

Copyright © 2022 Levi James Secord

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including without limitation, preservation, or instruction.

ALL OF CHRIST FOR ALL OF LIFE: DISCIPLING
BELIEVERS IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW
AT RIVERVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH IN
WEST SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Educational Ministry

by
Levi James Secord
May 2022

APPROVAL SHEET

ALL OF CHRIST FOR ALL OF LIFE: DISCIPLING
BELIEVERS IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW
AT RIVERVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH IN
WEST SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Levi James Secord

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: Stephen J. Wellum

Second Reader: Bradley G. Green

Defense Date: February 24, 2022

To my lovely and godly wife, Emily. You are God's greatest blessing in my life. Also, to our children, Gideon, Joshua, Daniel, and Theresa: may the total truth revealed to us in Scripture guide you all the days of your life and lead you to know, love, and serve Christ. This is the world God has made, and it will be your inheritance if you come to Christ by grace and through faith—this is my prayer. This world is charged and dripping with meaning because Christ is Lord over everything.

Sola Deo Gloria.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vi
PREFACE	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Context	1
Rationale	3
Purpose	5
Goals	5
Research Methodology	6
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations	7
Conclusion	8
2. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE WORLDVIEW PRESENTED IN SCRIPTURE	9
Foundations	10
Genesis 1:26-31	14
Colossians 1:15-20	19
Matthew 28:18-20	25
Second Corinthians 10:3-6	32
Conclusion	36
3. THE CHALLENGES OF SECULARISM AND POSTMODERNISM	39
Secularism	40

Chapter	Page
Postmodernism	51
Conclusion	66
4. DETAILS OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT	69
Synopsis of Lessons	70
Assessment of the Curriculum	77
5. EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT	78
Evaluation of the Project's Purpose	78
Evaluation of the Project's Goals	79
Strengths of the Project	83
Weaknesses of the Project	85
What I Would Do Differently	86
Theological Reflections	86
Personal Reflections	90
Conclusion	92
 Appendix	
1. WORLDVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	93
2. WORLDVIEW GRADING RUBRIC	95
3. AVERAGE SCORES FOR PRE- AND POST-SURVEYS	98
4. AVERAGE SCORES ADJUSTED FOR <i>T</i> -TESTS	99
5. GRADING RUBRIC AVERAGES AND COMMENTS	100
6. SAMPLE LESSON FROM CURRICULUM	102
BIBLIOGRAPHY	109

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
A1. Average scores for pre- and post-surveys	98
A2. Averages adjusted scores	99
A3. Grading rubric scores and comments	100

PREFACE

When I was an undergraduate student, the Lord deepened my faith through the study and application of the Christian worldview. I was introduced to serious and deep Christian thinking through the ministries of godly men, which forever changed my life. Since that time, the Christian worldview has been my passion. I would not be writing on this topic if it were not for the influence of godly men like Douglas Huffman, Paul Helseth, Ardel Caneday, Edward Glenny, and Stephen Wellum. Through their teaching, I was introduced to the works of Francis Schaeffer, David Wells, Cornelius Van Til, and Nancy Pearcey. By the grace of God and through these influences I am a better husband, father, sibling, pastor, and man. I hope to spread the same life-changing knowledge by teaching others about the total truth found only in the Christian religion. If not for God working through these individuals, this project would never have occurred. I thank Stephen Wellum, my project supervisor, for his guidance, support, and work.

Likewise, this project would not have been possible without the support of my family and my church. Riverview Baptist Church and Christ Bible Church have blessed and fully supported me as I pursued this degree and project. God has graciously blessed me through his people. Finally, my wife and children also sacrificed so that I could pursue this calling in my life. While I primarily seek to bring glory to God in this project, secondarily, I did this for my family. They are my greatest joy in this life and are a grace of God in my life. It is all of grace.

Levi Secord

Saint Paul, Minnesota

May 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This project aims to bring all of Christ to all of life¹ in response to the rising challenges of living in a post-Christian culture where secularism reigns. Secularism impacts Christianity as it exiles explicit matters of faith to the private sphere of life. Unfortunately, churches can unintentionally reinforce secularism by not teaching people to view all of life through the Christian worldview. If Christian discipleship only emphasizes private disciplines like Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance, then it subtly reinforces secularism. This project addresses the challenges of living in a post-Christian and secular age by teaching Christians to think and live distinctively as Christians. In other words, this project aims to disciple Christians to implement their faith in all of life.

Context

Riverview Baptist Church (RBC) is located in West Saint Paul, Minnesota. The church has about 200 members, with weekly attendance also averaging around 200. RBC is part of the North American Baptist Conference, which is an evangelical denomination located primarily in the United States and Canada. I serve as the Pastor of Christian Life and Growth, overseeing the education and discipleship ministries. Two other men serve as pastors. They fill the roles of Senior Pastor and Pastor of Youth and Young Adults.

¹ I am indebted to Canon Press for the phrase, “All of Christ for all of Life.”

As a church located in America, RBC faces the challenge of adapting to a country that is becoming increasingly post-Christian.² This reality brings particular challenges, especially the pressure to compromise with the spirit of the age. With mounting pressure to conform to anti-Christian ways of thinking and living, churches like RBC must counteract these godless ideologies with a robust view of Christianity.

To that end, RBC's mission is "to bring people to faith in Christ; to bring Christians to maturity in Christ; to worship and live to bring praise to Christ; to support locally and globally the work of Christ." This statement highlights the main strength of this congregation—its dedication to proclaiming Christ in all that it does. The main way RBC accomplishes this is through the systematic and exegetical teaching of God's Word.

In addition to RBC's commitment to exegetical and expositional preaching, RBC believes that Scripture is the chief authority for the Christian life. It is RBC's conviction that Scripture fully equips God's people to understand and live rightly in this world (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Bible is not only true, but it also reveals God's perspective on the universe. By knowing Scripture, Christians can rightly know themselves, others, this world, and God. This passion fuels the teaching of RBC, but often does not translate to those sitting in the pews.

For all of RBCs focus on biblical teaching, there is still an apparent disconnect in the lives of the congregants. The Bible and church are kept separate from much of the people's day-to-day lives. Sadly, many Christians do not view life holistically as Christians. Francis Schaeffer laments this reality: "The basic problem of the Christians in this country in the last eighty years or so . . . is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals."³ This dichotomy between faith and the rest of life demonstrates

² Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace: An Update on America's Changing Religious Landscape," October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

³ Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1980), 17.

the need for a robust and practical understanding of the Christian worldview. As Schaeffer led the modern resurgence in Christian worldview thinking, he identified a core problem that still haunts much of western Christianity—the cognitive dissonance between beliefs and how one lives. Many Christians neither hold nor implement a total Christian worldview. Such a fragmented worldview inevitably leads to fragmented living.

Rationale

Two factors contribute to the lack of worldview formation within many churches. First, many of discipleship models neglect to teach the Christian worldview. Ironically, Christian thinking is often not thought to be very important to Christian living. Second, worldview talk is often relegated to apologetics, studying various “isms” or the ivory towers of academia. While these areas are important, they are greatly weakened if the hard work of inculcating the Christian worldview is not done first. There is no way to defend against relativism, secularism, and cultural Marxism if Christians do not first have a total worldview rooted in Scripture. Without implementing worldview formation into discipleship processes, Christians are left living divided lives. Where did this dichotomy between and life and faith originate?

Nancy Pearcey convincingly argues that secularism is the source of this division. More specifically, Christians blindly accept the secular/sacred dichotomy.⁴ Secularism divides life into two parts. First, some sacred areas of life are private, like religious beliefs. Second, some secular areas of life are public, like work, education, politics, etc. Secularism demands the exile of religion from all public areas of life. This ideology is assumed by many believers and unbelievers alike because of its pervasive influence. In many ways, secularism is the very air people breathe today. It is assumed by many people that Christianity is meant to be kept in its secular cage.

⁴ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, Study Guide ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 31-62.

If the secular/sacred divide is not directly confronted, then the church often unintentionally reinforces it. Consequently, generations of Christians are taught not to be Christian in most areas of their life. In this way, Christians start viewing life, and Christianity, in pieces. The result is predictable—fragmented Christians who are unsure of Christianity’s place outside of Sunday mornings. Thus, the Christian faith becomes irrelevant to much of life. If RBC wishes to see believers live out their faith, then it must engage in the hard work of opposing secularism through intentional worldview formation.

Some have noticed the lack of Christian living from professing Christians and have urged more intentional discipleship, which is a right and good response, yet much discipleship literature reinforces the secular/sacred divide by stressing only traditionally spiritual disciplines like Bible reading, prayer, fasting, and going to church. If this is the sum of Christian practice, then it fits well with secularism. If discipleship is limited to spiritual disciplines only, then Christians are left living most of their lives in the secular realm where religious beliefs are meaningless. Perhaps so many Christians seem uninterested in disciplines like reading the Bible because they view them as irrelevant to large parts of life. In 2019, LifeWay released a study which found that nearly two-thirds of Christians do not read their Bibles daily.⁵ If most of life is truly secular, then the spiritual disciplines are irrelevant to life outside of Sunday mornings, and Christianity is reduced to a form of private pietism.

What is the solution to this problem? In the Great Commission, Christ commanded his disciples to make disciples of the whole world. This process includes teaching them to “obey everything I have commanded” (Matt 28:20).⁶ Jesus called for obedience in both public and private life. A disciple’s life is marked by total obedience

⁵ LifeWay Research, “Few Protestant Churchgoers Read the Bible Daily,” July 2, 2019, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/07/02/few-protestant-churchgoers-read-the-bible-daily/>.

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

throughout all of life. There is no secular realm of life where Christ is not Lord. Making faithful disciples in a secular age demands confronting the secular/sacred divide. Christians need all of Christ for all of life.

To counteract the secular/sacred divide, it is imperative that RBC expands its discipleship programs beyond the traditional spiritual disciplines. To be clear, these disciplines are essential to the Christian life, but it is necessary to show how those disciplines inform how Christians are to live in every area of life. By showing believers how to live out the Christian worldview, they will see the importance of prayer, Bible reading, and going to church. Jesus Christ is preeminent over all of creation, and it is the church's job to proclaim his lordship over every area of life.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to disciple believers at Riverview Baptist Church in West Saint Paul, Minnesota, to live according to the Christian worldview in all of life.

Goals

To confront the secular/sacred divide that permeates modern thinking, the Christian worldview needs to be clearly taught and systematically applied to the major areas of life: creation, mankind, the mind, the family, the church, society, and politics. Only by first providing the foundations of the Christian worldview can the work of application be accomplished. To that end, this project aimed to achieve three goals.

1. The first goal was to develop a twelve-session curriculum that teaches the basics of the Christian worldview, which applies to every area of life.
2. The second goal was to increase the knowledge of the participants by using the curriculum to teach them the basics of the Christian worldview.
3. The third goal was to equip participants to employ the Christian worldview to the major areas of life.

In meeting these goals, participants were able to combat the pervasive influence of secularism. These goals and how they were measured are expanded in the research methodology section.

Research Methodology

The following section details how these goals were accomplished. The first goal was to develop and teach a twelve-session curriculum that teaches the basics of the Christian worldview, which applies it to every area of life. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁷ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the “agree somewhat” level of the grading rubric.⁸

The second goal was to increase the knowledge of the participants by using the curriculum to teach them the basics of the Christian worldview. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-curriculum survey to course participants to assess any change in worldview thinking.⁹ This goal was considered met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-curriculum survey scores.

The third goal was to equip participants to employ the Christian worldview to the major areas of life. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post survey which was used to measure the change in the participant’s level of knowledge and confidence to apply the worldview to different areas of life.¹⁰ This goal was considered

⁷ See appendix 2. All the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research and Ethics Committee prior to use.

⁸ See appendix 2.

⁹ See appendix 1.

¹⁰ See appendix 1.

successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre and post survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

Secularism. *Secularism* is the belief that some areas of life, especially the public ones, are to be kept from the influence of religion. Pearcey identifies this separation as the secular/sacred divide that separates life into secular and sacred categories. According to Pearcey, secularism limits the Christian faith to “a matter of private personal belief.”¹¹ In this way, secularism exiles religious belief from the public spheres of life.

Worldview. According to James Sire, a *worldview* is “a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions . . . which we hold . . . about the constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”¹² Philip Ryken offers a more concise definition of a *worldview*: “The total perspective by which a person or culture perceives and interprets the world.”¹³ For this project, a *worldview* is the set of beliefs and assumptions that help individuals understand the world.

One limitation applied to this project. In conducting pre- and post-surveys, the results were dependent upon the honesty of participants. To help with this limitation, the participants were promised that their answers would remain anonymous.

One delimitation was placed on the project. As this curriculum was only twelve weeks long, it could not address every topic in life. After developing the core doctrines of the Christian worldview, the curriculum applied them to the major areas of life. These

¹¹ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 17-18.

¹² James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 122.

¹³ Philip G. Ryken, *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide*, ed. David S. Dockery (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 105.

areas include the self, family, church, work, politics, sexuality, and purpose. Issues such as economics, world religions, education, and science were not directly addressed.

Conclusion

God, as the creator of all things, calls his people to declare him in all of life. No matter what Christians do, their lives should bring glory to God. Being faithful to this expansive call in a secular age demands that Christians proclaim Christ's lordship over everything. There is no secular/sacred divide with a Christian framework of the world. All of the universe belongs to Christ, and everything finds its purpose in relation to him. All things were made by him and for him. What the Christian church most needs in all ages, but especially in the post-Christian age, is all of Christ for all of life.

CHAPTER 2

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE WORLDVIEW OF CHRISTIANITY

It is common for individuals to hold conflicting beliefs. For example, a Christian may affirm the incarnation and resurrection of Christ and yet still believe that the human body is something to be escaped. For Christians, worldview is particularly vital as the Bible provides a coherent and comprehensive understanding of all life. The Christian, or biblical, worldview is formed by the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith as revealed in Scripture. As Douglas Huffman and Paul Helseth observe, since the Bible is God’s Word, the Christian worldview offers “God’s true view of things.”¹ God’s Word equips Christians to think God’s thoughts after him and thus presents a worldview from above. It gives God’s perspective on reality—all of it—and God’s perspective is the true perspective. Therefore, the Christian worldview should offer the true understanding of all of life. Too often, though, Christians partition off their lives into separate parts. For some of those parts faith is essential, while for other parts it is totally absent.

Nancy Pearcey shows how secularism divides life into two parts—secular and sacred.² In the secular parts of life religion is exiled and thus the Christian faith is caged to the sacred areas of life. Secularism blinds Christians by exalting the material world as primary and exiling matters of faith to the private realm of life. Unfortunately, well-meaning Christians play into the secular/sacred split as much Christian teaching submits

¹ Paul K. Helseth and Douglas S. Huffman, “What Is the Biblical Worldview?” in *Christian Contours: How a Biblical Worldview Shapes the Mind and Heart*, ed. Douglas S. Huffman (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 69.

² Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, Study Guide ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

to its cage by only emphasizing spiritual realities. Consequently, Christians unintentionally swallow the secular pill by transforming the Christian faith into a mere private pietism.

Christianity is not simply a set of spiritual truths but offers a total worldview for all of life. The Bible gives a metanarrative that describes the beginning, end, and purpose of the universe. Thus, it boldly addresses all of life by building the necessary foundations for understanding everything. Christianity addresses who God is, who man is, what creation is, what is morally right, and what life's purpose is. Therefore, Christians cannot limit their faith to private spiritual realities. To disregard Scripture's comprehensive worldview requires ignoring the basic storyline and framework of Scripture. This chapter examines why the biblical worldview cannot fit within secularism's cage because within the pages of Scripture there is no secular/sacred divide. The comprehensive Christian worldview is displayed by surveying its foundations and then examining several key passages found in both the Old and New Testaments.

Foundations

The Christian worldview is built on the foundation of the triune God. From all eternity, the Godhead existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As the creeds affirm, one God exists in three persons. The act of creation involves all three persons as the Lord speaks the universe into existence *ex nihilo* (Gen 1:1). God used nothing but himself to create everything that exists. Therefore, he is dependent on nothing, and everything that exists depends on him for its creation and ongoing existence. Creation *ex nihilo* establishes that God is distinct from his creation. He is not one with the universe, and creation is not a part of him. Yet, God is intimately involved in his creation. He sustains it, directs its course, rules over it, and guides it all for his desired purposes (Col 1:15-20; Rev 22:13).

The doctrine of the Trinity establishes several essential foundations for the Christian worldview. First, the reality that God consists of three persons provides the grounds of human personality. As Francis Schaeffer writes, "The biblical Christian

answer takes us back first to the very beginning of everything and states that personality is intrinsic in what is . . . that a God who is personal on the high order of the Trinity created all else.”³ For personality to exist, the universe must be personal. Christianity provides the answer for how personality exists as the Trinity reveals that God is personal. For all of eternity, the Father, Son, and Spirit have related to one another. Mankind is personal because humanity is made in his image. Humans are personal because they are like God. If naturalism is true, then personality is a myth because there is no origin for personality. Schaeffer again, “No one has presented an idea, let alone demonstrated it to be feasible, to explain how the impersonal beginning, plus time, plus chance, can give personality.”⁴ Naturalism leads inevitably to an impersonal universe, and so man is likewise reduced to an impersonal animal.

Second, the doctrine of the Trinity affirms the tremendous unity and diversity of this universe. Robert Letham elaborates, “Second, we need to recapture and refashion a Trinitarian view of creation . . . that expressly and explicitly accounts for both the order and coherence of the universe and the distinctiveness of its parts.”⁵ Conversely, naturalism cannot account for the universe’s diversity and order, and postmodernism drives individuals away from *any* unifying principle. Robert Letham warns, “In a somewhat different way, postmodernism is unable to account the unity-in-diversity . . . postmodernism is a militant diversifying principle without a basis for unity.”⁶ The three persons of the Trinity account for the diversity of creation, while the union of the Godhead accounts for the unity of creation.

³ Francis Schaeffer, “The God Who Is There,” in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, vol. 1, *A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1982), 93.

⁴ Schaeffer, “The God Who Is There,” 95.

⁵ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, rev. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2019), xxxvi.

⁶ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, xxxvii.

Third, the existence of the Triune God who is the creator establishes the goodness of creation (Gen 1:31). God, who is infinitely good, is the source of creation (John 1:1-5). Therefore, the physical universe is not something to be escaped, nor are material things inherently evil. God values his creation so much he redeems it through the work of the Son.

Having established the Triune God as the foundation of creation and his desire to redeem it once fallen, it is right to turn to the storyline of the biblical worldview. The comprehensive nature of the Christian faith is displayed in the total narrative the Bible offers. This story is the *telos* of the cosmos as God redeems his good creation by joining it through the incarnation of the Son. Four significant movements of the biblical storyline provide the backbone of the Christian worldview—creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.⁷

The first stage of Scripture’s storyline is *creation*. As surveyed, God created the universe by the word of his power. He is the source and foundation of it all. Moreover, as his handiwork, creation reflects his glory (Ps 19:1-6). The Christian message begins with God creating all that exists. Such a starting point encompasses everything. All the universe is sacred because it flows from the transcendent creator. In the creation account, there is no room for a secular/sacred divide.

