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**The Non-neutrality of "Secular" Government**

by Freddy Davis

I often hear people (mostly Atheists) making the argument that Christians and Christian beliefs have no place in public policy. It is not just Atheists, though. Interestingly, some of the people expressing this criticism actually self-identify as Christians. The premise of the argument is that there are many religions represented in America, so government philosophy should be based on a "neutral" foundation. The only problem is, there is no such thing as a neutral point of view.

What Atheists try to promote as "neutral" is actually an overtly religious, Secular Humanist philosophy. It has its own way of answering all three of the worldview questions (1. What is the nature of ultimate reality? 2. What is a human being? and 3. What is the ultimate people can gain from life?). On top of that, all of its answers are based on faith. Additionally, this philosophy has its own way of dealing with morality. Based on the overt belief that God does not exist, it makes moral pronouncements based purely on the desires of those who hold the levers of power.

As examples of how this gets played out in real life, look at these recent headlines.

***Commission Says Christian Business Owners Should Leave Religion at Home***

In this story, the Human Rights Commission in Lexington, KY has decreed that Christian business owners who refuse service to LGBT organizations can be put in legal jeopardy. In other words, do business in ways which violate your religious beliefs or you can be fined, put out of business, or even be put in jail.

***College Students Claim They Were Threatened after Handing Out Constitutions***

This is a story about four Southern Oregon University students who were threatened with disciplinary action for passing out free copies of the U.S. Constitution on a public campus.

***City Threatens to Arrest Ministers Who Refuse to Perform Same-Sex Weddings***

In this story, two Christian ministers who own an Idaho wedding chapel were told they had to either perform same-sex weddings or face jail time and up to \$1000.00 per day in fines. Since the wedding chapel is a for-profit business and not a church, they were told they must comply with the city's new "nondiscrimination ordinance." They have operated the wedding chapel for 25 years.

These headlines are only a small sample of instances where this "neutral" philosophy is forcing people in the nation to operate by a set of moral principles different from their own. Many more examples could be listed and they are becoming more frequent and more high profile.

**Naturalistic Religion**

The people in political power who are trying to push an agenda which is "non-religious" believe that their approach is religiously neutral. However, nothing could be further from the truth. To these people, neutral means suppressing beliefs which don't correspond with their beliefs. So let's take a deeper look at this "neutral" philosophy. What does it really involve?

Neutral, in this case, is based on a naturalistic understanding of reality. Adherents believe that by putting aside the beliefs of an organized religion they are

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putting aside all faith. But what most of them don't realize is that their own belief is a faith system.

A naturalistic worldview is one which begins with the belief that everything which exists is explainable using natural means – there is no such thing as a supernatural reality. But just because Naturalists assert there is no supernatural realm does not mean it is so. In fact, to be consistent, they must be able to account for the entirety of the natural universe using natural means. That is, they must be able to prove, using experimental science, that it is possible for the material universe to have come into existence and operate the way it does. If they can't do that, they have to believe their premise by faith – which would make their beliefs a religious faith, not an empirical reality.

So exactly what do they need to demonstrate using experimental science that would prove their case. There are four basic essentials.

1. They must prove that it is possible for the material which makes up the natural universe to have come into existence spontaneously or that it is eternal.
2. They must prove that life could have emerged from non-life.
3. They must prove that the variety of life forms which exist on earth could have come into existence by natural means.
4. They must prove that consciousness could have emerged out of non-consciousness.

So the question is, which of the four is able to be demonstrated based on experimental science? And the answer ...? None of them! The very basis for the existence of the material universe as explained by Naturalists must be believed by faith. In other words, the foundation of the "neutral" point of view is a religious system.

### **Naturalistic Belief Expressions**

As a religious system, the next thing we need to understand is how a naturalistic belief system plays out in life. Since Naturalists insist that the operation of all public institutions be based on its value system, we need to understand what that system consists of.

#### ***Basis for its Belief about God***

Naturalism believes that God simply does not exist. There is no empirical evidence for this belief, so it is based purely on the faith presuppositions of their worldview.

#### ***Basis for Understanding the Nature of Human Beings***

The naturalistic belief about human beings is that they are purely natural creatures which came into existence by naturalistic evolution. Again, there is no science to back up this claim. They believe it simply because they have, by fiat, ruled out any other possibility.

#### ***Basis for its Belief about Purpose***

In order for a transcendent purpose to exist, there must be some transcendent existence to provide meaning. However, Naturalists do not accept the existence of anything supernatural, so they do not believe it is possible for there to be a purpose beyond what an individual makes up for him or herself. Once again, there is no scientific basis for this belief. It is purely a philosophical assumption.

#### ***Basis for its Belief about Life***

Life, for Naturalists, is assumed to have come into existence by naturalistic evolutionary means. As such, all life forms are viewed to be equally valuable. There is no reason one life form (including human life) has any more value than any other. Thus, the morality of killing or not killing any life form, in any given situation, is dependent purely on the evaluation of those who hold power. The morality of capital punishment, murder, abortion, hunting, vegetarianism, and every other topic related

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to preserving or killing life is subject to the determination of those who hold political power. Once again, there is no scientific basis for this point of view. It is based purely on the faith assumptions of Naturalists.

