

Culture Wars and the Soul: Part 3

By J.P Moreland

J.P Moreland:

Well I very much appreciate your response to the series, and I would like to leave time for questions today, as many of you've asked me if I'd do that; and I'd be delighted to. I have tried to show that we are in a culture war today which is really not just something that's American, it's a part of a much broader conflict between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness.

And I've tried to share factors in modern culture that have led to a denial of the soul, and how that is part of a much larger cultural iceberg. Last time I tried to show how once you deny the soul's reality, the impact that that will have for ethical theory, and what's happening in modern moral debate as a result of a loss of belief in the soul. What I'd like to do today is, I'd like to give a very brief treatment of what a soul is and how one would go about defending its reality. Now you might think I don't need to defend the soul's reality because recently on the front page of The National Enquirer, they had a picture of the soul. It's really quite encouraging.

It was the first one that's ever been photographed. They had actually had us the picture of a soul leaving a person's body. I forgot to bring the picture with me. So, I think I might need a little bit more than that, but... but notice that the idea is if we can get an image of something that it's got to be real, see. And we prove something is real by having a sensory impression of it. And if we can't get a picture of the thing, well gee, it's kind of up for grabs and that's what I was talking about in the first first series of these lectures.

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So what I want to do is proceed in in two steps. I want to talk a little bit about what I take a soul to be, and then I'd like to share with you a general strategy for how I would go about trying to argue that there really is such a thing. So what is a soul anyway? What is a soul? Let me warn you that the biblical words for soul, and for Spirit, nephesh, and ruah, psyche, and pneuma are very very plastic and they mean a whole host of things and I suspect most of you know that.

But you want to be very cautious when you see the word soul or nephesh or psyche in the scriptures; you want to be careful not to read everything it ever means in that one particular passage. You have to be very careful especially with these biblical anthropological terms, to root them and understand them in their context. I want to talk about the soul in a very very precise way, and I want to say that the soul, if I were going to give a dollar 98 cent definition, the soul is that within me that makes me a conscious living human being. The soul is that within me that makes me a conscious living human being. And I want to expand this definition in a minute and my attempt to expand it will be an attempt to show you what intellectual work the notion of a soul does for me. But I want to focus on one feature of this definition. I've said the soul is that within me which makes me a conscious living human being.

I want to focus on the word conscious right now consciousness. And once we come to understand that in at least in a living organism, that's an animal or a human being. Once we understand that a living organism has consciousness, then it it appears that that organism has got to have a soul. Why is that? Well, let's return to the very first lecture that I gave two days ago about what matter is. If you ask someone, if you ask a scientist or a philosopher to tell you what matter is, that person whatever else she does, will be to give you a very detailed description in terms of chemistry and physics and there will be a detailed description of what matter turns out

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...to be and they will use physical properties. Matter will turn out to be something that occupies space that can move through space, something that can have an electrical charge, something that will have magnetic properties, and on it goes in a very interesting description can be given to the physical and chemical properties of a clump of matter.

One thing however becomes obvious if you think about it, and that is, that neither the existence nor the nature of matter depends upon consciousness for it to be. To see this, consider the following. Suppose that the world is just as it is right now - that there are rocks, there are carbon atoms, and electrons, and gold, and things of that sort. But suppose that God does not exist, and no conscious beings ever evolved in the history of the cosmos. So now we have a world without consciousness. Now we asked the question, what an electron still have negative charge? I think the answer is fairly obvious yes it would. Would, would gold still be malleable? Would gold still occupy the space that it has embedded in a mountain? I think the answer is yes and on it would go. The point is, that matter is... does not require consciousness in order for it to be or for it to be characterized in terms of what it is. Contrast that with sensations, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and willings- episodes of willing. If we had a world without conscious beings, there could not be episodes of sensation, episodes of... of thinking, believing, desiring, or willing in a world without consciousness. This means then, that those episodes are aspects of something immaterial not material. And so one of the things that the soul does, is it's that within me that makes me conscious and it makes me human.