The second stage of the story is the *fall*. Genesis 3:1-24 recounts the horrific events of man rebelling against God and the subsequent fallout. By believing the serpent and disobeying God, Adam introduced sin and death to this world (Rom 5:12-14). While the story of creation establishes the importance of creation, its goodness, and its purpose, the fall explains what went wrong. Man is a rebel against his creator and is guilty before a holy God. Man’s sin brings brokenness to the world. In response to this sin, God curses

⁷ Though the four stages are common in biblical theology, I adapt the categories found in James M. Hamilton, Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology: A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 31.

the man, woman, serpent, and creation (Gen 3:14-19). Now everything groans under the weight of man's rebellion (Rom 8:22). The issue at the heart of all problems is creation's alienation from God as the result of human sin. The problem is fundamentally moral. The second stage of the biblical story impacts all of creation. The cosmos are under the righteous curse of God. Man is left wondering if all God's good work will be lost, but God promises redemption through the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). The fall's impact is comprehensive.

The third stage is *redemption*. God will not lose his work to the deceptions of Satan and the evil of man. God begins working through the seed of the woman right away, establishing a line that will lead to the birth of the Messiah (Matt 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38). The Messiah will save creation by redeeming the pinnacle of creation and the source of its curse—mankind. God the Son does this by joining his creation through the incarnation (John 1:1-16). He pays the debt due for man's sin by dying a sinner's death, God the Son incarnate establishes salvation (Col 2:13-15). Salvation comes to all men and women who will repent and believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. The moral problem of man is objectively dealt with through Christ's substitutionary death and resurrection. His work causes the new creation to break into this age (Col 1:20). Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of this new life and new creation guaranteeing the future restoration of everything (1 Cor 15:20-28). God's redemption of the universe, through the work of the Son, has a comprehensive impact.

The final stage of Scripture's storyline is *restoration*. The biblical story ends where it begins—with man dwelling with God in paradise (Rev 21:1-8). The destination of the whole universe is the eternal reign of Christ in the new creation. Through the work of the Son, God will make "all things new" (Rev 21:5). The heart of man's redemption is removing sin debt and sinful nature through justification and sanctification, respectively. Yet, man's salvation is not the entirety of the story, as what was lost in the fall is restored. Through the work of Christ, the groaning of creation will cease when God makes all things new. The end of everything, every person and every molecule, is the eternal reign of

Christ in the new creation. The culmination of the Bible's story is just as comprehensive as the beginning and middle. There is no room for the secular/sacred divide at the end of all things, nor in Scripture's metanarrative.

These are the foundations that undergird the Christian worldview and the remaining discussion of this chapter. These realities are reflected in numerous passages throughout Scripture. Next, several key sections are explored more in-depth to demonstrate the comprehensive nature of the Christian worldview. The four stages of the biblical storyline build a foundation for understanding why the Christian worldview cannot exist within secularism's edicts. The following sections explore key passages that reinforce the universality of the Christian faith and worldview.

Genesis 1:26-31

Genesis is a book of beginnings. It lays the foundation for the rest of Scripture and thus establishes the basics for understanding life. As the first chapters of Genesis unfold, God tells of the beginning of reality and how he created all of it. Consequently, the Christian worldview starts with a universal scope, encompassing the entirety of the cosmos. The pinnacle of God's creation is found in his making mankind in his own image. Unlike nature and its animals, man is distinct because of his unique relationship with God. Genesis 1:26-31 demonstrates that the Christian worldview is universal as God created everything and that he charged mankind to rule everything as his vice-regents. The role of mankind, especially redeemed mankind in Christ, requires fulfilling this universal cultural mandate.

Made in God's Image

Genesis 1:26 asserts that God created man in his *likeness* and *image*. While there is some debate on whether these two terms have different meanings, it is likely they

denote the same reality.⁸ To be created in the image of God is to be *like* him in some way. While mountains, stars, galaxies, and animals reflect the glory of God, they are not made in his image. Man alone is the apex of creation because of his relationship to the creator as an image bearer. But what does this mean?

Being made in God's image is more than being in a relationship with God, as it includes resembling and representing God.⁹ Man has certain abilities that resemble God—intelligence, language, morality, working, resting, and loving. Subsequently, man is like God because he is personal, but there remains a difference as God is infinite and man is not. As his image bearer, man represents God in creation. The purpose and result of being like God is that man rules on his behalf over his creation (Ps 115:16b).¹⁰ God created humanity to reign over his creation while recognizing that such a position remains under God's ultimate sovereign reign. The Christian worldview starts by declaring that God made everything and he designed man in such a way as to exercise dominion over the cosmos (Gen 1:26, 28). Bruce Waltke rightly observes that man is theomorphic: he represents and mirrors God.¹¹ As John Calvin explains, humanity functions as the “lord of the world.”¹² God rules over all as he created all, but in his universal reign, he charges mankind to act as his representative vice-regents.

⁸ C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006), 62.

⁹ Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 67.

¹⁰ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1a (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 164.

¹¹ Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 65.

¹² John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Genesis, Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 1, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 96.

Ruling over Creation

To be made in the image of God necessarily carries with it the role of vice-regents. By ruling over creation, man “images” God.¹³ Man’s fall into sin greatly complicates this purpose as God curses both the rulers (man and woman) and their would-be kingdom (the earth). The purpose of mankind remains: to rule over all of creation as God’s servants. Hence, the Bible establishes important truths for the Christian worldview. First, the material universe is good and worthy of care because God made it good and charged mankind to keep it. Unlike Gnosticism, Christianity affirms the goodness of the material world. Christianity is not about escaping the physical, but about renewing and restoring God’s creation. The result of the fall is that man’s purpose as image bearers becomes impossible without God intervening, but the duty remains the same (Gen 9:1-6; Ps 8:6).

Second, the creation story establishes that man’s rule is comprehensive. God’s call for mankind to rule over creation encompasses the totality of life. In a way, God commands Adam and Eve to expand the blessings of the Garden throughout the earth as they fill and subdue the world (Gen 1:28).¹⁴ This subduing is not a license to rule however man desires, but rather they must do so as God has directed. Richard Bauckham summarizes, “The close relationship between the image of God and the dominion means that the latter is an exercise of rule on *behalf of* God, not *instead of* God.”¹⁵ God created this world to be good and to be governed by those who are in a right relationship with him. This charge is often called the *cultural mandate*.¹⁶

¹³ Stephen G. Dempster, “Genesis,” in *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’s Bible*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 66.

¹⁴ Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 69.

¹⁵ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 30.

¹⁶ James W. Sire, *Discipleship of the Mind: Learning to Love in the Ways We Think* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 67-69.

Third, the creation account shows that fulfilling this first command given to man involves building cultures. The issue of cultural engagement is fraught with landmines, but Genesis 1:26-31 establishes that man is charged with ruling and subduing creation, which necessitates culture building. Culture takes many forms from farming to art, banking to lawn care, childrearing to preaching. The list could go on, but culture is not limited to entertainment, art, and politics. Fulfilling the command to subdue, rule, and fill creation necessarily includes culture. William Edgar offers this helpful definition of subduing and engaging culture: “Cultural engagement is the human response to the divine call to enjoy and develop the world that God has generously given to his image bearers. Culture includes the symbols, the tools, the conventions, the social ties, and all else contributing to this call.”¹⁷ In a very real way, culture-making, and cultural engagement for the Christian, means applying God’s truth to all of life. No part of creation escapes the authority of God. The original purpose of man is to glorify God by serving as his vice-regents over creation, but through the fall, man stained all of creation through an act of rebellion. As the story progresses, God overcomes the rebellion of his vice-regents and grants all authority to the second Adam—Jesus Christ.

As much of the world remains rebellious, Christians declare Christ’s comprehensive lordship. Christ’s work, as God the Son incarnate, restores mankind’s role as rulers over creation (Col 1:15-20). He overthrows all enemies opposing God’s purposes in salvation. Finally, Christ’s work will restore and renew this fallen creation when he returns and makes all things new (Rev 21:1-5). Nations, including their redeemed cultures, will come into this new creation (Rev 21:22-25). As Genesis 1:26-31 calls man to build cultures, and that purpose is damaged in the fall, in the new creation, God shows the fulfillment of the cultural mandate. Culture includes every facet of life, and therefore, faithful Christians must apply the authority of God mediated through the lordship of

¹⁷ William Edgar, *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 233.

Christ to all of life. This is what it means to be a benevolent vice-regent over God's creation. The only way to fulfill man's created purpose is through a comprehensive Christian worldview that sees the lordship of Christ as the only way to redeem a fallen creation.

Putting It Together

For the purposes of this project, three conclusions are derived about the Christian faith from Genesis 1:26-31. First, the Bible presents a comprehensive worldview. In the beginning, God spoke and created everything. All three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, worked in unison to create. Therefore, John can declare that the Son was integral to creating everything (John 1:3). Any claim that Christianity is merely a private pietism ignores entire sections of Scripture, especially the first chapters of Genesis. God made everything, and in the beginning, it was all very good. Creation, though broken and stained by sin, is valuable. Christianity declares this world, and this life matters as there is a degree of continuity between this life and the next. Therefore, Christians recognize that their faith requires them to engage all of creation as those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Second, man's role is comprehensive as God charges him with ruling over all of creation. God made man in his image for the purpose of him representing God throughout creation. Just as God made everything, so man is called to have dominion over all of creation; this is the heart of the cultural mandate, as man exercises his rule over creation, he does so as an image bearer that mirrors his creator. How Christians live declares what they believe about God and themselves. There is no neutral way to fulfill the cultural mandate. How Christians live, both privately and publicly, testifies to their relationship with God. The whole of life falls under God's command to fill and subdue

the earth. Those saved by the second Adam must consciously apply the lordship of Christ to all of life. Man is God's vice-regent over creation.¹⁸

Third, Christ's redemption is comprehensive. Man failed at fulfilling the cultural mandate. Instead of representing God through culture building, mankind attempts to replace him. Yet, in Christ, God is reversing the curse and bringing a new creation. This new creation will be like the old one, only free from death and sin. In the new creation, man will finally fulfill his role as vice-regents of God through Christ. Consequently, Christ is redeeming all parts of creation (Eph 1:10). The consummation demonstrates that all of creation will be remade through the work of Christ. This does not mean that everyone and everything is saved, but all types of creation will be remade. The *telos* the universe is moving toward is a comprehensive renewal leading to the eternal and universal reign of Christ and his children (Eph 2:6).

There is no room in the Christian worldview for a fragmented view of life. The beginning, middle, and end are all comprehensive. This world is God's, and all of it belongs to him. As God's children, Christians are charged with living this comprehensive vision of life. The Bible starts with a vision of all of reality, it then charges man with ruling over that reality as God's representatives, and it finds fulfillment in the coming of the God-man who brings total salvation to God's creation. Genesis 1:26-31 leaves no room for the secular/sacred divide in the Christian worldview.

Colossians 1:15-20

Christianity is centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ. While Genesis 1:26-31 is vital to establishing the beginnings and foundations of the Christian worldview, Jesus Christ is what makes the Christian worldview distinct. In his incarnation, God the Son affirms the worth and goodness of creation by joining it. If man were not made in the

¹⁸ Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 113-19.

image of God, then the incarnation would be impossible. Scripture teaches that Christ is fully God (John 1:1-3) and fully man (John 1:14). Additionally, the centrality of Christ is seen as his substitutional death accomplishes atonement for man's sin (Isa 53:4-12; Col 2:13-14). His work establishes the hope of fallen mankind, but this work relies on the identity of the person of Christ. Christ is at the center of the Christian worldview.

In demonstrating the comprehensive nature of the Christian worldview, it is essential to understand who Jesus is and how he relates to this world as the risen Lord. Colossians 1:15-20 declares that Christ is preeminent over everything and he is the purpose of creation. Therefore, individuals can only properly see and live by submitting to Christ's preeminence. Colossians 1:15-20 declares five truths about Christ and his universal reign: Jesus Christ is God, Christ's preeminence in creation, Christ's preeminence in salvation, Christ's comprehensive reconciliation, and Christ as the purpose of everything.

Jesus Christ Is God

Paul exalts Christ by first declaring his divinity. He confesses that Christ is the "image of the invisible God" (1:15). *Image* must not be confused here with how humans are made in the image of God. If this all Paul meant, then there is nothing significant about this statement. Rather, what Paul is driving at is that through the incarnation, Christ makes the invisible God visible. Man, in his image-bearing, does not achieve this. Arthur Patzia observes, "By image, Paul does not mean mere resemblance or similarity" instead, the word used conveys, "the idea Christ participates in and with the nature of God."¹⁹ Paul explains that Christ created everything (1:16), another sign of his divinity. If that were not enough, Paul circles back in verse 19 to declare, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." Christ, as the image of God, is fundamentally different than

¹⁹ Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 29-30.

man bearing God's image.²⁰ Paul's point is clear—Jesus Christ is eternally divine because he is God the Son incarnated.

As the Creator God, the Son made and sustains all things. His preeminence is rooted in his ontology. He is the creator and ruler of the entire universe by virtue of being God. Christ is the God who spoke the universe into existence, and as such, it all belongs to him (1:16). This status of creator is comprehensive as he created everything that is visible and invisible (1:16). The physical and the non-physical fall under his authority. Paul paints a comprehensive of Christ's authority because he is God in the flesh.

Christ's Preeminence in Creation

The concept of preeminence conveys Christ's supremacy.²¹ This passage establishes Christ's supremacy over everything (1:18), but it breaks down his preeminence into two categories. The first is Christ's preeminence over creation. This is tied to him being the creator of the cosmos. As its creator, he rules supreme over it, directing all of history to his desired ends. Nothing escapes his comprehensive rule. Paul also speaks of Christ as the "firstborn of all creation" (1:15). This is not a reference to a temporal birth, but rather to his rank.²² In Scripture, being firstborn is not exclusively about birth order (Ps 89:27), and the context of this passage makes it clear that Paul is not referencing a time when Christ was not. Such a conclusion does not fit with the declaration of Christ's divinity. For example, Paul states that everything that was made, was made through Christ, which requires his preexistence before creation (Col 1:16). What Paul means by calling Christ the "firstborn of all creation" is that he is the ruler of creation and he inherits all of it. A comprehensive rule and inheritance.

²⁰ Stephen J. Wellum, *Christ Alone: The Uniqueness of Jesus as Savior*, The Five Sola Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 97-99.

²¹ David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 100.

²² Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossian, Philemon*, 30.

The stress of the first section of this passage (1:15-17) is Christ's preeminent rule over creation. He made all of it as the Creator God, and he sustains all of it by his own power (1:17). Of course, his role in the creation process as the Son must not be viewed as separate from the roles of the Father and the Spirit. Wellum writes, "All things were created 'in him' (*en autō*) in the sense that all of God's creative work was 'in terms of' or 'in reference to Christ,' which links the Son to the Father in the closest of terms and makes creation entirely dependent upon the Son."²³ The triune God's rule is revealed through the person and work of Christ and it is a comprehensive reign over the created order, even in its fallen state. Christ's reign includes both the visible and invisible realms of life and even extends over rulers and authorities. Moreover, Christ is the "Lord of history," directing it to his desired purpose.²⁴ Jesus reigns supreme over all of life as the preeminent one.

Christ's Preeminence in Salvation

The second section of Colossians 1:15-20 pronounces Christ's preeminence in salvation (1:18-20). To put it another way, Christ is supreme in bringing about the new creation. Just as Christ is the firstborn of creation, he is also the firstborn of the dead. Moreover, he is the head of the church (1:18), denoting that he is the ruler and the source of the church.²⁵ Being the firstborn of both the old and new creation means Christ is preeminent, or supreme, over past, present, and future.

The centrality of the incarnation comes back into focus here as Paul points to Christ's resurrection. In order to rise again, Christ had to die, and his death requires that he be fully human. Christianity is not about escaping God's creation but saving it. As

²³ Wellum, *Christ Alone*, 99.

²⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 64-65.

²⁵ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 68.

God the Son incarnate, Christ is supreme and reigns over both the original and the new creation. Salvation comes by him and through him alone. His universal reign and redemption display the comprehensive nature of who Christ is and what his work means for Christians. In his preeminence over creation, Christ rules and directs all things to bring about his purposes. This purpose is only achieved by the preeminent one entering his creation to rescue it. Christ is the beginning and the end of the universe, the source, and destination of everything.

Christ's Comprehensive Reconciliation

The preeminence of Christ in both the old and new creations builds the foundation for a comprehensive redemption. The one who made everything reigns over it and directs it to his desired end. This end is the reconciliation of all types of things. Paul declares that Christ will “reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross” (1:20). Through his substitutionary death and resurrection, Christ reconciles the fallen creation with its creator. Through his death and resurrection, his kingdom (the new creation) breaks into this world. In other words, Christ's work impacts all of life. This is the *telos* of all creation; God redeems his fallen creation making it greater than it ever was. God accomplishes reconciliation through Christ, the one who is fully God and fully man. Christ is uniquely qualified for this role as the preeminent God-man.

Just as Christ rules over all of creation, all of creation shall be redeemed. This is not a declaration of universal redemption, but instead it refers to all types of things being reconciled to Christ. The totality of Christ's rule in creation, and his supremacy in salvation, guarantees that his work redeems things throughout the cosmos. He will not just whisk away his people to some ethereal and non-physical paradise, but he remakes the material universe through his death, resurrection, and preeminent reign.

Just as Christianity starts with a universal scope in Genesis 1, so it also ends with a universal scope. Salvation is not limited to immaterial and spiritual realities but

includes the physical universe. All of creation will be remade by the power of the supreme firstborn of creation. Salvation is comprehensive, and therefore the Christian worldview includes all of life. Living as a Christian necessitates rejecting the secular/sacred divide.

Christ Is the Purpose of Everything

Christ is both the source and destination of creation, which demonstrates the centrality of Christ to all of life. Colossians 1:16 declares that everything was created *for* Christ, and then the next verse states that he holds *everything together*. Douglas Moo elaborates on what it means to hold *everything together*: “The use of the perfect tense suggests a stative idea: the universe owes its continuing coherence to Christ.”²⁶ The only reason the universe continues to exist is that Christ wills it to be so. Since Christ holds everything together, exiling belief in him to the private parts of life implicitly denies who he really is. Christ sustains all of the universe, and so faith must inform all of life.

Moreover, this world, all of its people, rocks, animals, mountains, seas, and molecules exist *for* Christ. Their meaning and purpose cannot be rightly known without reference to him. He is their source and their final destination. F. F. Bruce puts it well: “But for Paul, the living Christ, who died to redeem his people, is the sustainer of the universe and the unifying principle of its life.”²⁷ The Christian worldview has Christ at its center, and this only makes sense as he is at the heart of both creation and salvation. He is the cohering power and principle for life. It is Jesus Christ over everything or nothing at all. Everything that exists does so for Christ. It belongs to him and finds its purpose in him. Therefore, the only way to understand the purpose of every facet of life is to see it in

²⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 125.

