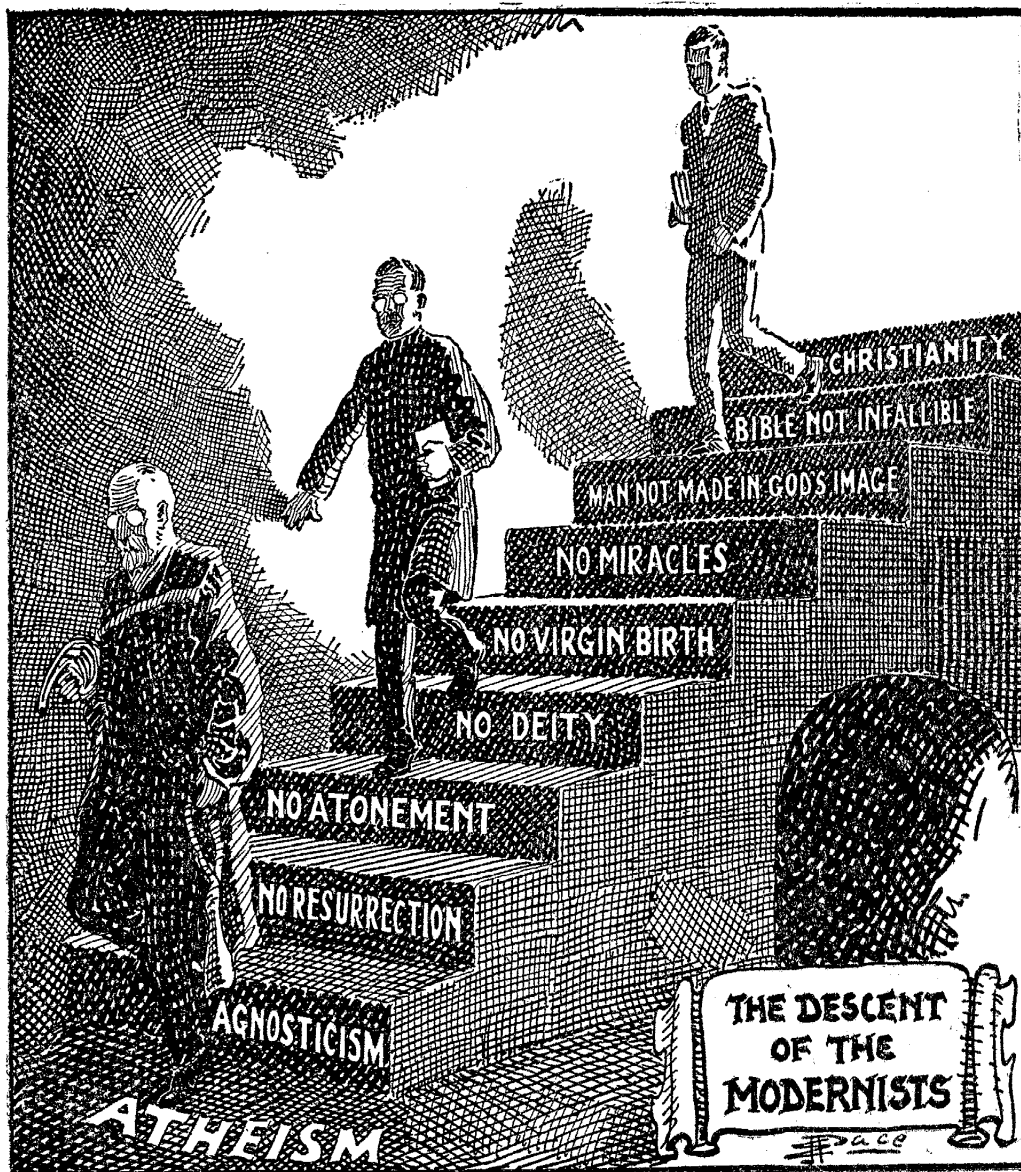


SECULAR HUMANISM:

Hedonistic – Naturalistic – Materialistic

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America has become the world's foremost champion of hedonism. This is the mindset in which the acquisition of pleasure and enjoyment is the highest priority in life. Responsibilities such as worship to a holy God, fulfillment of obligations, and personal improvement are deemed of secondary importance. Having fun is all that counts.

Hedonism and Pleasure

Not all things pleasurable are hedonistic. It's a pleasure to taste well-prepared food. It's a pleasure to rest after a toilsome day. It's a pleasure to know you've done a job well. In itself, pleasure is good. Pleasure is a part of God's creation, of which he himself said was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Moreover, the wise man of Old Testament times wrote that "there is nothing better for a man than that he should enjoy eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor" (Ecclesiastes 2:24).

Yet pleasure, as a part of creation, is no more worthy of one's total pursuit than is fame, riches or power. The pursuit of pleasure may, in fact, be harmful rather than beneficial. Jesus once told a parable about how the word of God, when planted in the hearts of some people, is choked by "cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14). The pursuit of pleasure apart from godliness is like serving the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25.)

The philosophy most associated with pleasure is that of 'hedonism.' The name of this philosophy comes from the ancient Greek word *hedone* which indicates pleasure. In ancient times, the philosophy of hedonism was promoted in various forms by Cyrenians and Epicureans. The Cyrenians tended to stress the licentious and restricted pleasures to those of the senses whereas the Epicureans, while acknowledging pleasures of the flesh, put more emphasis on peace of mind and the absence of pain.

