

Bible Special 06-09-05a

This is Tuesday, the 5th of September, 2006. We continue tonight our study related to why we believe the Bible, what is the nature of the alternatives that are offered by the world, that are believed in the world, and so on. Let's take a moment at the outset to concentrate, to examine ourselves, to ensure that we are in the faith, and to make sure that we are teachable by God's Holy Spirit.

Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship and in the study of your Word. We are grateful that you have revealed yourself, that the information is knowable. You have given us your Spirit.

You have revealed yourself in creation and in your Word. We pray that as we look at the alternatives tonight and the suppressing of the truth and unrighteousness that we see in the world around us, that God the Holy Spirit will enable us to see clearly the distinctives of our faith and to live confidently in its light. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Our study is rounding to the point of looking at a section of beliefs called naturalism. Last time we pretty much ran the gamut of pantheism and polytheism.

If you remember, we looked at deism and antitheism and eutheism, agnosticism, maltheism, nontheism, omnitheism, panentheism, polytheism, transtheism, etc. We pretty well knocked out all the deisms and theisms that there are. And I realize it was kind of slow going, but you just need to know that there is a lot out there and you could run across somebody from almost any one of these points of view and it should not come as a shock.

A lot of people are sort of naive when it comes to faith systems. They think, well, everybody's pretty much either a Christian or an atheist or there might be a few Buddhists and Hindus, but it's pretty much very simple. There is a spectrum and a rainbow with an infinitude of variations and shades and mixtures and admixtures and syncretistic combinations of all kinds of bizarre stuff.

It's like a trip through the city dump. You can find every different kind of plastic, every different kind of metal, every different kind of cardboard and organic waste all mixed together in a happy kaleidoscope of strangeness. So now you at least know the names of some of these things.

If someone comes up and says, well, hi there, I'm a panentheist, you'll not be taken by surprise. But I want to get back to something that is very common and that you're going to see in a very manifest way throughout our media, throughout our culture, because if you recall, I mentioned that there are sort of four big categories. You have the monotheistic religions.

That's us, the Muslims and the Jews. One God. Of course, the Jews accuse the Christians of not having one God because of Trinitarianism and Allah is not the God of Abraham, although they

try to say that he is.

You have people who try to tell you that the Jews, the Muslims and the Christians all worship the same God. No. No.

If anybody tries to tell you that, stop them right there and say no, no, no. You need to say no three times because we believe in the Trinity. Allah is not a Trinity.

The Muslims repudiate a Trinity. The Jews repudiate a Trinity. The Lord our God is one Lord, that's all they know.

They can't get past the Shema. And the Muslims manifestly, Allah, if you look at the roots of what Muhammad dug up and presented to the Arabs of the 6th century A.D., or is that the 6th century? 7th century A.D., he rounded up one of the pagan idolatry gods called Allah and tried to read into this one God all kinds of stuff. It's a grab bag.

There's stuff from the Old Testament. There's stuff from Jews who didn't know what they were talking about. There's stuff from mysticism.

There's stuff from two or three different popular cults of the time all mixed together and this became Allah. It is not the God of Abraham. Don't let anybody tell you that Christians worship the same God as the Muslims.

We don't. And saying that it's the God of Abraham doesn't make it so. Anyway, those are the monotheistic religions, right? Then we looked last time in detail at the pantheist, polytheist, different kinds of theist, non-theist and so on.

We'll talk about the fourth category peripherally, but it's not so important. The big third category is naturalism. Naturalism says boo on, from their point of view, mysticism.

They think we are mystical. They think that we're spook worshippers. They think that we're thinking of spirits and ghosts and sprites and fairies and angels are all in this supernatural world of the imagination.

And they say, no, no, no, no, no, no. It's the natural world. It's the scientifically measurable world that you have to deal with.

And if I can't put it on a slide and stick it under my microscope, it does not exist. Naturalism. Now, the credo of naturalism is what we call empiricism.

Have you ever heard the term empiricism? Empirical data means something that you can measure, something that is fairly tangible. And empiricism says I'm going to go by what I can grab a hold of and substantiate. So you have, for example, the whole idea that knowledge has to be built on this observable, testable, repeatable scientific foundation.

This is the essence of science is empiricism. And basically all of the naturalistic points of view

fall back in some way, shape, or form on empiricism. Now, what we want to talk about is the outworking of this because that's a methodology.

Empiricism is a method. You can't really run around saying I'm an empiricist. It's not really a complete belief system.