²⁷ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 66.

relation to Christ Jesus. The Christian worldview cannot be caged off from any part of life.

Summarizing Christ's Preeminence

The Christian worldview centers on the identity of Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:15-20 demonstrates Christ's preeminence in both creation and salvation. This preeminence is rooted in the nature of the person of Christ as he is fully God and fully man. As Paul explains, Christ created the universe, and he also sustains it. His lordship over creation is comprehensive, including both the seen and unseen. As the God-man, Christ not only created everything, but he is the head of the church and the source of the new creation. His death and resurrection demonstrate the value of all of creation. Stephen Wellum, commenting on Christ in Colossians 1:15-20, proclaims, "There is no sphere of existence over which he is not sovereign and supreme. No wonder all people are summoned to submit to him in trust, love, worship, and obedience."²⁸

As disciples of Christ, Christians recognize his reign over all of life, which includes what is traditionally considered spiritual and what is often not. Christ holds together every molecule in the universe and directs everything to his desired end—the new creation. He is the means and purpose of the new creation. All things were created by him and for him. Any suggestion that the Christian worldview must be banished to the private realms of life displays ignorance of what Scripture teaches. Who Jesus is—the creator and savior of the cosmos—rules out any attempt to cage the Christian faith. This is Christ's world, and humanity just lives in it.

Matthew 28:18-20

God created everything and then commissioned mankind to rule as his vice-regents. Creation and the cultural mandate establish the universal foundations of the

²⁸ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 182.

Christian faith. Christ, as God the Son incarnate, is preeminent over everything. He is the agency and purpose of the cosmos. Having established these truths, it is time to examine the mission of the Christian faith. Christianity addresses what was lost in the fall through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a man, Christ is able to act as the substitute for fallen humanity and pay the penalty due for sin—death. As God, he is able to satisfy God’s wrath as the sinless one and usher in the new creation.

What does this mean for those who are saved by grace through faith? What is the mission of God’s people in this world? In Matthew 28:18-20, Christ commissions his followers to go into the world and declare the good news of who he is and what he has done. This passage lays out the role of the church in this world, a role derived from Christ’s authority. Christ sending out his disciples only makes sense as Christ reveals his universal authority and presence.²⁹ To go out into the whole world, the disciples need to know that Christ reigns over it all and goes with them. Matthew 28:18-20 conveys the universality of Christ’s authority, command, teaching, and presence, jettisoning the possibility that the Christian faith is limited to private and spiritual realities.

Christ’s Universal Authority

Through the resurrection, Christ defeated the powers of sin, death, and Satan. Before he issues the command to go and make disciples, Christ establishes his universal authority. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus declares, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Having fulfilled his earthly ministry as the Messiah, Christ has been granted chief authority as the Son of Man. This authority foreshadows what Paul later declares in Colossians 1:15-20—a preeminent rule over the cosmos. As God the Son incarnate, Jesus ushers in the kingdom of God, establishing his redemptive rule.

²⁹ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 687.

Earlier in Matthew 10:5-23, Jesus commissioned the disciples to declare the kingdom, but he limits this declaration to the people of Israel. Jesus confines the proclamation of the gospel because the Son of Man had not come to the Father (10:23). Here, Jesus references a prophecy from Daniel 7:13-14 that describes the coming of the Son of Man who approaches the throne of God and receives a kingdom over the nations (7:14). Until the Son of Man goes to the Father, the preaching of the kingdom is largely limited to the people of Israel.

In Matthew 10:5-23, Jesus prophesies that this coming of the Son of Man to the Father will happen *before* the kingdom is preached in all of Israel. The careful reader sees the fulfillment of this prophecy as the risen Christ ascends to the Father in Matthew 28. Christ, who is the Son of Man, has now been given that universal authority, and thus the gospel can go out to the nations.³⁰ The mission of the church is dependent on and flows from the universal authority of Christ. The Son of Man in Daniel 7:13-14 appears to have divine attributes, and this truth is echoed as Jesus commands the disciples to baptize converts in the singular name of the “the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). He asserts that his name is unified with God the Father, an unmistakable claim to divinity. Christ’s universal authority is tied both to his divinity and to his work as the Son of Man.

The word “all” is used four times throughout the Great Commission to show the universality of Christ’s authority. His time of humiliation is over as he ascends to his exaltation at the right hand of the Father. He is both God and savior, and his rule and salvation are comprehensive. R. T. France summarizes the commission: “Here all the partial glimpse of Jesus’ universal authority are brought together in a final comprehensive declaration.”³¹ Matthew 28:18-20 speaks in unison with Colossians 1:15-20, declaring

³⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1112.

³¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1109.

the universal authority of Jesus Christ, and it is this universal authority which leads to and motivates the mission of the church.

Christ's Universal Command

Rooted in his universal authority, Christ commands his disciples to go out to the nations declaring the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 28:19). This command is connected with the word “therefore,” showing it is rooted in the universal authority Christ possesses. The Great Commission marks a vital shift in redemptive history as God’s plan of salvation moves out to the whole world. The Davidic king is now king over the nations as he sits at the right hand of the Father, awaiting their submission (Ps 110:1). All of this is rooted in who Christ is and what he has done.

Because Christ’s authority is universal, so is his kingdom. The Great Commission sends out God’s church to wage peaceful warfare that subdues all the world under Christ’s reign. His people preach the gospel everywhere and into every area of life. Donald Hagner writes of the charge given to the disciples: “They are to go everywhere with the message of the good news in the name and authority of Jesus.”³² Before the resurrection, Christ’s commands for kingdom preaching were mainly limited to Israel, but now his command is universal.

In the Great Commission, Christ places no limit on preaching the gospel precisely because he is Lord over all. There is no part of creation that the Son of Man’s authority does not touch. Therefore, Christians must proclaim his lordship in every area of life. This reality is displayed in the book of Acts. The apostles preach to commoners (2:14-41), religious leaders (4:5-12), political leaders (13:4-12), Jews (3:11-26), Samaritans (8:4-25), and gentiles (10:34-48). The scope of Christ’s command is universal: preach to all types of people and declare the lordship of Christ in all of life. The early church models

³² Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Waco, TX: Word, 1995), 889.

an uncaged Christianity that applies the gospel to everyone and to all of life. The mission of the church is universal in scope because its head is the universal ruler of all.

The Church's Universal Teaching

In addition to Christ's authority and command being universal, so also is his teaching. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commands his followers to go and make disciples throughout the nations. They do this by baptizing them and by "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." As the church seeks to make disciples, it does so by teaching them *everything* Jesus has commanded. Christ's teachings include everything from prayer (Matt 6:9-13) to paying taxes (Matt 22:21). The content of the church's message covers all of life as Christ's disciples submit to all of his teachings.

A mark of being Christ's disciple is holistic obedience. Of course, no believer obeys perfectly, but the direction of the Christian life is one of growth in faithful obedience to Christ. As Christ is the universal ruler of the universe, so his people must respond with faithful obedience throughout life. Thus, the church's doctrine must touch all of life. This is the natural implication of Christ's universal lordship and the universal nature of the message of his kingdom. Jesus reigns over all of life, and the church declares that reign by directing the nations to comprehensive repentance and faith.

What is the "all" that Christ commands the church to teach? Is it limited to just what is recorded in the gospel accounts? Here France is helpful again: "The basis of living as God will henceforth be the new 'commandments' given by Jesus. Not that these are necessarily opposed to the commandments of the OT, but as we have seen in 5:17-48, Jesus' teaching has given a new interpretation to the old law and it is by obedience to *his* words that salvation is henceforth to be found."³³

As France notes, Matthew established that Christ's teaching was a continuation of the old law, but it also brings in a new era of redemptive history. There is both continuity

³³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1118-19.

and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. Christ ushers in fulfillment. He is the substance to the shadows of the old covenants. His is an era of fulfillment, but this fulfillment builds on and narrows what came before.³⁴ As far as the argument of this project is concerned, it is enough to say that the command to teach everything Christ taught is not limited to just the gospels and epistles. The apostles set the example as they use the Old Testament scriptures to prove Jesus is the Christ and to instruct their churches how to live. All of this is done through the interpretative framework of Christ's work. The Bible as a whole testifies to Christ, and Christ is the key to understanding all of it. To teach all that Christ commanded is to teach the whole counsel of God from beginning to end. Such teaching necessarily addresses all of life.

Christ's Universal Presence

Not only does Christ send out his people into all the world to preach about his total authority, but he also promises to be universally with them (28:20). This promise offers great comfort in light of Christ's total authority. His promise of unending presence again implies his status as God the Son.³⁵ Jesus promises to be spiritually with his people until the age ends, which finds its culmination with Christ's physical return and the realization of his kingdom. Until that day, his church finds comfort in his spiritual presence in an age marked by hostility. Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth, and it is he who is with the church until the very end.

The task of reaching the whole world is monumental and sure to fail if it is left only to the ability of Christ's disciples. The church does not possess all authority in heaven and on earth, but Christ does, and he promises to empower and guide his people throughout this age. His presence comes through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, but nonetheless,

³⁴ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 591-652.

³⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 368.

the risen Lord is with his people throughout this age (Acts 1:1-3; 2:1-12). As the church proclaims Christ's reign to all the world, in every area of life, the Lord himself goes with them. This is an encouraging thought and it guarantees the success of the mission.

The Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate

Matthew 28:18-20 contains echoes of the cultural mandate found in Genesis 1:26-31. As God commissioned mankind to go forth and multiply, so Christ commissioned the church to multiply through declaring the gospel. Just as God commanded humanity to subdue the earth, Christ, as the second Adam, rules over creation and commands his people to spread that rule throughout the earth. The Bible starts with a universal scope, and Christ's kingdom is universal in its scope of redemption. John Frame explains this connection:

The Great Commission, therefore, can be understood as a republication of the cultural mandate for the semi-eschatological age. Unlike the original cultural mandate, it presupposes the existence of sin and the accomplishment of redemption. It recognizes that if the world is to be filled with worshippers of God, subduing the earth as his vassal king, they must be first converted to Christ through the preaching of the gospel. But when the evangelization of the world is complete, the result will be that envisaged in the cultural mandate.³⁶

The Great Commission is how the cultural mandate will be fulfilled. From the beginning, God commanded man to multiply in his role of vice-regent, and through this, the whole world would be filled with the worship and glory of God. When Adam sinned, much was lost, but through the second Adam, it is being remade.

The Great Commission is universal in scope because the role of mankind from the beginning was to be universal. For a time, it appeared this goal would never be reached, but through Christ it is being ushered in. Mankind is both restored and made better through the work of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the new creation will restore and improve Eden and bring Christ's redemptive reign to the ends of the cosmos. The Great Commission is the

³⁶ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 310.

mandate given to the church, and it comprehensively covers all of life and all of the universe because Christ, the second Adam, has all authority in heaven and on earth.

Second Corinthians 10:3-6

Man exists to rule over creation as God's vice-regents, but the fall corrupted both man and creation. Through the work of Christ, God restores both man and creation. In establishing the church, Christ commissions his people to go out and declare this good news. In turn, the church proclaims the coming kingdom, the remaking of all of creation. The Bible starts with a universal scope with creation, and it is with a universal scope that God remakes everything through the work of Christ. Because all of life resides under the lordship of Christ, any suggestion that biblical faith should be limited to the sacred parts of life contradicts Scripture. The cosmos is Christ's, both as its creator and as its savior. Therefore, as his people, the church engages all of life, understanding it in light of Christ.

The Great Commission demonstrates the universality of the Christian faith as Jesus proclaims his authority and sends out his disciples to proclaim who he is. The church is charged with teaching humans to obey everything Christ commanded, and in a way, this charge echoes the cultural mandate to subdue creation. But what does it look like to teach the gospel in a fallen world? Paul offers plenty of glimpses of the mission of the church in his letters and his life. For understanding the comprehensive nature of the Christian worldview, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 is exceptionally helpful. Second Corinthians 10:3-6 instructs Christians to tear down opposing worldviews and to take every thought captive to Christ. Christian ministry is a battle over right thinking, as George Guthrie observes: "Clearly Paul sees the mind as a spiritual battleground. Consequently, with the true gospel, Paul binds up all wrong thinking, bringing it into submission to Christ."³⁷ Consequently, the biblical worldview calls Christians to challenge and replace incorrect

³⁷ George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 475.

thinking, or worldviews, with obedience to Christ. Paul describes Christian ministry as tearing down rival worldviews, taking every thought captive to Christ, and that all of this is a divinely empowered warfare.

Tearing Down Worldviews

As Paul describes what Christian ministry does, he uses warfare imagery. Paul depicts his ministry as “destroying strongholds,” which are “arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God” (10:4-5). Paul’s metaphor paints a picture of a siege, with him and other Christians being the attackers.³⁸ As Christians preach the gospel, applying it to all of life, they encounter fortresses of unbelief. Note, the primary object of this attack is ways of thinking that stand against God’s truth. The conflict is a battle of ideas concerning truth and falsehoods. Such realities mark the fallen world. As man rebelled against God, he did not cease being God, but man ceased recognizing him as the ruler over all. Central to Satan’s deception in the Garden was the lie that man could become more like God, leading to attempts to supplant him (Gen 3:1-7). Since that time, mankind has set up its own kingdoms to rival God’s rule. With the gospel, Christ commissions the church as an army to retake his creation. Paul’s imagery displays a Christianity that is on the offensive, one that finds strongholds and tears them down. Francis Schaeffer elaborates on what happens when these strongholds collapse on individuals: “It is unpleasant to be submerged by an avalanche, but we must allow the person to undergo this experience so that he may realize his system has no answer to the crucial questions of life. He must come to know that his roof is a false protection from the storm of what is; and then we can talk to him of the storm of the judgment of God.”³⁹

³⁸ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 462-63.

³⁹ Schaeffer, “The God Who Is There,” 141.

What are these strongholds? Paul describes them as “opinions” and “arguments” that oppose God and the message Paul proclaims (10:5). Paul’s message is that Jesus Christ is Lord (2 Cor 4:5). In the context of Paul’s ministry, these arguments include both Jewish and pagan rejections of Christ. Both religious and philosophical strongholds.⁴⁰ The challenges Christians everywhere face are opposing ideologies that do battle with what God has accomplished through Christ. Greg Bahnsen explains, “Man uses his reason, not to glorify God and advance His kingdom, but to rise up in arrogant opposition to the knowledge of God.”⁴¹ Whether the ivory towers of academia or low-brow comedy, many types of ideologies oppose God and his gospel. Christians are called to tear them all down.

Christian ministry directly attacks such worldviews aiming at their total destruction. The power of God shines brightest as Christianity opposes unbiblical thinking, which leads to evil living. To be sure, ideas are important, but their importance lies in the reality that what an individual believes directs how they live. Christianity declares truths that lay siege to false worldviews, but it does so because ideas impact individuals. Primarily, beliefs impact a person’s standing before God. The goal of Christian ministry is not to win an argument, but to transform lives as individuals are freed from destructive worldviews. Nonetheless, carrying out the Great Commission means destroying any ideology which opposes the knowledge of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ. There can be no area of life where such beliefs remain unchallenged. The Christian mission involves tearing down all rival worldviews.

Taking Every Thought Captive

As Paul describes this warfare, the end goal comes into focus as taking “every thought to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). The imagery of taking something captive comes with

⁴⁰ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 466.

⁴¹ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith* (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media, 1996), 46.

strong connections to prisoners of war.⁴² What is taken captive here is not a person, but thoughts. When unbelievers convert, their thinking becomes captive to the lordship of Christ. They switch allegiance from the world and Satan to Christ. Now they see the world differently and consequently live differently. Obedience to Christ starts with a changed heart and mind. One's mind determines what is true, and then the heart desires it. Finally, the will carries out this action leading to a new lifestyle. As Christians confront evil ideologies, some individuals repent and believe. They pass from death to life, and this inviolably leads to new life.

As Paul elaborates, taking thoughts captive means obedience to Christ (10:6). While this obedience is not always perfect, it is meant to be comprehensive. Christians must learn to take every thought to obedience to the lordship of Christ. As Christians preach Christ crucified, they besiege opposing ideologies and take captives. Christian ministry is warfare, but it is a battle over ideas and worldviews.

Christians must not miss the comprehensive nature of this command—*every thought* must be taken captive. There is nowhere to escape from such a charge. From the garbage man to the lawyer, every occupation is covered. From eating to metaphysics, all levels of thought are covered. From worshipping on Sunday morning, to how Christians engage with media, all areas of life are to be lived out in obedience to Christ. As Christians grow in sanctification, they learn to see all of life through the message of the cross and Christ's comprehensive lordship.

Divinely Empowered

The battle Christians fight is not physical (2 Cor 10:4), but wages through the exchange of ideas. In a day where Christianity is overly privatized and overly spiritualized, Paul reminds that fighting opposing worldviews and bringing all lives in obedience to

⁴² Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 306.

Christ is the very definition of spiritual. Far from a secular/sacred divide, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 lays out a comprehensive battle plan for all of life. Spiritual warfare impacts everything.

Paul's encouragement is that God empowers this fight: "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds" (2 Cor 10:4). Not only is this battle of ideas God's will, but it is also how he exhibits his power. Through declaring the death and lordship of Christ, God destroys the seemingly impenetrable fortresses of this age. Whether it is Gnosticism or Darwinism, they are weak when compared to the gospel. Calvin is right, there is nothing more powerful in the world than this message.⁴³

In destroying the strongholds of worldly thinking, Christians see a partial fulfillment of Christ's promised presence with his people (Matt 28:20). As Christians lay siege to the ideologies and worldviews of their age, they can find confidence in the divine power and presence of Christ. Christ calls them to attack these strongholds knowing that God's power goes with him. Taking every thought captive may seem daunting, but with the power of God at the church's disposal, there is no need to fear. It is not the might or wisdom of Christians that wins the day, but the power of God in the gospel message that throws down strongholds.

Conclusion

Schaeffer expresses the wonder of the Christian worldview: "The Christian system is consistent as no other system that has ever been. It is beautiful beyond words, because it has that quality that no other system completely has—you begin at the beginning and you can go to the end."⁴⁴ He is correct, starting with Genesis and going

⁴³ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 20, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 323.

⁴⁴ Schaeffer, "The God Who Is There," 168.

through Revelation, the Bible offers a comprehensive worldview. It addresses every facet of life, and it does so by focusing on the person and work of Christ. This spiritual warfare, the battle of ideas and competing understandings of reality, is what Christian ministry is all about. Second Corinthians 10:3-6 describes how this battle covers all thinking opposed to Christianity.

Christ is the author of life and of salvation. He rules by virtue of his identity and his work. He saves rebels by grace through faith and then commissions them to declare the good news of who he is to all of creation. There are no limits to his reign, and there are no limits to what Christianity addresses. Believers living in a secularized age need to see this big, beautiful picture of Christianity; it enlightens all of life.

