

Extracted from *Biblical Teachings & Practices From A.D. 100 to A.D. 1500.*
“Not part of Is One Religion As Good As Another”

Humanists

Erasmus (1466 – 1536)

Erasmus was a “Dutch [humanists] scholar and an unusually brilliant student. He edited a series of studies on the Church Fathers which made available the early history of the departure from the New Testament pattern. He also edited the first printed Greek New Testament and exposed the inadequacy of the Latin Vulgate which had been used as the text of Scripture in the Catholic churches since the time of Jerome. Although Erasmus used ridicule extensively in his criticism of the Catholic church he did not launch out into an energetic program of reformation. He did, however, supply much of the material that other men used. It has been said that Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.” *The Eternal Kingdom*, F.W. Mattox, p 229

Machiavelli (1469 – 1527)

“Humanism in the extreme is a work of Machiavelli entitled *The Prince*. In this manual he stated:

- a. The successful prince must set aside all considerations of religion and ethics.
 - b. It would be proper for him to appear religious and at the same time employ fraud.
 - c. He might be ruthless when necessary.
 - d. There would be two standards of morality – one for the prince and another for the nation.
 - e. The prince must distrust the masses for they are ungrateful, inconsistent, deceitful and greedy.
 - f. Accordingly, the prince should not consider himself bound to keep any promises he had made to the people.
 - g. He emphasized that the state was supreme in power and must be made and kept strong.
- In this he set forth the principle of totalitarianism. ... Mussolini wrote the dissertation for his doctorate on the ‘Military Ideas of Machiavelli.’” *The Eternal Kingdom*, F.W. Mattox, p. 236

Humanism and/or Humanists

Humanists roots were centuries before the Renaissance.

Greek humanism

Sixth-century BCE pantheists (one who believes in many gods) Thales of Miletus and Xenophanes of Colophon prepared the way for later Greek humanist thought. Thales is credited with creating the maxim "Know thyself". Xenophanes refused to recognize the gods of his time and reserved the divine for the principle of unity in the universe. ... These Ionian Greeks were the first thinkers to recognize that nature is available to be studied separately from any alleged supernatural realm. ... In the third century BCE, Epicurus became known for his concise phrasing of the problem of evil, lack of belief in the afterlife, and human-centered approaches to achieving eudaimonia (Greek meaning happiness).

Ancient Asian humanism

Human-centered philosophy that rejected the supernatural and a skeptical attitude toward the supernatural can be found in:

- a.) 1000 BCE in the Lokayata system of Indian philosophy (philosophical skepticism and religious indifference)
- b.) 6th century BCE in Taoism (a system of morality to Confucianists)
- c.) Also in the 6th century BCE, Gautama Buddha, since neither soul or anything belonging to soul can really and truly exist, the view that the soul shall hereafter live permanent,

persisting, unchanging, yea abide eternally: is not this utterly and entirely a foolish doctrine?[18]

Dante (c.1265 – 1321)

Dante Alighieri an Italian poet of the Middle Ages. He wrote the Divine Comedy, originally called *Commedia* by the author and later nicknamed *Divina* by Boccaccio, [a Renaissance humanist (1313-1375)] is often considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of world literature. [Normally literary works were written in classical Latin rather than the Italian.]

The Divine Comedy describes Dante's journey through Hell (Inferno), Purgatory (Purgatorio), and Paradise (Paradiso), guided first by the Roman poet Virgil and then by Beatrice. The word "comedy," in the classical sense, refers to works which reflect belief in an ordered universe, in which events not only tended towards a happy or "amusing" ending, but an ending influenced by a Providential will that orders all things to an ultimate good i.e. the pilgrimage from Hell to Paradise begins with the pilgrim's moral confusion and ends with the vision of God. (wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante_Alighieri) [Apparently this was the prevailing belief of the Catholic teachings of the day.]

Renaissance Humanism,

Around 1806 Humanismus was used to describe the classical curriculum offered by German schools. Renaissance Humanism that flourished in Italy attempted to revive classical Greek and Latin learning. In the latter part of the 18th and the early 19th centuries numerous grass-roots "philanthropic" and benevolent societies were created. They were dedicated to human betterment and human virtue based on human reason alone independently from traditional religious institutions.

In the 19th century, the Catholic Church was seen as a political power exerting a strong influence. (wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholicism_in_Germany)

At about the same time, "humanism" as a philosophy that centered around mankind (as opposed to institutionalized religion) was being used in Germany by the so-called Left Hegelians, Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx, who were critical of the close involvement of the church in the repressive German-Prussia government.

Renaissance humanism was an intellectual movement in Europe of the later Middle Ages and the Early Modern period to move from the age of Darkness by the careful study and imitation of the great classical authors. For Petrarch and Boccaccio, the greatest master was Cicero. Their purpose was to persuade others to lead the good life. As Petrarch put it, 'it is better to will the good than to know the truth.' Rhetoric thus led to and embraced philosophy.

The basic training of the humanist was to speak well and write (typically, in the form of a letter). Initially it was a philosophical rather than anti-Christian or even anti-clerical. But it was considered in some way hostile to the Church, or to the conservative social order in general. The humanists criticized what they considered the barbarous Latin of the universities.