If I were going to give you a more detailed definition of the soul, I would say that the soul is an immaterial substance that makes me human. That unites my parts, properties, and capacities, and that remains the same through change. Now let's dissect that for just a minute. I'm

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...a human being. There is something about me that makes me human. Saint Paul tells us in first Corinthians 15 that I have a human body. He also says that reptiles have reptilian bodies and that and that birds have avian bodies. Doesn't he? Now let me ask you, if the body of an organism can be exhaustively described in terms of chemistry and physics. That is, if the body of an organism is merely physical then what sense is there in claiming that there are reptilian bodies, avian bodies, and amphibious bodies, and human bodies? It is in virtue of having a human nature that the body's human.

It is in virtue of having a reptilian nature that a reptile's body is reptilian. And it is in virtue of having an amphibian Nature that an amphibian's body is amphibious. The nature is the soul. The soul is my individual human nature. It is that which makes my body human. Now I know Keith Edwards and we've talked about this, will be the first to tell you, and he knows a good deal about the brain and he'll be the first to tell you that the brain and the body, and I agree with him completely on this, are also physical objects. My brain is chemical. My body is physical. There are electrons possibly in my body, basis if such exists. And so I'm entirely comfortable, and Christians ought to be entirely comfortable with the idea, that the body is made out of chemistry. But the body also has properties true of it that escape chemical and physical description. And the body is distinctively human, and it is in virtue of the possession of a human soul that the body is human. And I conceive of the soul, if you want to know how I conceive of it, as something that is fully present throughout every one of my body parts. My soul is completely present in my toe.

It is completely present in my eyeballs. It is completely present, it's not my pineal gland as Descartes said. The soul is throughout my body. In fact the soul is not a spatial reality at all. It
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...is not in my toe by being inside of it spatially. If that were the case, then if you cut my foot off I lose part of my soul. That doesn't happen. So the soul is a non-spatial reality that diffuses the whole body, and is what makes all of my body human. The soul also gives unity to my body parts. My toe and my heart, and my nose, have a deep interrelationship with each other. And in fact, if you carefully take a look at the human body, you'll discover that the parts of my body presuppose my body as a whole. You don't have parts and then put them together and form a whole like with an automobile. In an automobile you assemble a bunch of parts together, and the parts exist prior to the whole and then when you put them together you have the whole. With the human body it's the other way around.

You have a hole and that hole begins to assemble body parts within it. Dallas Willard put it this way: the Soul is a body part vacuum cleaner. The soul is what sucks up matter and turns it into human body parts, and it is the soul that forms and stitches and knits the body together. If you did if there was no soul the human body would not be capable of being formed. Yes and I know a little DNA theory, and I don't think that that has anything to do with it in terms of what I'm saying at this point. The soul is also the seat of a unity of capacities. Now think about your own life. You have many capacities in you. You have the capacity perhaps to think about mathematics even though you're not thinking about it. You probably have the capacity to say no to lunch. But even though you might not exercise it it is possible you don't have that capacity, but you have many many capacities in you. A capacity is an ability to do something that is not actualized at the present moment. You have the capacity to learn Russian, even though perhaps that capacity has not been actualized in you. These capacities form a deep unity and they are embedded in the soul.

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The soul is the seat of your capacities. Finally not only is the soul and immaterial substance that makes me human, and that gives unity to my parts and capacities but the soul is what remains the same even though I change. The ancient Greeks talked about a ship called the ship. 'Theseus' or 'Theseus' and where I'm teaching a course we'll be studying this little ship here later on in the semester. And the Greeks puzzle over the following they said let's suppose the priests own this ship - the ship Theseus. And suppose that the priests lived to be a thousand years old and this ship, is a thousand year old ship and every year the priests go out on the Mediterranean and they come back to dock, and at the end of one year they take apart...there are a bunch of carpenters on the dock, and the carpenters take a part off of the ship and set it on the dock and they replace it with one board. Then the priest go out the next year and come back and at the end of the second year, they repair a second board and stack it on the on the dock and the priest go out with an... and at the end of the thousand year period, all of the original boards of the ship Theseus are stacked on on the dock, and the ship that the priests have been riding on for the thousand year period has got completely new boards in it now.