The story of Scripture gives this metanarrative. God created man in his image and commissioned him to rule over creation as his vice-regents. Though, man rebelled, trying to make himself equal with God. The *coup de 'tat* failed, and man and creation were cursed by God. Yet, God set into motion a plan of redemption that included the salvation of creation and the establishment of his eternal kingdom. This kingdom broke into the world with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For he is the creator of the universe who rules over everything (Col 1:15), and he is also the means of redemption, making him preeminent over everything (Col 1:18). As such, as Christ ascended into heaven, he commissioned his people to retake the world by declaring the gospel (Matt 28:18-20). The church fulfills this as it confronts every false worldview and takes every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:3-6). Christianity is a comprehensive worldview covering all of life and all of the created order. There is no neutrality in this world; no secular area of life, for all of it is Christ's. It is his twice over by virtue of his identity and his work. This is the message Christ's people carry out into this world.

All the universe belongs to Christ. All of life is the scope of his teaching. Every facet of this world is the battlefield for his people. Christianity offers a comprehensive worldview that must never be limited by opposing worldviews like secularism. Pearcey

perfectly captures this thought: “Christianity alone provides what the greatest philosophers and sages have sought all along: a coherent and transcendent framework that encompasses all of human knowledge.”⁴⁵ Christianity is a comprehensive religion that touches all of life, for Christ is the comprehensive and preeminent Lord of all. The American church needs all of Christ for all of life.

⁴⁵ Nancy R. Pearcey, *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015), 89.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHALLENGES OF SECULARISM AND POSTMODERNISM

As established in chapter 2, Christianity offers a comprehensive worldview that begins at the beginning of time and goes through to the end of everything. This worldview encompasses all of life as Christ rules over everything. While many people live with inconsistencies in their thinking, the goal of the Christian life is to grow into greater alignment with biblical doctrine. To do so, the church must teach the worldview and framework for life that God reveals in Scripture. Moreover, the message of the gospel is the universal rule and reign of Christ achieved through his sacrificial death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. Christians cannot preach Christ adequately without a comprehensive scope. If churches preach only a limited faith, then they in effect preach a lesser Christ.

Worldviews are the set of beliefs and assumptions that help individuals understand the world. A worldview is how an individual or society interprets reality. James Sire elaborates,

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.¹

What a person thinks of the world impacts how he or she lives. Some of the questions every worldview answers include who is man, where did the universe come from, what is morality, and what is the purpose of life? How one answers these questions invariably

¹ James Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 9.

shapes the choices he or she makes—worldview thinking is both unavoidable and vital. Sadly, most do not inherit their worldview through careful analysis, but through day-to-day life. Worldviews are more often caught than taught. Thus, many hold contradictory beliefs, like considering the universe as solely naturalistic, but still speak as if there is such a thing as morality. Even Christians fall prey to such inconsistencies.

In every age, Christians face the temptation of false ideologies (Eph 4:14-15). Yet, this current age presents unique challenges to the faith. In some ways, the West is moving to become post-Christian—a society where Christianity moves away from being the dominant worldview to one where most people look at the faith with suspicion. In such an age, the need for a holistic Christian worldview is self-evident. Two dominant philosophies of today’s age, secularism and postmodernism, must be confronted if believers are to think comprehensively as Christians. The church must understand the unique challenges of both secularism and postmodernism.

Secularism

Secularism is a major force in the West as it exiles faith to the private sphere of life. Mary Poplin suggests that secularism is “the doctrine that rejects all religious principles in civic life.”² At its heart, secularism is a dismissal of religion from any public part of life. Its rise can be traced to the Enlightenment’s turn to human reason and the scientific method as the arbiters of truth. Religion, it was argued, cannot be tested by reason and science, and is thus put into a different category of knowing. By turning to science and reason, secularism attempted to remove the need for supernatural explanations for meaning, morality, and origins.³ Secularism reduces religion to a private act of faith that cannot be used to bind society or other individuals. Consequently, religion and faith

² Mary Poplin, *Is Reality Secular? Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 13.

³ Poplin, *Is Reality Secular?*, 14.

become upper story experiences not bound to logic, reason, or science. Faith becomes utterly detached from real life and in many ways becomes a *lesser* way of knowing. Secularism fragments life into different, often opposing, categories. Nancy Pearcey explains that secularism introduces the dichotomies of “secular/sacred, fact/value, public/private.”⁴ In a secular age, people live in tensions, inconsistencies, and fragments because of the absence of an unifying, transcendent principle.

Secularism, in its supposed reliance on reason and science, is put forth as the assumed standard. It is assumed to be the *only* reasonable and fair philosophy to build society around, at least in the West. It is thus treated as superior to any other ideology. Poplin asserts, “To hold secular worldviews is considered normal, more ‘progressive’ and ‘safer’ because such worldviews transcend specific faith commitments. These are superior to ‘religious’ worldviews—which are ‘pre-scientific’ or ‘pre-political’ justifications based on faith.”⁵ Religion is treated as *less* than anything secular and even considered by many to be dangerous to individuals and society. Such reasoning assumes the unreasonable nature of faith and that ideologies like secularism, scientism, and the Enlightenment are not themselves systems of belief.

What are the foundations of secularism? What impact does it have on society and religion? Is it always used in reference to the exiling of religion to the private sphere of life? Charles Taylor offers a threefold examination of secularism and how it shapes life in this age as it separates much of life from the sacred, decreases the number of people who practice religion, and offers many other viable options in religion’s place.

⁴ Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, Study Guide ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 32.

⁵ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 14.

A Secular Age

Charles Taylor explores life in a secular age, what this term really means, and how the West got to this point.⁶ He argues that secularism is multifaceted in its origins and how it impacts society. This ideology is more than a simple separation of the church and state. It is even more than banishing religion from the public square. Part of the difficulty of addressing secularism is its varied nature and the elasticity of its usage. Taylor offers both breadth and clarity with his threefold schema of secularism.

First, is the classical use of the word *secular*. In prior ages, it referred to things of this earth.⁷ Some things are concerned mainly with this life, and not with the life to come. Such interests are *secular* instead of *sacred*. The impetus of this thinking has roots in the Catholic practice of monasteries as priests promoted the sacred while the common believer was concerned mostly with secular vocations.⁸ Ironically, religion played a formational role in the beginning of what would become modern secularism as it separated faith from earthly concerns. The Protestant Reformation, at least in part, attempted to correct this secular and sacred divide. The Reformers gave the Word of God to the commoner and stressed the holiness of any righteous vocation. Still, as the secular/sacred split took root, the term *secular* came to refer to secularized spaces, especially public ones.⁹ Such thinking was not always the case as religion was “interwoven with everything else and in no sense constituted a separate ‘sphere’ of its own.”¹⁰ Secularism, in this first use, establishes parts of life as separate, at least in some fashion, from religion.

⁶ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

⁷ James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 20-21.

⁸ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 20.

⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 20.

¹⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

Second, the term *secular* can refer to the collapse of religious belief and practice in society. Taylor explains, “In this second meaning, secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to church.”¹¹ In earlier times, the default was belief in God. Now, in many parts of the world unbelief dominates life. Religious belief fades into a mere memory of a bygone era that has little impact on modern life. The second use of *secularism* refers to the diminishing importance and practice of faith in the West.

Third, *secularism* refers to the reality that religion is one of countless options for life and belief. Taylor explains, “The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.”¹² With the rise of hostile ideologies to Christianity, including naturalism, postmodernism, and humanism, traditional belief systems become unappealing. In such a society, religious belief is looked on with a certain level of suspicion and doubt. Taylor continues, “And this will likely mean that at least in certain milieu, it may be hard to sustain one’s faith.”¹³ Religious faith decreases not only in numbers, but in desirability.

Of course, all three of these realities constitute the secular age. Partitioning off the day-to-day realities of life as lesser than “sacred” pursuits lends itself to the belief that religion is not needed for most of life. Thus, as religion becomes irrelevant to life, many leave it behind. When the majority of people from a society abandon religion, faith appears unattractive, quaint, and impractical. Sadly, many Christians have secularized their faith in a way that fits comfortably within a secular age. If modern evangelicals proclaim a

¹¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

¹² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

¹³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3

watered-down Christianity—one that portions off much of life from the sacred—then it plays directly into the hands of secularism. How, then, does this dominance of secularism impact modern life?

Marks of Life in a Secular Age

As many people see faith as unbelievable, how does this impact life? Secularism is the water society swims in, and the fallout is far reaching. There are many marks of life in a secular age. The first mark of life in a secular age is the loss of the transcendent and the rise of the immanent. Taylor elaborates on the immanent frame of secularism: “This frame constitutes a ‘natural’ order to be contrasted to a supernatural one, an ‘immanent’ world, over against a possible ‘transcendent’ one.”¹⁴ Life in a secular age is consumed by the immanent to the exclusion of the transcendent. Everything is reduced to *this* life, to the physical universe, and the self. Gone is any concern for eternal life, the spiritual, and the transcendent God. Life is all about the here and the now.

The focus on the immanent frame marks this age from what has come before. With the supremacy of naturalism, life has no meaning beyond the present and the physical. This universe, it is widely held, is only material and so life becomes disenchanting. In ages past, when transcendence was the given, life was charged with beauty and meaning beyond the mundane. The material world was enchanted¹⁵ by the transcendent and spiritual realities. Today, the immanent frame is all that remains as religion and transcendence are exiled. Life in the secular age removes the transcendent and exchanges it for the immanent, and this disenchanting all of life as meaning is swallowed by what is physical and visible. There is nothing beyond what can be seen and touched.

¹⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 542.

¹⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 25.

The second mark of life in a secular age is the rise in the pursuit of human flourishing. Human flourishing is about finding a good, “fulfilled life”¹⁶ in this world. In the religious paradigm, life was directed by something beyond this world. Yet in a secular and immanent world, finding human flourishing in the now becomes the central ethic.

Taylor explains the impact of secularism on human flourishing:

I would like to claim that the coming of modern secularity in my sense has been coterminous with the rise of society in which for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option. I mean by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing. Of no previous society was this true.¹⁷

The good life became merely human flourishing within the immanent frame. Religion, especially Christianity, preaches denial of the self in life to receive greater reward in the life to come. In a secular age, such thinking becomes absurd. Human flourishing elevates the immanent frame, and to deny such flourishing is to deny the secular purpose of life. James Smith explains, “It’s that pursuing a way of life that values something beyond human flourishing becomes unimaginable.”¹⁸ Self-denial for gain in the life to come does not fit in a secular worldview. The only good is here and now, and is found in human flourishing, whatever that means. Unbeknownst to many secularists, without a transcendent foundation there is no basis or measurement for what human flourishing is, and *why* it should be pursued over and against something like human languishing. Why is flourishing better than suffering if the universe is strictly naturalistic?

The third mark of life in a secular age is a turning to the self for meaning and fulfillment. As society removes God, something must take his place. Smith explains that secularists’ search for meaning is stuck to a search “within the immanent order.”¹⁹ The

¹⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 16.

¹⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 18.

¹⁸ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 83.

¹⁹ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 69.

physical world is all there is, so meaning must come from within that framework. With meaning becoming unhinged from the divine, man now looks for it within the self. In a world marked by transcendence, God, who is outside of the self, provided meaning and direction.²⁰ Today, the only viable option for meaning is the self. Taylor writes, “The power to reach fullness is within.”²¹ The self is the god of this age, and so the battle at the heart of many of the “culture wars” is over the immanent and transcendent divide as one side looks within for meaning and the other points to an external standard. Secularism bows at the altar of the autonomous self, but the Christian faith cannot follow.

The fourth mark of life in a secular age is the haunting meaninglessness of life. The mood of this age is one of angst, dissatisfaction, anxiety, and emptiness. Try as moderns might to replace transcendence with the immanent and the self, this solution is ultimately unsatisfying. To remove God is to remove any foundation for an enchanted, meaningful world. Taylor writes, “But in the enchanted world, the meaning exists outside of us, prior to contact; it can take us over, we can fall into its field of force. It comes from the outside.”²² In the secular worldview, there is no *outside*. Yet man has a seemingly innate need to find meaning. Smith explains, “So it wasn’t enough to for us to stop believing in the gods; we also had to be able to *imagine* significance within the immanent frame, to imagine modes of meaning that did not depend on transcendence.”²³ So as secularists turned to the self, which is unable to bear such a weight, they return with nothing but a sense of loss and malaise about life in a secular age.²⁴ They search desperately for some shadow of meaning, but by cutting off the transcendent there is no

²⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 33-34.

²¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 8.

²² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 34.

²³ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 26.

²⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 302.

foundation to build meaning upon, and so this age is haunted by the nagging dread of nihilism. If the immanent is all there is, then there is no meaning beyond it. The death of the transcendent leads to the death of meaning.

All that is left is the haunting of the West's Christian past and the loss of transcendence.²⁵ This desire for meaning encroaches upon secularism as a sign of the lingering influence of the former Christian enchantment. Many feel this ache for meaning, but a return to Christianity seems unthinkable. Thus, many are haunted by "the spectre of meaninglessness"²⁶ that is life in a strictly immanent world. If there is nothing *beyond* this life, then there is no ultimate meaning *in* this life. Many moderns are thus left staring into the abyss that is secularism.

The final mark of life in a secular age is the pervasive influence of secularism. Smith observes, "So the shift to a secular age not only makes exclusive humanism a live option for us, it also changes religious communities. We're all secular now."²⁷ Merely being a person of faith is not enough to be anti-secular in today's world; secularism cannot really be escaped. Smith writes, "We now inhabit this self-sufficient immanent order, even if we believe in transcendence."²⁸ Many of those who believe in a transcendent God still live and function as if he does not exist in much of their lives. To many religious people, faith is still a personal matter kept in the private realms of life. Secularism reigns, even in the church. Clergy subtly reinforce secularism's dominance as they reduce the faith to a mere personal piety. The Christian church must seek a way to return from its exile.

²⁵ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 4.

²⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 717.

²⁷ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 28.

²⁸ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 93.

Confronting Secularism

Despite the pervasive acceptance and influence of secularism, there are chinks in its armor. It is not as untouchable as many purport. The smugness of secularism is found in its appeal to reason/science as if it alone is the neutral arbiter of reality. Poplin observes, “One of the major conundrums of secularism is its naïve assumption of neutrality, an un-self-reflective position that makes its superiority seem plausible.”²⁹ This air of superiority is bolstered because many view secularism as “more ‘progressive’ and ‘safer’ because such worldviews transcend specific faith commitments.”³⁰ Therefore, secularism is built up as the impartial referee for all disputes, but it does so as it looks down from on high on those who insist on bringing faith into public life. This reasoning assumes that secularism is not itself based upon faith. Secularism is thus built as a house of cards.

The modern secularist dogma is fraught with faith and dogma. The removal of the transcendent God demands something takes his place. There is always a god of every system. Pearcey laments, “Faith is a universal human function, and if it is not directed toward God it will be directed toward something else.”³¹ Secularism, with its many counterparts, has sidled into the spot once reserved for God. There is always a place of final authority, and this is no different with secularism. Poplin exposes this reality:

A naturalist’s faith is that all things ultimately can be reduced to material phenomena including, for example, religious beliefs, the mind, the soul and consciousness. Secular humanists place their faith solely in human reason as the bedrock up which to build “progressive” consensual social, moral, cultural and intellectual foundations.³²

Every worldview can ultimately be traced to some act of faith. The origins of life, reason, knowledge, morality, beauty, and meaning require faith from every system. The question is whether a given ideology can offer an adequate explanation for the claims

²⁹ Poplin, *Is Reality Secular?*, 17-18.

³⁰ Poplin, *Is Reality Secular?*, 14.

³¹ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 42.

³² Poplin, *Is Reality Secular?*, 15.

it makes and for universal human experience. Secularism operates as a system of faith. It is not neutral. If there is no transcendent God, then there is no foundation for human knowledge at all, let alone reason. Where does reason come from within secularism? Secularists are left with a leap of faith upon which to base human reason and the scientific method.³³ Additionally, the secular god is the autonomous self, and this self has no meaning beyond itself. It cannot be an adequate foundation for truth, reason, and morality let alone society, love, and purpose. Secularism does all of this in the name of reason and science instead of faith, but it is just as rooted in faith as any world religion. It does so while claiming to be above the fray and neutral. Poplin asserts, “But secularism is no more neutral than global Christianity, it has no fewer contestations inside itself or with the outside world.”³⁴ Secularism is every bit a system of faith as Christianity. It cannot honestly claim neutrality.

Despite the flaws of secularism and its obvious hostility to the Christian faith, many believers have cozied up to secularism. Christianity, with its focus on the life to come, seems custom-made for secularism as one can live secularly awaiting the coming sacred age. The sad realization is that secularism influences many Christians, including pastors, more than the biblical worldview.³⁵ For many, faith remains primarily a private experience expressed only in their devotional life, if it exists, and church attendance. If God is not necessary for most of life, then the relevance of said practices disappears. Many Christians think, feel, act, move, and breathe with secularist assumptions that are often reinforced on Sunday mornings. Pearcey warns, “A false god leads to the formation of a false worldview.”³⁶ If secularism is the lens used to interpret the God of Scripture,

³³ Nancy R. Pearcey, *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2015), 141-76.

³⁴ Poplin, *Is Reality Secular?*, 18.

³⁵ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 37.

³⁶ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 42.

then secularism becomes god. In this way, secularism cages the God of Scripture and reigns sovereignly over everything. By surrendering to such thinking, many Christians are indistinguishable from their secularist neighbors. What value is there in such a faith?

If the Christian faith does not impact all of life, then it is not worthy of people's time. If the church is nothing more than a social gathering and place to receive tips for improving the inner man, then it becomes redundant and unhelpful. As Smith observes, even unbelievers recognize that religion is pointless if it is not “seriously serious” and unless it “fills, directs, stains, and sustains your life.”³⁷ Taylor offers guidance for Christians by pointing to the transformation perspective of religion: “The perspective of transformation of human beings which takes them beyond or outside of whatever is normally understood to be human flourishing.”³⁸ For Christianity to be faithful to its doctrines, it must transform the lives of its adherents, not just in parts, but in totality. Pearcey summarizes, “Christianity is not just religious truth, it is total truth—covering all of reality.”³⁹ This vision must be recaptured if the church is to push back against secularism.

Christianity must break its secular cage by bringing all of Christ into all of life. Secularism is not what it claims to be—neutral and based on human reason and science—and it leads society to the abyss of an all-encompassing immanence. In such a world, there is no foundation for love, meaning, knowledge, and truth. Such a worldview is full of despair and meaninglessness, the very mood of the day. The self cannot replace God as it cannot hold up under the insurmountable pressure of being the sole foundation for life. If there is no meaning beyond the self, then there is no meaning at all. The church must push back against the reign of secularism by preaching all of Christ for all of life. If

³⁷ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 7.

³⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 430.

³⁹ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 33.

