

T H E  
RENAISSANCE

## I. The Art of the Renaissance Is One of Mankind's Glories

- A. The artists reflect their culture.
- B. The artists often provide the way for the next step in culture.
  - 1. Positive emphasis on nature in Giotto's art.
  - 2. Significance of work of Masaccio.
  - 3. Perspective as a form of humanism.
  - 4. Parallel and supportive developments in Low Countries. Van Eyck's *Adoration of the Lamb*, the substitutionary work of the crucified and risen Christ. Also an example of landscape naturalism.
  - 5. Dante's life and work.
    - a) Following Aquinas, he mixed Christian and classical elements.
    - b) Dichotomy in Dante and other writers between sensual and idealized, spiritual love.
  - 6. Brunelleschi's architecture and the conquest of space.
  - 7. Trend to autobiography and self-portraiture a mark of emphasis on Man.
- C. Italian Renaissance music.
  - 1. Invention of orchestration.
  - 2. Invention of movable type for music.

## II. Increased Drift Toward a Total Humanism

- A. Could have gone either way—with emphasis on real people living in a real world which God had made, or humanism could take over with its emphasis on the individual things being autonomous.
- B. The die was cast: Man tried to make himself independent, autonomous.
- C. A growing humanism sees what preceded the Renaissance as the “Dark Ages.”
- D. Idea of a “Dark Age” and a “rebirth” in Renaissance.
- E. Aquinas had opened the door for that which is the problem of humanism.
  - 1. Illustrated by Raphael's fresco in the Vatican: *The School of Athens*.
  - 2. Humanism's problem: What is the meaning of individual things, including Man, if there is no final thing to relate them to? And how do we know what is right or wrong if there is no absolute to give us certainty? Humanism ends with only statistical averages.

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- F. Fouquet's *Red Virgin* as an example.
    - 1. At first, only religious values seemed threatened.
    - 2. But gradually the threat spread to all of knowledge and all of life.
  - G. Man as hero: Michelangelo's *Prisoners* and *David*. Change in his later work, however.
  - H. Leonardo da Vinci and the dilemma of humanism.
    - 1. Logical conclusion of humanism as perceived by Leonardo.
    - 2. Final pessimism of Leonardo an expression of inevitable progression of humanism towards pessimism.

### III. Christianity's Answer to Humanism's Problem

#### Questions

- 1. In what ways is this treatment of the Renaissance different from other treatments with which you are familiar?
- 2. Attitudes toward nature and Man seem to be crucial to understanding the Renaissance. How far were these attitudes Christian and how far non-Christian?
- 3. Can you see any parallels between the evolution of humanism in the Renaissance—from hopeful dawn to ominous sunset—and the changing outlook on human and world problems during your own lifetime?

#### Key Events and Persons

Dante: 1265-1321

The Divine Comedy: 1300-1321

Giotto: c. 1267-1337

Brunelleschi: 1377-1446

Jan van Eyck: 1380-1441

Masaccio: 1401-1428

Fouquet: 1416-1480

Duomo, Cathedral of Florence: 1434

Leonardo da Vinci: 1452-1519

Michelangelo: 1475-1564

Michelangelo's *David*: 1504

Francis I of France: 1494-1547

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## Further Study

There are so many good picture books of Renaissance art and architecture that, rather than try to select one or two, I will simply urge the importance of consulting some. With profit, one might also listen to Renaissance music, such as the selection in *The Seraphim Guide to Renaissance Music*.

J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 2 vols. (1958).

Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography* (1966).

E. Gorin, *Italian Humanism* (1966).

E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (1962).

Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 4 vols. (1963).

W.H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators* (1963).