

Mightier Than The Sword (Part Thirteen)

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To this point in this series on philosophers, we have touched on those who have greatly influenced the lives of the citizens of England and France. We will soon touch on at least one German. However, we aren't finished yet with the American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Emerson's claim to influential fame might seem to begin an end as being the founder of Transcendentalism. However, Transcendentalism, as an organized institution, was brief. It never attracted large numbers of adherents to conform to its doctrines. And yet Emerson is widely recognized as a leading voice of the intellectual culture in the United States. One biography termed him as *the* leading voice among American philosophers. How can this be when so few are even aware of his profound influence on the American culture?

Recall that I said to you in a couple of these commentaries that a philosopher's influence of a culture seems directly tied to *whom* he influenced, not necessarily to how many, even in his own lifetime. In Emerson's case, both factors are directly and tightly linked.

You might recall I mentioned to you that Jean Jacque Rousseau's philosophies seemed to attract the attention of revolutionary personalities interested in overthrowing the order of things within their culture. His philosophies seemed to charge them with reason to proceed with overthrowing.

In last week's commentary, I quoted author Jeremy Bradley, who stated that Emerson's ideas regarding natural law continues to actively influence jurisprudential philosophy in the 21st century. This is 200 years after he lived. "Jurisprudential" is defined as the philosophy or science of law and its administration. Thus, this impacts on the making of laws and the defining of laws' application, and as such, it impacts on things like judicial decision,

court cases, and human behavior. In addition to this, Emerson's ideas impacted heavily on religion, and thus, the way of life here in the United States

The impact in these areas was not immediate but its intensity gradually increased, and I estimate that it thoroughly dominates America today. What sustained its continued success? It was who first accepted it and continued keeping it alive to this day.

Recall again where this concept had its greatest early success: It was in the area of Boston, the home of Harvard University and not far off is Yale. From those two leading universities it spread to other Ivy League schools and to most of the other universities in the East especially. His concepts found a home in the very places that are supposed to labor to produce the political, corporate, professional and religious leadership for this nation. The universities are what has kept his anti-God ideas going and growing in ever increasing intensity.

Novelists like Herman Melville, poets such as Walt Whitman and Robert Frost, and other philosophers like Henry David Thoreau picked up on his theme and spread the concepts every more widely in their works. Melville refers to Emerson as a great man. American literary critic Harold Bloom calls Emerson the prophet of the American religion. Notice: it's the *American* religion. Bloom points out that liberal, mainline Protestant Churches, as well as Mormonism and the Christian Science religion, all owe a great deal to the ideas of Emerson. However, the whole truth is that by the 1830s, Emerson himself had abandoned any remaining semblance of the Unitarianism and other aspects of Christianity he was raised in, as his writing reveals.

Incredibly, Harvard College Divinity School would occasionally invite Emerson to speak about his pantheistic ideas to the student body. What was his usual subject? He preached to America's future religious leaders about the "god" in all of us. We just heard a sermonette about that very subject—about the "god" in all of us ["Israel, Selfies, and Idolatry"].

In 1866, Harvard awarded him a doctorate degree, for which he didn't work, and the alumni elected him to their Board of Overseers. This was a university that began as a Christian college. Under the influence of the

leadership of Emerson and those other well thought of followers of his, Christianity steadily declined in influence.

When this nation began, though its dominant religion was in no way pure Christianity, there was overwhelming respect for the Christian base that was the dominant religion, in both the founding governmental structure and the citizenry.

The United States of America has clearly followed the path God's revelation in Ezekiel 16 sickeningly shows of how Israel pursued after the gods of the gentile nations. Emerson and those who accepted his concepts clearly walked that same path.

Christmas, Easter, Halloween and an entire additional host of pagan beliefs and practices are woven into the fabric of what American Christianity believes and practices. Emerson added paganism from Buddhism and Hinduism from which the New Age religions in America are derived.

Listen careful to this: Eastern philosophy (meaning, from India, China, Japan) reduces all of human knowledge to nothingness by obliterating all distinctions with its conception that the entire creation is one. In other words, in the universe there are no individual parts. Transcendentalism included this stupid thought.

By way of contrast, God, in His word, makes a clear distinction between Himself and what He created. "*I am God, not what I created.*" He also makes a clear distinction between the individuals He created and gave life to. Everybody, God says, has free moral agency. They operate independently of others.

The most tragic result of Emerson's efforts has been the destruction of the foundation of what this nation believed in its beginning. It has taken a fairly long time for this to occur, but his efforts delivered a decisive blow because the universities were attracted to his ideas and they passed them on to their students.

The central issue in Emerson's way of life teaching is what he called "self-reliance." Which is nothing more than trusting one's self. The only god they must please is the one Emerson taught is already in them at birth.

The result has been the religion that now dominates American life. We call it humanism. His idea regarding the god in us is what dominates humanism. Humanism allows all its members to believe whatever they desire, and the only god they must please is the one Emerson taught is already in them at birth.