

Humanism and the PR Teacher: No R and R (2)

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Humanism vs. Protestant Reformed Teachers: No R&R

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AUTHOR:

Dykstra Russell J

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Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Prof. Dykstra is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

[The first installment pointed out that humanism is the philosophy that makes man the measure of all things. Some of the significant concomitant elements of that basic dictum include:

- 1.A denial of God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. Depending on the emphasis of the particular humanist movement, the substitute god is man himself, or perhaps society, or culture, or science, and such like objects.
- 2.Earth-centeredness.
- 3.The liberty of man.
- 4.The striving for unity and peace, or a man-centered kingdom.

Humanists paid lip service to a God of some kind until evolution was developed. All forms of humanism espouse evolution.]

Humanism is at war with Christian school teachers. These teachers dedicate their lives to assist parents in the God-given task of raising the covenant seed in the fear of God. If the Devil can make teachers be the purveyors of this anti-God philosophy, he will have won a huge advantage

in his war with the covenant seed. Teachers must be aware that they are engaged in a constant war.

Humanism is the prevailing philosophy, or, even, religion, in the world today. Its influence will be felt. In fact, it is pervasive.

Humanism is manifested in the advertising that emphasizes freedom. The freedom of man is glorified in the rebellious spirit. Consider the automobile advertisements that ridicule rules and advance vehicles that allow the drivers to "go out of the lines." A commercial pushing deodorant uses a skateboarder doing his own thing, even if he is trashing public property. Man is free to do as he pleases.

Advertisers promote humanistic pleasure and encourage you to do your own thing using sexually suggestive ads. The totally earthly-mindedness of humanism is displayed in the glorification of parties that display attractive, happy people drinking, dancing, and laughing. The message is clear: This is the life to enjoy; it does not get any better than this.

Colleges promote themselves using humanistic themes—you need to make your own world, pursue your dreams. Obviously there is no hint that one ought to seek to know the vocation that God has determined. No, you choose your path, and go for it.

The hero worship that abounds in our day is rank humanism. It is a setting up of the individual as the standard. The rock star, the athlete, the financial guru, the actor and actress. These people then set the standards for dress, speech, attitude, Sabbath activity, etc. Not God's standards, but man's are to be imitated.

Teachers face the real possibility of influences of humanism concretely, and that not first of all in the student, but in themselves—in the speech, attitude, and dress of teachers. For an example, I notice that teachers of the old school wore (and still do wear) suits and dresses almost exclusively in class. This was not because they imagined that dressier clothes earned respect. But they understood that clothes do suggest attitudes, and indicate the importance of the work and the position. Christian school teachers have long recognized the importance of the work and the high calling, and thus went out and bought clothes appropriate for the work—even when salaries were smaller than today's.

Suits, even ties, and dresses are no longer the norm in many schools. Teachers are dressing more and more casually. I wonder, why the change? What influenced teachers to dress more casually? I do not accuse teachers of humanism because they dress casually. I only pose the question for your consideration as teachers. What is your standard for dressing, and who is setting it?

Teachers face the influence of humanism in the area of authority. Humanism pushes personal freedom, even rebellion against authority that restricts personal freedom. Teachers ought to face this squarely. Attitudes towards authority—has this changed among teachers? Is the administrator only a facilitator, or an authority? And are the parents the real authority, or an interference? And is the school board to be honored and respected, or complained about? It is easy to be influenced by the spirit of humanism because our flesh naturally loves it.

Teachers need to face possible effects of humanism as revealed in our speech. What is the content of our speech outside the classroom? Is it the same as the conversations of the world?

Cars, money, clothes, money, politics, money, and entertainment? Or are our conversations filled predominantly with spiritual things? What is influencing our speech?

Let it be clear that by bringing these things up, I make no accusations. I call matters to the attention of teachers in order that teachers may face these things themselves. You as teachers judge yourselves, as all believers must.

And if we as parents and teachers often discover that humanism has influenced our thinking and our speech, obviously, the students are affected far more. The rock and country music of the world relentlessly pushes the themes of rebellion, sex, and drugs. The unmistakable message pounded into the souls of covenant youth who listen to this music is this: There are no standards of right or wrong.

Advertising likewise is geared to catch the youth. It seeks to mold their thinking, stimulate their desires, and set their goals. The youth have a much harder time resisting the pressure of peers when it seems that virtually every one of their peers is in lockstep, and that, with the lifestyle portrayed in the advertisements.

Today's western culture is a humanist's paradise. Man has become the standard. If man can produce it, it is called legitimate art. No matter that it is perverse, blasphemous, demeaning, or all of the above.

Also in music, man-as-the-standard means that anything goes. There are the obvious moral evils of rock and country music, in its various forms. Humanism's influence is also found in religious music. Through the centuries, the church has encountered the ever-present danger of man-centered hymns. Now we are confronted with the additional danger of music that imitates godless rock music while adding some (ostensibly) religious content to the words. Man sets the standards of what is acceptable praise to God.

