

Why I am a Christian:

in a scientific, humanistic and atheistic world

Part II: Faith describes the human condition

A. Secular Humanism

What is it? It is a rejection of the **supernatural** and the **spiritual** as a basis for morality, and an embrace of philosophy and **science** as the only means to experience and understand the world

1. In 1980, many prominent humanists created a document outlining the **10 Ideals of Secular Humanism**
 - In the pre-ambule to the document, the authors blame fascism, communism, and every form of totalitarianism on **religion**
2. Humanists claim almost sole responsibility for the advancement in **technology**
 - They dismiss the contributions of faith and religion: any good that religion has done is diminished by the claim that religion has done more **damage** than good
 - They claim that the good done by religion would have been done by humanists anyway.
3. Secular humanists contend that the only way for humanity to survive is for us to reject religion and to abandon the irrational belief in God, and embrace the secular humanistic perspective.

What are the 10 Ideals of Secular Humanism?

1. Free Inquiry (*as opposed to censorship and imposition of belief*)
2. Separation Of Church And State
3. The Ideal Of Freedom (*from religious control and from jingoistic government control*)
4. Ethics Based On Critical Intelligence (*rather than that deduced from religious belief*)
5. Moral Education (*as opposed to religious indoctrination*)
6. Religious Skepticism
7. Reason
8. Science And Technology (*as the best way of understanding and interacting with the world*)
9. Evolution
10. Education (*which is the essential method of building humane, free, and democratic societies*)

B. 2 Main Problems with Secular Humanism

1. Secular Humanism places trust in human intelligence and reason for the future of humanity.
 - a. Humans are not as intelligent as we think, nor have we proven **worthy** of such trust.

"Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe."
Albert Einstein

 - Einstein, who rejected the concept of a personal God, also rejected humans as an answer to the world's problems.
 - Secular humanists have not been as successful or helpful to the world as they would like to believe: most every "success" has had **destructive** consequences that often outweigh the benefits achieved, whether intended or not (*this is similar to the argument that secular humanists make of religion and people of faith.*)
 - Einstein acknowledged the human need for the mystical and transcendent as necessary to create humility and to understand our place in the universe

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed." Albert Einstein

- b. This hubris of humanism created the circumstances for most of the destruction of the 20th Century
- 1) Our trust in humanism and science...
 - Split the atom... but created the **nuclear bomb**
 - Created **internationalism**... but is destroying local culture and has led to THREE major world-wide economic collapses since 1929
 - Introduced science, secularism and atheism to political systems... which has resulted in 2 **World Wars**; has powered Asian, European, Central and S. American communist revolutions which have murdered hundreds of millions and oppressed billions; has increased the power of the state at the expense of the **individual**.
 - 2) Humanism creates the tools and circumstances for totalitarianism and the loss of human freedom
 - a) Secular humanist will deny **culpability** for such destruction
 - b) Secular humanists will claim that this is contrary to their stated **ideals**
 - c) Secular humanists will re-iterate that all of this destruction is the result of **religion**...

“No, really it is... because we say so, and we’re smarter than you... See how we can twist the truth and make the atheistic Stalin and Hitler into leaders of religious movements so that we can maintain our air of superiority to you religious people and never have to take responsibility for any ugliness caused by secular humanists. Gee, aren’t we brilliant. Really we are. You just aren’t smart enough to understand.”