Modern philosophers such as Thomas Hobbs, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mills have also defended hedonism. Hedonism is now often categorized in different ways. Psychological hedonism contends that as a matter of scientific fact, pleasure is man's only motivation. Utilitarian hedonism contends that a person's conduct should have as its goal the giving of pleasure to the greatest possible number of people. Egotistic hedonism restricts pleasure to that of a single person. Philosophical hedonism contends that moral conduct should seek the most pleasure with the least amount of pain. In any case, hedonism is not so much the doing of a specific act which grants pleasure as it is a way of life produced by the viewpoint that there is nothing more worthy of pursuit in life than that which gives pleasure.

Although Christians distinguish between those pleasures that are biblically moral from those that are Biblically immoral, there is no such distinction in hedonism. To a hedonist, whatever is considered pleasurable is considered morally good. Hedonism does not rely upon sources outside of man to determine what is pleasurable and what is not. In hedonism, as in humanism, “man is the measure of all things.” In hedonism, pleasure is the means by which man measures all things.

Modern Conditions Which Have Produced Hedonism

While hedonism has always had some adherents, its extreme popularity in recent times has not always been possible. Throughout most of known human history about all most people could do was survive. Hedonism requires leisure time and personal wealth. Unlike most people in history who have had neither leisure time nor wealth, modern man often has much of both. “America has become a nation of tremendous prosperity. No other nation in the history of the world has known such material abundance, nor enjoyed such a broad distribution of that wealth among its people . . . The affluence of the American society has elevated pleasure-intended activities from the realm of the ‘desirable’ to that of the ‘essential.’ An entire sector of the economy has blossomed to satisfy the spectrum of people’s urges. America has become a hedonistic heaven.”

Hedonism is also made possible by removal of social barriers. In rural America, everyone knew every other person’s businesses, their goings and comings; not so in modern America. The modern city provides a place of estrangement among crowds. People are free to pursue their selfish pleasures without neighbors’ awareness, or social condemnation. Moreover, the popularity of hedonism in modern times is partially the result of modern technology which has produced, advertised, and promoted new ways of acquiring pleasures of all kinds through travel, sports, drugs, etc. An interesting psychological factor now tending to produce hedonism is the prospect of doomsday. Arthur Levine calls this hedonism ‘going first class on the *Titanic*. If you’re going first class on the *Titanic*, you don’t want a worldview, an understanding of life as a whole. It would only get in the way of enjoying yourself and not thinking about tomorrow.”

Leisure time, personal affluence, urban living, scientific technology, doomsday prospects, and other factors have all contributed to the current popularity of hedonism. However, if any one person were to be singled out as the most influential promoter of hedonism in modern times, it would surely have to be Hugh Hefner. His *Playboy* magazine, first published in the mid-1950s has had an unusually large circulation – especially among college and university people – in the intellectual community. *Playboy* has had the second largest circulation of all

the American magazines in all of Western Europe, preceded only by the *Reader's Digest*. Through *Playboy*, Hefner has produced a slackening of moral standards, an excessive freedom of profane expression, and a much less disciplined world.

Because of Hefner we hear people casually using obscenities in public; we meet men and women who are openly living together outside marriage; we see young people getting high on whatever exotic substances they can obtain; we pass singles bars filled with men and women on the prowl for a one-night stand; we read in the newspaper daily of the soaring divorce rate caused by people bored and dissatisfied with the restrictions of married life; we see ads for X-rated movies or videos; we see people in T-shirts bearing suggestive or profane language; we are frequently upset by the aggressively selfish and self-indulgent attitudes we see in so many of our neighbors.

The destructive nature of Hefner's philosophy, endorsed and promoted by the networks, hasn't escaped some of the secular press. *Chicago Tribune*, columnist Bob Greene makes some startling and intriguing personal assessments in an article on Hefner. Green credits him with being one of the two most influential Americans in the second half of the twentieth century.

Green says, "Hugh Hefner let Americans know that they could behave in any way they pleased. Conventional ideas of morality didn't matter; the standards of one's parents didn't matter; the approval of one's peers didn't matter. All that mattered was that feeling good became an end in itself." To say that Hugh Hefner is the originator of the immoral revolution we've witnessed in recent decades would be incorrect. However, to say that no one person in modern times has more effectively exploited immorality than has Hugh Hefner would not be inaccurate. He took advantage of the fact that, for most Americans, moral standards had already been emptied of their Godly authority.

When a personal sense of duty, responsibility & sense of moral righteousness is no longer rooted in a belief that God holds all men accountable for their actions, then human behavior is often regulated by one's own personal pleasures. In the name of freedom, Hefner championed pleasure. By calling for individual freedom, Hefner promoted individual selfishness and social irresponsibility that worked havoc on our cultural morality and especially on the institution of marriage.

In the *Playboy Press*' 'official history' of the modern sex revolution, author Allan Sherman proved surprisingly candid. The sex revolution, he suggested, was led by 'grown men and women, determined, dedicated, and dirty-minded beyond the call of duty.' He added: 'Carefully, and often secretly, my

generation manned the battlefronts of the [Sex] Revolution. We produced and sold the rock 'n roll records with risqué lyrics; we invented the term 'wonder drug,' and LSD as the true panacea, pushing it at the kids in the allowed atmosphere at Harvard. My generation wrote and read best sellers with nothing more to recommend them than a half-dozen paragraphs of old fashioned smut . . . We invented or at least perfected wife-swapping. We performed illegal abortions. We crowded into the dark to watch those stupid stag films.'