Christians will not, Pearcey warns, “not only do we fail to be salt and life to a lost culture, but we ourselves may end up being shaped by that culture.”⁴⁰ If the church does not regain the comprehensive Christian worldview, then society will be left without a contrasting witness and the church will continue to be shaped more by the idol of secularism than by the God of Scripture.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism and secularism mutually reinforce one another. Both worldviews impact Christianity, and in many ways replace it. At the heart of both is the autonomous self. There is much debate over what exactly postmodernism is, and it could rightly be described as more of a mood than an organized system of thought.⁴¹ In some ways, postmodernism attempted to be an anti-worldview that aimed at destroying other metanarratives. As a movement, many describe it as a rejection of metanarratives, or overarching stories that provide meaning to life. The term *metanarrative* is just another way to describe a worldview.⁴² Yet, postmodernism fails in this deconstruction of all metanarratives because even an anti-worldview cannot escape becoming what it hates—a worldview. Like secularism, postmodernism has pervasive influence in society, and if Christians hope to bring all of Christ to all of life, then they need to understand and combat its siren song. To fulfill this goal, the church must understand the origins of postmodernism, its core tenets, and how to combat it.

⁴⁰ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 44.

⁴¹ David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 73.

⁴² Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity—and Why This Harms Everybody* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020), 35.

Modernism and Postmodernism

The very name, *postmodernism*, identifies this movement in its relationship to modernism. It is impossible here to survey the fullness of modernist thought and how it morphed into postmodernism, but it is vital to note that one can only understand postmodernism by first understanding modernism. At the heart of modernism was a belief in unified truth that was accessible, and to some extent, judged to be true by human reason. Stanley Grenz explains, “Superficially the modern mind assumes that knowledge is certain, objective, and good. Moreover, moderns assume that, in principle, knowledge is accessible to the human mind.”⁴³ This philosophy reflects the influence of Enlightenment thinking, as everything was weighed and measured by human reason and the scientific method. There was great optimism in modernism that reason and science would triumph over all its rivals. Grenz again, “Isaac Newton later provided the scientific framework of modernity, picturing the physical world as a machine the laws and regularity of which could be discerned by the human mind. The modern human can appropriately be characterized as Descartes’s autonomous, rational substance encountering Newton’s mechanistic world.”⁴⁴ Modernism turned to the self in its search truth and knowledge by elevating human reason. The age of modernism saw the rise of competing worldviews that fought for primacy, or to be the unifying principle of all truth. Examples include humanism, Marxism, capitalism, and naturalism. The problems with modernism became clear as the pursuit of science and human reason failed to bring unity and instead multiplied bloodshed and division. If reason was the unifying process of life, then why the failure of rationalists agreeing on what is rational?

What became evident is that by cutting the self off from any external, transcendent authority, there was no basis for objective knowledge. At the heart of modernism is the autonomous, though rational, self. With Rene Descartes echoing in the

⁴³ Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 4.

⁴⁴ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 3.

background, “I think therefore I am,” the self took center stage for many modernists.⁴⁵ Grenz observes, “Building on the Renaissance, the Enlightenment elevated the individual self to the center of the world.”⁴⁶ The problem is evident: the self is an unstable foundation for truth, reason, and meaning. In the Enlightenment, the self became an “autonomous rational subject”⁴⁷ but there was nothing unifying one individual to another. Instead, many believed the self could be a neutral and unconditioned knower as truth was pursued.⁴⁸ This proved to be overly optimistic. Modernism was doomed to failure from the outset because of its attempt to absolutize the rational self. The problem is, each individual independently self-determined what was rational and true. Each person’s reason functionally became a god, and none of these little gods could agree.

There is much debate over how exactly postmodernism enters the scene. Is it a wholesale rejection of modernism, or is it the logical conclusion of modernism’s philosophical commitments? There is some truth to both views. Grenz puts it succinctly, “Postmodernism represents as a rejection of the Enlightenment project and the foundational assumptions upon which it was built.”⁴⁹ Postmodernism rejects *some* core tenets of modernism, including reliance on human reason, pursuit of objective and knowable truth, and an optimistic view of the future.⁵⁰ Yet in some important ways, postmodernism is just a continuation of modernism, as Myron Penner argues: “The postmodern turn is interpreted as extending the modern stress on human autonomy, especially with regard to rational explanation, only in an observe way. Viewed like this, postmodernity is more like

⁴⁵ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 3.

⁴⁶ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 2.

⁴⁷ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 3.

⁴⁸ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 4.

⁴⁹ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 5.

⁵⁰ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 60-88.

a cynical (or perhaps honest) version of modernity. It is modernity come of age.”⁵¹ Postmodernism continues and intensifies modernism’s reliance on the autonomous self—it is really hypermodernism.⁵² While modernism turned to the self in the form of human reason to find truth, postmodernism turns further into the self to find meaning, privatized truth, and purpose. The immanent self becomes transcendent, but only personally transcendent. Postmodernism rejects seeking universal truth through human reason, and instead universalizes the autonomous self who finds truth within. Modernism turned to the self in human reason, but in failing to find universal truth, postmodernism turns further inward and relativizes everything. Modernism placed reality under the authority of human reason, but postmodernism places reality under the authority of human experience, feelings, and preference. Thus, postmodernism is a form of broad skepticism aimed at many of the claims of modernism, except, notably, the autonomous self and the preeminence of the immanent.

Tenets of Postmodernism

The irony of the rise of postmodernism is that it became what it sought to destroy—a metanarrative. One of its core tenets is the rejection of worldviews, or any all-encompassing systems of thought. David Wells notes, “The postmodern mood beckons us away from the old Enlightenment world, but its call is also a siren song, for we are drawn toward a place in which there are no worldviews, no truth, and no purpose.”⁵³ Postmodernism does not just dislike worldviews, it seeks to deconstruct and ultimately destroy any system of thought that opposes it.⁵⁴ This opposition to systemic thinking

⁵¹ Myron B. Penner, “Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Some Preliminary Considerations,” in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*, ed. Myron B. Penner (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 18.

⁵² Penner, “Christianity and the Postmodern Turn,” 18.

⁵³ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 73.

⁵⁴ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 5-6.

makes postmodernism hard to define, and this may well be intentional.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, as postmodernism dominates society, there are some observable tenets of the movement.

The first tenet of postmodernism is the rejection of metanarratives.

Metanarratives, as discussed, are in essence worldviews. While modernism sought a unifying story of the world, the leading contenders brought untold carnage. Postmodernism replaces the search for a metanarrative, to an extent, with skepticism. Pluckrose and Lindsay observe that postmodernism operates as a “profound skepticism of any broad meaning-making structure underpinning people’s lives.”⁵⁶ Again, with the loss of the transcendent, any claims to absolute truth or universal right and wrong is looked on with utter contempt. Such thinking leads to a prevalent pluralism. D. A. Carson laments, “The only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism. No religion has the right to pronounce itself right or true, and the others false, or even (in the majority view) relatively inferior.”⁵⁷ The first rule of postmodernism is that there is no external, unifying standard in the universe. This thinking necessarily precludes the comprehensive story of Scripture.

The second tenet of postmodernism is a rejection of objective knowledge and universal truth. Central to the modernist experiment was the belief in the neutral knower and the quest for universal truth. Postmodernism rejects that the knower can be impartial and that there is such a thing as timeless truth.⁵⁸ Grenz notes the influence of Jacques Derrida on knowing: “Because nothing transcendent inheres in reality, he [Derrida] argues, all that emerges in the knowing process is the perspective of the self who interprets reality.”⁵⁹ Truth claims, it is argued, are more constructed than discovered. Thus,

⁵⁵ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 61.

⁵⁶ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 28.

⁵⁷ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 19.

⁵⁸ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 7-8.

⁵⁹ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 6.

postmodernism seeks to deconstruct the systems that make universal claims. Subjective relativism replaces objective truth. Gone is any belief that truth can transcend cultural influences, and what is left is an extreme perspectivalism.⁶⁰ Any claim to truth or knowledge is reduced to a person's perspective and a pursuit of power. This relativism plagues society as it abandons the search for transcendent truth and embraces the tenets of postmodernism.

The third tenet of postmodernism is the belief that truth claims, and any normative expectations, are merely exercises of power. Grenz points to the influence of Michel Foucault as postmodernism asserts that "every interpretation of reality is assertion of power."⁶¹ Since universal truth either does not exist or is inaccessible, it follows that all truth claims are attempts to gain power. This power is often wielded, it is argued, to keep others in their place. In rejecting such truth claims, metanarratives are "shattered" and what is left are "micronarratives" revolving around various identity groups like race, sexuality, and socio-economic status.⁶² Such thinking reduces the pursuit of knowledge to the pursuit of power between different identity groups. It also reduces the individual to his or her different cultural markers. Pluckrose and Lindsay testify to the centrality of power dynamics to postmodern thinking: "In this sense, for postmodern Theory [sic], power decides not only what is factually correct but also what is morally good."⁶³ The quest for knowledge and truth is all about power dynamics between competing groups. There is no sense in postmodernism of universal truth transcending culture or breaking through biases. Instead, biases and cultures *determine* what someone views as true.

⁶⁰ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*, 85.

⁶¹ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 6.

⁶² Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*, 67.

⁶³ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 36.

The fourth tenet of postmodernism is the elevation of diversity and tolerance. Since all truth claims are culturally determined, it follows that individuals should desire more diversity of input and thus practice tolerance. Sadly, the search for truth often produces violence and hatred. Postmodernism aims to correct that by relativizing all truth. In some ways, postmodernism responds to growing empirical pluralism and diversity of this age.⁶⁴ Yet, it elevates identity groups over and against the individual. Pluckrose and Lindsay write, “The postmodern view largely rejects both the smallest unit of society—the individual—and the largest—humanity—and instead focuses on small, local groups as the producers of knowledge, values, and discourses.”⁶⁵ The goal is to pursue diverse opinions, especially those of minority or oppressed groups.⁶⁶

Since these claims are culturally determined, postmodernism promotes moral relativism. There is no right or wrong outside of personal and group preferences. If there is no universal, transcendent source of morality, then morality is relative to the individual or the group. Alongside this relativism is the postmodern virtue of tolerance. All views are to be tolerated and held as equally right, at least in theory. Ironically, moral relativism becomes the *absolute standard* by which everything is judged. Carson explains, “Because of its independent status, this new tolerance becomes, ironically, a *moralizing* support of moral relativism.”⁶⁷ Intolerant views, or views that claim universal truth, are not tolerated. The intolerance of postmodern tolerance stems from the movement’s claiming the moral high ground and then enforcing its beliefs as the standard of judgment.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 91-119.

⁶⁵ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 42.

⁶⁶ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 38.

⁶⁷ D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 76.

⁶⁸ Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 1-2.

The fifth tenet of postmodernism is the loss of universal meaning and purpose. Central to this movement is the belief that “meaning has died.”⁶⁹ Meaning here is the idea that actions, or beliefs, have something beyond the immanent world which gives it definition. Instead, things like love are reduced to either chemical reactions or a personal preference. Gone is the idea that humans love because God has first loved us (1 John 4:19). In postmodernism, there is no meaning greater than the immediate context, and that which is socially constructed for the here and now. Carson observes that even language suffers in the postmodern age: “They [postmodernists] hold that language and meaning are socially constructed, which is tantamount to saying arbitrarily constructed.”⁷⁰ Meaning is made up by society and really is thus meaningless beyond that society. Similarly, there is no purpose to anything in life. Without the transcendent, there is no *telos*, end goal, to anything in this life.⁷¹ This life is all there is. A person’s life and this universe are *not* moving to some final destiny. Since the immanent is all there is, there is no grand purpose to anything. This thinking is the postmodern mood and is directly tied to loss of truth, worldview, and the transcendent. Wells laments this reality: “Thus has the postmodern self-consciousness become deeply nomadic, ever moving and never stopping, but it is always a movement without a destination. It is without purpose.”⁷²

The final postmodern tenet is the one which holds them all together—the elevation of the autonomous self. While transcendent meaning is exiled, the desire for meaning remains, and so postmodernism turns within. While culture and society are dominant features in postmodern thought, the self transcends them in two ways. First, society and its expectations are often viewed as oppressive—something the true self must

⁶⁹ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 67.

⁷⁰ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 21.

⁷¹ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 88-89.

⁷² Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 89.

liberate itself from.⁷³ Second, the self, as autonomous, chooses which groups it wants to identify with, hence the rise of transgenderism.⁷⁴ When society exiles God from the center of knowledge, truth, and purpose, something must fill the void. For modernism, that was the self in the form of human reason. For postmodernism, it is the autonomous self and its experiences, preferences, and desires.

The self is the proposed solution to the problems of both postmodernism and secularism. To correct modernism, the autonomous self imposes the necessity of relativism. Gone is the quest for truth, and instead society is left with personal experience and preference. Without the competing metanarratives of modernism, humanity can live in a state of tolerance and peace, at least that is the hope. Yet, with the self-taking prominence in a world that already being swallowed up by the immanent frame, how does the individual find meaning and purpose? Again, the self supposedly provides the answer. Without the grand worldviews of ages past, the self provides a privatized worldview for each person. Wells explains, “What has replaced the worldviews that once sought to encompass the whole of existence in their understanding are now privatized worldviews, worldviews that are valid for no one but the person whose world it is and whose view it is.”⁷⁵ As much as postmodernism rejects worldviews, all it really does is provide a new ideology that multiplies worldviews by privatizing them. Moreover, the self provides no stable ground for a worldview. As Wells explains, these worldviews are “private, personal, and evaporating.”⁷⁶ Rooted in the finite self, these privatized worldviews have no lasting significance and no ability to provide meaning, unity, or hope.

⁷³ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 35-39.

⁷⁴ For more discussion about the connection between the modern self and the sexual revolution, see Carl R. Truman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021).

⁷⁵ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*, 74.

⁷⁶ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*, 75.

The difference between modernism's and postmodernism's elevation of the self is *what* they appeal to within the self. Both replace God with the self, but they do so for different reasons. For modernism, the human intellect and reason reigned supreme because modernism viewed the world as a rational place with universal truth ready to be discovered.⁷⁷ Conversely, postmodernism rejects truth and turns to feelings as central.⁷⁸ Everything must now bend to the will of a person's internal feelings. Carl Truman explains life in this age as being psychological and internal: "In the world of psychological man, however, the commitment is first and foremost to the self and is inwardly directed. Thus the order is reversed. Outward institutions become, in effect, the servants of the individual and her sense of inner well-being."⁷⁹ Feelings are unquestionable, everything must submit to the desires of the individual, no matter how absurd. Modernism's slogan could be summarized as, "I think, therefore I am." Conversely, postmodernism's slogan is, "I emote, therefore I am." Both systems replace God with the self, but one does it in a rational way while the other leans into irrationality.

The rise of the autonomous self unites secularism and postmodernism. With the rejection of the transcendent and the focus on the immanent, both movements turn to the self to replace God. As Smith observes, the loss of the transcendent in secularism opens society up to "independent 'meaning' that is unhooked from any sort of transcendent dependence."⁸⁰ Yet, every system has a god—a final place of appeal. For both secularism and postmodernism that final spot of appeal is the self. The problem is that the finite and fallible self makes a terrible god. As much as postmodernism declares that individuals

⁷⁷ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 20.

⁷⁸ Truman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 47.

⁷⁹ Truman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 49.

⁸⁰ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 35.

can construct their own reality, identity, and meaning, they are stuck living in this world.

Wells poignantly explains the current dilemma:

However, this attempted rebuilding of ourselves and our society on different foundations is leading us, if I may be so bold, into a dead end. The truth is that we are not doing very well. When God—the external God—dies, then the self immediately moves in to fill the vacuum. But then something strange happens. The self also dies. And with it goes meaning and reality.⁸¹

The self provides no meaningful foundation beyond the self, so this age is untethered from meaning, love, purpose, truth, and ultimately reality. With no center that unites the countless autonomous selves that wander aimlessly through life, the world appears infinitely fractured. Focusing on the immanent and the self leads inevitably to despair. The self has no power to save, heal, or conquer death. The self is finite, weak, and ever-changing. There is no salvation found within.

Sadly, it is the autonomous self that sits at the center of both secularism and postmodernism because they both reject the transcendent God. To make matters worse, these two ideologies dominate life in the West, including the church. Religion, including Christianity, has taken a decidedly individualistic turn. As individuals still crave a connection with the sacred, they look to religion but many refuse to submit to propositional truth and a transcendent God who demands obedience. Instead, many look within, even when being religious. Wells again, “In the more spiritual aspect of the postmodern world . . . the relation between the self and the sacred . . . is found within the self.”⁸² Modern spirituality is driven by personal experience and intuition. Even Christians are trained to look within and listen for that little voice,⁸³ apparently ignorant that that voice may be their own and not God’s. No longer is looking *outside* of the self the standard for truth, even spiritual truth, which demonstrates the pervasive impact of postmodernism and

⁸¹ David F. Wells, *God in the Whirlwind: How the Holy-Love of God Reorients Our World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 31.

⁸² Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 75.

⁸³ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 149.

secularism upon the church. To combat this reality, the church needs a strong, comprehensive worldview rooted in an external authority—God’s Word.

Confronting Postmodernism

The destructive force of postmodernism reverberates throughout society as it deconstructs the worldviews and structures of generations past. As this erosion occurs, it is as if postmodernism is sawing off the very branch it sits upon. Schaeffer warns of the inevitable collapse of every worldview raised in opposition to Christianity because all facts ultimately belong to God: “Regardless of man’s system, he has to live in God’s world.”⁸⁴ No matter what one believes, he or she remains bound by the realities of this universe. One of those constants is the law of non-contradiction and the need for coherence in one’s beliefs. Postmodernism quickly deconstructed its rivals and in the process set itself up as the one, true worldview. By rejecting all metanarratives and setting itself up as the only true metanarrative, postmodernism is inherently contradictory, self-defeating, and invalid. Postmodernism trumpets that there is no truth, all-the-while claiming itself to be true. Yet, postmodernism has seen several mutations of its own.

Some argue that postmodernism is dead,⁸⁵ but Pluckrose and Lindsay trace the development of postmodernism from a fringe academic theory to the dominate force in Western society, showing that it is still alive and well, though in a mutated form. Postmodernism began as an academic theory based around the idea of deconstructing metanarratives and power structures.⁸⁶ This happened around the 1960s and found its expression in the works of individuals like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-

⁸⁴ Francis Schaeffer, “The God Who Is There,” in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, vol. 1, *A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1982), 138.

⁸⁵ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 42-43.

⁸⁶ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 21-43.

François Lyotard.⁸⁷ Rejecting metanarratives and deconstructing power structures were central to this movement and closely connected it with critical theory. Critical theory deconstructs power structures and has since spawned many off shoots, like queer theory, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, and others. This academic focus on deconstructing everything led inevitably to despair and nihilism.⁸⁸ Pluckrose and Lindsay call this academic timeframe postmodernism’s “high destructive phase,” which came to an end around the mid-1980s.

