

Religion and Secularism

By Jacob Nagrocki

Religion is a big part of many people's day to day lives, and even if you don't believe in it, you are still inevitably exposed to it. For some it's just church on Sunday morning, or an old Christian school, that is easily forgotten. For others it's the clothes they wear, daily rituals and a piece of hope. However, for just as many it's a ruling force, dictating their lives and rights. Even so, modern progress has brought us an alternative to superstition, faith, and biblical teachings. Knowledge from research and experience, supplemented by logical thinking, gives us a secular way of thought, more so when the afterlife is taken out of the question. Yet, with a purely secular train of thought, have we put our morality at stake? Without religion, which is ultimately an explanation for why we're here and where we are going, can we keep good virtues or are we simply afraid of judgment? I think that's up to individuals to decide.

The ideal individuals from these very different groups, can be hardly distinguishable from the outside. It can even be possible for these two groups to exist interdependently. When it comes down to it, it's really only their faith, or lack thereof that is different by definition. Nevertheless, this one area can change quite a few things behaviorally.

The ideal religious man is highly esteemed by his peers on his virtues more than anything else. While his job need not be religious, some of his leisure time may be dedicated towards his religion, whether this be prayer, meditation, or time spent in a holy building. Other leisure activities are to be within the confines of what his religion deems wholesome and ethical, or at the least, not outside of those lines. Sincerity with others is quite important, he should be helpful and virtuous not in worry of his

afterlife but to increase the well being of those men around him. At the same time, he will be confident knowing that he will be rewarded for his efforts in life. When in conflict, he looks to the skies with pleas that an answer will come to him, and during good times he will send thanks just as heartily. His concerns with society will be how his religion is being tolerated and how its morals are standing up to those around him.

The secular man is known as a man of experience, knowledge and logic. If his work is not related to the arts or sciences, he might spend his free time looking into them. He might be agnostic, believing that something is probably up there but not understanding how that relates to him entirely. As a result of this, he probably sets his own moral standards and seeks for himself where it is he should be going with his life. He is comfortable living his life under his own standards and that he can count on good judgment if that is what is awaiting him. Of course, even without this possibility on his mind it is important for him to see other human beings do well. When in conflict he will try to reason out a solution. He might try a series of things to test or use past experiences to solve his problem. In good times he will do what he can to expand his own mind, while following a trend of progress in technology and human rights. Freedom of speech is an important part of these rights, because without it little progress can be made by individuals and small groups. In areas with low human rights standards for religious reasons, it is important for them to maintain their right to speak up, and they don't believe that religion is a valid excuse anymore.

To summarize, the ideal religious or ideal secular lifestyles easily fit the mould of

a moral life. However easy it would be to bash religion in certain areas of the world, where it causes fighting, retracts from human rights or deals questionable punishments, it would be just as easy to turn around on secularization and say they are causing unnecessary exclusion of some religions from innocent people. With this in mind, they are perfectly reasonable endeavors on an individual basis. Certain changes will hopefully take place to accommodate both groups. Even with religion as a reason there are certain things that won't hold up to human rights standards forever. I can't totally agree with secularism either, I believe that religion is good for society, at its least, to provide a framework for good morals. Neither group is perfect, and I believe it is up to us, not just as individuals, but as a whole, to reform how these things go.