

The Rise of Humanism

By Margaret McIntyre

Europe in the 15th and 16th Centuries

Most scientists and inventors of the 15th and 16th centuries honoured the God of the Bible and gave glory to Him. Some of these were: Galileo who invented the telescope and proved that the Earth orbits the Sun; Kepler who discovered the orbit of Mars; Harvey, who discovered the motion of the heart and blood in animals; Halley, who studied comets and Newton who discovered the composition of white light and laws of motion, the basic principles of modern physics.

Europe in the 17th and 18th Centuries

But a change was coming. This was the “Enlightenment” of the 17th and 18th centuries. Now man’s greatness was glorified and God was no longer acknowledged. Voltaire, a French philosopher help up a Bible and said, “In 100 years from now this will be a forgotten book”. But 100 years forward, to the very day, the Bible Society opened up their work on the premises.

France became entrenched in humanistic thinking. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Huguenots found true Christianity. They were French Protestants who followed the teachings of theologian John Calvin. But they were persecuted by the French Catholic government. Those who were not killed fled the country, creating Huguenot settlements all over Europe, in the United States and Africa. This was a loss to France which did not see another move of God.

Educational influences of the 19th and 20th Centuries

John Dewey, of the 19th and 20th centuries, was an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer whose humanistic ideas became influential in education and social reform. (He was *not* the Dewey who invented the library referencing system.) John Dewey was a major voice of progressive education and liberalism. This was the idea that there should be no rules in education. Rules and formalities should be forgotten. Spelling and Times Tables should be caught and not taught. His writings influenced teacher training colleges from the 1940s onward. In the 60s we saw the results. Students taught in this way became rebellious at university level, something not seen before.

Then came Skinner, (early 20th Century), an American psychologist, behaviorist, author, inventor, and social philosopher. He was a professor of psychology who founded the experimental analysis of behavior, using operant conditioning, a method of controlling behaviour through rewards and punishments for behaviour. He used his daughter for his experiment, and as a result, she spent the rest of her life in a mental institution.

The above shows us the results of a humanistic foundation. God wants a different foundation. He wants us to change the way we teach so that children are brought into a knowledge of God.

Often, where religion find a place in education, it is pigeon-holed into a corner. "It must not influence anything else!" But God wants His knowledge to influence all areas of learning.