Yet, this pure destruction was not to last as postmodernism took an applied turn.⁸⁹ Pluckrose and Lindsay write, “Theory [postmodernism] couldn’t content itself with nihilistic despair. It needed something to do, something actionable.”⁹⁰ Postmodernism sought to right the wrongs of society, especially in light of power imbalances. This effort became known as a search for “social justice.”⁹¹ Basically, as postmodernism evolved, it was not content with only destruction but entered the fray of politics in an attempt to better the world. This search for social justice is postmodernism applied to real life. No longer was postmodernism limited to an academic game played in ivory towers. Pluckrose and Lindsay elaborate, “While original postmodern thinkers dismantled our understanding of knowledge, truth, and societal structures, the new Theorist reconstructed these from the ground up . . . derived from the means and values of New Left political activism, which in turn had been the product of Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School.”⁹² Thus, activists

⁸⁷ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 21.

⁸⁸ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 45.

⁸⁹ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 45-66.

⁹⁰ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 45.

⁹¹ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 46.

⁹² Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 48.

applied postmodernism in the form of various theories under the umbrella of critical theory, and it offered prescriptions to improve life, which was the applied turn of postmodernism.

The first two stages of postmodernism—its high destructive phase and the applied turn—gave way eventually to a “reified” postmodernism.⁹³ Pluckrose and Lindsay again, “What has happened is that applied postmodernism has come into its own, been *reified*—taken as real, as The Truth according to Social Justice—and widely spread by activists, and (ironically) turned into a dominant metanarrative of its own.”⁹⁴

Postmodernism is now the assumed truth by which everything is judged. Its history illustrates that postmodernism became what it sought to destroy—an all-encompassing metanarrative.

Reified postmodernism illustrates the first major issue of postmodernism—it does not play by its own rules; it is self-contradictory. Postmodernism says there are no metanarratives, all-the-while setting itself up as *the* metanarrative to which everyone and every ideology must submit. Christians must start their confrontation of postmodernism by pointing out its inconsistencies and how its quest ultimately failed. This world is God’s. People can scream all they want about not having worldviews, but the mere rejection of worldviews is itself a worldview. Now, in its dominance, postmodernism loses its tolerance and demands everyone bend the knee—or else. So much for rejecting modernism because of its various and oppressive metanarratives. At its foundation, postmodernism is shown to be no different than its predecessors, despite its air of moral superiority.

The second area Christians must confront about postmodernism is the inconsistency of its rejection of universal truth. Despite claims to the contrary, no one can really live as if there is no universal truth. Rather, this is often an excuse to justify morally questionable behavior. Postmodernism displays the inability to not function without some

⁹³ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 65.

⁹⁴ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 65.

semblance of universal truth because it treats its own claims as universal; again, just like modernism before it. Wells observes about postmodernism, “It has few, if any, ‘doctrines,’ and makes no truth claims beside the fact that there is no universal truth. And that is universally true!”⁹⁵ This ideology, at its core, is self-defeating. The core claim that “there is no universal truth” is treated as universally true. Any honest engagement with this argument shows that postmodernism is a house of cards.

Similarly, the third belief of postmodernism that must be confronted is its rejection of trans-cultural truth and knowledge. If all truth claims are ultimately societal and displays of power, why is postmodernism exempt? Pluckrose and Lindsay explain, “It asserts the objective truth of socially constructed knowledge and power hierarchies with absolute certainty.”⁹⁶ All other metanarratives are culturally derived, but somehow postmodernism in its reified form escapes this charge. It alone transcends culture to become absolute truth, which apparently does not exist.

The fourth postmodern belief that Christians must challenge is the rejection of universal right and wrong. Reified postmodernism seeks to enforce its moral code upon all of society in the name of social justice. What is this justice? Where does it come from? And why should any culture submit to it? As reified, postmodernism claims moral superiority and now punishes any who deny its orthodoxy. Tolerance is intolerantly enforced on all who question postmodernism’s reign. Carson explains, “Because of its independent status, this new tolerance becomes, ironically, a *moralizing* support of moral relativism.”⁹⁷ The claim that each individual can choose his or her preferred morality is not true, as postmodernism demands everyone submit to its moral vision by rejecting longstanding and historical beliefs such as orthodox Christianity.

⁹⁵ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 75.

⁹⁶ Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 62.

⁹⁷ Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 76.

The final way to confront the postmodern mood is to attack its inability to provide a center, purpose, or meaning. By turning to the individual, society removes significance beyond the self. Any hint of honesty acknowledges that the self is limited, finite, and destined for death. There is no lasting hope within, and any claims to the contrary are rooted in delusional thinking. As Letham points out, postmodernism is a militant diversifying principle which cannot bring unity.⁹⁸ With the rise of identity politics, a direct fruit of postmodernism and critical theory, Western society is fractured into seemingly endless interest groups. However, if the self is the source of meaning, truth, and purpose, then there is nothing to unify around and humanity is destined for endless fracturing. As hard as postmodernism tries to provide a basis for truth within, if that truth does not transcend the individual, then it ceases to be true in any meaningful way. Finally, with the elevation of the immanent, the removal of the transcendent, and the turn inward, there is no basis for purpose in life. Moderns like to speak about being true to the self and finding meaning within, yet they are haunted by the reality that if the self is all there really is to life, then life ultimately means nothing. Christianity offers the foundation for truth, meaning, and unity in the transcendent, creator God. He is there, and he has spoken so that humanity may know truth. Christianity offers a comprehensive alternative to postmodernism.

Conclusion

The pervasive influence of secularism and postmodernism displays the need to teach the comprehensive Christian worldview. Both ideologies stand in opposition to the Christian faith and exert inordinate influence upon society. For Christians to live effective, faithful lives in this age, they must understand the major systems of thought raised in opposition to Christ (2 Cor 10:4-6). The impact of secularism and postmodernism is not

⁹⁸ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2019), xxxvii.

limited to unbelievers, as their siren call infiltrates the church. No matter claims to the contrary, they offer comprehensive visions of life that contradict Christianity. These ideologies call for allegiance and then direct people to find meaning in the immanent frame—especially the self. It is only through contrasting these dominant philosophies with the worldview of Scripture that the saints can be equipped for ministry. If the church hopes to liberate its people from bondage to worldly thinking and living, then it must teach all of Christ for all of life.

Despite their near unchallenged status, the cracks are evident within postmodernism and secularism. By cutting off the transcendent from life, individuals are left without any anchor for meaning and no direction for purpose in life. Moreover, society is torn apart as postmodernism turns further and further into the self. If the individual self is god, then not only is there no truth or purpose, but there is nothing to unite around. This reality fuels the tumult evident in society's streets, churches, and homes. If the church is to faithfully proclaim the gospel, then it must call the world and itself to renounce the worship of the modern self. To do that, Christians must confront both secularism and postmodernism.

The good news is that turning to the immanent frame in search of transcendence is doomed to fail. Turning the self into a god is absurd. It leaves modern man empty and hopeless. The modern paradox is that despite the grandeur of society's material blessing, life is haunted by the absence of anything truly transcendent, leaving individuals anxious, purposeless, and depressed. The self makes an impotent god.

Yet, the Christian worldview offers a flaming center that unites the entire universe—a rock-solid foundation to build life and society upon, and a direction by which to orientate life—and that is the story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. This story finds its center in the work of God the Son incarnate who entered history to die a sinner's death, redeem his creation, and to reign over it eternally. Wells points to this hope:

Christian hope is not about wishing that things will get better, that somehow emptiness will go away, meaning will return, and life will be stripped of it

uncertainties, its psychological aches and anxieties. . . . Hope, instead, it has to do, biblically speaking, with the knowledge that the “age to come” is already penetrating “this age,” that the sin, death, and meaninglessness of the one is being transformed by the righteousness, life, and meaning of the other, that what has emptied out life, what has scarred and blackened it, is being displaced by what is rejuvenating and transforming it. More than that, hope is hope because it knows it has become a part of a realm, a kingdom, which endures, where evil is doomed and will be banished, that it has left behind it the ship of “this age” which is sinking.⁹⁹

The flow of all Western attempts to find meaning, purpose, and truth apart from God have flowed inevitably to the despair and chaos of postmodernism. All worldviews that reject the transcendent God end up in chaos: it is Christ or chaos. The urgency to teach and live out a comprehensive Christian worldview is displayed by the prominence of secular and postmodern thought.

⁹⁹ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*, 206.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This ministry project consisted of a series of twelve lessons on the Christian worldview. The lessons were written as a curriculum and then taught at Riverview Baptist Church (RBC) in West Saint Paul, Minnesota. The curriculum is divided into two main sections. The first section contains six lessons and builds the foundations of the Christian worldview. The main goal of this section is to establish the comprehensive nature of the Christian worldview. By establishing this comprehensive scope, the foundation is laid for the second section, which applies the Christian worldview into the major areas of life. Like the first section, the second section contains six lessons. The writing phase of the curriculum ran for twelve weeks, starting on June 7, 2021, and ending on August 27, 2021. Each week, one lesson was written for the curriculum.

To measure the effectiveness of the curriculum, it was taught in a series of Sunday night seminars beginning on September 12, 2021, that ran for twelve weeks. Adult participants were given pre- and post-surveys¹ to measure the curriculum's impact on their knowledge and application of the Christian worldview. Additionally, a panel of experts was sent the curriculum for their evaluation. To evaluate the curriculum, the experts used a grading rubric² designed to measure the faithfulness and success of the curriculum in teaching a comprehensive Christian worldview.

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

Synopsis of Lessons

The twelve lessons of the curriculum aim to build a comprehensive worldview that combats both secularism and postmodernism. The curriculum refutes the secular/sacred divide by demonstrating that the biblical worldview addresses all of life. The first section builds this comprehensive scope by offering a miniature systematic theology that builds the basic Christian worldview. This section has lessons on creation, Scripture, anthropology, the fall, redemption, and epistemology. The second section of six lessons applies this comprehensive worldview to the major areas of life. The second set of six lessons explain the Christian view of the self, sexuality and the family, work, government, church, and meaning. More topics could have been addressed, including justice, ethics, morality, science, education, etc., but this curriculum is designed as only an introduction to the Christian worldview.

Lesson 1

The first lesson covers the doctrine of creation. The lesson's main point is that God created and rules over everything, establishing the goodness of creation and the comprehensive nature of the Christian worldview. The Bible starts with an across-the-board scope as God creates everything. This lesson supports the big idea first by defining the concept of worldview and that all worldviews attempt to be comprehensive. Second, it establishes that God created everything *ex nihilo*. Everything that exists comes from God, but it is not God. He transcends his creation as its Creator, sustainer, and Lord. Third, the curriculum asserts that creation reflects God's character as good, ordered, and knowable. Fourth, this lesson applies these truths to worldview formation by asserting that the Christian worldview is comprehensive in its beginning, that humans are creatures and not God, creation is good and meant to be enjoyed, reality is objective, and Christ rules over all of creation.

Lesson 2

The second lesson covers the doctrine of Scripture and establishes two truths: (1) God reveals himself to humanity through Scripture; and (2) Scripture is authoritative, perfect, sufficient, and comprehensive. To demonstrate these truths, the lesson begins by examining the difference between general and special revelation. In general revelation, God offers general but non-saving truths about himself and the world through creation. In special revelation (Scripture), God gives his account of history, humanity, creation, salvation, the future, and all of life. Next, lesson 2 dives into the nature of special revelation by examining what Scripture says about itself in 2 Peter 1:19-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. These texts explain that Scripture ultimately comes from God and is sufficient to equip Christians for all of life. The lesson introduces the four main elements of the Bible's storyline: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. These four stages are not just the storyline of the Bible but of the entirety of the created order. Lesson 2 ends by examining how the teachings of Scripture are comprehensive and thus cannot coexist within the dictates of secularism.

Lesson 3

The third lesson examines the doctrine of humanity. The main point of this lesson is to explain that God made humanity in his image and charged humans to rule over creation. This lesson focuses on Genesis 1:26-30 to establish the *imago Dei* and the cultural mandate to fill and subdue creation. To be made in the image of God bestows special rights and abilities on humans and establishes that every person at every stage of development has a sacred right to live. Lesson 3 also examines Genesis 2:18-25 to see the differences between how God created men and women. Both sexes equally possess value as both bear the image of God, but both have different roles. Finally, the lesson ends by applying the doctrine of man to worldview formulation. First, humans are not autonomous as they are creatures and not God. Second, God's design of humanity, including being

male and female, is good and not to be rejected. Third, God has given man a comprehensive job to do in the cultural mandate—fill and subdue the earth.

Lesson 4

The fourth lesson examines the comprehensive impact of the fall. Every worldview must answer the question, “What went wrong?” Christianity answers this question with the story of how sin entered the world through deception and disobedience. The main point of this lesson is that humanity chose sin over faithful obedience, and now all of life is marked by sin. Moreover, the reality of the fall establishes this is a moral universe where there is a universal standard of right and wrong. Lesson 4 examines Genesis 3 and how it establishes the patterns of sin prevalent in human history and how sin impacts all of life. Next, it establishes that the fall is a real, historical event. Without the fall, there is no origin of sin and death and thus no need for Christ. The gospel sits upon the foundation of the fall happening as described in Scripture. This lesson then moves to how the fall establishes that only God can truly fix the problems of this world because all humans are sinners by nature and by choice. Finally, lesson 4 applies the fall to worldview formation by showing the comprehensive impact of sin, the reality that this is a moral universe, and that man is sinful but still valuable.

Lesson 5

The fifth lesson covers the doctrine of redemption. This lesson covers redemption broadly, including both Christ’s work and his second-coming. The main point of this lesson is that sin necessitates that God must act to save his creation by dealing with sin and death. God does this by entering his creation through the incarnation of the Son and his subsequent death and resurrection. Christ’s work accomplishes a comprehensive redemption that eventually renews all of creation. The lesson begins by reviewing the problem of sin and death. Next, the lesson looks at the necessity of the incarnation—the savior must be both God and man. Lesson 5 then moves to examine the nature of Christ’s

death and resurrection. The doctrine section ends by covering the consummation. The salvation Christ provides is not just spiritual, but it covers all aspects of creation. This comprehensive scope is established by examining Revelation 19 and 21. Finally, the doctrine of redemption is applied to worldview formation by examining how Christians should live in light of this present and future redemption.

Lesson 6

The sixth lesson explores the topic of truth and how people can know it, otherwise known as epistemology. With the dominance of postmodern relativism, the concept of truth is often dismissed by non-Christians. Lesson 6 establishes that everyone at least lives as if truth exists and can be known. The main point of this lesson is to demonstrate the importance of universal truth to the claims of Christianity and that the faith stands or falls based on the existence of universal and knowable truth. To understand the importance of universal truth, this lesson begins by examining life in a supposedly post-truth world where relativism reigns. The lesson then explains how modernism and the Enlightenment paved the way for the postmodern relativism of our day. Next, the lesson builds the Christian view of the truth. First, it examines how God is the source of all truth. Second, it explains the nature of what truth is. Third, it looks at the limitations of human knowledge. Finally, the lesson concludes by applying this epistemology to living life in a truth-filled world. Christians must seek the truth in humility and conform their lives to what is true. Lesson 6 is the final lesson in the first section, which builds the foundations of the Christian worldview.

Lesson 7

The seventh lesson is the first lesson in the section of this curriculum that applies the earlier foundations to the different spheres of life. This lesson begins with the most basic unit—the self. The main point of this lesson is to combat false views of the self and establish a Christian view of the self. Lesson 7 first examines modern distortions of the

self as society turns people inward to find joy, meaning, and purpose by replacing God with the self. Selfishness and despair now mark the current age. Second, the lesson establishes the Christian foundation for the self as a creature made in God's image with a job to do. The lesson focuses on truths about every individual self but then moves into unique truths about Christians. God renews and transforms the self of every person who comes to Christ in faith. The self is not self-determined but designed and determined by the Creator God. Finally, the lesson ends by applying this view of the self to live as Christ calls his followers to die to self and follow him.

Lesson 8

The eighth lesson examines human sexuality under the biblical definition of the one-flesh union. There may be no more heated area of life today that Christians must confront than human sexuality. The main point of this lesson is to establish the goodness and beauty of sexual intercourse when expressed righteously. The lesson first examines modern abuses and distortions of sex and sexuality. Many today view sex and sexual expression as the ultimate good in life. Conversely, Christians affirm the importance and goodness of sex, but they also recognize that it is not ultimate. Second, the lesson establishes the superiority of the Christian sexual ethic. It points out the three purposes of sexual intercourse: procreation, relational intimacy, and pleasure. These God-given gifts are not to be abused or dismissed as shameful. Third, this lesson examines the importance of the Christian view of sexuality and sexual identity. God created sex, and he determines the correct expressions of it. God also offers forgiveness for sexual sins and a new identity in Christ (1 Cor 6:9-11). Finally, the lesson concludes by applying the Bible's teaching on sexuality to how Christians should live today.

Lesson 9

The ninth lesson explores the sphere of work and vocation. The main point of this lesson is to establish the goodness of work, even in a fallen world. This lesson explores

the cultural mandate to fill, subdue, and have dominion over creation. Contrary to secularism's claim that religion has no place in public spheres of life like work, the Bible puts forward a comprehensive picture of life, including the realm of work. Lesson 9 begins by examining modern distortions of work that view it as the source of all meaning or as a great evil to be avoided. This lesson also confronts the lie that only full-time ministry serves God. Second, this lesson examines Genesis 1–3 and how it establishes both the goodness of work and the frustrations of work in a fallen world. Third, this lesson explains how all righteous vocations render service to God. Finally, the lesson concludes by applying the Christian view of work to life by balancing its importance with the reality that work is not ultimate.

Lesson 10

The tenth lesson applies the Christian worldview to the sphere of the state and government. The main point of this lesson is that governing authority comes from God, and this reality both legitimizes it and limits what power the state possesses. Throughout history, governments and kings have asserted their connection to the divine as a way to demand submission. The state is God's servant and only has authority to do what God asks it to do—no more and no less. God alone has ultimate authority. This lesson examines many texts to establish the Christian view of government, including Romans 13:1-7, Matthew 22:15-22, and Acts 5:27-29. The lesson first examines current distorted views of the government, especially looking to it for salvation. Second, lesson 10 examines the inherently limited nature of the government's authority. As this is worked out, the lesson moves to discuss how the law is over rulers. Third, the lesson examines the varied nature of civil disobedience in Scripture. Because God is over the government, citizens have a right, and sometimes a responsibility, to defy unjust rulers. Finally, lesson 10 ends by examining how to apply the Christian teaching of the government to modern life by reviewing the American context.

Lesson 11

The eleventh lesson studies the sphere of the church and what the Christian worldview has to say about the mission and purpose of the church. The main point of this lesson is that Christ, as the head of the church and the one with all authority, commissions his church with a comprehensive mission to declare his lordship over all of life. First, to establish this main point, the lesson examines what the church is by looking at Ephesians 2:12-24, Romans 12:4-5, and Colossians 1:18-20. In these passages, the preeminence of Christ in the church is displayed and applied. This section then examines the various biblical metaphors used to describe the church. Second, lesson 11 explores the purpose of the church by examining the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20). In it, Christ explains he has all authority in heaven and on earth, and because of this, he sends his disciples out to teach a comprehensive obedience to the world. Third, this lesson applies how the church does this by being the church through local congregations and going out into the world and confronting false beliefs (2 Cor 10:3-5).