2. Humanism’s Illogic re: totalitarianism

- a. Secular humanists argue that:
 - Religion is, by nature totalitarian, and totalitarianism is, by nature, religious
 - Therefore, every totalitarian political system, movement, or ism is religious
 - Even the good that religion does is nullified by its totalitarian nature
- b. However, totalitarianism is a **political** ideology, not a religious ideology.
 - 1) Secular humanists and the “new” atheists, like Christopher Hitchens, by equating all totalitarianism with religion, demonstrate their lack of historical **perspective**, trading it for a perspective advantageous to their interpretation that religion is inherently immoral (*For those interested in a good book addressing the ignorance of Hitchens’ argument, read Peter Hitchens’ book, “The Rage Against God.” And yes, Peter Hitchens’ is Christopher’s Christian brother, in case you were wondering. Ironic, isn’t it?*)
 - 2) This leap of logic is called **confirmation bias**: we seek out only the information that confirms our biases, and dismiss those which do not; or, we re-interpret information to suit our bias.
 - 3) **The Truth**:
 - Some religions are inherently political, and are totalitarian by nature (*e.g., Islam. However, in all fairness, we may yet see Islam mature and create a non-political, secular construct, as many other faiths and philosophies have been able to do*).
 - Some religions are not inherently political (*e.g.—Buddhism and EARLY Christianity which, may I remind you, for its first 400 years grew without having political power. It can be argued, however, that Christianity was fundamentally transformed by Constantine, and that since 400 AD is an inherently political religion. I would be inclined to cede that argument,*

which is why the church MUST reject the political activism of Christianity and return to our historic political pacifism. The values of Christianity are antithetical to totalitarianism)

- Virtually ALL of the political systems and models of the 20th Century, with exception of right wing Christian Fundamentalism and Islamic Fundamentalism, are secular, humanistic models. These contemporary political systems have almost universally **centralized** political power and **decreased** personal freedom, therefore leading to unprecedented oppression and destruction. This political oppression is NOT religious oppression.

The same concerns that secular humanists have about religion and totalitarianism can be said of secular humanism. Once any ideology achieves critical mass (i.e., a broad base of public acceptance), it acquires enough political power to be oppressive. Even if the use of this power in a totalitarian manner is at odds with the purpose of that ideology, those espousing that ideology are still responsible for the misuse of its ideals, for checking the abuses, and making amends for the damage it causes (*including Christians*).

Violence, oppression and hate are at odds with the message of Christianity, though some Christians hate and kill and oppress. Similarly, some humanists have, for what they think is the greater good, oppressed and murdered. Atheists such as Stalin, Hitler, Pol-Pot, and Mau Tse-Tung have used science and atheism to oppress their populations and political enemies. These were NOT religious movements, but secular humanist movements, despite the absurd Hitchensian philosophical cop-out that some secular humanists use to deny culpability.

I will grant that totalitarianism is antithetical to both Christianity and secular humanism, an acknowledgement that the “new” atheists will never reciprocate because of their atheistic fundamentalism. Therefore, I am responsible to hold Christians accountable and to oppose those who would abuse Christianity. Many secular humanists cannot admit that their belief system can be abused. A humanist who becomes totalitarian was never really a humanist, in their opinion: they were actually “religious” since they used what secular humanists have labeled a religious method, totalitarianism, to accomplish their end. By such a magical, self-congratulatory wave of the hand, secular humanists absolve their accountability for the atheistic tyrants of the 20th Century. In so doing, they become a danger to the survival of humanity. I will not grant their argument that totalitarianism is, by nature, religious. Unless secular humanists acknowledge and embrace their responsibility for the destruction that has been wrought upon the world by their philosophy, they will not be a viable moral option.

This blame game, the unwillingness to take responsibility for one’s own shortcomings as demonstrated by some secular humanists, is not a surprise. It is exactly the nature of broken humanity as indicated in Bible. There is no shortage to the inventiveness of humanity in using power to oppress others; or, to the excuses and failed logic we use to avoid responsibility.