Drama continues to press its pernicious humanism upon us. Too many students, I fear, (and, of course, one is too many) come to school with their heads filled with last night's movies and sitcoms, which is to say, the violence, the filth, as well as the authority-ridiculing jokes of the ungodly. I pray God that teachers do not imbibe this deadly spiritual poison. I pray that rather you do recognize the wickedness it contains, and that it is one of the most powerful tools ever invented by man to exert influence. We must not allow these evils to enter into our minds in the semi-hypnotic state that comes upon television viewers. Nor may we allow drama to be condoned in the classroom or halls of the Christian school.

We face new battlefields with the coming of computers into many homes. The more powerful the tool, the greater the capacity for evil in the war. The computer gives the youth access to video games, which not only waste time, but shape attitudes. The main themes of the popular games are violence, vengeance, and victory—victory at any cost, for my self-actualization. And that does not touch the access into the cesspools of iniquity on the Internet.

In the wars in culture, feminism arises as a major foe. Feminism preaches the ability and freedom of women, and insists that the standards of Scripture have no bearing on what women can or may do. I still recall the old popular song of my teenage years in which a popular female singer belted out, "I am woman, I can do anything!"

The humanist mainstay of freedom has won many triumphs in our culture in the area of sex. The

result is acceptable promiscuity, homosexuality, abortions, and easy divorces. And these ravage the youth that are caught in these situations, either by their own sins, or the sins of their parents. The effect can be simply devastating from every point of view.

In the war against humanism, cultural influences are some of the most powerful and deadly forces that teachers face.

But teachers face this influence in other ways. Consider the classroom material, for instance. In a third grade English textbook, one can find a set of sentences in which students must correct the capitalization, or perhaps find the subject and verb. Innocent enough until, upon careful reading, one discovers that the individual sentences—taken together—form a cohesive lesson on some humanistic theme: the environment, social injustice, feminism, or some such topic.

Teachers are always looking for new and better resources—whether purchased, rented, or drawn from the Internet. Teachers must not allow themselves to become callous. The perspective must be identified. It will rarely be Christian, and even more rarely a Reformed world and life view. Almost certainly, it is man-centered. Teachers must not be hesitant about calling the bias to the attention of students and pointing out the error. Use the opportunity to give instruction on the subtle influences of humanism.

Perhaps the most deadly foe in the battle is what may loosely be called "Christian humanism." This movement sees the value of man to be that everyone is supposedly created in the image of God. Reformed Christians can get caught up in this thinking, even though the Bible and the Reformed confessions teach that the image of God was lost in the fall. This leads to a certain affinity between the believer and the unbeliever, and the opportunity for the believer to join hands with the unbeliever for the cause of humanity. The social calling of this humanism is the obligation to do something in this creation and in society to improve both.

Concretely, teachers, if you obtained your college degree from Grand Valley State U, Western Michigan U, or any other secular college, you heard the message that man can shape his own destiny. So, get out and make the world a better place. If you attended Dordt, Calvin, Trinity, or any other Christian college, you heard that you can do something for Christ, you can make a difference in this world, and you must make a difference in this world.

Hearing that message, woven into nearly all classes, for four years, will have some effect. Teachers must face the question, How much of this influence remains in me after I graduate? Do I feel guilty that our school is not active in social causes? Am I slightly embarrassed when old college friends ask, "What is your school doing?" and I know that he refers to social activities? This movement may sound very pious and pressure the Christian school to do its "Christian duty," but it is humanism for all that. The cry is: "Christ has redeemed the world, and now it is up to you to make the whole creation subservient to Christ. We must save the world. Christ will come after our mission is accomplished."

The influence of humanism is not limited to the world about us. It encroaches on the church's doctrine and life as well. Humanism is at the heart of all forms of Arminianism—the teaching that man can save himself, or that man's efforts are a necessary contribution to his own salvation. Humanism is expressed in all perfectionism thinking—I can achieve perfection. All the tolerance movements in the church world are basically humanism. Erasmus, the great Dutch humanist, combined all of these. He strove for peace among the various factions of the church, despised wrangling over points of doctrine, and trumpeted the free will of man.

Humanism's influence in the ecumenical movements today is very deep. It produces the sentiment that we must have tolerance and peace at all costs. The various churches in the Reformed camp must unite by every means, it is widely and noisily affirmed. This hits close to home. When the Protestant Reformed Churches and United Reformed Churches break off talks because the PRC refuse to compromise on doctrine and tolerate a conditional covenant, the PRC are condemned by many as a bunch of proud and intolerant folk who maintain doctrine at the expense of the unity.

These movements and attitudes press upon Reformed, Christian teachers. By nature, we do not like to be different or to be rejected by others. Students do not like to be different, especially those in junior high and high school.

Teachers, being redeemed sinners drawn out of this world by grace, are still naturally open to humanism. And their students, hardly having begun the major battles, are not conscious of the dangers involved or the consequences of giving in. Thus, the urgent necessity for teachers to be fighting—consciously. The war against humanism is constant, and the battle is fierce.

Christian school teachers may feel at times overwhelmed by the enormity of the battle and relentlessness of the enemy. They should not. God has not deserted these warriors or left them to fight on their own. Nor has He left them unarmed. Teachers have powerful and effectual weapons at their disposal. Next time: The arsenal.

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