The humanists' close study of Latin literary texts soon enabled them to discern historical differences in the writing styles of different periods. By analogy with what they saw as decline of Latin, they applied the principle of *ad fontes* (back to the sources) across broad areas of learning, seeking out manuscripts of Patristic literature [writing of "church fathers"] as well as pagan

authors. After the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, refugees brought with them Greek manuscripts, not only of Plato and Aristotle, but also of the Christian Gospels, previously unavailable in the Latin West.

After 1517, when the new invention of printing made these texts widely available, the Dutch humanist Erasmus, who had studied Greek at the Venetian printing house of Aldus Manutius, began a philological [considers both form and meaning in linguistic expression, combining linguistics and literary studies] analysis of the Gospels, comparing the Greek originals with their Latin translations with a view to correcting errors and discrepancies in the latter. Erasmus, along with the French humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, began issuing new translations, laying the groundwork for the Protestant Reformation. Henceforth Renaissance humanism, particularly in the German North, became concerned with religion, while Italian and French humanism concentrated increasingly on scholarship and philology addressed to a narrow audience of specialists, studiously avoiding topics that might offend despotic rulers or which might be seen as corrosive of faith. wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism

Consequences of the Renaissance humanist movement

The ad fontes principle (back to the source) also had many applications. The humanists were often opposed to philosophers of the preceding movement of Scholasticism, the "schoolmen" of the universities of Italy, Paris, Oxford and elsewhere. The scholastics' methodology had developed out of their engagement with the science and philosophy of the ancient Greeks and medieval Arabs in an attempt to synthesize the thought of Aristotle with Catholicism. But they had not engaged with the literary, historical and other cultural texts of antiquity. wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism

The re-discovery of ancient manuscripts brought a more profound and accurate knowledge of ancient philosophical schools such as Epicureanism, and Neoplatonism, whose Pagan wisdom the humanists, like the Church fathers of old, tended, at least initially, to consider as deriving from divine revelation and thus adaptable to a life of Christian virtue. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism)

By refocusing on those literary, historical, oratorical, and theological texts, Renaissance humanism profoundly changed the cultural and intellectual direction of Europe. In philosophy Renaissance humanists tended to focus more attention on Plato's dialogues and less on the Aristotelian texts. wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism

Better acquaintance with Greek and Roman technical writings also influenced the development of European science in which Platonism (the theory of forms and antitypes) stood in opposition to the Aristotelian concentration (the study or theory of design and purpose) on the observable properties of the physical world.[33] But Renaissance humanists, who considered themselves as restoring the glory and nobility of antiquity, had no interest in scientific innovation. However, by the mid-to-late 16th century, even the universities, though still dominated by Scholasticism (resolution of the disagreement through rational discussion), began to demand that Aristotle be read in accurate texts edited according to the principles of Renaissance philology, thus setting the stage for Galileo's quarrels with the outmoded habits of Scholasticism.

Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The phrase the "religion of humanity" is sometimes attributed to American Founding Father, Thomas Paine, though as yet unattested in his surviving writings. Thomas Paine called himself a theophilanthropist, a word combining the Greek for "God", "love," and "man", and indicating that

while he believed in the existence of a creating intelligence in the universe, he entirely rejected the claims made by and for all existing religious doctrines, especially their miraculous, transcendental and salvationist pretensions. The Parisian Society of Theophilanthropy used Paine's book, the *Age of Reason* (1793), to pour scorn on scripture combined with Voltairean mockery "to expose the absurdity of a theology built on a collection of incoherent Levantine folktales." In the 19th century Ludwig Feuerbach of the Hegelians wrote ("Man is a god to man" or "god is nothing [other than] man to himself").

The original signers of the Humanist Manifesto I of 1933, declared themselves to be religious humanists. Because of the failure of traditional religions to meet the needs of their day, the signers of 1933 declared it a major necessity to establish a religion that was a dynamic force to meet the needs of the day. Since then, two additional Manifestos were written to replace the first. In the Preface of Humanist Manifesto II, the authors Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson (1973) affirm that faith and knowledge is required for a hopeful vision for the future. Manifesto II references a section on Religion and states traditional religion renders a disservice to humanity. Manifesto II recognizes the following groups to be part of their naturalistic philosophy: scientific, ethical, democratic, religious, and Marxist humanism.

In 1941, the American Humanist Association was organized. After World War II, three prominent Humanists became the first directors of major divisions of the United Nations: Julian Huxley of UNESCO, Brock Chisholm of the World Health Organization, and John Boyd-Orr of the Food and Agricultural Organization.[49]

In 2004, American Humanist Association, along with other groups representing agnostics, atheists, and other freethinkers, joined to create the Secular Coalition for America which advocates in Washington, D.C. for separation of church and state and nationally for the greater acceptance of nontheistic Americans. The Executive Director of Secular Coalition for America is Sean Faircloth a long-time state legislator from Maine.

Modern Humanists, such as Corliss Lamont or Carl Sagan, hold that humanity must seek for truth through reason and the best observable evidence and endorse scientific skepticism and the scientific method. However, they stipulate that decisions about right and wrong must be based on the individual and common good. [i.e., there are no absolute values.] As an ethical process, Humanism does not consider metaphysical issues such as the existence or nonexistence of immortal beings. Humanism is engaged with what is human.[9] So there are no absolutes. In 1925, the English mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead cautioned: "The prophecy of Francis Bacon has now been fulfilled; and man, who at times dreamt of himself as a little lower than the angels, has submitted to become the servant and the minister of nature. It still remains to be seen whether the same actor can play both body parts." [10] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism