Education and New Age Humanism

The Humanistic Charade

Most religions consist of a unified system of beliefs that deals with basic views on such things as God and human ethics. The two basic elements in all religions are: (1) a view of God or some ultimate reality, and (2) a view of ethics, derived from ultimate reality. Most often these are expressed in some kind of holy book. Each major religion has a holy book or books. Christianity is no exception. Humanism, as well, has its holy books: *The Humanist Manifestos I and II.*

The manifesto itself regards humanism as a religion. The very first sentence reads: "Humanism is a philosophical, religious and moral point of view as old as human civilization itself."(1) So, humanism not only has its "holy books," but has a view of God as well: It says there is no God.

The second *Humanist Manifesto*, published in 1973 states; "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 prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith.

"Salvationism, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means for survival."(2)

The manifesto goes on to say, "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 nontheists, we begin with

humans not God, nature not deity."(3)

The *Humanist Manifesto* goes on to state, "we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves."(4)

Regarding the individual, the *Manifesto* says that "in the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults."(5)

And humanism has a firm position on ethics. Their "bible" says, "Moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational."(6)

In other words, morals are not derived from absolutes given by God, but are determined by the individual from situation to situation. By and large, the humanists deplore any reference to them as being "religious." However, the Supreme Court identified secular humanism as a religion on at least two occasions: *Abington v. Schempp* and *Torcaso v. Watkins*.

In Torcaso the court spelled out that "religion" in the constitutional sense includes non-theistic, as well as theistic religion and the state is therefore forbidden to prohibit or promote either form of religion.(7)

The concern I have is not whether "humanism" is recognized as a religion by the humanists themselves or not. It is that those who shape the young minds of America are humanists and in most cases they are not willing to be honest about it.

The Great Brain Robbery

Humanism is the dominant view among leading educators in the U.S. They set the trends of modern education, develop the curriculum, dispense federal monies, and advise government officials on educational needs. In short, they hold the future in their hands. As Christian taxpayers we are paying for the overthrow of our own position.

Charles Francis Potter, an original signer of the first Humanist Manifesto and honorary president of the National Education Association, has this to say about public school education:

> *Education is thus a most powerful ally of Humanism, and every American public school is a school of Humanism.(8)*

Not only are the leading educators of America promoting humanism, but so are those who write the textbooks children use in the classroom.

A sociology textbook dealing with ethics states: “There are exceptions to almost all moral laws, depending on the situation. What is wrong in one instance may be right in another. Most children learn that it is wrong to lie. But later they may learn that it is tactless, if not actually wrong, not to lie under certain circumstances.”(9)

To show how this is coming about, we will go first to the basic issue the change in the philosophy of education. We will then examine some of the fruit the specific programs carrying the humanist message into the classrooms. Finally, we will examine the attitude of those in educational leadership who are trying to promote humanism in the schools, whether it be secular or cosmic in nature.

Educational Philosophy

Most of us have thought that the schools' basic responsibility is to teach what is known as the three "R's": reading, writing and arithmetic. But the fact that many students today cannot pass basic aptitude tests indicate the failure of the public schools in teaching the three "R's."

A recent *Time* magazine essay stated that "a standardized math test was given to 13-year-olds in six countries last year," and that the "Koreans did the best. Americans did the worst." Besides being shown triangles and equations, the kids were shown the statement "I am good at mathematics." Koreans were least likely to agree with this statement, while Americans were most likely to agree, with 68 percent in agreement.(10)

The conclusion one might make regarding these informative results is that American school children are not very good at math, but they feel good about it.

Today leading educators no longer see their job primarily to be the teaching of these necessary skills. The philosophy of education has undergone a fundamental change. Educators now perceive their jobs to be the complete "resocialization" of the child—the complete reshaping of his values, beliefs and morals.

Teaching is now being viewed as a form of therapy, the classroom as a clinic, and the teacher as a therapist whose job it is to apply psychological techniques in the shaping of the child's personality and values.

Teacher as Therapist

S. I. Hayakawa, U. S. Senator from California, was an educator for most of his life. On the floor of the U. S. Senate, he stated:

> *In recent years in colleges of education and schools of*

> *sociology and psychology, an educational heresy has flourished . . . The heresy of which I speak regards the fundamental task of education as therapy.(11)*

The National Education Association report, "Education for the 70's," states clearly that "schools will become clinics whose purpose is to provide individualized psycho-social treatment for the student, and teachers must become psycho-social therapists."(12)

The February 1968 issue of the National Education Journal states:

> *The most controversial issue of the 21st Century will pertain to the ends and means of human behavior and who will determine them. The first education question will not be `What knowledge is of the most worth?' but `What kind of human behavior do we wish to produce?'(13)*

Who will determine human behavior, and what kind of behavior do we want? Who will engineer society, and what kind of society shall we design? These are the tasks the educational leaders have set for themselves. They are not thinking small.

