

## **The St. Peter Option: To Everyone an Answer**

### **Living as Exiles in a Foreign Land**

1 Peter, 2 Peter, Christian Vocation, and the Table of Duties

## **13 Humanism VS. Faith in the Holy Trinity**

**Introduction**—What if you could have moral, ethical, human behavior, that treated its fellow man with respect and dignity, that helped others, was well-educated and promoted science, freedom, and the betterment of human life without belief in a god? You would have humanism. This “Jeffersonian Belief”—Give me the Sermon on the Mount without God and the supernatural. The Golden Rule.

Humanism appeals to the cultured, well-educated, respectful agnostic or atheist (he is not radical, nor does he believe that the extreme ideologies of our culture are helpful and good for society, yet he lacks the spiritual fortitude to resist it.

### **What is humanism?**

- **Classical humanism** is concerned with universal human values, potential and worth. It is concerned with the needs and welfare of humanity. It emphasizes the significance of the individual. It sees human beings as autonomous, rational, moral agents. Classical humanism, which is associated with the Renaissance, emphasized beauty, aesthetics, freedom, logic, reason, and the study of the humanities (ancient literature, art, philosophy, and the classical languages of Greek and Latin).
- **Christian humanism** is the union of Christianity and classical humanism. Classical humanists studied Greek and Latin writings, Christian humanists study Hebrew and biblical Greek, along with the writings of the church fathers. Like classical humanism, Christian humanism pursues reason, free inquiry, the separation of church and state, and the ideal of freedom. Christian humanism is rooted in Scholasticism, the dominant Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Scholasticism was a system of logic, metaphysics. It was intellectualistic and grounded in Aristotelian thought. Notable Scholastics in the Church were Albertus Magnus, Dun Scotus, and especially Thomas Aquinas. At Luther’s time Erasmus was the foremost Scholastic who ascribed certain freedoms to the human will in spiritual and moral matters (Pelagianism or semi-pelagian). Luther wrote his famous treatise, the Bondage of the Will, against Erasmus.
- **Secular humanism** is a term coined by Christians to describe the idea that one could retain certain “Christian values” without the dogma and supernatural content of the Christian faith. By the 1960’s the term had been embraced by humanists who considered themselves secular. Today, the term “secular” is largely dropped, and the term “humanism” applies to the beliefs of people who simply want to be good, well-educated, moral, ethical people who are concerned about their fellowman without the baggage of religion and a specific belief in a personal transcendent God.

#### **Key points to secular humanism:**

1. Secular humanism is rooted in agnosticism or atheism.
2. Humanism is a man-centered ethical system

3. The fundamental aspects of modern humanism:
  - Ethical
  - Rational
  - Supports democracy and human rights
  - Personal liberty combined with social responsibility
  - Values artistic creativity, imagination, and the power of art to move people
  - Desires to achieve human fulfillment by cultivating ethical and creative living to address the problems of our times.
4. “The Happy Human” – in 1965, the British Humanist Association in the UK held a design competition for a logo to capture modern humanism. The winner was “the Happy Man” but later renamed the “Happy Human”
5. Humanists deny that humanism is a religion, but in 2014 a federal district court held that “Secular Humanism is a religion for Establishment Clause purposes.” In 1961 decision *Torcaso v. Watkins*, the court stated that The Establishment Clause prevents government from aiding “those religions founded on different beliefs.” In a footnote of that decision, the court clarified that this principle extended to “religions in this country which do not teach what would be considered a belief in the existence of God...Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism, and others.”
6. Humanist Chaplains have been employed on major universities such as Harvard, MIT, Columbia, New York University, Rutgers, Stanford, and the University of Central Florida.

### **Faith in the Holy Trinity—What does this mean for us as Christians?**

1. The problem of sin, as God defines it, cuts across the claims of humanism and shows us to be in need of redemption. The goals of humanism to create a good, better, and prosperous life for all humanity have never been close to being realized.
2. The ideal of love is not found in man, but in the self-giving love of the Holy Trinity.
3. Fulfillment, meaning, and the purpose of life comes from dependance upon God, the Holy Trinity, as confessed in the Creed (See the Small Catechism’s Explanations)

### **Peter’s encouragement to live in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord: 2 Peter 1:2-4**

1. That God is Creator, over us, the source of life, and all things, and that we, as Creatures are dependent upon Him the divine life and love of the Holy Trinity that is communicated to us know through the promises of God in Christ whereby, we become partakers of the Divine Nature.
2. That the Holy Trinity is the source of objective truth and moral goodness and virtue.
3. Humanism does not know the forgiveness of sins, what that means, and how it is at the center of our lives as Christians in the way in which we live with one another and interact with the world around us. (Table of Duties, 1 Peter 2 and 3 material)