Now the Carpenters get tired of being land lovers and they decide they want to go out to sea, and so they take all the boards on the dock and build them put them together and they've got a new ship. The question now becomes which ship is the original ship, Theseus. Is it the one the priests are on? Or is it the one that the carpenters have rebuilt. The answer seems quite obvious to me, and it seems quite obvious that...that the ship, the original ship is the one the Carpenters rebuilt. If you have trouble seeing that, then retell the story and say that every time a board is replaced, they put frozen jello in the new ship. So that at the end of a thousand year period, the priests are now riding on a green frozen jello ship Theseus. And the carpenters have

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...reconstructed a ship made out of entirely the same parts as the original ship.

If you agree that the... the Carpenters reconstructed ship is the ship Theseus, then you hold to the following principle and it's this: a material object cannot gain new parts and lose old ones and still be the same material object. Now, do you know that your body gains new parts and loses old parts with monotonous regularity? Fact, you don't have the same parts that you had seven years ago, certainly, and you don't have the same parts completely that you had five minutes ago. You're constantly undergoing a shift of parts. What that means is, that if you are simply a physical object, you do not have an enduring self. You're not the same self that exists from one moment to the next.

You see that? You can only be the same self if there is something else in you that is over and above your body parts that came into existence when you came into existence, and passes out of existence if you ever do, which you won't, and which is not one of your body parts. And that's what the soul is. The soul is that which keeps you being the same through the substitution and gaining and losing of body parts. Now if you deny the soul's reality in this sense, then you cannot believe in literal sameness through change. Right, but then if you don't believe that all kinds of problems arise: why should I be punished for what a look alike did three weeks ago? Right? Right serious. Why should I fear going to the dentist? Because it's not going to be I who goes, it will be someone with my memories, right? Because I won't exist two weeks from now. I know you think I'm playing a game with you; I wrote an article and probably the leading journal for process philosophy the journals called process studies, and I said this makes process philosophy wildly implausible because of their view that you don't have a self that endures from minute to minute.

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And I raised this problem, and of course of, a response to Charles Hartshorne at Claremont says to this is...well the idea you don't have an enduring self gives new room for... for the Christian idea of altruism because you're not worried about yourself going to the dentist, you're showing compassion on another person that will be going to the dentist. I'm quite serious and my response to that was, my response to that was gee I sure love altruism, but I think you're being a little too generous with me; when I worry about the dentist I'm not worried about another guy going to the dentist, I'm worried about me going to the dentist and I know quite well the difference between worrying about myself and worrying about a lookalike.

The problem of unity through change and how a person can remain the same even though they undergo an exchange of parts. Now the soul then is that within me which makes me human, which gives unity to my capacities and my parts and so on and that lets me be the same as I change. Now there are very important things to keep in mind here, and I want to unpack a few things and then try to open it up for some questions. The first one I want to point out is, that my capacities and my soul can come in a hierarchy. For example, a person might not have the ability to say no to ice cream, but they might have the ability to develop the ability to say no to ice cream. You see that. In fact St. Augustine said, "What makes human beings different from animals is that they have higher order capacities". According to Augustine, animals might have beliefs but they don't have beliefs about their beliefs. And certainly they don't have beliefs about their beliefs about their beliefs.

You have lower and higher order capacities. I have the capacity to speak English. I don't have the capacity to speak Russian, but I might have the capacity to develop the capacity to speak Russian. Now you have ultimate higher order capacities, and so does a vegetable for
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...example. Does an acorn have the capacity to draw nourishment from the soil? Yes and no. If you mean does it have the first order capacity to draw nourishment from the soil. No. It doesn't have any roots. It can't. You can't put in the soil right now and draw nourishment, but it does have the ability to develop a root system, and that has the ability to develop certain things, and those will have the ability to draw nourishment.

Do you see that? This is important for abortion and euthanasia. There is a professor at Westmont College that claims, in a book that he just came out with, that defective newborns are not persons. And the reason they're not persons is because he says they don't have the capacity to relate to God, and because they don't have that capacity they're not humans. The problem with his view is, he is treating the capacity to relate to God as a first order capacity, not a higher order capacity. I would argue that a defective newborn does have the capacity to develop the capacity, to develop the capacity to relate to God simply by being human, even though through defect, that higher order capacity might not be capable of being actualized because it get blocked by a defect in a lower order capacity. So a defect is something which keeps higher order capacities that we have by nature from being unable to be actualized because of a defect in a lower order capacity that is necessary for the realization of higher order ones.

