

secular HUMANISM

Handout for Lesson 15 of *Thought Provoking Questions*

WHAT IS SECULAR HUMANISM?

When the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras wrote, “Man is the measure of all things, of things that are, that they are, and things that are not, that they are not,” he was attempting to state his conviction that truth is relative.

1. Neutral definitions of humanism establish that humanism is not necessarily anti-God. This is well and good, but what we are seeking is a definition of the worldview known as Secular Humanism.
2. Secular humanism holds that man is the standard by which all of life is measured and judged; values, law, justice, good, beauty, and right or wrong are all to be judged by man-made rules with no credence to either God or the Bible.
3. The Dictionary of Philosophy defines philosophical humanism as “[a] philosophy that (a) regards the rational individual as the highest value; (b) considers the individual to be the ultimate source of value; and (c) is dedicated to fostering the individual’s creative and moral development in a meaningful and rational way without reference to concepts of the supernatural.”

CHARACTERISTICS OF SECULAR HUMANISM

Secular humanism is a collection of ideas that bind together into a coherent system.

- » First, Secular Humanism is a worldview.
- » Second, Secular Humanism is a religious worldview.

TENETS OF SECULAR HUMANISM

Theologically, Secular Humanists are atheists.

Philosophically, Secular Humanists are naturalists. Secular Humanist beliefs in the area of biology are closely tied to both their atheistic theology and their naturalist philosophy. If there is no supernatural, then life, including human life, must be the result of a purely natural phenomenon.

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Atheism leads most Secular Humanists to adopt ethical relativism — the belief that no absolute moral code exists, and there-

fore man must adjust his ethical standards in each situation according to his own judgment.

Humanists have a bible — Humanist Manifesto I of 1933 and Humanist Manifesto II of 1973; these documents may be summarized by a few basic areas insofar as they relate to Christians.

- » A world without God
- » A world of evolved animals.
- » A world where everything is permitted.
- » A world of self-centered humans.
- » A world with one government.

WHAT IS THE EFFECT ON SOCIETY?

There is an intuitive sense of foreboding that the fabric of our society is in danger of unraveling.

Despite the strong economic cords binding us together, despite the growing pervasiveness of government in society, despite the extensive legal protections we enjoy, our society is more fragile than ever.

- » It is endangered institutionally.
- » It is endangered culturally.
- » It is endangered morally.

HOW FARES THE “CHURCH”?

The church has been invaded by materialism.

- » We have determined that a thing is of little worth unless we can wear it on our back, eat it off the table, drive it down the street, or jingle it in our pocket.
- » We spend money we don’t have buying things we don’t need to keep up with people we don’t like.
- » This leaves little room for “treasures in heaven.”

The church has changed its teaching in some instances.

- » Secular theologians have come to the conclusion that the traditional orthodox understanding of scripture is no longer helpful; they have sought to reshape the gospel to fit the sinner instead of changing the sinner according to the gospel.
- » The major problem with secular the-

ology is its defective view of God.

- » Secular theology’s view of Christ is equally flawed.

HOW FARES THE LORD’S CHURCH?

First, recognize that secular humanists don’t mind Christians believing what they wish to believe as long as they keep it to themselves and out of the public square.

Many Christians have adopted the fact/value, public/private dichotomy, restricting their faith to the religious sphere while adopting whatever views are current in their professional or social circles. In effect, there is no longer a Christian mindset in understanding and defining reality.

Thinking “Christianly” means understanding that Christianity gives the truth about the whole of reality, a perspective for interpreting every subject matter.

Christianity serves two functions – it is a message of personal salvation telling us how to be reconciled to the God from whom our sin has separated us, and it is a lens for interpreting the world.

Many no longer think it is even the function of the church to provide an interpretation of the world, resulting in a church that has been boxed into the private sphere and has largely stopped speaking to the public square.

It is no wonder that people say religion is irrelevant when the result of this “great gulf” is that Christianity has nothing to say as to 90% of our life.

CONCLUSION

If we find ourselves thinking that we can do the Lord’s work in the world’s way, as though worldly weapons were adequate, then we have drastically underestimated the nature of the battle.

The opposite is likewise true: If Christians use the weapons God has ordained — and if we lay our talents at his feet, dying to our pride and ambitions, obeying Biblical moral principles, guided by a Christian worldview perspective — then even if by external standards we seem to have lost, we have really won.

Christian life really begins when we understand that “apart from me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)