This is a method. I want to establish the truth of the thing by empirical means. Now, if you're a computer guy, if you are a scientist looking for a cure to some disease, or you're looking for a better rocket engine or something, you do testing.

You do troubleshooting. You try things out and you see what works and what doesn't work. And this is great.

This is fine. It's a good method for solving problems in the material world. There's not a thing wrong with empiricism.

Empiricism is great. Rationalism using reason is great. But this becomes the sole foundation for a philosophy, an approach that seeks to explain the great grand questions of life and existence.

Now, let me tell you what this is like in my mind. Let's pretend that we are stepping into a time machine and we're going to go back to the days of Christopher Columbus. What year did Christopher Columbus sail the blue? 1492, didn't Columbus sail the blue? Okay, so we're back in 1490 and we're talking to Christobal Cologne.

And he's over there trying to raise funds, Queen Isabella, the whole thing. Now, wooden ships, iron men, canvas sails. We don't have any modern technology in terms of what we know in the 20th and 21st centuries.

It's before the Industrial Revolution. It's before a lot of the great scientific discoveries. Chris Columbus just wants to find a route to shorten trade and make a fortune.

So he goes sailing west. And we're talking to him and we're saying, look, I want to tell you some things because I'm from the 21st century. And you try to start talking about television and so on.

He says, look, stop right there. I'm a practical man. I'm interested in practical things.

I believe what I can see with my eyes, what I hear with my ears, what I can touch with my hands, my five senses. This is what we call empiricism. And we say, well, but listen, when you get to the 21st century, it's going to be great because somebody can be talking in London and you can hear them in Spain.

You can hear them in Venice. You can hear them in Rome. In fact, somebody can be doing a dance in Spain and you can watch them do that dance in London or in Rome.

Christopher Columbus says, look, I know all about the curvature of the earth and telescopes. I

own one. I'm a sailor and I'm telling you, you can't see that far.

Oh, listen, it travels through the air. What's he going to say? I can't see that with my eyes. I can't hear that with my ears.

I can't touch that with my fingers. All of the knowledge that I have and all of the means of testing tell me that that's just impossible. Now, we just take it as a commonplace, radio and television.

We can instantaneously see things that are happening all over the world, can't we? We can hear someone talking anywhere in the world. We can see someone doing something anywhere in the world. How do you explain radio and television, wireless internet, cell phones to someone who says, look, my standard of measure is what I see, what I hear, what I can touch.

You hand him a cell phone and say, watch this. Hand him a walkie-talkie. Go 50 feet away and start talking.

He's going to drop that thing like a hot potato because there's no explanation for how it works. This is the problem with empiricism. Empiricism is limited to the knowledge set that you have, the access that you have to the available data.

There may be data that your empirical tools can't access, right? Christopher Columbus in 1492 has no means of measuring radio waves. He has no means of understanding short wave or infrared or cell phones, any of that stuff. It cannot be.

And he can use the best and most sophisticated instruments of his day and he has no access to those things. Now, think about today. We have a huge scientific community, scientists with sophisticated measuring devices.

They have got scales. They have got electron microscopes. They've got telescopes hanging out there in space.

They've got the Hubble. They have got powerful computers. They've got modeling.

They've got particle accelerators and all kinds of equipment in physics. They've got the best that modern technology can provide. But just like Columbus, you know what they don't have? They don't have a scale that can weigh an angel.

They don't have a view screen that can display the throne room of God. It doesn't mean those things don't exist. It means that with the current technology and the current tools, there is no way to access that data.

So what do they say? I can't access it. It doesn't exist. Which would be just as silly as Christopher Columbus showing up today and walking around saying, yeah, I see you talking on that cell phone, but that's nonsense.

That can't work. You're too far away from the person you're trying to talk to. You can't hear them at that distance.

I don't know why you're staring into that funny-shaped box there because those pictures, that can't be something from a distant land or a distant place or a past time. You can't make records of what happened yesterday and the day before and a year ago and 50 years ago. And reproduce it.

It's impossible. How could that possibly take place? You're trying to tell me that little round shiny disk has got an hour and a half of what happened 20 years ago, 50 years ago on it. It's not possible.

Well, he can't conceive of it because he's got no empirical way of understanding. This is the situation with science today. So this is our foundation.

This is what we want to understand at the outset. No, you cannot empirically prove that God exists, that angels surround us, that there is a spiritual immaterial world. We are told about it from people who have accessed it, from people who have seen it, people from that world who have come to us and have communicated.

