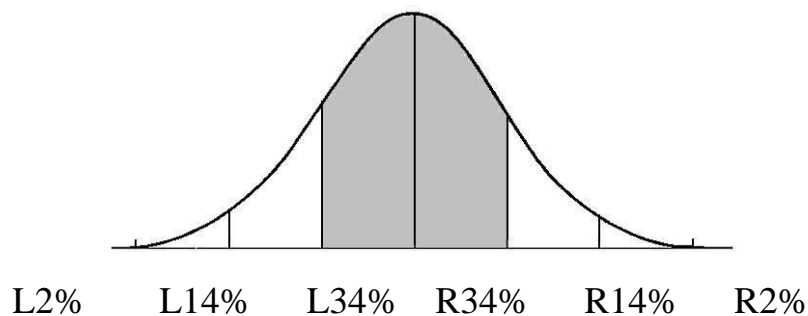


Religion

Introduction

Since there is so much concern about Islam right now, I would like to present a concept that could clarify the issue somewhat. Statistics have no emotion. Only a small portion of any group is radical. Much of the concern about Islam in America today is highly emotional. In order to introduce some balance to the current anxiety in America we shall resort to an old and faithful device known as the Bell Curve.

The Bell Curve



The famous Bell Curve or Normal Distribution or Standard Deviation shows the normal percentages for almost any characteristic or group of people. The larger the group the more the Bell Curve is applicable. There are millions of Moslems. For our purposes here we will use 34, 14, and 2 percent on both sides of the average which is very close to the mathematical formula but doing away with decimals.

The majority of the people in any distribution is moderate as indicated by the 68 per cent which is the sum of 34 percent evenly placed on both sides of the overall average. To each side of this is an additional 14 percent on each side. Finally, there are the extremes of about 2 percent on each end ($34 + 14 + 2 = 50 \times 2 = 100\%$). The standard deviation has been proven true in any group.

The larger the entire group is the more accurate the standard deviation. This is why it is called the STANDARD deviation and the NORMAL distribution. The marks along the curve each represent one standard deviation from the average which is in the center. There is a lot of mathematics used to produce the Bell curve but the picture tells it all. Each half represents 50% of the whole group.

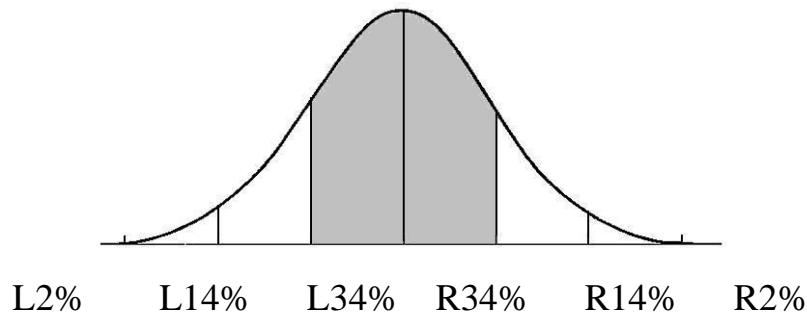
The extremes, Right and Left, are each 2% of the entire group. These are the extremists for both sides. Their minds are made up and they do not change.

Next to the extremes, both on the Right and the Left, is 14% of the whole group. These are the leaders of each side. All of them are not hard line extremists, but some of them are very close.

Touching in the middle are the Right and Left Moderates with 34% on each half. Together they constitute 68% of the whole group and are definitely the majority.

Usually the more radical conservatives of any group are referred to as the “right” and the liberals are called the “left.” So, the “right” 2% of Moslems are extremists. The “left” 2% are liberals, probably the super-rich among them. The same holds true for the Christians. The far right are legalistic, unforgiving and angry. The far left do not even believe in personal salvation; everything is a social issue. The 14% next to the far right and far left are considerably less extreme in their views and lifestyles but they are big enough and extreme enough to be highly influential on their half of the moderates. This leaves the 68% moderates, the R34% and the L34%, who are not interested in imposing their beliefs, such as they are, on anyone.

Are All Christians Radical Extremists?