C. The Bible describes the human condition (Genesis 1-3)

1. Humanity is created for three purposes:

- Loving **God**
- Loving **others** (*NOTICE: there is NO distinction, in Genesis 1:26-27 between male and female. BOTH are created in the image of God, and are, therefore, EQUAL partners. This is in contrast to those who claim the Bible is misogynistic. Many of the people of the Bible may be, but God's intention for humanity is not. I cannot express how profound this concept of equality is. Even the Greek philosophy and mythology did not allow for male/female equality*)
- Caring for God's **creation** (*Christians ought to be the biggest advocates of environmentalism. However, remember that our methods should never collude with power*)

2. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is placed in the garden (2:9)

- This is not a children's story about a **stupid** piece of fruit
- The tree represents **maturity** and human fulfillment: one day humanity will be prepared to partake of it. God wants to open the universe to humanity, when we are ready.
- Does this make God a cruel heavenly parent, because God places something so tempting before us? Is a father cruel by parking a 1978 Corvette in the garage? *"Son, one day, you will be mature enough to drive it."*

3. Humanity was **impatient** with God's long-term plan (3:4-5)

a. The fruit is an opportunity to become God, or at least our view of what it means to be God

- We think that to be God means to have the **power** to rule over others: totalitarianism
- Knowledge is the tool that allows us to oppress others
- Totalitarianism is a **HUMAN** problem and desire, not a God problem or desire.
- God uses knowledge to **nurture** relationships and maturity, not for power or control.

b. This desire to be god, a fascist **dictator** of our own little world, is what the Bible calls "sin."

- "sin" is everything that is **selfish** (i.e.—putting ourselves first at another's expense)
- Everything that is **selfish** is sin

4. The beginning of the **blame** game (3:8-13)

- The *man of dust* (**Adahm**) blames *woman*
- *Woman* (**Eve**), blames the serpent
- No one takes responsibility for his or her immoral behavior (remember: it's not about eating a stupid piece of fruit, but striving for knowledge to gain power and leverage over others.)

5. Human relationship with God, others, and the world is **broken**. (3:14-19)

- Humanity is **banned** from the garden: the universe cannot afford a humanity that wants to use knowledge for power, hence the reason for the banishment from the garden
- Despite the evidence of the destruction caused by totalitarianism, humans will STILL try to **dominate** one another (again, that is called sin)
- **Notice:** the nature of the relationship between man and woman changes. This change in this relationship is NOT because God re-orders creation, placing the man over the woman; but, because man wants to dominate, and woman is willing to oblige him. (*remember this every time*)

a woman stays in an abusive relationship). The domination of woman by man is a sin, and is evidence that our relationships are out of sync with God's intended purpose

6. The rest of the Bible is God's story of restoring us to loving **relationship**.

My Opinion: I find it compelling that a story thousands of years of age could so accurately and with such precision describe the way the world is, and prescribe why the world is not as it should be. That "sin", or "immorality", or whatever one wants to label human brokenness, is so accurately, and universally defined in such a simplistic form, I find compelling. Philosophers fill books with their attempts to communicate their reasons for the struggles of the world and to define morality; and, even if they prove to be accurate, these philosophers do nothing but bloviate, obscure, and obfuscate, making philosophical discussion inaccessible and burdensome (though it may build the author's self-image by making them believe in their own superiority, so I guess it has some purpose). The great majority of the world does not have a college degree nor can they follow the arguments of the world's "great" philosophers, but this is not a sign of a lack of intelligence any more than it is a lack of intelligence that most people do not understand the tax codes of the US. That many might find philosophers inaccessible is a criticism of the philosopher, not the ones reading the philosophers. God, however, communicates the yearnings and brokenness of the world in the simplicity of a short story, the sum of which is: *Whenever we strive for power, or act in a manner that is selfish and is at the expense of another, we have sinned or acted immorally.* This is universally applicable and stands the test of time: The destruction of the planet, adultery against my spouse, a lie on my resume, ripping the mp3's from a CD that does not belong to me, using political power to enforce my will, taking the last Twinkie in the bread box that I know belonged to my spouse are all sin and lead to broken relationship. Plato, C.S. Lewis, Sam Harris, John Locke, Bertrand Russell, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christopher Hitchens, Martin Luther, or Richard Dawkins will never write something so simple, elegant, and universal. I have been often asked why, if there really is a God, God doesn't make the message simple, plain, and universal so that it will stand the test of time. It seems to me that God has. That, I find, is more compelling than a world filled with the books of the great philosophers, and this is one of the reasons why I am a Christian.