According to Sherman, this conscious assault on the sexual restraints maintained by Western middle-class culture was soon transformed into an attack on the whole 'incredibly clean-cut and impossibly wholesome' American world of Disney, church socials, motherhood, miniature golf, apple pie, and hot dogs. In the end, Sherman suggested, the sex revolution of the 1960s and early '70s 'removed America's backbone and revealed our awful secret: Stripped of the Puritan ethic, we have no morals at all.' When it was over, he said, 'we were coming unglued, splitting off into gaps and shards and lunatic fringes.' Sherman added that 'nothing was reduced to less recognizable rubble than the revered . . . Institution of Marriage.'

All these things have not been alone in producing the highly immoral and hedonistic climate now prevalent in modern America. More significantly have been those ideas that have prepared the way for and now support modern hedonism. If Americans are ever to be turned away from modern hedonism, then Americans must first be turned away from those ideas that have produced and currently support modern hedonism.

Modern Concepts Supporting Hedonism

Just what are these ideas. They are anti-biblical beliefs primarily about the nature of man and the source of morality. They are also false human assumptions about the acquisition of human happiness, the nature of freedom, and the role of individuals within community.

The Physical and Temporal Nature of Man

Mankind is now generally said to be the highest life form that has evolved from a self-existent universe. Mankind is considered to be the product of a natural, social, and cultural heritage and environment. Humanity is thought to be not sinners in need of salvation, but basically good and self-sufficient. Mankind is assumed to be only temporal, like all other animals.

Individuals are therefore not believed to have eternal spirits or souls. Human beings will therefore not have to stand before an eternal God to be judged for their earthly conduct. Mankind is thought to be the sole judge of all things. Mankind is said to need guidance only by reason and intelligence, and use of the scientific method, not by faith or divine revelation. It is believed that the goal toward which all mankind should strive in life is to reach their full human potential in the here and now.

The Human Origins of Morality

Regarding the foundations of morality, these anti-biblical ideas contend that moral values are not derived from God, but from human experience; that ethics stems from human need and interests; that ethics are self-made and situational. It is therefore believed that no restrictions should be placed upon sexual behavior between consenting adults, nor should the many varieties of sexual exploitation in themselves be considered evil. All individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their own lifestyles as they desire.

These ideas are the ideas of humanism. They make man to be his own god. While these ideas have been steadily gaining credibility in the Western world since the time of the Renaissance, the last century especially has seen them unleashed because the authority of the Bible, which heretofore had held them in check, was undermined by skepticism, higher criticism, and the assumed validity of Darwin's theory of evolution. When the authority of the Bible was no longer considered valid, human hearts were emptied of the relevancy of God and a true understanding of the nature of man. Into hearts emptied of God's relevance and of humanity's true nature, mankind has been only too willing to install himself as his own god and to rely upon his own intelligence to guide his life.

The Deceitfulness of Hedonism

But it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jere 10:23) Because modern man knows that pleasure in itself is good, he has assumed that the pursuit of pleasure is his most worth-while goal. The hedonist seeks happiness through immediate and sensual thrills. The person who can have the most pleasures in life is judged to be the happiest. But this perspective fails to realize that man is a spiritual as well as a physical being. To think of mankind as only physical is to be "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures" (Titus 3:3).

The spiritual nature of man cannot be satisfied with physical thrills. The quest for happiness through pursuit of personal pleasure (if we may learn anything at all from human experience and casual observation) is the surest way to unhappiness and discontentment. Man is happy only if his spiritual nature is satisfied through godliness (Psalms 40:8).

The hedonist is also deceived because he thinks he can be free without responsibility. Assuming he is free to do as he pleases, the modern pleasure seeker looks upon Christian morality as restrictive of individual rights. He does not want to be inhibited by moral codes nor to be distracted from pleasurable quests. He thinks his freedom gives him license to indulge himself in his desired pleasures. He assumes that society must tolerate his selfish quests regardless of whatever social consequences may result. He generally has little if any sense of community responsibility, and whatever responsibilities he may assume generally come after personal pleasures are fulfilled.

Consequences of Hedonism

Whenever most people in a society think that way, then, because every man seeks only his own pleasures, the structures of society begin to fall apart and people are left in a decadent world. That's what has happened in the United States.

Statistical evidence began mounting during the 1960s and 70s which suggested that American family life was malfunctioning. The nation's divorce rate, for example, tripled between 1958 and 1978, while the marriage rate in 1980 stood at its lowest level in forty years. The number of divorced persons per 1000 married persons climbed from 35 in 1960 to 100 by 1980; among black women, the increase was from 78 to 257. The U. S. fertility rate (births per 1000 women aged 15-44) fell from 122.7 in 1957 to 66.7 in 1975, reflecting a rapid American retreat from child-bearing. Over the same few years, the nation's illegitimacy ratio (illegitimate births per 100 live births) tripled. Of the 3.5 million children born in the U. S. in 1979, 17 percent were to unmarried women; among black Americans, the figure was 55 percent, almost three times the figure from the late 1950s. Four out of every ten out-of-wedlock births in 1979 were to teenage girls, who commonly became children raising children. The incidence of human abortion increased from an estimated 100,000 illegal abortions annually during the late 1950s to 615,000 in 1973 (the first year when the procedure was legal in every state) to over 1.5 million in 1982. In that year, an estimated one million American children lived on the streets, as many as a third of them supporting themselves as prostitutes."

