

THE SECULAR BEST IS NOT ENOUGH

by George Drew

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The "worldly world" has developed some quite noble rules of understanding life in our universe. This has happened in every great philosophic age. Most of us live by these rules and ways of thinking 90% of the time.

Yet we know how limited these rules are. They give no basic hope for and improving race of people. Even worse, they provide no deep sense of meaning, or release from the basic fear of life's ending at physical death. The great religions offer so much more as to be like comparing white to black.

A modern ten commandments is suggested by theological professor, Georgia Harkness, who then compares them with parallel Christian thought.

1. The universe is self-consistent and self-contained, and man is the highest development in the level of the animals.

The universe is under dominance of God as Creator and Ruler. God has created man with spiritual qualities, so that with God's help, man is able to rise above himself and change his human nature.

2. Man has intelligence and the power of social adjustment, but is essentially a part of nature. His human nature can't basically be changed.

Man is a living spirit, capable of uncalculating and unselfish love for his fellow humans, free to make moral choices, even to sacrificing his own life as he has done by the thousands, under the influence of God, and so has changed the world.

3. The purpose of the universe consists of what man needs and wants.

There is mind in creation and therefore purpose, or else God's mind is less than ours. It is important to build the world for more than ourselves, and life has meaning. Without purpose, there is no meaning, only senselessness.

4. Right and wrong are decided finally by group standards, by what is best for the greatest number.

Right and wrong are built into the universe and are demonstrated by God-led men, and most sharply by the life of Jesus. These standards are above group standards and make progress possible in man's life.

5. The good life is what brings happiness and the satisfaction of man's desires.

The good life is more than human happiness, because we can't know what happiness is. Obedience to God is what makes the good life, and

this path is shown in the teachings of Christ.

6. Evil and maladjustment exist, but man will someday learn how to live in the world as it is. Evil is basically self-centeredness, and grows out of man's thinking he knows what is best. This leads to rebellion and injury to other humans. It is "original sin", but it is conquered by obedience to something higher than ourselves.

7. Man's power to find the good life and overcome suffering comes from his own resources. His highest virtue is self-reliance.

While self-reliance is a virtue, our final reliance must rest upon trust in a loving and purposeful God. Otherwise, our morale will collapse when life becomes too difficult.

8. All improvement comes through education plus various kinds of social pressure, economic or political.

Education and social forces are important. But to be brought up in a good home with good schooling and social surroundings is no guarantee of a good life. This comes through personal decision and acceptance of God as our central power.

9. Each man's personal existence ends with death.

The Christian lives in hope that God is good and powerful enough to continue the soul's existence after death. This is important not only for hope for future reward or fear of punishment, but for showing the enhancement of the value of human personality. We are more than transitory things in control of blind mechanism.

10. Jesus is an influential historical figure around whom the church has been organized as a social organization.

Jesus is more than a great, good man. He lived and lives to show us God. The church is more than a community of followers; it is a fellowship that is divinely grounded upon a power much greater than the people in it.

It is clear that the difference in each case is not between fairly good and a little better. The difference is basic, going in different directions. The worldly world overlooks the basic self-centeredness of humans. Something more powerful than man's will is needed to overcome it. Christianity is more realistic about man. It understands that man needs something above himself to lift him out of his self-centeredness. His life must be God-centered.