

2. An analysis of the document

For the purpose of facility in comparing and correlating text and comments, the full text of Humanist Manifesto I is repeated, with the comments following paragraph breaks.

HUMANIST MANIFESTO I

The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of a candid and explicit humanism. In order that religious humanism may be better understood we, The undersigned, desire to make certain affirmations which we believe the facts of our contemporary life demonstrate.

(Note that science in its modern form has both disrupted the old beliefs and given impetus to a movement toward new beliefs. Note also that humanism is here spoken of as "religious humanism")

There is a great danger of a final, and we believe fatal, identification of the word religion with doctrines and methods which have lost their significance and which are powerless to solve the problem of human living in the Twentieth Century. Religions have always been means for realizing the highest values of life. Their end has been accomplished through the interpretation of the total environing situation (theology or world view), the sense of values resulting therefrom (goal or ideal), and the technique (cult) established for realizing the satisfactory life. A change in any of these factors results in alteration of the outward forms of religion. This fact explains the changefulness of religions through the centuries. But through all changes religion itself remains constant in its quest for abiding values, an inseparable feature of human life.

(Note that religions change; religion remains constant. Note also the need for divorcing religion from religions.)

Today man's larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and his deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion. Such a vital, fearless, and frank religion capable of furnishing adequate social goals and personal satisfactions may appear to many people as a complete break with the past. While this age does owe a vast debt to traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation. We therefore affirm the following:

(Note that all traditional religions must be discarded as inadequate to meet contemporary needs, and a new religion be established. Humanism is presented as that religion.)

First, Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.

(This means that the universe has always existed, never had a beginning, and exists from itself, by its own inherent force)