The hard fact is that whenever people choose freedom from all restraints they become slaves to their own passions. Their passions then lead them to ruination of their communities. “Society cannot exist,” said Anglo-Irish statesman, Edmund Burke, “unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more of it there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds can’t be free.”

If we wish really to be free to direct our own destiny, free of totalitarian domination, then we must discipline ourselves and seek the common good which is found only when all seek to obey God. Hedonism does not produce a free or stable society. The pursuit of pleasure ends not in fulfillment, but in emptiness.

A Realistic Worldview

In order to obtain fulfillment in his pursuits, mankind must pursue realistic objectives in accordance with a worldview that is realistic. Such a worldview requires recognition that man is a creature, made by an eternal Creator, and accountable to his Creator for his conduct; that man is a spiritual as well as a physical being, and that the spiritual nature of man, as well as the physical, has needs which must be fulfilled; that man is a sinner and in need of salvation from the consequences of his sin; that God cares about man and that he took the initiative in making possible man’s salvation by having his Son bear the penalty for the believers’ sins; that the word of God is given to man in order that man might know how to live; that the word of God is demonstrated by the life of Jesus, the incarnate Word, as an example for men to see how the word is to be lived.

The pursuit of objectives that give a real sense of fulfillment also requires that people act according to the reality of God’s existence and of man’s spiritual nature. This means that in order to gain life, one must lose it (Matthew 16:25). Self-denial and humility are required. Greatness is achieved through service (Matthew 20:25-28). Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians describe both negative and positive actions of those who think realistic. Negative conduct includes repentance, the laying aside of all anger, malice, slander, lying, greed, etc. Positive conduct includes obedience to the Lord in such things as being kind, compassionate, gentle, patient, thankful, forgiving, etc. It includes being genuinely honest, speaking the truth in love, working diligently, being just and fair, forbearing with one another, etc. Husbands are to love their wives as themselves. Wives are to submit to their husbands. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. The conduct that brings fulfillment is unselfish. It is in exact contrast to the selfishness of hedonism.

Whereas the pursuit of pleasure ends in emptiness and boredom, the pursuit of objectives based upon spiritual realities brings lasting joy, peace and happiness. It's a spontaneous joy based upon deliverance from sins, like the joy of Israel when they were delivered to the other side of the Red Sea from their Egyptian enemies (Exodus 14:30-15:21; Acts 8:5-8; Matthew 25:21). It's a joy which minimizes hardships and suffering, like the joy of Paul and Silas when they sang praises to God at midnight, even though they had just been beaten and bound in prison (Acts 16:16-25). It's a joy that sustains persecution and the loss of property for Christ's sake, like the Hebrews who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, because they knew that they had in heaven an enduring substance (Hebrews 10:34). It's a joy that looks upon trials and hardships, not as circumstances to be endured, but as means to produce greater character (James 1:2-4).

Conclusion

In this world two conflicting worldviews compete for the minds and hearts of men. One is temporal, the other is eternal. One walks by the flesh, the other by the spirit. One is man-centered, the other is God-centered. One is pleasure seeking, the other is joy producing. You must decide which of these worldviews will determine the way you live. And whether or not you consciously decide, you will either make pleasure your God, or you will serve the God of all joy.

Naturalism is the belief that nature is all that exists. This belief has religious connotations. Naturalism requires that nature be the means by which the origin and processes of all things are explained. It means that naturalism is the key to all knowledge. It means that nature is the lord of man.

Naturalism Is Religious

Naturalism requires that certain divine characteristics be attributed to nature. First, if nature is all there is, and power operates within nature, (such as in weather conditions, in the force of a mighty river; in the growth of living plants and animals, etc.), then nature, rather than a supernatural being, must be considered all powerful.

Second, if nature is all there is, and intelligence is operative within nature, (through design, order, wisdom, beauty, etc.), then nature, rather than a supernatural being, must be considered all wise.

Third, if nature is all there is, then nature, because it exists, must be considered self-existing. This implies that nature is eternal - another attribute of deity.

Origins of Naturalism

Although naturalism arose in the eighteenth century, it received no broad-based following because it had no explanation of the mechanics by which nature originated or is sustained. However, when Charles Darwin published in 1859 his *Origin of Species*, he provided plausible mechanisms for the theory of organic evolution, and with that, outlined, for many who were wanting it, an excuse for their denial of the supernatural. Naturalism then gained credibility, and became a major foundation stone for modern humanism.

Significance of Naturalism

The theory of organic evolution is primarily biological. However, if the process of evolution is true in biology, then the same evolutionary process may also be assumed to be operative in the origins and continuation of all things. A supernatural God is therefore no longer needed to explain origins or continuing events of nature. Humanism generally denies the existence of a supernatural being.

If the theory of evolution is true, then it must of necessity effect every area of human knowledge. If there is no supernatural, then human knowledge cannot be acquired through divine revelation, (that is, the Bible). Naturalism requires that knowledge be acquired only from nature, and only through the natural processes. This is also affirmed by humanism.