Let's start by looking at Christianity. The Christian R2% are the Right Wing Extremists. These are the fanatics who are very legalistic. They believe that they know the exact nature of right and wrong in every situation and give no mercy. For them the Right knows what is right. They are intolerant of weaknesses in others. They have created their own monsters among other Christians by their superior judgmental attitudes.

The R14% are the Right Wing leaders. These are the Evangelicals. This group has most of the beliefs of the Far Right but are more tolerant and more loving. They tend to lead the R34% centrists.

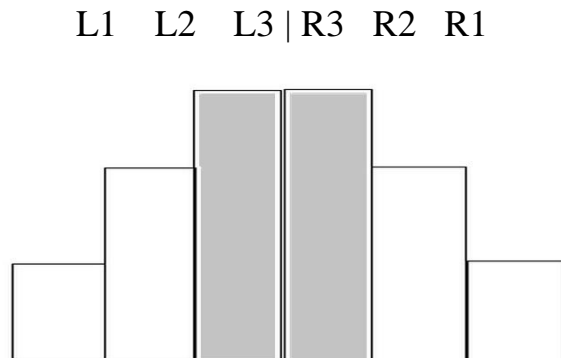
The 68% Moderate Christians are the L34% and the R34% combined. Theoretically half of the centrists, 34%, will have some right or left wing identification. These people are content with the status quo until it hurts them heavily and personally. They will show some loyalty to their church. They generally talk about “Christ” but seldom talk about “Jesus.” They will get involved if they are personally threatened.

The L14% are the Left Wing leaders. These people are looking for an “open minded” way to go and are opened to accepting parts of other religions.

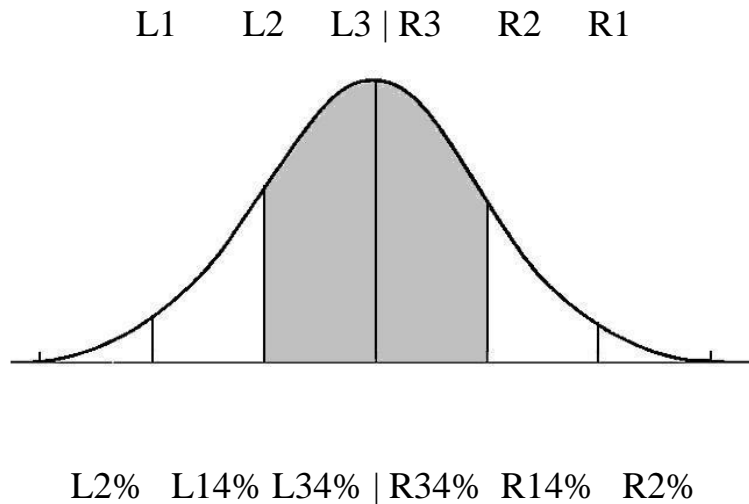
The L2% are the Left Wing Extremists. They are Christians in name only. Tolerance and social action are their areas of interest. However, they are very intolerant of their own Christian Right.

For Christianity to be effective the mainstream media has to be bypassed as it serves only the Left. In order to be heard the Right is obliged to use other forms of media. There are alternate broadcast and cable television outlets. There are alternatives on the internet. Something that goes viral on the internet can reach many. Radio is sometimes a neglected media which can be used very effectively. Plain old personal networking is often looked upon as being old fashioned and ineffective. However, once started it can spread at an exponential rate. Peaceful public demonstrations are still part of the constitutional rights of Americans. And, of course, prayer is the secret weapon of the Christian faith.

The Bell Curve Does Not Look Like This!



The Bell Curve Does Look Like This!



What does this mean?

This means that even within the six standard deviation sections from L1 To R1 the more extreme a group gets the less they are in numbers. Just look at the “roof” of the curve.

In 2016 the world has a total estimated population of 7.4 Billion people. There are about 2 Billion Christians and 2 Billion Muslims. Not everybody in R1 is equally intense. For 2 Billion Christians 2% would be 40 Million Christians. It is not likely that there are that many legalistic emotional radicals. However, if only one half of one percent (.5%) of the R1 Christians were legalistic emotional radicals there would be 10 Million legalistic emotional radicals.

