

**“The fool has said in his heart, ‘there is no God’” (Ps. 53: 1).**

**+ Lecture 2: Humanism, a polite term for atheism +**

**I) What is humanism all about?**

Humanism is as old as the Garden of Eden. [Philosophers](#) have written on the subject since Plato and Aristotle. Later writers include French revolutionaries such as Rousseau and then Engels and Karl Marx. Growth of the concept was slow for the first few thousand years of recorded history, until French and European philosophers further developed some details prior to the French revolution. In 1959, Darwinism gave it accelerated growth through the theory of evolution.

Most people think that humanism means ‘kind’ or ‘humane’ because a false association of words often deceives them. They relate humanitarian with the Good Samaritan. Then they equate the belief system of humanism with humanitarianism.

The [Humanist Manifesto I](#) (1933) and the [Humanist Manifesto II](#) (1973) provide the basic tenets of humanism. We are going to look at these tenets to understand what humanism is all about.

- 1) “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 prayer, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith” (Preface of HMII)

+ From this we can safely conclude that humanism denies the existence of God.

- 2) “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. Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence; in our judgement, the dogmas and myths of traditional religion do not do so” (HMII).  
“No deity will save us, we must save ourselves” (HMII).

+ Thus we can conclude that humanism holds that man creates his own god. That is, humanists would state that ‘God’ is a product of man’s imagination. They also conclude that nothing should be placed above human needs, which leads to the conclusion that man becomes his own god.

- 3) “Science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces” (HMII).

+ Humanism, then, believes in the theory of evolution.

- 4) “Modern science discredits such historic concepts as...the ‘separable soul’ ...As far as we know, the total personality is a function of biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context...There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body” (HMII)

+ Humanists deny a resurrection, to them humans are only a mass of conditioned nerves and reflexes living by conditioned response mechanisms that evolved over millions of years that expires by their death.

- 5) “Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful” (HMII).

+ Again we see that humanism denies the hope of salvation or the resurrection into immortal life and ridicules any concept of future judgement for our transgressions. The Bible says: “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen.8: 21). Therefore, a person who believes in eternal judgement of the soul is more to be trusted than one who did not.

Humanism is not just a collection of philosophical murmuring, *it is a religion*. At least that’s what the United States Supreme Court said in 1961 in a case titled ‘Torcaso v. Watkins’ and again in 1964 in another case titled ‘U.S. v. Seeger’. Also the closing statement of (HMII) clearly states “These affirmations are not a final credo or dogma but *an expression of a living and growing faith*”. Humanism is nothing but a redefined label for the rebellion against God that happened in the Garden when man was deceived by the words of the serpent ‘you will be like God’ (Gen.3: 5) it also brings to mind the attempt to build the tower of Babel (Gen.11).

## **II) Humanism and Education:**

In an interview with the Boston Herald in 1982 humanist Charles F. Potter commented that: “Education is thus a most powerful ally of humanism and every American public school is a school of humanism”. Humanists hide behind names like ethical society, humane society, social engineering and the famous ‘higher critical thinking’. They believe their thoughts are higher than those who believe in God.

The following is quoted from the signer of (HMI, 1933), John Dewey who is considered as the father of progressive education:

“There is no God, and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion. With dogma and creed excluded then immutable truth is also dead and buried. There is no room for fixed natural law or permanent moral absolutes” (Living Philosophies, 1930).

The hearts of children are the goal of those that have taught against absolutes and encouraged ‘relative positivism’ (Positivism along with Relativism are the basis of saying ‘the end justifies the means’). Humanism with its relative and subjective values feeds systems like. I’m OK. You’re OK. Or tolerance in a big way. No absolutes. Each person establishes his / her own system of values as they see fit with no absolutes or external authorities (Postmodernism).

Gloria Steinem, a militant feminist and editor of Ms. Magazine, has stated: “By the year 2000 we will - I hope – raise our children to believe in human potential, not God”. Paul Baldwin, a social psychologist said: “any child who believes in God is mentally ill”. Then to top that Baldwin boasted that national mental health programs are being developed to help children who believe in God to have ‘healthier, more balanced’ attitudes.

## **III) The purpose of humanism:**

Humanists are a group of extremely disappointed people who are seeking a meaning to human life.

- “Using technology wisely, we can...provide human kind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving *an abundant and meaningful life*” (HMII).
- “Humanism can provide the purpose and inspiration that so many seek; it can give *personal meaning and significance to human life*” (HMII).