Humanism also states that since human knowledge is limited by naturalism to whatever can be ascertained through nature, then whenever man seeks to know about himself, he can only learn from nature whatever nature chooses to reveal by its own processes.

Relationship Between Man and Nature

These beliefs of humanism suggest that nature is the eternal regulatory force and intelligence which humanity must accept. By this reasoning, man must submit to nature & live harmoniously with it. However, man refuses to accept his natural environment as his Lord. Man must change it, and regulate it. Man wants to be Lord over Nature. This desire is expressed in the Preface to the second Humanist Manifesto.

The next century can be and should be the humanistic century. Dramatic scientific, technological, and ever-accelerating social and political changes crowd our awareness. We have virtually conquered the planet, explored the moon, overcome the natural limits of travel and communication; we stand at the dawn of a new age, ready to move farther into space and perhaps inhabit other planets. Using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend our life-span, significantly modify our behavior, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers, and provide humankind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life. . . . Humanity, to survive, requires bold and daring measures. We need to extend the uses of the scientific method, not to renounce them. . . . Confronted by many possible futures, we must decide which to pursue.

The concluding sentences of the first *Humanist Manifesto* declared that “Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible . . .” This idea that man should rule over nature is not new. In his commentary on the Old Testament book of Judges, James B. Jordan compares the modern religion of secular humanism to the worship of Baal, the ancient Canaanite fertility god.

So what was Baalism? In essence it was the ascription of power to Nature: The universe has within itself the force of life. The world as we know it is the result of the union of the ultimate male and female principles of the universe, which may be called Baal and Ashteroth (or Astartes). (A similar goddess is Asherah, mistranslated as groves in the King James Version. The difference between the goddesses is technical and both were expressions of the same religious principle.) Canaanite philosophers believed, of course, that these ultimate forces were impersonal, and that their union was not sexual; but the common people preferred to think of the matter mythically. The sun god copulated with the origin mud of the world, and the animals and man resulted. How does such a myth differ from a more sophisticated expression of the same principle, such as can be found in any 21st century

high school science textbook? Once, we are told, there was a vast primordial sea. Then one day, sparked by the sunlight, an organic molecule appeared, which evolved to become our present world. A male principle, sunlight, inseminates a female principle, the primordial sea, and life is born.

The Baal-Asteroth religion understandably was intimately concerned with fertility. The Creator God of the Bible had promised fertility to Israel if they were faithful to Him (Dt. 7:13-14), but what He demanded was moral loyalty, including especially sexual chastity (monogamy). The religion of Baal, however, advocated exactly the opposite method of getting fertility. Chaotic orgies would stimulate Nature (human, animal, and crop fertility). The true religion of Israel said that fertility was obtained by submitting to the Creator, while Baalism said that fertility was obtained by stimulating Nature. Thus, in true religion, man is the servant/slave of God, in submission to Him; while in Baalism, man is the lord of his god (Nature) who needs to be stimulated by him.

Nature religion is a religion of stimulation. Man has to stimulate Nature in order to get results. Like the Baal priests of the ancient world, he may engage the senses, or cut himself with knives (1 Kings 18:28), in order to arouse the sleeping god. This is also the philosophy of the modern world. Stimulating nature is not seen (as in Christian faith) simply as a form of technological dominion. It is also seen as a way of salvation, so that modern medical scientists believe they will solve the problem of disease by learning how to control nature, and modern philosophers believe that controlling nature will permit man to control evolution and advance humanity, while revolutionaries from Marx to Marcuse believe that simply stimulating society through the imposition of social chaos will automatically lead to a better world.

Impact Of Naturalism Upon Christianity

The impact of naturalism upon Christianity in America is enormous. Naturalism contributes immensely to the destruction of Christian homes and also to society as a whole. Naturalism dominates the nations compulsory educational establishment from top to bottom. When Christian parents send their children to public schools, their children learn the philosophy of naturalism. They are taught that nature is all there is, that there is no God, that the Bible consists of myths, legends and superstitions, that man evolved by chance to become what he now is, that man has no soul, that there is no such thing as sin, and therefore no need for salvation from the eternal consequences of sin.

Since naturalism teaches that there is no God, then it concludes that human beings will not stand in judgment before God, that there will be no life after death, and therefore that there is no heaven and no hell.

While Christian parents insist that their children live by Christian values, their children may be under pressure from school teachers and fellow students to live by the values of naturalism. Children may therefore be torn between two diverse value systems. They may become confused regarding what is right and what is wrong. This often creates family tensions between parents and children, and far too frequently, results in children rebelling against their Christian parents.

Flaws Within Naturalism

Naturalism Cannot Explain Morality

To overcome family deterioration caused by naturalism, we must teach that naturalism is fatally flawed with unsolvable problems. In the first place, if nature acts as it has been designed and programmed by nature to act, then all actions of living things can only be classified as natural actions. Whatever nature does must automatically be considered right. When snakes stick out their tongues, when bears catch and eat fish, when birds fly south for the winter, they are all acting naturally and rightly. Wild and domesticated animals act naturally by instinct or as they have been trained. All actions of such animals do not fall into a moral category.