So maybe there are also 10 Million Christian legalistic emotional radicals in the world that threaten people with violent unloving actions from God. I personally don't want to live very close to them. They have forgotten John 3:16, if they ever knew it.

What or who are Christian legalistic emotional terrorists?

After 50 years as a Christian minister I have seen it all. I have pastored, taught, done missionary work, earned advanced degrees, and taught at the college level in

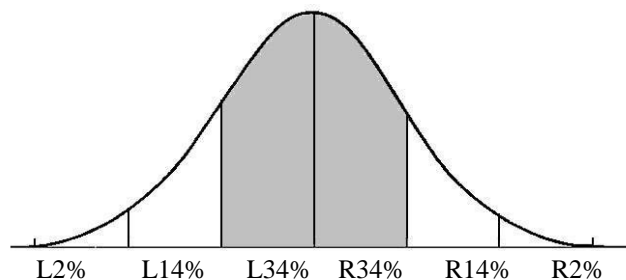
America and Africa. I can readily recognize the Bell Curve in Christianity. I am in the Right 14%. To me the Bible is God's authoritative Word, but I despise legalism.

There is, however, the Right 2% in Christianity that are immersed in legalism. They beat people with the Bible, they minister to bring doubt and fear, and they listen to no one. I will refrain from mentioning denominational groups because I do not want to fan the flames of fanaticism.

Some of those from the Right 14% who are closest to the Right 2% can also be very legalistic. I am closer to the Right 34% who are right leaning. The Christian Right 14% absolutely affirms the Bible as The Word of God, but they, like myself, tend to be more Grace oriented in Christian practice. Most of the Right 34% in Christianity are moderate in every way but are still more biblically oriented than the Left.

The Left 4% group in Christianity is barely recognizable as being Christian. Social and political answers are everything to them and the 14% approach their philosophy. The Left 34% in Christianity are involved in social issues but can still understand their moderate counterparts to the Right.

The Real Competitor: Secular Humanism



The Humanist R2% are the Right Wing Extremists. The R2% Humanists recognize themselves as real Secular Humanists. They consciously and purposefully believe in Secular Humanism. They have studied it and are totally committed to it. They call themselves Secular Humanists. They believe in no God and in no afterlife. They test everything with the scientific facts. They believe that everyone should be

free to grow. They believe that truth changes as we learn. They believe in ethics which must help everyone. They demand tolerance. And they want to build a better world.

The R14% are the Right Wing leaders. This group will generally lead the Right leaning moderates (R34%). They are aware of the tenets of Secular Humanism and will promote them.

The center 68% are the Moderates which consists of the L34% and the R34%. They believe in people and they do not think about this much. These people are content with the status quo until it hurts them heavily and personally. Thomas Jefferson, a Secular Humanist, is talking about them in the Declaration of Independence when he says, “all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.”

Theoretically half of the moderates 34% on each side will have some right or left wing identification.

The L14% are the Left Wing leaders. They are much more vague about their beliefs. These people are looking for a “tolerant” way to go and will lead the Left Wing Moderates (L34%).

The L2% are the Left Wing Extremists. They do not believe in anything.

In America the Left Christians and the Left Humanists touch and overlap. In practicality there is considerable overlap with the total 16% (14 + 2) Humanist Left and the 16% Christian Left.

In all three models, Humanism, Christianity and Islam, The Right Wing leaders (R14%) are the ones who bring about change within their communities and beyond.

In the religion of Humanism people believe that they have no need for gods because they are in themselves gods. Until Greece and Rome people worshiped gods in the shape of strange beings that were models of reptilian or animal life or a mixture of human and animal. Ra, the principal Egyptian god, was the god of the Sun. He was human from the neck down with the head of a great bird or falcon. Others had the heads of a crocodile or a jackal or a wolf. The gods of ancient Babylon had bodies like a lion or a bull or a snake. Some animals had wings like a bird.

Ancient Greece is the great head of humanism. All of the Greek gods appeared as men and women and Rome merely adopted and renamed the Greek gods. This was the final exaltation of humanity. In today's western world view characteristics of these particular gods of the Greek pantheon have merely been morphed into the god of mankind himself.

