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Christianity and Culture: Recovering Christian  
Humanism in the 21st Century, 12:00 pm  
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### **Human Flourishing without Christian Humanism is Doomed for Failure**

Christian Humanism, rooted in the Incarnation, serves as a robust foundation for human flourishing, while simultaneously offering salvation for all who accept it. Humanity can only flourish through the love of God, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Without Christ and the Incarnation, what is there? Man? Earthly pleasure? No, the only things there are death, corruption, temporary contentment and pleasure, loss of identity, and evilness. Christ is all, and in all is Christ, without the continual care and love for us by God, humanity cannot flourish, progress forward, or achieve any meaning. This essay will make the following arguments; First, it will explain what human flourishing is. While a hard question, Jens Zimmermann speaks to this, simply stating that human flourishing requires religion. Second, how can Christian Humanism be a foundation for human flourishing? And third, why cannot other humanisms also be a foundation?

First, what is Human Flourishing? This is undoubtedly a hard question, but a simple answer is to live for Christ, to give him glory to the ends of the earth, that one may be blessed. Humanity cannot flourish without Christ, and Christian Humanism gives a path to achieve this as best as fallen men can. Unfortunately, in this postmodern culture, religion has been stripped from most aspects of life, leaving man with an identity crisis, unable to define what human flourishing really is.

Unless we know who we are and what we live for as human beings, how can we define the purpose of education, of justice, of politics, of science, or even of business? These disciplines are meant to aid human flourishing, but what does it mean to flourish? How can we define what it means to be fully human and expend energy toward constructing a culture that approximates this ideal unless we know what being human means? One dominant factor in the forgetfulness of our religious roots was the exclusion of religion from public institutions. This exclusion in turn based on certain philosophical assumptions about the nature of reason. (Jens Zimmerman, 2009, 31).

When the culture ultimately excluded religion—specifically Christianity—from institutions and other aspects of life, Christ was taken out of the picture. When they excluded religion, specifically Christianity, from institutions and other aspects of life, they removed Christ from the picture. As a result, the devil stepped in, corrupting the youth and gradually taking over the culture. But then Christ came, bringing salvation and crushing the devil. This human flourishing is reliant on Christ and his loving act on the cross some two thousand years ago. For the culture to flourish, Christ must once again become the big picture. For the progression of humanity and a culture of men and women who fear God, Christian Humanism and Christianity are the key to fulfillment of this vast task.

Secondly, how is Christian Humanism a sufficient and reasonable foundation for human flourishing? Christian Humanism, whether the culture recognizes it or not, is the very root of the culture. It might not appear that way, but the philosophy of the postmodern culture was derived from the Christian worldview.

My point, rather, is to show that neither Plato Nor Aristotle, for all their influence on intellectual history, ultimately shaped the anthropology underlying Western culture, but rather that a specific Christian vision of human nature provided this foundation and this significantly shaped our cultural horizon. We have to recognize that the religious roots that shaped our basic view of human nature

and of Western culture derive from a particular religion tradition. Convinced that all religious traditions roughly say the same thing and are mostly mythological anyway, many no longer look deeply into their own particular religious roots. (Jens Zimmerman 2009, 23).

While Plato and Aristotle had influence on secularism, Christianity was the prominent religion that the anti-humanist would have been familiar with, often using Christianity as a starting point or flat out rejecting everything. Culture's ideas and vision of humanity did not come from man's own thought like secularist want, but from a "Christian vision of human nature" and has shaped our view and culture. Just because the culture and institutions try to remove religion from education, the workplace, and more, does not mean that Christianity and Christian Humanism can provide a foundation for our flourishing, but that the culture does not want it.

Christian Humanism provides a foundation for human flourishing because it is fundamental to humanity in general, "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). Christ is the cornerstone, the foundation, the one to save us all. Through him, all can be done. Humanity, in their fallen nature, needs a goal to flourish well. Christ gave us that goal when he came and became man, so that we could become like him.

I have argued that patristic incarnating anthropology, together with its concept of deification, that God became man so that man could become like God, provides the foundation for the educational idea of character formation in Western culture. Taking up the Platonic ontology of participation, the Christian humanistic ethos was essentially built on the idea of "faith seeking understanding." And even while this attitude gave precedence to divine revelation and theology, it nonetheless unified every are of human knowing under the umbrella of intelligible cosmos within which human nature has a supernatural destiny of communion with God, as evidence by this

very nature as rational creatures made in the image of God. (Jens Zimmermann 2009, 145).

Christians participate in worship, and communion, and community with God together, allowing for the flourishing of the church and the people in it. Humans are to participate in the communion with God, as man was created in his image so that they could worship him. While Christians are in this Divine communion or friendship with God, they are also in community with each other, humans are beings of community and do better together. Take, for example, the tower of Babel. Man, all, had one goal: to build a tower to reach the heavens. If God had not intervened, there was no telling what man could have accomplished. Man works better together, and Christian Humanism gives the world a foundation to regain this lost attitude towards one another, a foundation to rebuild upon.

Thirdly, why cannot other humanisms also provide a foundation? Simply put, they do not have Christ. Even secularists have called for a return of religion to all aspects of life, because they saw that it was beneficial for a healthy society. Nicolas Sarkozy “insists on religion as an intrinsic part of the state because only religion provides citizens with the transcendence and hope essential for any healthier society” (Jens Zimmermann 2009, 44). Religion is a requirement for the flourishing of mankind, and the progression of society. Education minister of France Luc Ferry “calls for a religiously inspired “transcendental” humanism that draws on the Christian idea of imago Dei to introduce a spiritual dimension into secular humanism” (Jens Zimmermann 2009, 44). After years of secularism and the degrading culture, some start to realize that Christianity provides things that no other religion, or humanism, or way of life can. It provides Christ, the Incarnation, a transcendent God. Christian Humanism is the only Humanism—from the list provide on page thirty-one in *Readings in Christian Humanism*—that has religion and provides substantial material and writings to build a better culture on a firm foundation.

Christian Humanism is the key to a better culture, a better society where men and women fear the Lord, a better place to raise the youth, better schools to teach the youth. Without a firm foundation, the culture is like the man who builds his house on the sand. It is fragile and the smallest of trials will destroy it. A good culture must be built on the rock of the firm foundation of Christ, or it will fail and leave those within in chaos and disarray. Christian Humanism provides the foundation upon which humanity can flourish in the presence of God, till the new creation, where all the worries of this Earth will be washed away. Through the Incarnation, Christ gives a foundation that when used will build a culture and society that will not fail with the largest of trials, or the toughest of times, but will push through to the end.