The physical conduct of human beings, however, while performed within natural boundaries, is generally realized to come within a moral category. If nature is all there is, and if man is only natural, then it might be considered natural for a man to tell lies, to be adulterous, to murder, or even to be cannibalistic, and such would then be considered right. If such conduct were the basic nature of humanity, then it would not be natural to be truthful, chaste, faithful or righteous. The fact that humanity is capable of opposite types of conduct within the moral category, one righteous and one wicked, indicates that humanity is not confined to natural activity. Therefore, nature is not all there is.

All men, whether humanists or Christians, insist that humanity must abide by certain moral imperatives. The differences between humanists and Christians are about which moral imperatives are applicable. Christians, believing that people are responsible to God, accept moral imperatives from God. However, humanists, believing that mankind is only natural, incorrectly departs from naturalism to insist that people must act according to moral imperatives, not of nature's design, but of man's own choosing!

For humanists, moral values are relative, situational, and autonomous. Humanists insist that there are no absolute moral values. However, that insistence is itself an absolute. What they are really saying is that there must be no arbitrary absolutes not of their own choosing. Humanists seem to think that absolutely nobody but humanists should be allowed to impose absolutes upon others!

Naturalism Is Not Scientifically Proven

A second flaw of naturalism is that, in spite of its claim to be scientific, naturalism cannot be supported either by the scientific method or by commonly recognized principles of science. Scientific methodology requires both observation and repetition, neither of which is applicable to the origin of the universe since scientists were not there to witness it, nor does the universe repeat its origination. Moreover, scientific principles of causality, analogy, comprehensiveness and consistency all fail to support naturalism's theory of evolution. The principle of causality requires that every effect have a cause. The theory of evolution, however, has no explainable cause to commend it. The principle of analogy (or uniformity) requires that the present be explained in terms of the past. Nothing in the present explains the evolutionary assumption that life comes from non-life. The principles of comprehensiveness and consistency also indicates that evolvement by chance of living creatures, even over extremely long periods of time, is impossible.

Other known scientific principles also argue that nature could not have originated through the process of evolution. The second law of thermodynamics, a proven law of science, demonstrates that all things in nature tend to deteriorate and decay whereas evolutionary theory would have us believe, without scientific viability, that living things within nature evolve in an upward progression of complexity.

Naturalism Is Subjective

Finally, naturalism unrealistically presumes that its so-called scientific foundations are unbiased and objective. However, studies in the philosophy of science have clearly demonstrated that all the natural sciences have preconceived philosophical foundations. Natural scientists approach their experimentation with theories derived from their own personal training and previous experiences. Among men there is no such thing as absolute objectivity.

Scientific pronouncements about the validity of evolution are founded, not upon any knowledge derived from the scientific method, but from personal presuppositions of the scientists. Belief in evolution is just that. It is a faith. In the final analysis, naturalism, like humanism, is a religion!

Conclusion

Although modern man wants to believe in naturalism, there are too many objections to its validity. If naturalism were true, then man would not want to be lord over nature, nor would it be flawed with unreasonable and unscientific difficulties. Since humanism is built upon the foundation of naturalism and since naturalism can be demonstrated to be false, then it follows that humanism is also false.

Strictly speaking, materialism is the belief that matter is all that exists. In this absolute sense, materialism makes no distinction between matter and mind. It holds that the mental faculty in man is but an extension of the physical. In this sense, materialism is a part of naturalism. However, the term 'materialism' is generally used in a much looser, and more practical sense. In a practical sense, a materialist is one who acts like matter is all there is. Most people will deny, if asked, that matter is all there is. However, many people act in ways inconsistent with what they say they believe.

For example, if you had asked Moses if obedience is necessary and if he believed what God said, he would surely have said 'yes'. And to his credit, Moses generally acted that way. However, on one occasion, God instructed Moses to speak to a rock and promised him that then water would come from the rock for Israel and their cattle. Moses was on this occasion no doubt exasperated by the constant complaining of the Israelites. At any rate, he struck the rock twice and spoke to the people, rather than speak to the rock as God had commanded. In so doing Moses did not obey God. The reason that Moses did not obey is, as God himself said, "because you did not believe me, to hallow me in the eyes of the children of Israel . . ." (Numbers 20:1-13).

In like manner, whether or not a person says he believes that matter is all there is, he is a materialist if, practically speaking, materialism is a way of living which places total confidence in material possessions. A materialist is one who seeks to acquire material goods because he believes that his quality of life is determined by the quantity of his material possessions. A materialist trusts in his material possessions to satisfy his needs rather than trusting in God or some other source of power. Moreover, practically speaking, a materialist is one who acts like man is only a physical, material being. By his actions, a materialist denies the existence of man's spiritual nature.

Materialists In The Bible

The rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22) who asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life was a materialist. When Jesus told him to sell all he had, give to the poor, and then follow Jesus, the rich young ruler refused because "he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22). He trusted his material possessions to satisfy his needs. His actions demonstrated that in this life he did not believe that Jesus could satisfy his needs apart from his material riches. He acted like he was only physical, not also spiritual.

Likewise, Jesus' parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) is about a rich man who thought he could meet all his needs with material goods. That's why Jesus called him a fool. The rich fool acted as if he did not realize he had a spiritual nature and spiritual needs. Jesus had prefaced his parable with the statement that "one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

Goals Of Materialists

From a biblical perspective, there is nothing wrong with materials or with material possessions. However, it is wrong to *rely* upon material possessions to satisfy all the needs of life. It is wrong because God requires faith in Him to meet the needs of life (Hebrews 11:6), which is impossible if faith is placed in material possessions or mammon (Matthew 6:24).