Most importantly, the Lord Jesus Christ himself who was in the beginning with God and who has revealed the things of God to us. But in the same way that Christopher Columbus or Benjamin Franklin or anyone else from times gone by, if we were to go back and talk to them and say, look, I think Ben Franklin could probably stretch his mind to believe that technology would reach the point where these things are possible. Thomas Edison could probably easily wrap his mind around television or spacecraft and radio waves going out and communicating with them and getting pictures back and so on.

There are men who might eventually, although they would never be able to see it or prove it, you might be able to talk to them and they would believe it because they understand the potential for industry and technological advance. They've had a little taste of it. They understand the rudiments of it.

And they might believe it. Well, in the same way, there are people who are going to believe the angelic witness. There are people who are going to believe the divine witness through Jesus Christ, the witness that's contained in the word of God.

And there are people who can't and who won't. So when you come to naturalism, I only believe what I can measure. I'm going to base my entire world view and I'm going to stake my life and my future on the fact that nothing exists that I can't measure.

Well, to me, this is kind of a dumbed down and limited view. Refusing to believe and refusing to admit and refusing to acknowledge even the possibility that something could exist that's beyond human reach. It's a sort of an arrogance.

It's a kind of pride. I refuse to admit the possibility of anything that I myself can't experience. I'm not going to take anybody's word for anything.

If you want to talk about God and angels, then you better bring me God on a plate. You better bring me an angel and let me test him. So, what this has given rise to, based on empiricism, this naturalism approach, is you have a philosophy in the world called secular humanism.

Secular humanism. Sometimes they just want to call themselves humanists or believers in humanism. Because basically, the only intelligent creature that anybody knows anything about are humans.

And so we are the apex, we're the pinnacle, and it's all about us. Conveniently so. And secular humanism distinguishes humanists, those who are pursuing intellectual goals and so on, from religion.

Sometimes they like to distinguish themselves and say, I'm not mystical, I'm not religious, I'm not blinded by ancient myths and legends and so on, and so I'm a secular humanist. Other times they say, it belittles me to even be associated or defined as antithetical to religion, so leave off the secular and just call me humanist. Either way, just remember, it's based on what? Empiricism.

And it is a form of naturalism. Everything is explainable through natural causes. This, of course, gives rise to evolution.

If you're not going to have anything that we can't see and measure, no unseen agent that brought biological life and the cosmos into existence, then it had to have happened by natural means. Well, the humanists think that any religious belief, and Christian belief in particular, is a blight and inappropriate for human beings. That it's a scourge and a bane and a negative influence, and it does nothing but cause harm and problems.

And one of the major tenets of secular humanism is religion is bad. All religion is bad. Christianity, in particular, is bad.

Now, at various times, the secularists or the secular humanists or the humanists, whichever title they choose to call themselves by, they've come out with declarations. They've come out with a manifesto or a belief statement. I want to read you, they're all pretty much the same, but the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism in 1980 came out with a very definitive, very representative statement.

And the best way to learn about secular humanism is to let them describe it. So, with that as a background, and understanding sort of how they build this, let's take a look at what they say. First of all, they define themselves, secular humanism is a vital force in the contemporary world.

It is now under unwarranted and intemperate attack from various quarters. This is how they introduce the thing. We're a vital force in the contemporary world, and we're being attacked.

So, this declaration defends only that form of secular humanism which is explicitly committed to democracy. It opposes all varieties of belief that seek supernatural sanction for their values or espouse rules by dictatorship. Did you hear that? Sounds fancy, but listen to it again.

Secular humanism is opposed to all varieties of belief that seek supernatural sanction for their values. Secular humanism is opposed to everybody who says there is a supernatural basis for what I believe, i.e., I believe in God. Secular humanism says we're opposed to you.

Or, those who espouse ruling by dictatorship. The two are put in the same category. Anybody who believes in a God, and anybody who's a cruel inhuman dictator, we oppose them.

That's what they're saying. This is the first paragraph of the 1980 secular humanist declaration. We are a vital force.

We are being attacked, and we oppose anybody who believes in God and anybody who's a vile, cruel, murdering dictator. As though those two are equal. And they go on.

Democratic secular humanism has been a powerful force in world culture. Its ideals can be traced to philosophers, scientists, and poets of classical Greece and Rome, to ancient Chinese-Confucian society, to blah, blah, blah. They go on to pat themselves on the back.