What that means is that defective newborns do have all of the capacities that go with being human simply by being human, even though some of them might not be capable of being actualized through the development of lower order capacities through a defect. So, the statement... the question does a defective newborn have the capacity to relate to God is ambiguous. If you mean does it have the first order capacity, the answer is no. Does it mean,
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...does it have a higher order capacity which through defect is unable to be actualized, I would argue the answer is yes because I get my highest order capacities from my human nature, not from anything I do.

So the notion of a soul, that structure, that has higher and lower order capacities is unbelievably helpful in ethics, tremendously helpful in psychology where much therapy is not focused on first order capacities but helping people develop capacities to develop capacities. That sort of thing. What about frozen sperm? Can does a frozen sperm have soul stuff in it. You bet it does. I don't see any problem at all with why a frozen sperm couldn't have soul stuff in it. An acorn has soul stuff in it but it can't... it lays dormant.

See the fact that the souls... that soul stuff can be dormant doesn't mean it's nonexistent. An acorn can sit on a shelf for 15 years, and it still can become and it can still actualize its living capacities in the right conditions. So is the acorn living? Yes and no. If you mean by living it's actually doing things that living things do, no. But it has the capacity latent and dormant within it to, realize certain living abilities; I don't know why we should change the territory when it comes to the soul. I don't know why of sperm in a sperm bank could not continue to have dormant within it, the capacity to develop living functions of certain circumstances and that seems to be the way souls are. And I leave it to the biologists and others to tell me more about the soul in that regard. So these are some things about the soul in terms of what the soul might be, and I know some of its abstract but this is a little bit of of the type of work that the soul does for one. How do you argue for the soul? Well the first way you argue for it is, you try to show that there are things true of your mental life that aren't true of your physical life, and things true of your physical life that aren't true of your mental life and so the two can't be the same thing. If my mental life has

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...features different from my material life or vice versa, then how can my mental life just be my physical life? If they're things true of them that are not true of what is true of the other they've got to be different. There are things true of my mind that are not true of my brain and things true of my brain not true of my mind, and so the mind and brain have got to be different. For example, any region of my brain, anything going on in my brain, will have chemical and physical properties, spatial location, any part of my brain is probably located somewhere between my ears... hopefully less I've been in a fight with Mike Wilkins. Then they might be (inaudible)... And any part of my brain will also have certain mass or weight. Now try to apply those to thoughts. Do the thoughts that I have... is my thought of launch a quarter of an inch from my left ear? Is my thought of the Pythagorean Theorem of two centimeters to the on top of it? I mean thoughts are just not the kinds of things that appear to be spatially locally, localized. What's the chemical composition of my thought of lunch?

How much does my thought of lunch weigh? I mean philosophers don't need neck braces after all, if they have heavy thoughts. If you... if you close your eyes and hallucinate a pink elephant, you will have in your mind a pink elephant awareness. But there will be nothing in your brain that is pink or that's an awareness of pink. A neuro physiologist could peer all of your brain while you're having a pink elephant elucidation in your mind, and he's not going to see an awareness of a pink elephant in there because it's not in it in your brain it's in your soul. And so the first argument is, and I could go on and on, but the first strategy is to show there are things true of the soul that are not true of the body, and things true of the body that are not true of the soul, and therefore they cannot be the same even though they might enter into very intimate

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...cause effect relationships with one another. Brain damage can impact mental functioning no question about it. But then again psychological dysfunction and can impact the brain too. So causation can go both directions even though there is not identity between mind and brain.

The second kind of argument for the soul focuses on certain abilities we appear to have that would not be possible if I was simply material. Certain abilities we seem to have that would not be possible if I were simply material. One for example, and only focus on one, is freedom of the will, like I mentioned the first day. If you really believe that there is such a thing as freedom of the will, then you cannot be a physicalist or a materialist because physical systems don't behave freely. Physical systems are governed according to the laws of chemistry and physics. And if I were merely a material object however complicated, I would not have the ability to deliberate and to choose.

