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IS SECULAR HUMANISM A RELIGION?

It took parents more than a decade after the Supreme Court expelled prayer and Bible reading from the public schools to discover that the intellectual and moral vacuum left behind by those decisions was filled NOT by a neutrality toward religion but by an affirmative hostility toward religion. In the past several years, many writers and parents have identified that hostility as, in fact, a religion called Humanism.

But even after Humanism was identified and labelled, a severe semantic problem tended to conceal what was really happening. After all, the average person would say, what's wrong with Humanism? It sounds like something humanitarian; or evidencing a caring concern for humanity; or a love of the humanities; or at worst, just harmless.

Modern dictionaries offer little help. Humanism is a word with several definitions, and most of them are not threatening. The primary definitions are "any system or mode of thought in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate"; or "a devotion to or study of the humanities."

Humanism as a word with positive instead of negative connotations is further enhanced by the fact that, in the dictionary, the sequence of words is humanism, humanist, humanitarian, humanitarianism, humanity, humanities, humanize, and humankind.

So, religious parents found it very difficult to get anyone motivated to oppose the "danger" of Humanism. The typical reaction of the average citizen was that "Humanism" probably doesn't exist, and if it does it isn't a "religion," and in any event it certainly is not something that public school children or parents need worry about.

The claim that Humanism is a religion was alleged to be a hallucination of the imagination of fundamentalists. It was suggested that the only people who believe that Humanism is a "religion" taught in public schools must be the kind of "primitive" who would believe that the earth was created instead of that it evolved.

Referring back to earlier Webster's dictionaries, however, one finds this accurate definition of Humanism: "a contemporary cult or belief calling itself religious but

substituting faith in man for faith in God." Somehow, in later editions of dictionaries, that precise definition has been dropped. But meanwhile the cult expanded its influence.

The house organ of the religion of Humanism is a magazine called The Humanist. It recently conducted an essay contest and published the prize-winning essays in its January/February 1983 issue. One of them, called "A Religion for a New Age" by John J. Dunphy, is startling in its frankness. It lays all the Humanist cards on the table. Here are some direct quotations from this anti-Christian diatribe.

"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.

"The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new -- the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of Humanism, resplendent in its promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian idea of 'love thy neighbor' will finally be achieved."

So there you have it. To paraphrase a famous line, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Humanist religion, after all. Yes, Virginia, Humanist preachers are teaching their religion in the public schools." And it is more aptly called "Secular Humanism" because it has substituted faith in man for faith in God.

Every time a teacher rejects or refuses to recognize God's moral law as codified in the Ten Commandments, and tells the child that we cannot or should not be judgmental about stealing, lying, killing, maiming, blaspheming, fornicating, or coveting, that teacher is teaching the religion of Humanism. Every time a teacher rejects or ridicules the notion that God created man and the earth, that teacher is teaching the religion of Humanism.

It's time to expose the hypocrisy of those who have so dogmatically chased God and the Bible out of the public schools in the name of freedom of religion, and then forced their own Humanist religion on the children instead.