In the words of John F. Kennedy, "Our problems are man-made, therefore they can be solved by man. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings." That is the great western mindset. Communism has bowed to it. Christianity resists it continually, sometimes more successfully than others, but in the end Christianity will prevail. Islam will wear itself out hammering on it. The hammer wears out before the anvil. Neither Humanism nor Christianity will accept Islam including sharia law.

Secular Humanism is a prominent world view. Included in it are certain beliefs and convictions. Humanism requires that all beliefs be tested. Nothing is to be accepted by faith. Each person must consider any and all beliefs and traditions no matter what area of life they involve. After due consideration the individual decides which beliefs are the most logical and which ones will work for the good of humanity in general.

In Humanism the answers to human problems and challenges must be sought by critically examining each problem. Firm factual evidence and scientific methods must be used in these examinations. Also, every person and human beings as a group must be offered the opportunity to grow as individuals. They all need to be fulfilled and their creativity must be given room to grow.

Ethics are important in humanism. However, the principles of ethical conduct must be developed in the light of how much they will enhance the well being of all.

In humanism the concept of truth is constantly changing. There are no objective, permanent truths, no absolute truth. Only new knowledge can help humans to grow collectively and thus recognize the ever emerging new truths by which we live.

For the secular humanist only this life is important. The afterlife, if it exists at all, is not to be the concern of the humanist. We must strive to make this life better for everybody by growing in our understanding of the past and striving to live in concert with those who disagree. The final goal of Secular Humanism is to build a

better world for all by the open exchange of ideas and tolerance. The good of all and tolerance are watchwords of Secular Humanism.

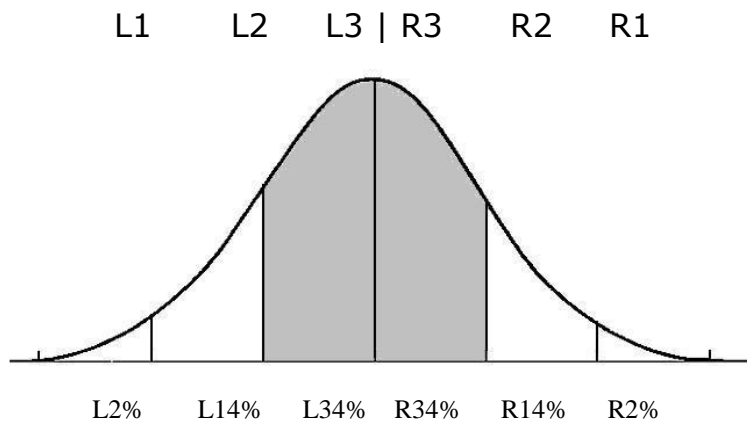
A Religion

Secular Humanism in itself is a religion whether or not its adherents call it a religion. Furthermore, it is a religion without God. It is a religion with no admission of an afterlife. It is a religion with no final, absolute standards of right and wrong.

Since man is made in God's image, humanism is the logical religion of mankind if they are to reject the revelation of The God-Man, Jesus Christ. Natural man is not aware that God's image within them has been drastically altered by the fall. Only the Spirit of Christ can reveal and restore the fallen image. However, the awareness of the image itself is still there. The desire to improve is also still there. The human psyche will not bow to a lesser god than itself as it perpetuates a continual losing game of self-improvement.

The Eventual Winner: How and Why it wins.

The Bell Curve



There is a phenomenon that has shaped America in the past more than any other event; they were called The First and Second Great Awakenings. Between them was a massive decline in the Christian faith. This was the waning. The return of the strength of Christianity is made evident by a study of both of these awakenings.

An awakening is another word for a massive Christian revival. However, an awakening is a deeply felt and far reaching phenomenon. To call an awakening merely a revival falls far short of the mark. A revival usually affects those who are already believers. Generally, the progression is revival, movement, awakening. The revival affects the believers. The movement spreads the revival to many churches. An awakening affects entire communities and even an entire nation. An awakening increases interest in matters of faith. An awakening touches people deep inside and causes them to realize that they have a desperate need for God which leads them to experience God in ways that they had not known. Out of an awakening comes whole new religious movements and groups or denominations.

