

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE SUN SETS ON THE WEST?

On Tuesday, November 20, Dr. Vishal Mangalwadi, longtime Fellow of the MacLaurin Institute, delivered the 10th and final lecture in his series “Must the Sun Set on the West?” to the largest crowd yet. After having demonstrated (in the first nine lectures) the price that the West is now paying for its wholesale abandonment of biblical authority, Mangalwadi laid out the options for the West: chaos, tyranny, or revival. The lecture itself was framed, on the one hand, by an American tragedy and, on the other, by the story of the redemption of an Indian thinker.

He began by noting that in the last two weeks, three people that he knows in Minneapolis have had their cars broken into, most likely by those seeking to fund their drug addictions. What happens, he asked, when the cost of imprisoning drug addicts and other criminals overwhelms government financial resources, and those criminals are released? Mangalwadi posited that the West, in the face of the social chaos and violence that could erupt, might welcome Islamic *sharia* law in order to suppress anarchy.

Putting a personal and intimate face to this possibility, Hannah Lieder (at Mangalwadi’s invitation) spoke of the violent death of her drug-addicted son a year ago in Minneapolis. Even a trained nurse, himself on a drug high, was unable to prevent her son’s death as he himself ignored his professional training and became an accomplice to her son’s death. Her son, like Curt Cobain (the subject of Mangalwadi’s first lecture), had embraced the nihilistic worldview to which so many in the West are turning now that the hope built into the biblical story has been summarily rejected.

Mangalwadi’s, on the other hand, is the story of someone from the East who found hope and intellectual substance and vibrancy in the biblical faith most often associated with the founding of the West. He spoke of his early and highly creative habits of lying and stealing while growing up in his native India, and how his righteous father wisely valued integrity over imagination.

While a teenager, Mangalwadi became a Christian, only to seriously consider rejecting his newfound faith while a student in an Indian university. His skeptical professors warned against embracing a universal view of reality, for, after all, the story of the five blind men and the elephant shows that we all discern reality differently. In that well-known story, one blind man, feeling the elephant’s tail, concludes that the elephant is made of rope, while another, feeling its side, determines that it’s a wall, and yet a third concludes from feeling the elephant’s tusks that the elephant is primarily a sharp, pointed spear. Thus have scholars long argued for the relativity of all ideas about reality: each philosophy or religion understands a portion of reality, but none really tells the full truth about reality.

But, Mangalwadi asked, what about a sixth person who is not blind? That person can, in fact, show the five blind men the truth about the elephant. Mangalwadi went on to say that, in fact, “the concept of blindness makes sense only if there is someone who is not blind.”

As Mangalwadi began to read the Bible (revelation from God, who is not blind to reality), he wondered if it could be trusted. He found the text to be extraordinarily honest in describing the failings of its heroes. “The Bible was not court history,” said Mangalwadi.

He looked at the social consequences of Biblical thought in the Indian context. He discovered that his very famous Indian university (Allahabad), which gave India five of her seven prime ministers since independence, was founded by an evangelical Christian from Britain. Indian democracy was not a product of Hinduism, but of Biblical thought. All of India’s languages, including Hindi, were first written down and recorded by Bible translators. He concluded that biblical ideas, when translated through human lives, can make a deeply positive impact on society, as they did most prominently in the West.

Mangalwadi concluded by warning that the “intellectual elites have amputated the soul of the West,” which is the Bible. The West’s future is at great risk unless revival comes. “It is possible!” he concluded, as the crowd gave him sustained applause.