Lesson 12

The twelfth lesson serves as a capstone that demonstrates why life has meaning. The main point of this lesson is to show how other worldviews, like secularism and postmodernism, rob individuals of purpose and demonstrate how Christianity provides meaning to all of life. This lesson first examines the four horsemen of modern meaninglessness: naturalism, secularism, postmodernism, and the self. By reviewing the hopelessness of finding meaning within these four, this lesson sets a stage to offer a better path forward. Second, this lesson surveys Solomon's search for gain in the book of Ecclesiastes. He could not break through the vanity of this life, but he does point people toward God (Eccl 12:13). Finally, the lesson ends by examining how the preeminence of Christ provides meaning to all of life (Col 1:15-20). Christ is the missing center of all of life, and he alone provides a way out of the vanity that marks life in a fallen world.

Assessment of the Curriculum

This project assessed the success of the curriculum in two ways. First, pre- and post-surveys were given to those who participated in the classes. The surveys were designed to measure if a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-curriculum survey scores was achieved. The students who partook in the class ranged in age from early twenties to over eighty years old. Students were given the tests before the beginning of the first class and after the completion of the final class.

Also, the curriculum was sent to an expert panel who was given a grading rubric to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum in building and applying the Christian worldview. The expert panel utilized the rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. Three individuals evaluated the curriculum.

The first expert for the panel was Paul Helseth who serves as the Professor of Christian Thought at the University of Northwestern-St. Paul in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Helseth has taught the Christian worldview in a college setting for over a decade and is also a published author with numerous scholarly articles and chapters in several books. He earned a doctorate degree from Marquette University and a master's degree from Wheaton College.

The second expert to review this curriculum was P. Andrew Sandlin who is the founder and president of the Center for Cultural Leadership in Coulterville, California. He also serves on the faculty of H. Evan Runner International Academy for Cultural Leadership of the Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity. He holds a doctorate in Sacred Theology from Edinburg Theological Seminary. Sandlin has written numerous books applying the Christian worldview to all of life.

The third expert to review the curriculum was J. Aaron White, who serves as a pastor over discipleship at Redeemer Bible Church in Minnetonka, Minnesota. He has served in ministry for over ten years and has several books published through Shepherd Press in Wapwallopen, Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This final chapter will evaluate the success of the ministry project and its attempt at worldview discipleship. In assessing the project, consideration will be given to many things that occurred throughout the process. First, the project's purpose and original intent will be evaluated to determine if it was accomplished. Second, the goals of the project will be measured according to the data gathered as outlined in the methodology section of the first chapter. Third, the strengths and weaknesses are evaluated and examined with an eye toward what could be improved if this project was conducted again. Fourth, the project will conclude with theological and personal reflections of what was learned through this process.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this ministry project was to disciple believers at Riverview Baptist Church in West Saint Paul, Minnesota, to live according to the Christian worldview in all of life. The motivation behind the project was the reality that discipleship curriculum often ignores worldview formation and worldview curriculum often jumps straight into apologetics or cultural issues. All these topics are important, but the absence of worldview formation demonstrates that many assume that the Christian worldview is in place. The project taught Christians the foundations of the Christian worldview and then how to apply it to the major areas of life.

This purpose was central to the entire process of writing the twelve-lesson curriculum and then teaching it. To accomplish this purpose, the curriculum was divided into two main sections. The first section was a miniature systematic theology that disciplined

participants in the major doctrines of the Christian faith, especially with a focus on worldview formation. Theology is integral to worldview formation. This section covered the doctrines of creation, humanity, the fall, Scripture, redemption, Christ's return, and truth. Through these lessons, participants were disciplined in the foundational beliefs of the Christian worldview.

The second section then took those foundational doctrines and applied them to the major spheres and issues of life. The goal was to move worldview beyond intellectual discussion by displaying how it impacts every facet of life. In this section, the Christian worldview was applied to the issues of understanding the self, human sexuality, work, government, the church, and meaning in life. Certainly more topics could be covered, and I desire to one day add to this curriculum, but the major areas of life were covered in this section providing discipleship for "all of life" in an introductory fashion.

By writing and teaching this curriculum the purpose of this project was met. While the purpose in general was met, there were three stated goals for this project. Each goal was given a specific way to measure whether it was successfully accomplished. These instruments included giving pre- and post-surveys to class participants and having an expert panel evaluate the curriculum. The success of the goals, according to these methods of evaluation, are explored in the next section.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This ministry project had three goals that measured its success in fulfilling the purpose. Each goal was examined according to the methodology laid out in chapter 1. The first goal was to develop a twelve-session curriculum that teaches the basics of the Christian worldview, which applies to every area of life. This goal was measured by a panel of three experts who read and evaluated the curriculum using a grading rubric. This goal was considered met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met

or exceeded the agree somewhat level on the grading rubric.¹ There were six possible grades for each item in the grading rubric. Each possible grade was assigned a score to determine if the goal was met. The possible evaluation grades were as follows (weighted score in parenthesis): strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), disagree somewhat (3), agree somewhat (4), agree (5), and strongly agree (6). To achieve the goal, 90 percent of the responses needed to at least reach the “agree somewhat” level.

By these standards, the first goal was successfully met as 100 percent of the responses surpassed the “agree somewhat” level.² The expert panel responded to 100 percent of evaluation items with the highest grade possible, “strongly agree.” The positive evaluations were encouraging as the panel is made up of a professor of theology, a founder of parachurch ministry, and a pastor over education. This diversity of specialty in evaluators, but unity of positive responses, shows the strength of the curriculum and how it meets a current need in the church.

Along with the scores, the panel had an opportunity to submit comments about the curriculum after each question. The feedback here was also overwhelmingly positive.³ In response to the item, “I would recommend others use or go through this curriculum,” one evaluator responded, “With enthusiasm!” In the comment section of the item, “This curriculum has the proper scope as an introduction to knowing the Christian worldview.” Another evaluator wrote of the curriculum, “Easy to follow, yet rich in depth.” In response to the item, “This curriculum has the proper scope as an introduction to the living out the Christian worldview,” one evaluator wrote, “Topics are handled with winsome, pastoral care.” Another comment, this one in response to the item, “This curriculum has the proper scope as an introduction to knowing the Christian worldview,” was, “This curriculum is

¹ See appendix 2.

² See appendix 5.

³ See appendix 5.

actually a mini-systematic/cultural theology and, in fact, superior in substance to many full ST [systematic theology] texts.” Finally, one response to the item, “This curriculum has the proper scope as an introduction to living out the Christian worldview,” was, “I have never encountered a more comprehensive, accurate worldview curriculum.” These comments were encouraging to read and reflect positively on the work put into developing the curriculum. The goal of developing a curriculum that teaches the Christian worldview and applies it to the major areas of life was successfully met.

The second goal of this ministry project was to increase the knowledge of the participants by using the curriculum to teach them the basics of the Christian worldview, and was measured by having participants take pre- and post-surveys⁴ to measure the impact of the curriculum. By this standard, the second goal is considered successfully met. To measure impact, the instrument used a five-point Likert scoring system. Participants read an item and then marked one of the following answers: strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), neutral (3), somewhat agree (4), or strongly agree (5). Participants took this survey before the first session and after the final session.

Of the 24 items in the survey, 9 were used to measure the second goal. Of those 9 items, 3 were items where the best answer was in the positive form “strongly agree” (questions 1, 2, and 7).⁵ Conversely, there were 6 items where the best answer was in the negative form of “strongly disagree” (questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, and 23).⁶ The negative items were reversed scored for the purpose of conducting the *t*-test.⁷ For all these items, the average moved in the desired direction from the pre-surveys to the post-surveys.⁸

⁴ See appendix 1.

⁵ See appendix 1.

⁶ See appendix 1.

⁷ See appendix 4.

⁸ See appendix 3.

While the averages moved in the desired directions for these items, a *t*-test was conducted to measure whether or not the changes were statistically significant. During the implementation period, 19 participants took part in the curriculum and were considered in this assessment. A *t*-test for dependent samples showed a significant positive change in the knowledge of the participant ($t_{(18)} = -2.636, p < .05$). The Likert scale and pre- and post-surveys gave concrete evidence to the effectiveness of the curriculum. The goal of increasing the worldview knowledge of believers at Riverview Baptist Church was successfully met.

The third goal was to equip participants to employ the Christian worldview to the major areas of life. The success of this goal was also measured using responses from the pre- and post-surveys which were given to students before partaking in the worldview discipleship class and after completing the course. The same five-point Likert scale was used. Participants read an item and then marked one of the following answers: strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), neutral (3), somewhat agree (4), or strongly agree (5). The items for the third goal aimed to show how Christians would employ the Christian worldview into the major areas of life.

Of the twenty-four items in the survey, 15 were used to measure the success of the third goal. Of those 15 items, 9 were questions where the best answer was in the positive form “strongly agree” (questions 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20).⁹ For the remaining 6 items, the desired answer was in the negative form of “strongly disagree” (questions 9, 10, 19, 21, 22, and 24).¹⁰ The negative items were reversed scored for the

⁹ See appendix 1.

¹⁰ See appendix 1.

purpose of conducting the *t*-test.¹¹ For all these items, the average moved in the desired direction from the pre-surveys to the post-surveys.¹²

Since all the averages showed improvement, a *t*-test was conducted to demonstrate if the changes were statistically significant. During the implementation period, 19 participants took part in the curriculum and were considered in this assessment. A *t*-test for dependent samples showed a significant positive change in the knowledge of the participant ($t_{(18)} = -2.372, p < .05$). Again, the *t*-test demonstrated a significant statistical improvement from the pre- and post-survey results. Partaking in the worldview discipleship course had a positive and significant impact on students. The curriculum was a success in teaching students to employ the Christian worldview throughout the major areas of life. As evidenced by the *t*-test results, the third goal was successfully met.

I was initially nervous about whether this curriculum would make an observable difference. Teaching is often difficult to measure. Additionally, having taught at Riverview Baptist Church for eight years already, I had previously covered a lot these concepts. For that reason, I doubted whether an impact would be made. Yet, this was the first time I taught on worldview in such an intentional and organized manner. The positive impact and success of the project highlights the importance and necessity of incorporating intentional worldview formation to the discipleship process.

Strengths of the Project

The greatest strength of the project was the teaching of the curriculum. Not all participants in the class partook in the pre- and post-surveys, mostly due to not being able to commit to twelve weeks of class. I have been in full-time ministry for eight years, and this class was the most fun class I have ever taught with lots of active dialogue and discussion during and after class sessions. The personal feedback I got about the need for

¹¹ See appendix 4.

¹² See appendix 3.

such teaching was overwhelming. The results from the expert panel and the participants validate that the curriculum was needed and addressed a major area of need.

Christians in the West live in a time of uncertainty and upheaval. The ruins of Christendom are attacked everywhere, and the dominance of secularism and postmodernism pose significant threats to acceptability of the faith. Believers feel this uncertainty everywhere and desire shepherding in how to live faithfully in such a society. This project addressed the problem by realizing any form of discipleship that neglects active worldview formation falls short in equipping the saints for life in this age. Many discipleship programs limit themselves only to the spiritual disciplines (i.e., Scripture reading, prayer, and journaling). Some may assume that as one reads Scripture, he will accurately apply it to worldview formation, but often cultural influences impact how an individual understands Scripture more than Scripture shapes how one understands culture. A worldview is comprehensive in nature; it is a view of the world—all of it.

Even those that regularly attend church and have done so for years may not have a fully biblical worldview. This is where many a worldview book, class, or curriculum goes off course as they assume Christians already possess a biblical worldview. Such curriculum spends little time building and explaining what the Christian worldview is and instead focuses on confronting its challengers. Such work is needed, but first believers must be disciplined and trained in conforming their worldview to Scripture. Building that worldview is a strength of this project as it spends the first six lessons actively building the biblical worldview. In essence, those lessons are a brief systematic theology introducing core biblical doctrines and applying them to worldview formation. Next, the final six lessons actively apply that worldview to the major issues and spheres of life. This method is the strength of the project as it builds a comprehensive worldview and then disciplines Christians to apply it to all of life.

Weaknesses of Project

Despite the success of the project, there were areas of weakness in its design and execution. First, the format of the class presented challenges. The class was held on Sunday nights for twelve weeks. Originally, the intent was to teach this series as a part of the normal Sunday school schedule at Riverview Baptist Church. Unfortunately, due to conflicts with ministry scheduling, Sunday school was no longer available. The class was moved to Sunday evenings, which limited the amount of people who could consistently attend. To compensate, all the class sessions were recorded and made available to all participants.

Second, choosing what issues deserved attention in this series was left to my discretion. The curriculum was divided into two sections. The first section sought to build the core doctrines of the faith. The first six lessons covered God as creator, the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of humanity, the doctrine of sin and the fall, the doctrine of the person and work of Christ, and the doctrine of truth and its knowability. Other important doctrines could have been addressed, including the Trinity, the attributes of God, the nature of justice, and many others. Moreover, the lessons served only as introductions to these doctrines—they provide foundations, not depth. The second section addressed the major areas of life and covered applying the Christian worldview to the issues of the self, sexuality, work, government, the church, and meaning. Lessons on science, education, the family, art, and economics would also serve the people well. The project itself could not literally address every area of life.

Third, the pre- and post-survey items could use more refinement to better measure the impact of the curriculum. Writing good items to measure something like the impact on a person's knowledge and worldview implementation is difficult. After teaching the course, better items could likely be written that would address the heart and content of the material.

What I Would Do Differently

The three weaknesses provide a framework for improvement I would make if I were to undertake this project again. First, I would teach this course as part of a normally scheduled Sunday School ministry. Believers already gather on Sunday mornings, and many regularly attend a morning Sunday school class. Adding another teaching event to attend, as I did with a Sunday evening class, adds another burden to people's schedules and prevents more individuals from attending. If I were to do this project again, I would teach the course during a Sunday morning class.

The second weakness was the inability to cover more issues and topics. Due to the change in schedule that resulted in moving the class to Sunday evening, I taught on fewer subjects than desired to shorten the class. If I were to do the project again, I would add lessons on justice, eschatology, education, science, economics, and possibly politics. By doing so, the curriculum would address even more of life by showing that Christ is Lord over everything.

The third weakness was the pre- and post-survey items. As I reread the items at the conclusion of the project it became clear they could have been written with more precision to address the content of the curriculum. The issue was in part due to writing the items before I wrote the curriculum. If I were to do this again, I would write the items after the curriculum was finished.

Theological Reflections

Writing a curriculum that builds the foundations of the Christian worldview while also applying it to the major areas of life was a large task. Theology can be tremendously deep with lots of nuance—how does one introduce the core doctrines of the faith in six lessons? Life is equally complex. How does one apply all of Christ to all of life in another six lessons? Throughout the process, it felt like I needed to be an expert in every area of which I wrote, and that was impossible task. Despite this complexity, the message of the curriculum was exceedingly simple and can be summarized in five words—

Christ is Lord over everything. That message sustained my research and study. Through this process I came to see the importance of that message throughout all of life. The heart of the gospel message is that Christ is Lord and what he did through his death and resurrection. Four theological truths that directed and sustained this project: the preeminence of Christ, the comprehensive nature of his work, the comprehensive sending of his people, and the message of the church. If churches hope to equip people to live in tumult of this age, then these truths must come to forefront of teaching and discipleship of the flock.

The Preeminence of Christ

Colossians 1:15-20 was at the heart of this project, and my love and appreciation for its teaching grew throughout it. Paul declares that Christ is preeminent and supreme over everything in both creation and salvation (1:16-18). God the Son, as a part of the Trinity, is the creator of everything (1:16). All of creation, from the smallest molecule in the most distant reaches of space, to the White House, is his. As Creator, he has divine rights over it all (1:16b-17). Not only does he own it all, but he actively holds all things together (1:17b). Thus, everything exists for Christ (1:16b). Everything finds its *telos* in him. Paul declares that Christ is preeminent, or supreme over everything. Such supremacy is not limited to spiritual or non-physical realities but includes all things whether “visible or invisible” (1:16).

This is the heart of the identity of Christ Jesus—Lord over everything. Being eternally the divine Son, he is sovereign over the cosmos. This universe is his creation and preaching and teaching must reflect this wondrous reality. Too often, pastors succumb to the lures of secularism and only declare Christ as Lord over spiritual realities. Such preaching fits comfortably within the cage of secularism but ignores passages like Colossians 1:15-20. Preachers often declare a desire to “preach the whole counsel of God” but refuse to preach all of Christ for all of life. As the preeminent Lord of creation, no topic is off limits to the preacher. The church has something to say about absolutely

everything because Scripture addresses everything and because Christ is Lord over everything.

Christ's Comprehensive Work

The person of Christ, the eternal and preeminent Lord of all, provides the foundation of the comprehensive nature of his work. Again, Colossians 1:15-20 illuminates this great reality. Christ is preeminent over both creation and the process of salvation. Through his death, Christ reconciles to himself “all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (1:20). When teaching the comprehensive nature of the Christian worldview, it is imperative to stress that the cross impacts all of creation. As others have addressed, for too long some segments of Christianity have turned Christ's death to escape physical reality by joining Christ in an ethereal kingdom.¹³ Yet, Scripture teaches that Christ's physical resurrection is the firstfruits of a new creation (1 Cor 15:20). This new creation is physical, and God is redeeming and remaking his creation which was initially very good (Gen 1:31). The work of Christ does save sinners, as humanity's sin is the heart of the problem, but it will also remake everything in the physical universe. Paul stresses this wonderful reality in Ephesians 1:20 where he declares that this reconciling of all things was God's plan, through Christ. Paul writes, “As a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:10). The plan was always to redeem all of creation through dealing with the sin of humanity at the cross of Christ. “All” here does not imply a universal salvation for every person, but that all types and parts of creation are being redeemed—things on earth and in heaven. The gospel message covers all of life. Such a work cannot coexist within the dictates of secularism and its exiling the faith from many areas of life. Christians, especially pastors, must reclaim this total picture of the Christian faith.

¹³ For an extended discussion of the physical nature of the resurrection see N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

A Comprehensive Sending

The person of Christ has a comprehensive lordship as he rules over everything seen and unseen. Christ's work overthrows sin and death through his sacrificial death. His death defeats the problem at the heart of the cosmos. His work will unite all things in Heaven and on Earth. This total picture is the flaming center of the Christian faith, and it leads to a comprehensive sending in the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20). In this passage, the risen Christ sends his people out to proclaim who he is and what he has done. The content of the sending is marked by this comprehensive nature of his kingdom. There are four statements about the total nature of the commission. First, Christ declares, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18b). As the risen Lord, he now possesses *all* authority both in Heaven and on Earth. It is not a future reality, but Christ presently has all authority. This all-encompassing power is the foundation of him sending out his disciples. Second, because of that authority, he sends his disciples to "all nations" (Matt 28:19). The scope of redemptive history is no longer focused on Israel but has expanded to include all the nations of the world. Third, the content of the message Christ's people declare is to teach all the world to obey "all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20). Pastors and the church are to leave nothing out. The message is totalizing in its content and scope. Finally, Jesus offers hope to the church as they strive to fulfill this Great Commission as he promises, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). His presence is also comprehensive. The Great Commission continues and establishes the comprehensive nature of the Christian faith and its message.

