

Why All Preachers Should Be Concerned About Humanism¹

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While all Christians should be concerned about humanism, preachers should be especially concerned because preachers are leaders in proclaiming Christian truths in a world that has quickly become humanistic. If preachers are not concerned, then we surely cannot expect other Christians to be concerned.

I. Humanism is THE major modern philosophical enemy of Christianity. Even so, many preachers (and certainly most professed Christians) do not see humanism for the gigantic enemy it really is.

A. Its scope is wide. It encompasses many other philosophical forms, e.g. scientism, secularism, naturalism, materialism, statism, feminism, hedonism, etc. Modern humanism may be considered as an umbrella under which other philosophies may be at least partially found. We may be more or less aware of these philosophies, but we need to see them as all united together and re-enforcing one another under the banner of modern humanism. Many may see limited portions of realities caused by one or more of these unchristian philosophies, but a thorough knowledge of humanism improves one's ability to see the reality produced by their union.

B. Its social consequences are severe. Like trees, philosophies can be known by their fruits. Humanism produces bad fruit. Its social symptoms include such things as divorce, abortion, suicide, drug abuse, sexual permissiveness, homosexuality, pornography, wife battering, child abuse, etc. Preachers teach against these evils. However, it is as impossible to remove these unwholesome social symptoms from our culture without acknowledging the correlation between a philosophy and its consequences, as it is for a physician to treat medically the underlying causes of physical symptoms. The strength of humanism, in producing its terrible consequences, may be likened to a rope wherein each strand may be likened to a different philosophy. Each philosophy is itself strong, but when they are all intertwined together in the rope of humanism, their strength is greatly magnified.

C. Its reach is extensive. It penetrates into every sphere of life. There is no area of human life - whether the home, church, civil government, school, industry, commerce, foreign affairs, etc. - which is not effected by it. It destroys some families and weakens others, though sexual permissiveness, abortion, divorce, homosexuality, pornography, etc. Humanism in our culture is now probably *the* major hindrance to church growth. It has produced totalitarian government bureaucracies in this nation. It is taught, in one form or another, in all our public schools. And it is the dominant operating philosophy in industry, commerce, foreign affairs, etc. Humanism has influenced us all, whether or not we know it. Only by an understanding of the philosophy will we comprehend what it is doing, and how we can rid ourselves of it in every sphere of our lives.

II. Since humanism now dominates cultural values in our world, preachers must turn people away from humanism to Christianity, if we would change our world. (Humanism has turned the Christian world upside down - a reversal of Acts 17:6. This indicates the weakness of Christianity in our world. That must be changed!)

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A. To defeat Christianity's philosophical enemies, preachers must first understand them.

1. In times past, we have viewed denominationalism as our greatest threat. We have therefore studied its errors and refuted them. In quest for truth, we have debated more, and have published more debate books, than any other professed Christian group in the world. Denominational heresies have indeed been major threats to genuine Christian faith, and, to a lesser degree, still are. But the major modern philosophical enemy of Christianity is no longer denominationalism. It is humanism.

2. Some preachers and church leaders are now informing themselves about humanism, but by far the majority of Christian people hardly recognize its existence. And among preachers, few have a comprehensive understanding of its beliefs and its workings. The reason is simple. Preachers are not trained to understand it.

3. It would be incorrect to say that humanism, as an unchristian philosophy, is not taught in our Christian universities and schools of preaching, because it is taught. However, it is generally taught only incidentally. A Christian psychology teacher may teach about humanism as it relates to psychology. It may be discussed in a Christian Apologetics or a Christian Evidence course, especially as it relates to the theory of evolution. Teachers may or may not teach against humanism in various subject areas, depending upon their own personal knowledge of it. When they do, it is often very little. Even so, to the best of my knowledge, only a small minority of *Christian universities or schools of preaching among us has an entire course in its curriculum devoted to an understanding of humanism and its unchristian implications for society.* That must change!