### ***Basis for its Belief about Family***

As with all of the other topics, the concept of family, for Naturalists, is based on a purely natural understanding of reality. Since there is a complete denial of the existence of the supernatural, there can be no belief that God created the family to exist in a particular way. The definition of family, then, is subjective based on the desires of those who hold political power. As such, family groupings which are based on homosexual relationships, polygamous relationships, pedophilic relationships, or any other structure can be acceptable. As before, there is no science to back up this point of view. It is accepted by default, and every other point of view is simply dismissed out of hand.

### ***Basis for its Belief about Sexual Morality***

Since Naturalists don't accept the existence of a God who could decree what is right and wrong concerning sexuality, the only possible source for determining the morality of sexual matters is human beings. Humans are looked at simply as natural animals which must decide for themselves how they wish to act sexually. As before, this is a faith position as there is no science to back up this point of view.

### ***Basis for its Approach to Creating Laws***

The same approach for dealing with all of the other topics must be applied to the law, as well. Naturalists do not acknowledge the existence of a supernatural law giver, so law cannot have an absolute basis. In their understanding, the power brokers in society create laws which promote

the survival of the group. Any law whatsoever is potentially proper, and they can be changed anytime those in power deem it desirable. The basis of this point of view is not empirical, but is a philosophical construct.

### ***Basis for its Approach to Economics***

Concerning economics, Naturalists use the same kind of reasoning as before. The ultimate goal of society is survival. There can be no higher purpose because there is nothing higher to give that kind of purpose. The most natural approach to economics based on this point of view is a system where everyone obtains the same outcome. Generally, this must be enforced by some kind of top down political system which has the power to make it happen. In a society dominated by Naturalism, the most common enforcement approaches are either some form of dictatorship or a communist/socialist system. In order to philosophically support this point of view, Naturalism needs to be demonstrated to be true. However, since that is impossible, it must go forward as a faith assumption.

### ***What "Neutral" Means for Naturalists***

In truth, Naturalist's attempts to make the public square religiously neutral are not neutral at all. In fact, there is no such thing as neutral in this arena. Below is a partial list of what "neutral" actually means to those who believe in a naturalistic worldview.

Neutral means opposing anything that has to do with any belief system except Naturalism.

Neutral means promoting naturalistic evolutionary theory.

Neutral means operating on a philosophy of the survival of the fittest.

Neutral means promoting abortion.

Neutral means promoting relativism and purposelessness.

Neutral means promoting alternative family structures.

Neutral means promoting (or denying the existence of) sexual promiscuity.

Neutral means basing laws on relativistic rather than absolute principles.

Neutral means creating an economic system based on equal outcomes rather than equal opportunity.

### **Neutral Is Not Neutral**

As can clearly be seen based on the above observations, neutral is not really neutral. It is the promotion of particular beliefs which correspond with a naturalistic worldview, and the exclusion of anything else. While the Naturalistic approach to "religious neutrality" has as its purpose to eliminate religious discrimination from the public square, what it actually does is create religious discrimination based on a different set of religious principles.

Some will now look at this situation and discern an even deeper problem. If it is impossible to be truly religiously neutral, how do we keep sectarian beliefs and a theocratic government from emerging?

Well, the answer already exists in the founding documents of our nation. The first amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits the establishment of a state church. As such, the government is not allowed to push sectarian beliefs on the citizenry. That is one part of the equation.

There is another element, though, which involves which moral rules will have the most influence on our laws. That is covered by another phrase in the first amendment to the Constitution which prohibits the abridgement of the free exercise of religion. This does not simply mean that people can go to whatever church they want, but that they are free to express their religious beliefs in every part of the public square – including the halls of government. This part of the equation has the potential to become problematic, but will not if the founding principles are truly respected. While these precepts do come specifically from the Christian faith, they promote principles of justice and equality, not sectarianism.

The reason this works is because the system is set up for the nation's values to be determined by the citizenry, not the government. And this is done in a way which does not limit the influence of the citizen's values in the public square, but welcomes them all. The people elect representatives who represent their values and who create public policy which corresponds with those values. That determination belongs only to the people. It is not up to

executive or judicial officers to determine them. The problem which exists in our day is that a minority of people have usurped our system using executive and judicial power based on a naturalistic worldview understanding of how things ought to work.

The solution to this problem is not more executive or judicial fixes. Rather, it is allowing the system to work as it was designed. But for that to happen, it is necessary to elect people to representative office who respect the system – something that is currently in short supply.

All that said, the bottom line problem is not a system problem – it is a heart problem. There are enough citizens in the nation today who are far from God and are happy to elect and support people who are more interested in a particular political agenda than they are in seeing the purposes of God accomplished in the world. And the only solution is for Christians to massively take the gospel into society and lead people to Christ. Until we see a change of heart, we will not see a change in society.

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