The beginning rumblings of the First Great Awakening began about 1730 and continued for over twenty years. Strangely enough, it began among the Calvinists who were known for their staid and somber attitude towards spiritual matters. The leaders were surprised at the emotional reactions of the people when it came to their relationship with God. Not only were there extreme reactions in public meetings but the emotions continued long after the meetings were over. Furthermore, those who were touched by this strong presence of God began and continued to act like sincere Christian believers.

The First Great Awakening

The First Great Awakening involved the educated elite and was strong in the Northeastern Colonies. The Second Great Awakening was strong in the Northeast but also in the pioneer area of the Midwest. It began in 1790 and continued past 1820. The reforms which came out of the Second Great Awakening involved nearly every area of life.

Some believe that there have been Great Awakenings since the Second one. For instance, there was one between the Civil war until just before World War One in the early 1900's. Still others believe that there was another one later in the 1900's. No doubt there was some revival during those periods but none of it ever approached the power and scope of the first two awakenings.

In the First Great Awakening many cried out, some fell down, or fainted, some seemed to have fits. There was a great concern for the individual's soul. The concern for one's soul seemed to spread from one person to another almost by contact. Just the reports of what was shared in the public meetings brought to the listeners a great

concern for their own souls. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit seemed to work in a calmer way but the personal awareness of the need for salvation was just as deep and long lasting.

It is stressed over and over in the accounts of the time that all sorts of people, young, old, rich, poor, educated, ignorant, whites, blacks, Indians, English, male and female, were strongly convicted of sin and became converted and continued to display their new character for the remainder of their lives. Throughout there appeared a great love for God. This love for God brought about changes as to how people felt about themselves and others and about religious matters in general.

In 1734 the awakening broke out in Massachusetts in the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. There are still hundreds of his sermons in print. He is best remembered for his sermon "Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God." However, most of his sermons did not emphasize the wrath of God. The awakening soon spread throughout New England.

As serious and composed as Edwards was, he learned to put up with the noisiness of the revival. This led him to write a book about emotion in religion entitled *Religious Affections*. "Affections" was the colonial name for emotions. Edwards concluded that emotions alone could not nullify a spiritual experience nor confirm the validity of a spiritual experience. In short, emotions were not the direct work of God but the human reaction to what God was doing in the lives of people.

Another leader, George Whitefield, came over from England and preached all over the colonies with an enormous effect. Whitefield was a Calvinistic Methodist and he disagreed on several important points with John and Charles Wesley who also preached widely in the colonies and in Britain and were the founders of Methodism which was not Calvinistic.

Methodism stressed free choice on the part of the believer. Calvinism stressed the sovereignty of God which seemed to exclude free choice; one was chosen by God or not chosen and human choice was irrelevant. Whitefield, while being Calvinistic, allowed for human choice in the matter of salvation.

God, Whitefield proclaimed, was merciful. Rather than being predestined for damnation, men and women could be saved by repenting of their sins and embracing Christ. Whitefield appealed to the passions of his listeners, showing the joy of salvation and the horrors of damnation. He spread the Great Awakening from New England to Georgia. Benjamin Franklin printed Whitefield's sermons in his paper.

One pastor reported that when Whitefield held a series of meetings, they had not seen such emotions since the earthquake. Apparently, there had been an earthquake in the region earlier which had frightened and upset everyone. The effect of the revival with its conviction of sin was more powerful than the earthquake. The pastor went on to write that the request for God's help in prayer during the earthquake, strong as it had been, was for protection but did not include requests to be saved. But the revival made many people anxious to be sure that their souls were firmly in the hand of God. There was greater fervency during the revival than during the earthquake. After accepting Jesus the people felt a calmness in their souls. This was because the people admitted their sins instead of arguing with God about them.

The Colonial belief in this modified Calvinism which was the basis for the First Great Awakening in America laid a foundation for the American Revolution. The preachers of the First Great Awakening reviewed God's covenant with America and repudiated the materialistic corruption of a rich colonial society. They reasoned that if the source of the corruption lay in England, a breaking of the ties with the mother country would result in a new America.