B. To demonstrate the superiority of Christianity and to make Christian values relevant in a humanistic world, preachers must (1) understand the conflicting beliefs of Christianity and humanism, (2) recognize their respective social implications, and (3) encourage Christian influence in society. A few examples, to illustrate contrasting values and their implications, are as follows:

1. *Were all things created? or did they evolve?* If all things were created, then there is a higher power by which all creation is governed. If all things evolve, then there is no higher power, and man, as the highest form of evolutionary existence, must be self-governing. Most preachers are aware of the philosophical foundations of these conflicting points of view, although some seek to compromise them. While most see the conflict, many do not understand the cultural implications that come from these conflicting perspectives.

2. *Are morals and truths absolute? or are they relative?* If there is a God, then His standard of morality and truth are absolute. If there is no God, then all things happen by chance, and all morals and truths are relative. If there is no God, then any human conduct that is perceived beneficial may be declared moral. If there is no God, then any statement that is perceived beneficial may be declared truthful.

3. *Is man basically good? basically bad? or neither?* Humanists believe that man is basically good. If man is basically good, then whatever man does is basically good. This view does not admit the existence of sin. The Bible teaches that man is neither basically good nor bad, but basically free to choose to do either good or bad. The Christian belief requires a standard of conduct to which all men are accountable, and by which all men's behavior may be judged to be

either good or bad.

4. *Is man only physical? or is man both physical and spiritual?* Humanists contend that man is only physical and only temporal. Christians believe that human beings are not only physical but also spiritual. Man has an eternal God-given spirit that returns to God at death to await God's judgment for its eternal destiny in either heaven or hell.

5. *Is God the judge of all things? or is man?* Humanists say that "man is the measure of all things." They do not believe in human accountability to God. They believe human beings can do whatever is permissible among humankind. Christians believe that everyone is accountable to God for all human conduct. Accountability to God demands performance in accordance with God's standard of morality. Such accountability means better human conduct because it expects to be rewarded for righteousness and punished for wickedness.

6. *Is knowledge derived from God? or from man?* Humanists say that mankind can acquire knowledge only from nature through natural observation. Christians say that human beings can acquire knowledge not only from nature but also from God through His revelation of Himself to mankind, now available through the Bible. If humanity can know nothing except from nature, then humanity can know nothing of God's love, providence or will for mankind.

7. *Should the basic unit of society be the family? or the individual?* Humanists believe that individuals should be free to experience a full range of civil liberties. Their emphasis on individual rights, means that individuals should not be shackled by lifelong marital commitments, makes individuals the basic unit in society, and produces selfishness and irresponsibility. On the other hand, Christian belief in lifelong marital commitments emphasizes individual responsibilities, produces unselfishness, and makes the family the basic unit in society.

8. *Should civil governments be under God? or independent of God?* Christians contend that God has sanctioned three institutions - the home, the church, and the state - and that all are subject to God's authority. Humanists contend that God is not relevant to man, and that therefore the state is the highest governing authority over all human conduct, including governance of the home and the church. On the other hand, since Christians contend the state is subject to God's ordinances, shouldn't Christians participate in civil governance?

9. *Are all things religious? or are some things secular?* By 'secular' humanists mean 'non-religious.' Humanists consider things secular - such as politics, commerce, civil governments, environmental concerns, etc., things not directly related to church, salvation, personal holiness, etc. - as matters which religion cannot address. Christians, however, believe that religion must address every area of life (Colossians 3:17). Humanists want Christians to believe that "secular" is a neutral category between Christian and non-Christian, but there is no neutral category. Nor is there a legitimate categorical distinction between the "religious" and the "secular."

Our world is now dominated by humanism because many Christians, unaware of humanistic values, have allowed it. However energetic Christians may be in opposing humanism, humanism will not be defeated (1) until more Christians are better informed about it, and (2) until most professed Christians rid themselves of some specific humanistic beliefs which most hold, to some degree, often unknowingly.