It is only if there is something in me in addition to my body that that it is possible for there to be such a thing as freedom of the will. So this type of argument tries to cite something that is apparently true of us. Now you can always argue you don't have free will. That would be an interesting discussion. But granted that we do have it, granted that we do for the sake of argument, then the physical list is in very dire straits because there is no room within materialism for freedom of the will. I wish I had more time on this, I promised I'd open it up for questions but I'd like to summarize. This has probably been the most abstract of all three of these sessions and I apologize for that. The simple truth is you can't do hard work on these topics without metaphysics and a certain amount of philosophy. That's... that's just part of the real estate.

But what I've tried to say is that the soul can be understood. It can be understood. Richard Swinburne wrote a book called *The Evolution of the soul*; he's a Christian philosopher at Oxford
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... has a whole section on the structure of the soul. It's very nicely done. But the soul is that within me which makes me a conscious living human being. The soul is an immaterial substance that makes me human, that unites my capacities and my parts and my properties, and that makes me the same even though I gain and lose body parts. To argue for the soul, you try to show there are some things true of your mental life that aren't true of your physical life, or some things true of your physical life that aren't true of your mental life and thus the two can't be the same thing even though they might intimately relate to one another.

And the second general strategy for arguing for the soul is to try to cite certain human abilities that are apparently true that would not be possible if physicalism were the case. Now I'm going to I'd like to take about five or ten minutes for questions, and I know I've probably raised something that you'd like to ask. Several of you asked if I could do this, and so let's...please feel free if you if you'd like to raise an issue or a question I...I'll do the best I can to answer it. And I'm not qualified to answer it. I don't really know what's going on in Romans 7.

I did until I met while Russell and and...he's and he's kind of a... I'm up for grabs on that passage. Now, he tells me that I've understood that wrong all my life, and I like my friends and so you know and he he's forgotten more about the passage than I've ever known. So I ask him. I don't know what's going on in there, so I'm serious I I'm real I don't know, but I do know that I do know that to the degree that you believe in it in an intermediate disembodied state, that you've got to believe in a soul it seems to me and... Christian theologians that deny the soul's existence and there are many of them now that deny the soul's existence. The only way they can say the afterlife, John, is by saying that when you die you become extinct but at the Resurrection, God creates you ex nihilo all over again.

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There is no intermediate state. That raises problems as to why is it, how is it 'I' that God recreate instead of a lookalike or somebody with my memories; they're all serious kinds of problems of personal identity. So I do know that at first, I think in Second Corinthians 5, where Paul talks about not wanting to be found naked in my view at least he is talking about, contrary to Murray Harris, he is talking about a disembodied state there and that requires the soul. Well, I'm traducian and I could be wrong on this, but if you'll recall in the ancient church the creationist view said that God creates the soul and implants it in at some time. That raises the question when, could be at fertilization it could be later and I think Aquinas thought it was later, but most likely it's at fertilization for certain reasons.

I'm a traducian and I think that the soul is passed on through the genetic materials. In fact, I don't think the genetic materials could be genetic materials if they were not ensouled, and I'm teaching a 15 week course on that right now. So I'm not just saying that to be cute. I honestly have some reasons for it. So to me, this... a sperm or an egg has soulish stuff in it but it's not an individual and until something happens to it an individual won't emerge. But it has the capacity to generate an individual. So to me, when an egg and us and a sperm unite, then the soulless capacities... the soul stuff in the two fertilized eggs can create an entirely new individual now. So that's my understanding of it.

He says that a physicalist might say that the chemical activity in the brain while you're hallucinating a pink elephant would be different from the chemical activity in the brain when you're hallucinating a blue elephant let's say, and so maybe that the chemical activity just is the hallucinatory awareness. Problem with that is that all that shows is, that that the mentally event

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...correlated with a brain event it doesn't show that the same thing is the brain event. And the only thing that scientists can do is show correlation, he cannot show identity it's impossible for him to do so. There is no way he can do it. It's a philosophical issue. There's no way a scientists can show that that color is a wavelength. Some of you have been raised to believe that a color is a wavelength of light. To me that's terribly reductionist and unchristian. And I mean that quite seriously, that kind of movement has been a part of a view to reduce things to chemicals and physics... chemistry and physics. And there's no way in the world to prove that heat is the mean kinetic energy of molecules or that a wavelengths light. How could you prove it? Come up with one single scientific test to prove a statement like that. It's impossible. The only thing the scientists can do is to show that a certain frequency of wavelength is correlated with a specific color. That's all you can do. And I'm entirely open to the idea that maybe colors are instanced or emerge in space and time when certain physical conditions are present. Ok. I'm open to that. But just because a wavelength can be correlated with a color, it doesn't follow the wave length is the color. And in fact it is self-evident that they're different because a color is a smooth quality. Color when I look at a red book it's not vibrating or moving it's, it's it's a static color quality. A wavelength is vibrating and moving and jumping. There are different things in my view.