If asked, many people would declare that man has a spiritual nature. At the same time, however, they may be directing all their goals toward the acquisition of material goods for physical benefits only. By their actions, they indicate belief that the quality of their lives depends upon the quantity of material goods accumulated. In a practical sense, matter is their god! They may claim to be believers in God, but in reality, they are practical atheists!

Materialists are goal oriented toward acquiring material things. They look only to themselves or to civil governments to supply the material needs and comforts of life. They are either willfully ignorant, or neglectfully unmindful, of the spiritual needs and blessings of life. By their actions, materialists deny the reality and importance of spiritual things. They deny the relevancy of God to man. Materialists don't consider that God is man's creator, provider, sustainer, lawgiver, savior, lord, judge and rewarder or punisher.

Materialists are goal oriented toward fulfilling temporal human desires of the flesh. They are not so much concerned about love, joy peace, patience, and other spiritual experiences such as kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, etc., as they are about creature comforts derived from wealth, physical pleasures gained from food, drink, and sexual gratification, or self-esteem based upon personal achievement, fame, or power.

Materialists are not goal oriented toward the divinely declared reality of an everlasting existence in either heaven or hell. Having made no preparations for everlasting life with God, they are destined to everlasting torment and punishment where they will be separated from all that is good and holy, and be confined always to that which is evil and horrible (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29).

Nature of Materialists

Character

Materialists are interested primarily in themselves. They are, by their very nature, selfish. The rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22), the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21), the rich man who refused scraps from his table to be given to Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the priest and the Levite on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10:30-35), and the elder brother (Luke 15:25-32) were all selfish. They demonstrated by their speech and conduct that they were materialistic. Materialism supports modern humanism by its concerns with self and temporal existence.

The opposite of materialism is unselfishness and compassionate charity. Compassion seeks to relieve the physical and spiritual needs of others. The compassionate are commended by God (Matthew 25:31-40; Matthew 10:42). Jesus was compassionate (Matt 9:36). The apostles taught compassion (Gal 6:2). Compassion has been a benchmark of Christian conduct from the earliest days of Christianity.

Morality

Materialists have no certain sense of morality. If matter is all there is, then a man's success in life must be evaluated in terms of his accumulation and use of material things. And if matter is all there is, then the manner by which a man has acquired material things is relatively unimportant. Morals are then but a means to an end, having no definite values within themselves. Materialists may therefore determine for themselves whether morals have values, and if so, what they may be.

On the other hand, if matter is not all there is, if man does indeed have an everlasting soul, then success in life must be measured in terms of one's spiritual well-being, his relationship with God, and his preparation for everlasting existence apart from his physical body. And if matter is not all there is, then man may not determine for himself the manner by which he acquires and uses material things. Rather, the manner for acquiring wealth is prescribed by God. Man's acquisitions and uses of material things must be according to God as set forth in his written word.

Causes And Consequences Of Materialism

Christians in America now find themselves living in an extremely materialistic environment. All other values appear to be secondary to acquiring massive amounts of money in order to enjoy abundant physical pleasures and creature comforts. Reasons for American's current enchantment with materialism may be attributed to many factors – most of which have had detrimental repercussions on Christianity and the family.

Industrialization

Historically, materialism gained strong support from the industrialization of the western world. With the beginning of the industrial age, men turned more and more intensively toward money making pursuits, and therefore tended to give decreasingly less attention to the spiritual welfare of their families.

Whereas fathers once worked with their wives and children in agriculture or other family businesses, they now began to leave their families every day for financial employment elsewhere. As they did, their spiritual influence in their families diminished. As men became more preoccupied with businesses, their materialistic greed produced numerous social ills, most of which related to the deterioration of families. One researcher has declared that “the most dominant cause for the . . . break-up of the family . . . was the fact that the *men of America became almost completely preoccupied with money-making and building a great industrial culture.*”

Advertising

As materialistic pursuits increased, consumer goods were produced in larger varieties and quantities. Advertising also stimulated the desires of society to want ever more. Men worked long hours to make enough money to fulfill the desires of their families. Being gone a distance from home most of the daylight hours, men left the spiritual welfare of their families to wives and mothers. It follows that the influence of fathers began to wane, while that of mothers became, for practical and spiritual purposes, the heads of their families. Fathers now spent very little time with their children.

One study of ““middle-class fathers of one-year old infants found that they spent an average of only 20 minutes a day with their babies. When a recording microphone was attached to each infant’s chest, the data indicated that in terms of true, intimate interaction between father and child the average daily time together was *38 seconds*.”

When the time came that men could not by themselves earn sufficient funds for family desires, then their wives also had to seek employment away from their children. While materialism is not the only reason American women have joined the labor force, it is surely the predominate one. Note the statistical increase of women in the work force over the last one hundred years. “In 1890, less than five percent of the total number of American wives worked outside the home for wages and salaries. By 1940 this figure had increased to 17 percent, but the most dramatic increases followed World War II. In 1947, 20 percent, or one in every five married women was employed in the labor force. The proportion of married women in the workforce rose to one in four (25 percent) by 1950, one in three (32 percent) by 1960, and one out of two (48 percent) by 1980.” Two thirds of all wives are now in the labor force.

