's view of an Almighty God is to admit that it might have some degree of validity, which also allows a degree of doubt regarding his own view. He must choose between being open to the Christian view, or he must be intolerant and reject it altogether. Among those who choose the latter, some become the radicals we see who are often violent and filled with hate. For them, the war is on! There are many factors that dictate behavior, good and bad, so we must be careful not to over generalize, but this is why many riots and some of the most violent protests are carried out under the banners of environmental protection, social justice, world peace, etc.

The Third Element

So why is it that many of those who claim the high ground of cultural compassion and tolerance, would march for animal rights or chain themselves to a tree that is going to be cut down, but would have no qualms about ending a baby human's life by ripping it apart in its mother's womb? It seems completely illogical, but the logic of it is explained in the scrubbing of the spiritual element from their psychological make up. Simply put, the humanist does not see humans as being made in the image of God or as being the pinnacle of God's creation. Therefore, the idea of humans having intrinsic value is logically diminished. To the humanist, humans are simply elements of nature that have evolved differently than other elements.

True Christianity recognizes and balances the three-parts of the human being - spirit, mind, and body, whereas humanists, as pointed out above, reject the spiritual and supernatural. It is the spiritual element of the human being that humanists fail to recognize.

The body represents the natural world, including fauna and flora. Humanists and Christians alike should have a sense of stewardship for them. The difference between extreme environmentalism and environmental stewardship is essentially the worship of nature vs. the stewardship of nature. To protect a tree simply because it is a living thing, when it is a plentiful renewable resource, is kin to worship. To protect a tree because there are too few of them is stewardship.

Christians also understand the importance of the mind, which represents the realm of consciousness, reason, and education. Christians have historically been leaders in the area of education and academic pursuits. It has only been in the last half-century or so that humanists in America have made academia their stronghold.

But as Christians, we recognize a third element, that we are first and foremost spiritual beings, made in the image of God. This is what gives every human intrinsic value and it is what gives us a whole different perspective. For us, life is much more than a beating heart and a college degree.

Humanists, on the other hand, lack this spiritual perspective on life. Being completely blind to the influences of the spiritual world, the evil forces that exist in the spirit can easily manipulate them and use them for evil purposes. And there is no one so blind as the one who refuses to see.

“Christian” Humanism

As mentioned, humanism has many variations and differing levels of development. One of its more insidious expressions is religious humanism/particularly the Christian version. Humanistic beliefs have unfortunately crept into the church, in many cases without our notice. In 1943, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, reportedly said that "Christian tradition... was in danger of being undermined by a 'Secular Humanism' which hoped to retain Christian values without Christian faith." Consider this description of secular humanism from Wikipedia:

Fundamental to the concept of secular humanism is the strongly held viewpoint that ideology—be it religious or political—must be thoroughly examined by each individual and not simply accepted or rejected on faith. Along with this, an essential part of secular humanism is a continually adapting search for truth,

primarily through science and philosophy. Many Humanists derive their moral codes from a philosophy of utilitarianism, ethical naturalism, or evolutionary ethics...

In other words, defining truth and morality is up to the individual and is relative to the circumstances. What is right for you might not be right for me, but tomorrow it might change. There are no absolutes. Yet on some moral issues, God has made it absolutely clear.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

– 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NKJV)

Sadly, we see Christian churches in our culture who have embraced humanistic principles and have redefined morality. People who call themselves Christians commonly live together without being married. Marriage itself has even been defined in some churches to include homosexual couples.

Vain Imaginations

Several years ago, I was preaching on the University of Iowa campus and used the scripture from 1 Corinthians 6 above. One young lady protested strongly against the idea that someone could go to hell for fornication, saying, “My God would never send someone to hell for having sex.” My reply was instantaneous without thinking, leading me to believe that it was an inspired answer for the moment. “That is right.” I said, “Your god would not because your god is a figment of your imagination.”

Of course, a person does not go to hell for one sin or another committed in a moment of indiscretion for which there is godly sorrow and repentance. God sees our hearts and extends grace and forgiveness. But when we blatantly ignore God’s word, and when we redefine truth to justify continued sinful behavior, that is a different matter.

The young lady mentioned above seems to have had an image of God in her mind that had come from herself, a human, thus it was humanistic. Paul wrote of those who exchange the image of the glorious incorruptible God for one they have created from their own imagination. He says that they, “...became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man...” (Romans 1:21-23 KJV).

William Booth, a 19th century Methodist preacher and the founder of the Salvation Army saw this coming more than 100 years ago:

"The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and Heaven without Hell."

-William Booth

Jesus addressed the same issue when He said, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, yet do not

do the things that I say?” (Luke 6:46). We must guard our hearts to avoid being influenced by the humanism that is all around us and the human nature that is within us. We must guard our way lest we become those who call themselves Christian but do not possess Christian values nor bear His image.

Join the Culture War

If we Christians intend to reclaim leadership in the culture, we must recognize, as many of the humanists have, that we are at war. We are called to be soldiers in God's army and we are supposed to win. Jesus has given us the authority and the commission to go and “...make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:18).

Unlike the violent and hateful contingent of humanists described above, the Christian approach to the culture war is based in non-violence and love. However, we must not let the humanistic thought define what Christian non-violence and love looks like. They would like us to adopt (or keep) the weak definition which is essentially political correctness. Political correctness might be summed as “Be nice and never offend anyone, or hurt their feelings.” The exception of course would be Christians, it is ok to offend Christians.

Humanism in Christians is exactly what William Booth was talking about in the quote above. We must not, for fear of offending someone, refuse the help and power of the Holy Spirit, avoid praying in the name of Jesus, stay out of the political fray, or omit all references to repentance from sin, being born-again, and hell from our sermons.

It is not popular, but Jesus did not come to help us all get along. He was not influenced by the “happy human” philosophy when He said,

³⁴ "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

³⁵ For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';

³⁶ and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'

³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

— Matthew 10:34-39 (NKJV)

We are called to boldly proclaim Christian values, not only in our churches, but also in the public square. We are called to make disciples of all the nations. We are called to wield the sharp sword of God's word and it will draw philosophical blood.