



What Is Christian Humanism? *Recovering a Human Society*

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Jens Zimmermann (PhD, University of British Columbia; PhD, Johannes Gutenberg University) is the J. I. Packer Chair of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver and has published widely in philosophy and theology. His books include *Incarnational Humanism*, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction*, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian Humanism*, *Human Flourishing in a Technological World*, and the coedited *Oxford Handbook of Theological Anthropology* (forthcoming).

The Importance of Humanism for the Christian Life

What led to your interest in writing a book on Christian humanism?

Jens Zimmerman: To promote a holistic view of reality to Christians (and non-Christians) in which all areas of human activity, including our relation to creation, are interconnected in Christ. Our current understanding of nature and human nature has been flattened beyond recognition because we no longer allow for a cosmic order to which human knowing and doing have to conform. This flattening is evident in particular in the loss of understanding ourselves as persons made in God's image.

What is your main thesis in *What Is Christian Humanism*?

Zimmerman: My thesis is that many of our current social and environmental issues are best addressed through a recovery of Christian humanism. In contrast to much modern thinking, especially eco-theology, we will not improve our situation by diminishing human nature but by recognizing its uniqueness as made in God's image. Human beings are persons made in Christ's image designed to humanize the earth. Tending the earth and uniting humanity is our responsibility, and God's becoming human in Christ (the incarnation) has shown the path we are to take.

Who did you have in mind as you were writing this book?

Zimmerman: Mostly Christians who are looking for a biblical interpretive frame to live holistically and engage current issues. My hope is that this book will also serve non-Christians interested in religious humanism. I wrote this with a first-semester university student in mind, but hope that the relatively jargon-free language, while not "unacademic" will appeal to a broader than merely academic audience.

What do you hope your book contributes to the study of Christian humanism?

Zimmerman:

1. It shows that Christianity (the gospel) is fundamentally a humanism.
2. It shows the importance of this humanism for central areas of human activity (i.e. education, human knowledge, ethics, the arts, technology etc.).
3. It argues for the crucial role of metaphysics/frames of reference (i.e. a Christ-centered, Trinitarian interpretive frame) for interpreting and engaging the world.



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