Materialism has thus contributed to removing men from the headship of their families. It has thrust the leadership of families upon women, (a role God did not intend for them to perform), and then it has burdened women with employment outside their homes and away from their husbands and children.

Public Schools

Another cause for America’s obsession with money is the fact that our public schools are now geared to promote materialistic rather than spiritual values. The purpose of education is generally declared to be that of instructing people how to make a living. In order to be a productive, tax-paying citizen, a benefit rather than a burden to society, people must be taught, it is said, in order that they can get jobs and make money.

In the name of secularization, modern public education recognizes only the material & the physical. By avoiding awareness of the spiritual nature of humanity, public education implies that matter is all there is, that the ‘good life’ must be lived here and now, that there is no life after death, and that therefore students should enable themselves by their education to acquire all they can while they can.

Loss Of Personal Identity

For many, a much more recent cause for America's enchantment with material possessions seems to be a growing loss of identity and a diminishing sense of personal worth. Our nation has been shifting from a Christian value system to a humanistic value system. It is also shifting from an industrial society to an information society. Radical social and economic changes are taking place. We live in an age of corporate take-overs. People feel insecure in employment. Most Americans move from one community to another a least once every five years. People therefore feel little sense of community stability or belonging. Families are deteriorating and breaking apart. Divorce rates in America are the highest of any nation in the world.

More than a third of the couples first married in the 1970's have now divorced. More than a third of the children born in the 1970's have spent part of their childhood living with a single parent. The emotional consequences of this trend upon both adults and children are proportionately large and suggest that in the future our society will become increasingly unstable and insecure.

People no longer feel secure and protected by traditional socio-economic structures that once provided security. All this produces an identity crisis that too often results in people thinking that 'if you do not look out for yourself, nobody else will.' When people can not any longer identify themselves with family, community, or employment, and when presumed relationships with God are commonly discredited by a generally humanistic society, money then becomes for most the only way they know of defining who they are by what they have. Thus, we live in a society wherein many people seem unable to feel good unless they have an abundance of material possessions.

Humanism Is Materialistic

Modern humanism is materialistic in both the strict and in the practical sense of the term. In the strict sense, because humanism holds that matter is all there is, it explicitly denies the spiritual nature of man.

“Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualist of mind and body must be rejected,”¹ “Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the ‘ghost in the machine’ and the ‘separable soul.’”

Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social & cultural context. There is no credible evidence that life survives the body.” “We have found no convincing evidence that there is a separable ‘soul’ or that it . . . survives death.”

In a practical sense, humanism, being economically materialistic, implicitly denies the spiritual nature & needs of man. It relies solely on material possessions to satisfy the physical needs of life. In acquiring material goods to meet life’s needs, however, modern humanism relies not just on the individual unit but upon the state. In modern humanism, governing agencies of society are responsible to collect economic resources throughout society in order that there might be an “equitable distribution of the means of life.”

Influence of Materialism Upon Professed Christians

For humanists, who believe that there is no God and therefore that there is no life beyond present existence, such materialistic thinking is understandable. Christians, however, should not be overcome by such temporal thinking. It is a sad fact that professed Christians now seem to be caught up in the same materialistic quests, and to the same extent, as other Americans. Have Christians forgotten where they are going? Have Christians forgotten what they should be doing? Or have most Christians never really had much conscious awareness of these things?

Christians should have a strong sense of identity with God. Christians are children of God (Romans 8:14-17). Christians belong to God (Romans 14:7-8). Christians live with the protective care of God (Psalms 55:22). Christians are a part of God’s family on earth – the church (Ephesians 3:14-15). A Christian’s sense of security relates to his personal identity with God (Ephesians 1:3-10; Ephesians 2:4-9). Christians ought not rely on money for their security (1 Timothy 6:10, 17). It is too uncertain (Proverbs 23:5). Those who rely on money make it their god! (Colossians 3:5).

Christians should understand that this temporal life and material things are not all there is. Christians are but aliens and strangers passing through time on the way to an eternal home with God (1 Peter 2:11). Christians ought not therefore give themselves, like the ungodly, to materialistic quests, but strive for spiritual service (Mark 10:24).

Christians should spend much time, effort, and money in doing good works that benefit others, and calling upon them also to obey and serve God (Matthew 25: 31-46; Ephesians 2:10). Christians must act on the premise of Jesus that “it is more blessed to give than receive” (Acts 20:35). Christians must assess their personal worth and success in life, not in terms of material possessions, but according to their standing with God, and their preparation for eternal life. To do otherwise is humanistic, foolish, and eternally destructive.

When professed Christians are materialistically minded, as most now seem to be, it is impossible for their homes to be genuinely Christian. Children imitate their parents. If Christians are going to build better Christian homes than now exists, then Christians must turn away from materialism. Children will come to feel secure in relying on God whenever they see that their parents are secure in their reliance upon God.

Conclusion:

Materialism is a major enemy of Christianity because it causes people to act like there is no God. It causes Christians to act like man has no spiritual nature. Materialism relies upon physical things to satisfy the needs of life. It is temporally oriented. It produces selfishness. It denies absolute morality. It makes a god of money. It has already captured the hearts of a vast number of professing Christians.