

Origins and Destinies

By Clark Blanchard

- *What is secularism?*
- *Why is it widespread among Christians today?*
- *What is God's provision for combating it?*
- *What should my concerns be regarding it?*

Stripped to its bare bones, the prevalent philosophy of the average nonbeliever in America today is three concepts. They are:
Materialism, that says only things count
Narcissism, that says only I count
Secularism, that says only now counts

These views, exhibited in a nonbeliever, are not surprising. It's simply thorn bushes doing their thing. *You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they?* (Matthew 7:16). Nevertheless, it is sad to see people living without Christ in such a shallow way. We should be motivated to reach out to them with the Gospel. It is both sad and sinful when those of us who know Christ choose the same lifestyle. We will focus our attention here on the secular aspect--that only now counts.

A Definition

Webster defines **secular** as "pertaining to worldly things or to things not regarded as sacred; temporal." Perhaps the last word is most descriptive, **temporal**. If we explore the origin of the word "secular," we find that it comes from the Latin *saeculum*, which is a word dealing with time or an age. The root concept behind secularism is one that relates to the issue of time. It is more specific than just being worldly or non-religious. It is the view that only now counts. The past and future are of little or no concern now.

A Wider View - Origins

If we consider life from strictly a human perspective, we find significant value in knowing about past history, especially the origin of things. That's one of the reasons why history has always been an important (though neglected) subject in formal education. In Scripture, rehearsing Israel's origin was an often repeated theme. Even in the New Testament (Acts 7) Christians remember Christ's death through the Lord's Supper, *proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes*--origin and destiny (Luke 22:19, I Corinthians 11:23-26). Understanding the past helps us understand why things and people are the way they are now.

A Wider View - Destinies

The same holds true for anticipating the future, although this is much more difficult. Some European Jews who had the wisdom and foresight to understand the gathering Nazi storm clouds in the late thirties, left family, friends, and businesses and came to America. Their view of the future greatly affected what they did and ultimately their very survival.

God's Provision

God, in His wisdom and grace, has made significant provision for instruction about origins and destinies through His Word. It begins with the Gospel itself and is carried into every realm of discipleship.

Origins and Destinies in Evangelism

The Gospel, at its core, drastically widens the non-believer's temporal outlook. It teaches him that life now is the result of what happened in Eden several millennia ago and that death and judgment are appointments for everyone (Romans 5:12; Hebrews 9:27). But because of what happened in Israel two millennia ago, that bleak destiny can be changed to eternal life by acting now (Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 6:2). The Gospel is an issue of origins and destinies that requires action in the present.

Origins and Destinies in Discipleship

When Jesus Christ enters a person's life, He begins a new work of transforming that life (2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 1:6). God's Word removes the secular blinders and gives the new disciple a marvelous panoramic view of the past and the future. It provides divine truth regarding when, where, how, and why things originated and the pathway to the present time. Further, it provides the big picture of where things are headed, all the way into eternity. Plus, it provides personal future security for the individual believer (John 6:24). Secular history can provide some record of the past, though it may be limited and distorted, but it takes divine revelation to deal with the future, especially for the individual.

This God-given view of the past and future sets the proper context for us to live our Christian lives in the present.

We are to live heartily every minute, hour, and day of the present, in the light of God's teachings about the past and the future. This is totally different from living in the present from a secular perspective. As a believer begins to grasp this panoramic view, it will put things and me in a proper context in time. And this marvelous provision is found nowhere except in God's Word.

The Void

Sadly, however, many believers never have had their secular blinders removed. They've never seen from horizon to horizon. For them, only now and some vague idea of heaven—someday--make up their view.

As a substitute, others have adopted the world's story of evolution or some compromise with it. Somehow they feel that both evolution and the Bible must be true but have never worked through the issues. The flood, the Tower of Babel, the Dispersion, and other issues of origins are also all vague concepts.

Regarding the future, many believers are equally confused about issues such as the rapture, the tribulation, Christ's return, the millennium, or the Antichrist. They feel it's all too complex, too confusing, and especially too controversial.

Beyond this, many believers completely miss God's teaching about service and sacrifice now in exchange for rewards in eternity. Yet it's a major theme of the New Testament (1 Corinthians 3:8, 14). Likewise, Old Testament patriarchs such as Abraham, Moses (Hebrews 11:9, 10, 24-26), and many others also lived with their hearts in eternity.

Instead of sacrifice and service now and rewards later, secularism demands instant gratification with material rewards now. Its banner is the credit card. Never has the personal debt load in America been greater. Within the church this is at the root of certain false teachings such as "Name It and Claim It" and the "Prosperity Gospel."

The reason many believers have missed out very often boils down to fear of the controversial. Origins and destinies are major biblical subjects over which there is much disagreement. Therefore, many believers shy away, especially where tolerance rules supreme. This first became obvious in modern America among the parachurch movements after World War II. It was, and still is, a major void in the teaching of groups like the Navigators, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ, and Young Life. More recently, it has been evidenced in newer groups such as Prison Fellowship, Promise Keepers, and others. Increasingly, the megachurches, in their drive for numbers, have followed the same course. The result is an increasingly large percent of Christians who are secular. They have little, or no, sound biblical view of origins and destinies. Their focus is here and now, and they live accordingly.

Action Items

Therefore, it's appropriate for us to address this issue seriously by at least the following courses of action:

- (1) Review our own understanding of what the Bible teaches about origins and destinies.
- (2) Make on-going provisions for growth in these areas through the study of God's Word. We need to remain open and teachable.
- (3) Apply the Word. Live accordingly.
- (4) Share what God has taught us regarding origins and destinies with our families, friends, and those involved with us in discipleship. Provide mutual encouragement.
- (5) Use these issues in evangelism. Many poor secularists have been brought to saving faith by hearing what God has to say about origins and destinies.

Questions and Answers

Q: *What is secularism?*

A: It is the philosophy or world view that says only now counts. It's a temporal outlook that is not concerned with origins and destinies.

Q: *Why is it widespread among Christians today?*

A: The general reason is lack of biblical study and application. The more specific reason, for many, is the desire to avoid controversy and be tolerant. In many cases, it is the influence of churches and parachurch groups that try to avoid controversial issues and teaching in the interest of numbers.

Q: *What is God's provision for combating it?*

A: As with nearly all issues, it is the regular study and application of His Word, especially those many sections that deal with origins and destinies.

Q: *What should my concerns be regarding it?*

A: I should implement the action items identified at the end of this article.