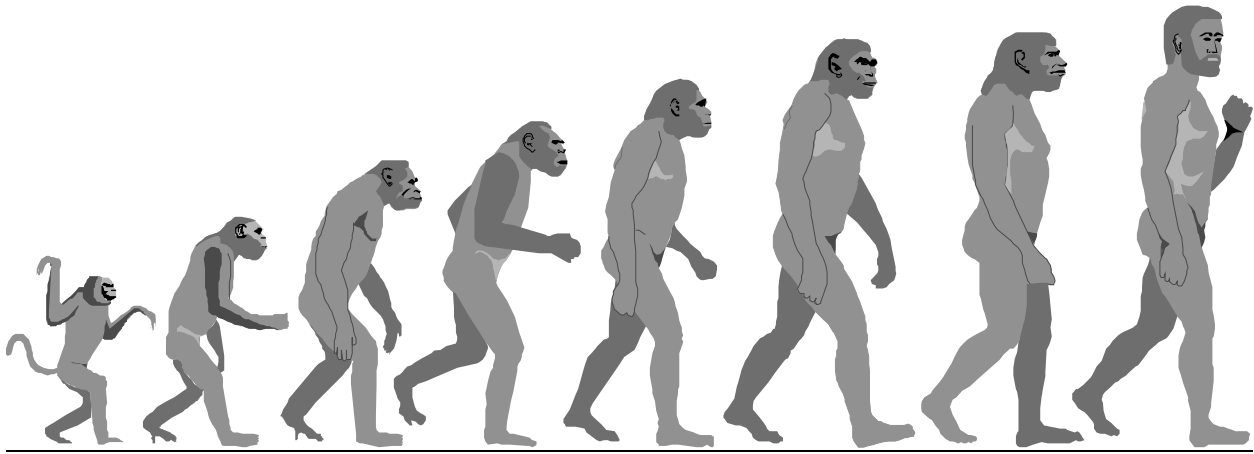


Christian Outreach and World Religions Secularism



Secularism Among the Nations

1. Approximately 20% of the world's population is non-religious.
2. Three types of non-religious people: Atheist-there is sufficient evidence to show that God does not exist. Agnostic-there is insufficient evidence to show whether God exists or not. Functional Atheist-one who is apathetic concerning God's existence.

Rise of Secularism

1. Gutenberg's printing press opens the opportunity for study of ideas. Positive Effect: The Reformation. Negative Effect: Renaissance (means "new birth") and its role in developing humanism.
2. Empirical Science replaces deductive (rationalizing from basic principles) approach to learning. Nicholas Copernicus (1543), Johannes Kepler (1630), Galileo (1642). Rene Descarte (1650) "I think, therefore I am."
3. Enlightenment. The discovery of universal laws (Bacon (1626), Boyle (1692), Newton (1727) seems to support the analogy that the universe is like a machine. Philosophers challenge the Christian worldview, Hobbes (1679) materialism, Hume (1776) denied miracles, Kant (1804) emphasized the power of the intellect. Despite all these changes Christianity remained virtually unseated.
4. The Theory of Evolution was the rivulet that burst the dam. Darwin (1882) *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. Darwin seemed to be able to explain the origin of a universe without God.

Basic Beliefs of Secularism

1. The Denial of God: Matter is all that exists. God is a projection of man's thoughts and desires.
2. Denial of Miracles: All things operate according to universal laws.
3. The Fact of Evolution: Among top evolutionary scientists evolutions is described as "the best explanation." However this is the result of #s 1 & 2 above.
4. Potential of Humanity: Dependence upon God is viewed as a way of diverting attention from dependence on human beings to solve problems.
5. Centrality of Empirical Science: There have always been at least three ways of understanding (revelation, deduction, observation). Each way works better depending on the questions we ask. How does empirical science answer the question "what is love?"
6. Stress on Relativity: Secularists deny any absolute moral reference point. Humanity is by nature good. All that is needed is to realize that innate goodness.
7. Finality of Death: Secularists deny any afterlife

Suggestions for Evangelism

1. What kind of God have they rejected. Ask the secularist of their understanding of God. They are often very uninformed and have a very limited understanding of God.
2. Offer Evidence for God's Existence: (Things to think about)
 - A. The Second Law of Thermal Dynamics: The total amount of energy in the universe remains constant (first law). The availability of usable energy is constantly decreasing (second law). The universe is like a cooling cup of hot tea. This implies that someone heated it up in the first place. Pour salt and pepper into a clear container. Begin shaking it, and let the salt and pepper mix. Random processes do not produce patterns.
 - B. Presence of Design: The watchmaker analogy - a watch assumes a watchmaker. The intricate designs of nature assume a Designer.
 - C. Conscience: Feelings of guilt and right & wrong give evidence of our moral nature. How does one explain the idea of "fairness." Do we teach children that if one child is given one cookie and other is given three cookies that this is not fair?
 - D. The Longing for Something Beyond: Bertrand Russell—"It is odd, isn't it? I care passionately for this world and many things and people in it, and yet... what is it all? There must be something more important, one feels, though I don't believe there is" (Heck, 224).

Responding to Objections

1. The Problem of Evil: (1) The "problem" assumes a standard of "goodness." This leads to some absolute truth. (2) Consider the source of evil. The materialist can't be upset by natural disasters. The true materialist can't even admit to a "problem of evil." Other forms of evil that seem to stem from humans have to do with personal choice. God allows people to choose evil. People often assume that God has not done or is not doing anything about evil in the world. Find something they are working on. If it is not finished, does that mean it will never be finished? God is still working for salvation and the final separation of evil from the holy. This is judgment day.
2. Those Who Have Never Heard: Secularists might complain that God is unjust to condemn those who have never heard. Is God unjust?

God is just: Psalm 8.1,3; 19.1-4; Romans 1.19-20; 2.14-15; Isaiah 40.12-14, 26; Acts 14.15-17; 17:24-25.

God Draws Near to Those Who Draw Near to Him: James 4.8

Any system of justice other than that which God has established (based on faith) can be shown to be unjust. If God were to save on the basis of a good life, we could then ask, "How good a life are we talking about?" It is fair to save one who led a fairly decent life but lived in an affluent country like the USA. Would it be fair to condemn someone who stole from others because they were hungry? We cannot presume to be better judges than God.

3. The Bible Can't Be Believed: Ask them to read the Bible. Offer them a small portion such as the Gospel of Mark or John. Ask them to write down their objections. For more information on the reliability of the Bible see Josh McDowell's Evidence that Demands a Verdict or, Ray Stedmann's The Case for Christ.
4. Evolution Sufficiently Explains the Origins of the Universe:
 - A. How come the fossil record shows the sudden appearance of complex life forms and a lack of transitional forms?
 - B. How does life come from nonliving matter?

- C. How does complexity arise out of simplicity without the aid of intelligent intervention?
- D. How does the immense amount of information encoded in DNA arise through random chance?
- E. How do mutations help species evolve when almost all are lethal or semi-lethal?
- F. How do species evolve when there is a limited amount of change possible within species?

For more help defending the doctrine of Creation see any of the websites below:

In any of these websites type keywords such as “Age of the Earth” in the search box.)

www.icr.org www.answersingenesis.com www.equip.org

Most of the information for these Bible studies has been drawn from *The Compact Guide to World Religions* by Dean C. Halverson, Bethany House Publishers, 1996.