- “Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism” (HMII).

+ **Comments:**

- 1) Trying to find a meaning for our lives is a good purpose but the problem lies when we try to find this meaning away from God, “They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water. And hewn themselves cisterns – broken cisterns – that can hold no water” (Jer.2: 13)
- 2) King Solomon was trying to find a meaning for his life, he said: “I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven” (Ecc.1: 13). He also said: “whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure” (Ecc.2: 10)<sup>Ⓢ</sup>. After many years he reached the following conclusion, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandment for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc.12: 13).
- 3) It is written that God has put ‘*eternity*’ in the hearts of men (Ecc.3: 11). This eternity that is put in our hearts cannot be filled except by God who is ‘*unlimited*’. No human love can truly fill our hearts, the whole world itself can not fill or satisfy our hearts. This was the conclusion of St. Augustine who said: ‘Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee’.
- 4) Christ said: “Indeed the kingdom of God is within you” (Lk.17: 21). It is true that God is present everywhere and He is not limited by a place but our hearts are where we can feel His presence, we can see Him with our hearts, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matt.5: 8). After the resurrection, Lord Jesus appeared physically to two of His disciples who were travelling to a village called Emmaus and although their eyes were restrained so that they didn’t know Him (Lk.24: 16) their hearts were burning within them (Lk.24: 32). Therefore search for Christ within your heart. He is closer than you think.

**VI) Humanism & Individualism:**

There is an obvious relation between humanism and individualism, which is the tendency to magnify individual liberty, as against external authority, and individual activity as against associated activity. The chief recognized forms of individualism are religious, ethical, and political. Through all these forms of individualism runs the note of emphasis upon the importance of *self* in opposition to either restraint or assistance from without. Individualism is best described as a tendency or an attitude.

Religious Individualism describes the attitude of those persons who refuse to subscribe to definite creeds or to submit to any external religious authority. Such are those who call themselves free thinkers and non-denominational Christians. In general all Protestants are individualists in religion, in as much as they regard their individual interpretation of the Bible as the final authority. On the other hand, Orthodox Christians and the Roman Catholics accept the voice of the Church as the supreme authority, and therefore reject out right the principle of religious individualism.

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<sup>Ⓢ</sup> King Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1kings11: 3)!  
For more on his luxurious life read (1kings 10 – 2Chronicles 9).

Ethical Individualism means that the individual conscience or the individual reason is not merely the decisive subjective rule, but that it is the only<sup>Ⓢ</sup> rule; that there is no objective authority or standard, which is bound to take into account.

Political Individualism has a much smaller following now than it had a century or even a half century ago; for experience has abundantly shown that the assumption upon which it rests are purely artificial and thoroughly false.

+ **Comments:**

- 1) The true danger of Humanism to us is not the denial of God's existence but rather the introduction of another god to our hearts and minds namely the self and the ego. When we are exposed to this philosophy whether at school or from the society around us we may be able to reject the clear portion of atheism, but when it comes to magnifying the self and putting an emphasis on the ego, what will our reaction be?
- 2) Indeed many are the holy verses that encourage self denial and humility, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matt.16: 24-26). Read this verse carefully and you will see that both Christianity and Humanism share the same goal, which is the comfort and salvation of the *self* but there is a very clear difference in the way to accomplish this common goal. Christianity teaches that through self-denial and humility one will preserve his life on the other hand Humanism states the complete opposite.
- 3) Self-denial is not a sign of weakness on the contrary it requires a great deal of strength and courage to be able to deny one's self. *"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city"* (Prov.16: 32).
- 4) Wisdom is most important with self-denial and any virtue in general. For example St. Paul said about himself, *"I am the least of the apostles, whom am not worthy to be called an apostle"* (1Corith.15: 9), this same Paul defended his apostleship strongly in his second Epistle to the same Church (2Corinth.11).
- 5) Individualism is an expected result of magnification of the self. Many of the youths problems are a fruit of individualism, how many times have you heard a high school senior say, 'I can't wait to go to college and leave the house'? Even with parents it is almost certain that most of the marital problems are due to being self-centered and selfish. Even if the ego is not the cause of the problem it will be the reason for not solving the problem.
- 6) Let us consider the following verse and think about the number of problems we could have avoided or solved if we had applied it; *"Let nothing be through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind. Let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests but for the interests of others"* (Phil.2: 3,4).

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<sup>Ⓢ</sup> 'There is a way which seems right to a man, but it's end is the way of death' ( Prov.14: 12)