The First Great Awakening is credited for preparing the convictions of the people which led to the American Revolution itself. Out of a deep respect for the Golden Rule, citizen Christians became democratic and pressed for a free exchange of ideas including a free press. The movement of the 1740s played a key role in the development of democracy just before the American Revolution by preaching that the Bible taught that all men are equal, that the value of a man lies in his moral behavior and not his social class. By 1773 when battles over taxation without representation erupted, Americans were prepared to defy the British.

The Second Great Awakening

The Second Great Awakening began around 1790 and grew rapidly. By 1820 all churches had grown tremendously.

It began in Boston in 1792. This was because the Baptists started an ever growing prayer initiative. It began with just one day a month. These prayer meetings grew at a steady rate. Often entire congregations were converted. In the New England states all were affected in every type of church.

During the Second Great Awakening church membership rose sharply and the preachers came from all levels of education and different races. Many new denominations were formed.

There was widespread expectation that the second coming of Christ was very near.

The great revival quickly spread to Ohio. By 1800 the awakening was as far as Kentucky. It then crossed the mountains among uneducated people on the frontier. There was trembling and shaking, weeping and shouting. The revival totally changed Kentucky and Tennessee.

At Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1801 as many as 20,000 people participated. This was considered the frontier at that time. The growth in old churches and the creation of new churches stressed salvation as a personal relationship with Christ and not church membership.

It moved into Virginia and North Carolina and South Carolina, and into Georgia. There were large crowds and their buildings were too small. They met in fields in groups of thousands. Many observers were converted in large numbers and joined the churches.

The colleges were revived. As Christianity grew, the students became missionaries and expanded the educational ministry. The Second Great Awakening was partially responsible politically for the Two Party System. All forms of democracy were encouraged.

We can only conclude from history that no matter how weak Christianity may become as the generations pass, God will move to restore the next generation. And with the restoration comes a deep personal faith which is not dependent on the institutional organization often referred to as the Church. The life is not in the institution, although it is often bolstered by an awakening. The life is in the hearts of the people as the Spirit of Christ moves among them and upon them.

The strength of Christianity always returns but perhaps not in the form that we expect. The U.S.A. is not the Kingdom of God. However, America's next great faith is a strong, revitalized, victorious Christianity.

The Evangelicals

The R14% Christian leaders are often the most motivated. They are further bolstered by many from the right side of the moderate 34% on issues of common interest such as individual freedom, personal Christian experience, the wrongness of

abortion, etc. To the extent that purely doctrinal issues are avoided, more and more support can be garnered from the right side moderate 34% and perhaps on into the left side moderate 34% in matters of practice and living. For instance, the Roman Catholics and the Mormons will agree with the Evangelicals on being opposed to abortion.

Christians can ally themselves with the humanists in their love of liberty, their distrust of people with power, and their desire for the common good even though they agree for different underlying reasons.

Evangelical R14% Christianity could engage Secular Humanism beginning with the Left leaders L14% directly. They can take advantage of overlaps; the Golden Rule, opportunities for women, Intelligent Design. Also, Christians are not actually opposed to science.

In dealing with Secular Humanism another Christian strategy can be formed. If the Evangelical Right Wing leaders 14% can motivate the Right Wing Moderates 34%, the right leaning moderates can influence the entire moderate center, 68%, and then seek to influence the entire Humanistic Left.

The Humanist R14% often have a massive general effect because of “morals” and “science.” Morals mean “decent folk” and they should be “tolerant.”

A sense of values may be a good place to begin. Both the Humanist and the Christian believe in values for different reasons. The Humanists want values for the “good of all,” and the Christians want values because it is pleasing to God and values help in practicing the Golden Rule. Therefore, some identity can be formed here.

There is a primitive intuition in mankind that tends to allow a belief in a creator God. It may be known as Creation theology or as Intelligent Design. Sometimes this is a starting place to enter into dialogue with a Humanist.

The most difficult gap for a Christian to bridge with a Humanist is regarding the exclusive claims of Jesus as the God-Man and only Savior. This requires supernatural help. To expect this help the Christian must be Evangelical enough to believe in the convincing power of a supernatural God, the Holy Spirit. Overall, the power to change which is supplied to the Christian believer by the Holy Spirit is the Christian advantage.