Democratic secular humanism has creatively flowered in modern times with the growth of freedom and democracy. The more freedom and democracy you have, the more secular humanism you have. And if you don't have secular humanism, you don't have freedom, and you don't have democracy.

This is the implication. Secular humanism provides the impetus for humans to solve their problems with intelligence and perseverance, to conquer geographic and social frontiers, and to extend the range of human exploration and adventure. It's play the cosmos music, listen to Carl Sagan talking, you know.

That's kind of the idea. New cults of unreason as well as bizarre, paranormal, and occult beliefs, such as belief in astrology, reincarnation, and the mysterious power of alleged psychics, are growing in many Western societies. These disturbing developments follow in the wake of the emergence in the earlier part of the 20th century of intolerant, messianic, and totalitarian, quasi-religious movements such as fascism and communism.

These religious activists, fascists and communists, are religious activists, not only responsible for much of the terror and violence in the world today, but stand in the way of solutions to the world's most serious problems. So you see the viewpoint. Let's tar people who believe in God with the same brush as cruel dictators, communists, fascists, psychics, astrologers.

Just lump them all together. They're all unreasonable. They're all mystical, unhinged, in the dark.

That's their view. Now, what do they believe? Well, number one, they believe... There's only about a handful of these. First of all, they believe in free inquiry.

The first principle of democratic, secular humanism is its commitment to free inquiry. We oppose any tyranny over the mind of man, any efforts by... Now listen, who is it that would stop freedom and keep you from having a free inquiry? Ecclesiastical, political, ideological or social institutions that shackle free thought. The first thing in the list is ecclesiastical.

Like, oh, it's the church. They're the first to jump in and stop your free thought, your free inquiry. Well, let me ask you one thing.

We're a church and we're studying secular humanism. How many secular humanists do you think have met tonight to study the church? Who's doing the free inquiry? I ask you. We oppose any tyranny over the mind of man, any efforts by ecclesiastical, political, ideological or social institutions to shackle free thought.

But ecclesiastical comes first. Boy, that church will be there before any despot, any tyrannical ruler, any ideological fascist or communist or Bolshevik or totalitarian. No, no, the church will get there first.

That's what they're saying. So, we're for free inquiry. Well, that's fine.

I'm all in favor of free inquiry. I think we're doing a little more free inquiry than they are. Number two, we believe in separation of church and state.

Secular humanists believe in the principle of separation of church and state. The lessons of history are clear. Wherever one religion or ideology is established and given a dominant position in the state, minority opinions are in jeopardy.

Any effort to impose an exclusive conception of truth, piety, virtue or justice upon the whole of society is a violation of free inquiry. Clerical authorities should not be permitted to legislate their own parochial views, whether moral, philosophical, political, educational or social, and they ramble on and on and on about how dangerous it is for people with a religious point of view to have any political say whatsoever. Can't even represent that viewpoint.

And they move, again, putting everyone in the same bucket to go on to say, regrettably, in communist countries, the power of the state is being used to impose an ideological doctrine on the society. Hmm. What's happening in the science classroom? Is the power of the state being used to impose an ideological doctrine on society? Well, some would say yes.

It's the philosophy of naturalism. It's the philosophy of secular humanism. And it is exclusive.

What happened to free inquiry, where you can say, hmm, I wonder if this evidence might suggest an intelligent designer? I wonder if this might suggest that maybe some of the ancient beliefs of the human race that go back thousands of years might be true, that there is some

sort of creative intelligence behind biological life and behind the sophisticated programming and engineering that went into DNA and so on. Oh no, not allowed to inquire into that. We're all for free inquiry, but not that.

You can't inquire into that. That's, no, no. Well, those are the first two conflicting elements of secular humanism.

We're all for free inquiry, but we want to separate church and state. Therefore, if you inquire into anything other than what belongs to secular humanism, we don't want that, because we're separating the church and the state. Well, we're going to pause here and take our break.

It's amazing how fast we're already through our first session. When we come back, we're going to take a look at two things. We're going to finish looking at the tenets of secular humanism, and as we come to understand the major points of secular humanism, I think you will begin to recognize how it has permeated, infiltrated, and drenched and completely infiltrated all aspects of our modern American society.

Secondly, we're going to see what the logical conclusions are that you ought to draw, if you're a thinking, reasoning person, from this philosophy. And I'm going to give it to you from someone who is an ardent believer in it. I'm going to read you exactly what they wrote and the conclusions that they drew, and we'll see how those hold up.

Let's pause here and take our break.