One more and then I'd like to say something by way of conclusion.... Faculty psychology. I I'm an advocate of faculty psychology, frankly. Not as the total package, but faculty...a faculty, the soul is not simple Rob. The soul has got within it all kinds of capacities. Now a faculty is a natural grouping of soulish capacities. The mind is a faculty. Now what does it mean to say the mind as a faculty? It means that the mind is a range of capacities in the soul. The emotion is a

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...fact. Emotion... I have an emotional faculty, and that means that emotions grouped together as a range of capacities in the soul. And I have willing capacities, the will is a faculty. And so I am a unity of faculties but faculties are natural clusters of capacities in the soul.

Let me close by making one kind of word of encouragement. The Marxists took over in the Soviet Union in 1917. In 1991 collapsed in the Soviet Union and in the eastern bloc countries. People living at the time between 1917 in 1991 were constantly told at the University that Christianity and views of reality that are Christian are silly, and ignorant, and out of it, and ridiculous. They weren't silly and ignorant out of it ridiculous but those in control, the intelligence, the elite the politically correct, constantly indoctrinated people, that Christian ideas were hopelessly naive and outdated. Now the Soviet Union has collapsed and they're begging Christians to come in to help teach them how to teach in the public schools and things like that.

I believe in this country we're in the same situation. Our universities, do you realize that up until 1950, the president UC Berkeley delivered sermons to his faculty. Gospel sermons. They were. They were Christians in the liberal sense, but nevertheless it was not out of place for the president at UC Berkeley to stand up and deliver a message from the scriptures to his faculty. Think about that for a minute. However our young people go to university and college today, and we are told what the Soviet Union told people, that Christianity is silly. That if you're a Christian you're naive and dangerous, and the idea of a soul is kind of spooky as Patricia Churchill of the U.S. UCSD says, it's this spooky religious stuff.

And I'm telling you, it's they don't...very seldom are arguments given for this thing. It's basically cultural indoctrination in a secular culture that is reacting against its religious roots. And what I'm going to say is, that we need to do what the Soviet church did. And that is to not
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...buy the baloney, and to continue to dig in and to be courageous and to be ourselves; and to work to prepare ourselves so that will be the kinds of people we need to be when this culture collapses because it is going to collapse. You cannot live a secular life for long in a culture without a collapsing. Soviet Union tried it and the reason they collapsed was not because Marxism failed *per se*, it's because their view of the world isn't true and Christianity's view of the world is true. And what's going to happen in this culture is there's going to be a collapse and we've got to get ready for it. And what part of getting ready for it is for us to just patiently and graciously continue to let our Christian views be ours and to do cognitive work with them, and not capitulate to the politically correct cultural indoctrination.

And I don't care how many people with lab coats on, or how many big name professors tell you the soul's silly. It isn't. And you just have to weather this storm; this too will pass. And all of this materialism is going to be done away with someday in my view. And when this thing runs its course and we start getting against this reaction against Christianity where the only heresy on a secular university campus is orthodox biblical Christianity or Judaism, and that is about the only heresy these days which I'm trying to say is a cultural reaction against religion. And it's a Johnny come lately as late as 1950, it wasn't there but it's been happening since then. This will pass I believe, but in the meantime what you and I need to do is to be the people of God and to work hard at being what we need to be so that when chaos breaks out we'll be prepared and be the right kinds of people to pick up the pieces of individuals lives. Part of that preparation is intellectual, not all of it part of it. And part of that is involved, arguing for the soul as a part of our culture wars. God bless you and thank you for your attentiveness. Appreciate it. You're dismissed.