Catherine Barrett, a former president of the NEA, said:

> *We will need to recognize that the so-called basic skills, which represent nearly the total effort in elementary schools, will be taught in 1/4 of the present school day. The remaining time will be devoted to what is truly fundamental and basic.(14)*

Barrett wishes to press on to bigger and more significant things, such as redesigning society by reshaping our children's values. Educational leaders are saying the big question in education is: What human behavior do we want, and who will produce it?

The question we need to ask is: By what pattern do these educators propose to reconstruct society, and whose values will be taught? You can believe that it will not be the Judeo-Christian value system.

What are the basic programs carrying the humanist message into the classroom? Senator Hayakawa mentions psychodrama, role playing, touch therapy and encounter groups. Others are: values clarification, situation ethics, sensitivity training, survival training and other behavior-oriented programs. Meditation, visualization, guided imagery, along with self-esteem teaching, represent intuitive learning that has become known as "affective education."

Dr. William Coulson of the Western Sciences Institute indicated that affective learning, self-actualization, is at the root of our nation's illiteracy.(15)

These programs are designed to modify children's attitudes, values and beliefs. The primary problem is not the teaching of values, but the fact that these new programs are designed to "free" the children from the Judeo-Christian value system taught by parents and church.

These programs cover such topics as sex education, death ed, drug and alcohol education, family life, human development and personality adjustment. The teaching today by humanists is void of absolutes; there is not a basis of discerning right and wrong. The only wrong is having or holding an absolute.

Relativism is the Key

The only basis for developing morals is what the child himself wants or thinks, and /or what the peer group decides is right. Strong convictions of right and wrong are looked upon as evidence of poor social adjustment and of need for the teachers' therapy. The bottom line is this the major consensus determines what is right or wrong at any point in our culture,

there are no absolutes.

Sheila Schwartz is a member of the American Humanist Association, and her article “Adolescent Literature: Humanism Is Alive and Thriving in the Secondary School” appeared in the January/February 1976 edition of The Humanist. In regard to the impact of secular humanist thought in education, she makes the following statements:

> *Something wonderful, free, unheralded, and of significance to all humanists is happening in the secondary schools. It is the adolescent-literature movement. They may burn Slaughterhouse Five in North Dakota and ban a number of innocuous books in Kanawha County, but thank God [sic] the crazies don’t do all that much reading. If they did they’d find that they have already been defeated. . . Nothing that is part of contemporary life is taboo in this genre and any valid piece of writing that helps make the world more knowable to young people serves an important humanistic function.(16)*

Lastly, what are the basic attitudes of the educational leadership in America?

Sidney Simon is one of the educational elite in the U.S. He is a humanist, teaches at the Center for Humanistic Education in Amherst, Massachusetts, and is one of the main architects of values clarification theory, which is widely used in public schools. Mr. Simon is a professor. He teaches those who will later teach your children and mine in the public school. While Mr. Simon was teaching at Temple University in Philadelphia, he commented on his experience teaching high school students:

> *I always bootlegged the values stuff. I was assigned to teach social studies in elementary school and I taught values clarification. I was assigned current trends in American education and I taught my trend.(17)*

Simon goes on to say, “Keep it subtle, keep it quiet, or the parents will really get upset.”(18)

Rhoda Lorand, a member of the American Board of Professional Psychology, made some observations about the attitudes of educators before the U.S. House Sub-Committee on Education. Her testimony related to House Resolution 5163 having to do with education. Her words are as follows:

> *The contempt for parents is so shockingly apparent in many of the courses funded under Title III, in which the teacher is required to become an instant psychiatrist who probes the psyche of her pupils, while encouraging them to criticize their parents’ beliefs, values and teachings. This process continues from kindergarten through the twelfth grade.(19)*

As parents, we are expected to fund the very teaching methodology that is designed to destroy our influence upon our children.

The New Age Seduction

However, the humanist perspective on education is not the only threat we face today. The humanists became entrenched in the late 1960s and during the 1970s.

During the decade of the eighties and now in the nineties we have a new threat. Those who have bought into the New Age movement have a goal to influence the young as well. The January/February 1983 issue of The Humanist carried this article titled “A Religion for a New Age.” The author stated:

> *I am convinced that the battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being. These teachers must embody the same selfless*

> *dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values in whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level preschool day care or large state university.(20)*

The main thrust of this new threat is eastern in philosophy and origin. Humanism as a religion represents a real threat to our Christian heritage, but eastern philosophical ideas by comparison are deadly to our way of life.

Instructor magazine, a publication for teachers, carried an article entitled "Your Kids are Psychic! But they may never know it without your help." The article says that "teachers in particular are in a position to play an exciting role in the psychic development of children."(21) The article goes on to identify psychic ability as the practice of telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and retrocognition.

As teachers continue their path toward enlightenment of their students, they may step into the world of "confluent education." Dr. Beverly Galyean describes confluent education as a "wholistic" approach to learning. The basic premises of "confluent education" should cause great concern within the Christian community.

Among Dr. Galyean's premises are:

> *In essence we are not individuals but part of the universal consciousness [which is God]. Realizing this essential unity, and experiencing oneself as part of it, is a major goal for a child's education.*

> *Because each person is part of the universal consciousness which is love, each contains all the wisdom and love of the universe. This wisdom and love is the `higher self.' The child can tap into this universal mind and receive advice,*

> *information and help from it. This is usually done through meditation and contact with spirit guides.*
>
> *Each person creates his or her own reality by choosing what to perceive and how to perceive it. As we teach children to focus on positive thoughts and feelings of love, their reality will become that.(22)*

Dr. Galyean sums up her beliefs by saying that

> *Once we begin to see that we are all God . . . the whole purpose of life is to reown the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence, and when we do that we create back to that old, that essential oneness which is consciousness. So my whole view is very much based on that idea.(23)*

As Christians our response to New Age influences in public school education can be carried out in several ways.

First, we must develop a relationship with the school. One possibility might be through actively working as a volunteer on campus in some capacity. Another is getting to know your child's teacher and his or her worldview.

Second, we must discern he particular bias of the textbooks used in the classroom. Whether they are humanistic in their approach or eastern and whether they properly treat the Judeo-Christian world view.

Third, if we discover that our Judeo-Christian perspectives are being sacrificed for the inclusion of alternative views, then we must become politically involved and seek the election of individuals to the school board and other effective positions who reflect a more traditional stance.

Fourth, we must continue to be actively involved in our

children’s lives. Furthermore, we must teach our children to become discriminators. We cannot ever accept the idea that our child’s education is someone else’s responsibility.

It is imperative that we educate others as to the problems within the system and then take appropriate action.

As Christians, our response to New Age influences in public school education can be carried out by developing a relationship with the school and getting to know our children’s teacher and his or her particular worldview.

We must also be aware of the bias represented in our children’s textbooks. However, more importantly, we must develop a deeper relationship with our children, thereby becoming the greatest of all the various influences in their young lives. Unless we achieve this goal, we will have emotionally and spiritually lost the battle for our children’s future.

Notes

1. Paul Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto I* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1979), 9.

2. Paul Kurtz, Edwin H. Wilson, *Humanist Manifesto II* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1979), 13.

3. Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto II*, 16.

4. Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto II*, 17.

5. *Torcaso v. Watkins*, 367 US 488, 1961, 495n.

6. Virginia Armstrong, *Humanism in American Education I*, (Blackstone Institute of Public Law and Policy).

7. Helen M. Hughes, *Inquiries in Sociology* (Newton, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1972), 37.

8. Charles Krauthammer, “Education: Doing Bad and Feeling Good,” *Time*, 5 February 1990, 78.

9. Address to the U.S. Senate, U.S. Department of Education Hearing, March 1984.

10. “Education for the 70’s,” National Education Report.

11. National Education Journal, (Feb. 1968).

12. Timothy D. Crater, “The Unproclaimed Priests of Public Education,” *Christianity Today*, 10 April 1981, 45.

13. William R. Coulson, “Memorandum to Federal Drug Education Panel,” 23 April 1988, Program Newsletter (La Jolla, Calif.: May 1988).

14. Sheila Schwartz, “Adolescent Literature: Humanism is Alive and Thriving in the Secondary School,” The Humanist, Jan. Feb. 1976.

15. Crater, “Unproclaimed Priests,” 46.

16. Ibid., 47.

17. Ibid.

18. John Dunphy, “A Religion for a New Age,” *The Humanist*, Jan. Feb. 1983, 26.

19. Alex Tanous and Katherine Fair Donnelly, “Your Kids Are Psychic!,” *Instructor Magazine*, April 1980, 65.

20. Frances Adeney, “Some Schools Are Looking East for Answers,” *Moody Monthly*, May 1982, 19.

21. Ibid.

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