The Church's Mission

Jesus Christ, the one who has *all* authority, has commanded his people to reach *all* the world with *all* the things he teaches while promising he will *always* be with them throughout *all* the age. This is the church's mission, and it is comprehensive in nature. If we hope to live this out, then pastors and Christians need to consciously apply the teachings of Scripture to all of life. That is the heart of this project, and I believe it to be at the heart

of the gospel. Jesus is Creator, savior, and Lord. He refuses to lose anything that is his, and asserts that everything is rightfully his. Why are so many Christians ashamed of such a message? Perhaps it is because they have allowed secularism and postmodernism to shape how they read Scripture and live out their faith. Perhaps it is because there are areas of life where we do not want Christ as our Lord. Perhaps it is because few preachers and teachers take the time to build the Christian worldview in their people.

After completing this project, I am more convinced than ever on the urgency of this mission. Many Christians are floundering under anemic or non-existent worldview discipleship. Is it any wonder many professing believers resemble their unbelieving neighbors? Each age of the church has its own unique challenges, but our age is one where the people suffer under many blind guides occupying pulpits who care more about lightshows and laughs than teaching the comprehensive lordship of Christ. In a quest for relevance, churches and ministries mimic the tactics of the world with a pathetic envy. In the process they abandon the one thing which would truly make their teaching relevant—the total lordship of Christ. His kingdom impacts all of life for all of time, and it is the job of shepherds to declare this truth to the sheep. While many have not caught this vision, I have been greatly encouraged through seeing these theological truths throughout Scripture, and by seeing the eagerness believers have received through such instruction. The fields are ready if we are willing to fulfill the mission of the church.

Personal Reflections

Writing and teaching this curriculum was a great joy and led me to contemplate much of life and ministry. The feedback I received was greatly encouraging, especially from those who attended the class. The study necessary to write each lesson was daunting and stretching, but it deepened my love for Christ and his church. I was profoundly impacted by undertaking this project and I hope to adapt and use this curriculum for years to come. Declaring the lordship of Christ is my life's calling and I embrace it with renewed vigor. There are two important reflections I would like to highlight.

First, the impact this study had on those who partook in the class inspires me to continue in ministry. The first goal of faithful ministry is to glorify God by maintaining a faithfulness to him. Yet, the second goal is that my efforts might to be used to positively impact people. I do not teach to make a name for myself or to hear my own voice. Rather, I teach to equip the saints, call sinners to Christ, and help them grow in personal holiness and love for Christ. The best way to do this goal is not to teach Christianity as a form of escapism. Instead, it is best accomplished by demonstrating how the lordship of Christ impacts all of life. People in the class were greatly encouraged to learn of the breadth of impact of the cross—what a joy! I research, write, study, pray, and read to better declare the glories of Christ to his people and the dying world. Hope is found in Christ and him alone.

Second, the implication that continually hit me throughout this process was the meaning and purpose true worldview formation brings. We live in an age where there is no foundation for meaning in life. If this universe is the byproduct of time and random chance, then everything is reduced to random meaninglessness. Lacking an eternal starting place, people are told in a million ways to turn within themselves to find meaning and happiness in life. The problem is, we are finite and mortal creatures. Humans were never meant to bear the burden of determining truth and meaning in life. Such lofty and important things can only be safely built on God. To say, “Find your truth and meaning within,” is a of way of saying there is no ultimate meaning and truth. All self-made truth and meaning dies with the self. Such revelations of unyielding despair are what many seek to avoid, but eventually all must face it—if there is no God, then there is no ultimate meaning in life. Sadly, the escapist and overly pietistic versions of Christianity echo this mentality as they imply there is no meaning to *this* life. Rather, we must flee it and find meaning in the life to come.

The wonder of the comprehensive Christian worldview is that it teaches that everything matters. Christ created everything, he rules over everything, Christ died for a

everything, and he will restore it all in his kingdom. Such glorious truths mean that everything eternally matters because everything has been made and redeemed by Christ. There is no room for despair and meaninglessness in the Christian life. Christ is risen and he reigns. David Wells summarizes the Christian hope with penetrating insight: “[Christian hope] is not that life loses its emptiness because there is life beyond the grave but that what has made life empty is destroyed by Christ’s death and resurrection.”¹⁴ Wells continues,

Christian hope is not about wishing that things will get better, that somehow emptiness will go away, meaning will return, and life will be stripped of its uncertainties, its psychological aches and anxieties. Nor does it have anything to do with techniques for improving fallen human life, be those therapeutic or even religious. Hope, instead, has to do, biblically speaking, with the knowledge that “the age to come” is already penetrating “this age,” that the sin, death, and meaninglessness of the one is being transformed by the righteousness, life, and meaning of the other, that what has been emptied out of life, what has scarred and blackened it, is being displaced by what is rejuvenating and transforming it. More than that, hope is hope because it knows it has become a part of a realm, a kingdom, which endures, where evil is doomed and will be banished, that it has left behind it the ship of “this age” which is sinking.¹⁵

Conclusion

“All of Christ for all of life,” was the mission of the project. I have made a start at it with the development of this curriculum. Declaring Christ’s comprehensive lordship is the goal of his people, and it is the foundational truth of the entire universe. Despite the quantifiable success of this project, it is meaningless without Christ and his grace. All glory and honor belong to him, the Savior and Lord of the universe. He is the theme of our song, and he alone deserves our praise. Come quickly, Lord, and establish your eternal kingdom. *Soli deo gloria.*

¹⁴ David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 198.

¹⁵ Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 206.

APPENDIX 1

WORLDVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Informed Consent¹

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the impact of worldview discipleship on individuals who partake in this curriculum. This research is being conducted by Levi Secord for purposes of completing his doctoral project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will take a pre-survey and post-survey, pre and post partaking in the worldview disciple class, to measure the impact of the curriculum. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Worldview Questionnaire

Using the scale below, ask yourself how you feel about each statement. How true is each statement about you? Respond with the numerical rating as follows:

- 5 – Strongly Agree
- 4 – Somewhat Agree
- 3 – Neutral
- 2 – Somewhat Disagree
- 1 – Strongly Disagree

1. _____ The Bible gives answers to all types of questions I face in life.
2. _____ I can adequately define and apply the Christian worldview.
3. _____ The Bible mainly applies to spiritual realities.
4. _____ Man's main problems are found outside of himself.
5. _____ Christianity is more about feelings and experience than thinking.
6. _____ Christianity applies more to spiritual than physical realities.
7. _____ I know what the cultural mandate is and it impacts how I live.
8. _____ My faith impacts how I treat my spouse and other family members.

¹ Questionnaire adapted from Raymond Keith Meyer, "A Comparative Analysis of the Factors Contributing to Biblical Worldview of Students Enrolled in a Christian School" (EdD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 185-87.

9. _____ I rarely apply my faith to my occupation.
10. _____ My purpose in life is to better myself.
11. _____ There are some areas of life where religion doesn't apply.
12. _____ I am confident in applying my faith to my family life.
13. _____ I am confident in my knowledge of how the Bible informs politics.
14. _____ I am confident in defending the biblical view of marriage & sexuality.
15. _____ I am confident in living out the Christian worldview throughout all of life.
16. _____ Christian faith is necessary to understand any educational discipline.
17. _____ Every local church should submit to the commands of Scripture.
18. _____ I feel confident that I serve God in my job.
19. _____ My Christian faith is mostly a private reality.
20. _____ Genesis 1-3 is important to how I live my day-to-day life.
21. _____ The best way to serve God through your career is to enter into ministry.
22. _____ Religious convictions shouldn't enter into public policy decisions.
23. _____ Christianity is primarily about whether or not I will go to heaven.
24. _____ I feel a disconnect between Sunday mornings, and the rest of my life.

APPENDIX 2

WORLDVIEW GRADING RUBRIC

Informed Consent¹

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the faithfulness and scope of this worldview discipleship curriculum. This research is being conducted by Levi Secord for purposes of completing his doctoral project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will offer your expert analysis on the faithfulness and scope of the curriculum. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Worldview Curriculum Grading Rubric

Use the following scale and please check the answer that best corresponds to your feelings in response to the following statements:

Please evaluate the curriculum based on the following criteria:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
This curriculum has the proper scope as an introduction to knowing the Christian worldview						
Comments:						
This curriculum has the proper scope as an introduction to living out the Christian worldview						
Comments:						

¹ Adapted from Raymond Keith Meyer, “A Comparative Analysis of the Factors Contributing to Biblical Worldview of Students Enrolled in a Christian School” (EdD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 185-87.

This curriculum faithfully treats Scripture						
Comments:						
This curriculum builds the necessary foundation of the Christian worldview						
Comments:						
This curriculum adequately teaches the importance of God as creator						
Comments:						
This curriculum faithfully teaches the uniqueness of man in creation						
Comments:						
This curriculum adequately teaches the doctrine of Scripture						
Comments:						
This curriculum faithfully teaches the impact of sin						
Comments:						
This curriculum adequately teaches the basis of truth						
Comments:						
This curriculum adequately explains the impact of Christ's work to the world						
Comments:						
This curriculum faithfully teaches the core doctrines of Christian eschatology						
Comments:						

The curriculum adequately applies the Christian worldview to the self						
Comments:						
The curriculum adequately applies the Christian worldview to the church						
Comments:						
The curriculum faithfully demonstrates the importance of the cultural mandate to life						
Comments:						
The curriculum adequately applies the Christian worldview to work						
Comments:						
The curriculum adequately applies the Christian worldview to politics						
Comments:						
The curriculum adequately applies the Christian worldview to human sexuality						
Comments:						
The curriculum adequately applies the Christian worldview to purpose and meaning in life						
Comments:						
This sufficiently counteracts secularism by showing Christian impacts all of life						
Comments:						
I would recommend others use or go through this curriculum						
Comments:						

APPENDIX 3

AVERAGE SCORES FOR PRE- AND POST-SURVEYS

Table A1 includes the average scores for both the pre- and post-surveys given to students before and after partaking in the worldview discipleship class. The survey used a five-point Likert scale. The pre and post-test averages are listed as well as the net change. Every question that has a net negative change reflects a change in the desired direction.

Table A1. Average scores for pre-and post-surveys

Question	Pre-test Average	Post-test Average	Net Change
1	4.857	4.944	0.087
2	4.036	4.389	0.353
3	2.179	1.667	-0.512
4	1.750	1.167	-0.583
5	1.393	1.056	-0.337
6	2.143	1.389	-0.754
7	3.143	4.167	1.024
8	4.857	4.944	0.087
9	1.679	1.278	-0.401
10	2.370	1.444	-0.926
11	1.250	1.111	-0.139
12	4.179	4.333	0.154
13	3.607	4.222	0.615
14	4.286	4.778	0.492
15	4.036	4.611	0.575
16	3.964	4.667	0.703
17	5.000	5.000	0.000
18	4.120	4.471	0.351
19	1.893	1.444	-0.449
20	4.143	4.500	0.357
21	2.071	1.667	-0.404
22	1.714	1.167	-0.547
23	1.893	1.389	-0.504
24	1.786	1.444	-0.342

APPENDIX 4

AVERAGE SCORES ADJUSTED FOR *T*-TESTS

Table A2 includes the average scores of the pre- and post-tests adjusted with reverse scoring for the items where the desired answer was 1 instead of 5. The table includes the net gain from the pre-test to the post-test.

Table A2. Averages adjusted scores

Question	Pre-test Average	Post-test Average	Net Change
1	4.857	4.944	0.087
2	4.036	4.389	0.353
3	3.821	4.333	0.512
4	4.250	4.611	0.361
5	4.607	4.944	0.337
6	3.857	4.611	0.754
7	3.143	4.167	1.024
8	4.857	4.944	0.087
9	4.321	4.722	0.401
10	3.630	4.556	0.926
11	4.750	4.889	0.139
12	4.179	4.333	0.154
13	3.607	4.222	0.615
14	4.286	4.778	0.492
15	4.036	4.611	0.575
16	3.964	4.667	0.703
17	5.000	5.000	0.000
18	4.120	4.471	0.351
19	4.107	4.556	0.449
20	4.143	4.500	0.357
21	3.930	4.333	0.403
22	4.286	4.833	0.547
23	4.107	4.611	0.504
24	4.214	4.556	0.342

APPENDIX 5

GRADING RUBRIC AVERAGES AND COMMENTS

Table A3 lists the average score for each of the twenty items in the grading rubric.¹ The items from the rubric were numbered in descending order and each potential answer was given the following score: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), disagree somewhat (3), agree somewhat (4), agree (5), and strongly agree (6).

Table A3. Grading rubric scores and comments

Question	Average	Comments
1	6	1. "This curriculum is actually a mini-systematic/cultural theology and, in fact, superior in substance to many full ST texts." 2. "Easy to follows yet rich in depth."
2	6	1. "I have never encountered a more comprehensive, accurate worldview curriculum." 2. "Topics are handled with winsome, pastoral care."
3	6	1. "Very well annotated."
4	6	1. "Not merely builds a foundation, but also articulates it." 2. "A helpful systematic approach."
5	6	1. "This topic is addressed in detail."
6	6	
7	6	1. "The authority and sufficiency of Scripture is affirmed."
8	6	1. "This is a repeated theme."
9	6	1. "It especially champions a propositionalist epistemology amid postmodern and other skeptical epistemologies."
10	6	1. "The implications of lordship are clear."
11	6	1. "Highlights eschatology as worldview without bogging down in exegetical details." 2. "Yes."
12	6	1. "Individual application is a particular forte of this curriculum." 2. "Yes."
13	6	1. "Proper ecclesiology is upheld."
14	6	1. "Yes, and a balanced understanding of the mandate." 2. "Yes."

¹ See appendix 2.

Table A3 continued

Question	Average	Comments
15	6	1. "The implications of 1 Cor. 10:31 are clear."
16	6	1. "A strong suit of this project."
17	6	1. "A clear, biblical statement in the face of the Sexual Revolution." 2. "Very clearly."
18	6	1. "Very Christ-centered."
19	6	1. "Not merely secularism, but several other regnant ideologies." 2. "Yes."
20	6	1. "The author should turn this curriculum into a full volume." 2. "With Enthusiasm!" 3. "Yes."

APPENDIX 6

SAMPLE LESSON FROM CURRICULUM

This appendix includes a sample lesson from the curriculum developed for this project. The lesson included is the first lesson of the curriculum. It establishes the first foundation of the Christian worldview—creation. The lesson then applies this foundation to worldview formation.

Foundation 1: Creation

Big Idea

God created and rules over everything, establishing the goodness of creation and the comprehensive nature of the Christian worldview.

Learning Objectives

- I. Students will have a basic understanding of what a worldview is and why they are important.
- II. Students will understand that God created everything and that creation is good.
- III. Students will see that God is distinct from his creation, though intimately involved with it.
- IV. Students will come to recognize that all of creation reflects the glory of God.
- V. Students will understand the Christian worldview begins with a comprehensive scope.

What is a Worldview?

A worldview is “*The total perspective by which a person or culture perceives and interprets the world.*”¹

A. Understanding what a worldview is

A worldview is a religion, ideology, philosophy, or outlook that an individual or group uses to make sense of life. These beliefs provide the foundation, direction, and purpose to life and often answer the big questions of life like—Who am I? What is the world? What’s gone wrong? Is there a God? Is there truth and meaning? How do we fix what’s gone wrong?

¹ Philip G. Ryken, *Christian Worldview: A Student’s Guide*, ed. David S. Dockery (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 105.

Every person has a worldview, and they are often more caught than formally taught. Individuals grow up surrounded by various worldviews and are shaped by them. This leads to many inconsistencies among those who are not formally taught their worldview. While many are not taught their worldview, this cannot be so with Christianity as Christ commanded his church to disciple others in everything he taught (Matt. 28:16-18). Nonetheless, many individuals, including Christians, hold contrary beliefs that lead to inconsistent worldviews and lives.

There are various influential worldviews today. These include Islam, secularism, modernism, postmodernism, naturalism, Marxism, etc. These ideologies interpret the world, the individual, life, and offer some definition of what the good life is. Each of the ones above has a profound influence upon society today, even upon Christians.

Christianity, as a religion, is a worldview—it is a total perspective of life. Christianity comprehensively covers all of life. As rooted in God’s Word, the Christian worldview is derived from God’s Word and thus offers God’s authoritative perspective (or worldview) on life. The Christian worldview, as long as it remains faithful to Scripture, offers “God’s true view of things.”²

Christians must engage in intentional worldview discipleship. God has spoken, revealing his truth so that we may know it. In the pages of Scripture, we find a comprehensive worldview that covers all of life and does so in a way that we may think God’s thoughts after him.

² Paul K. Helseth and Douglas S. Huffman, “What Is the Biblical Worldview?” in *Christian Contours: How a Biblical Worldview Shapes the Mind and Heart*, ed. Douglas S. Huffman (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 69.

Foundation 1: Creation

Read Genesis 1:1-8, 31

A. God Created Everything

God spoke everything into existence. In the beginning, there was nothing but God, and he spoke the universe into existence (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6-9). The Christian worldview starts with this simple yet profound truth—God created everything. All things that exist, from the smallest molecule—neutrons, protons, quarks, atoms—to the largest stars at the farthest reaches of the universe, were created by Him. All the universe is his by right divine right as the Creator.

Creation is an act of the entire Trinity. God the Father is the ultimate source of creation, yet the Trinity works in unison to create. Everything that exists came into being *through* the Son (John 1:1-3). Moreover, everything that was created was made *by* and *for* Christ (Col. 1:15-20). The Spirit brought life to creation (Ps. 104:30). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the eternal Godhead, created and sustains the universe.

As the Creator, God owns everything. As he is the origin and maker of every atom, rock, and creature, God has divine ownership of it all. It is his. Psalm 50:10-11 says, “For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine.” Or, as Paul puts it, everything exists *for* Christ (Col. 1:16). You, and everything else that ever was, is Christ’s by divine right. The purpose of everything is found only in Christ. Everything exists for a reason—the glory of God through Christ.

B. God is different than and transcends creation

God created out of nothing (ex nihilo). As Creator, God needed nothing besides what was natural to himself to create. He is the source of all of creation and indeed the fountain of life (Jer. 2:13; Ps. 36:9). God is not dependent on anything to create or sustain his creation. Everything that exists, whether visible or invisible, physical, or spiritual, came into being solely by the will and power of God (Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11).

Creation ex nihilo shows that God is distinct from creation. God is not a part of creation, nor is creation a part or emanation of him. Creation is not divine; God alone is divine. This is the lie that plagues all rejections of God—worshipping the creature instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Many world religions blend creation with God and see them as one and the same. Christianity wholly rejects this because God is not creation, nor is creation God. Rather, there was a time when only God existed, and he then spoke the universe into existence.

God transcends his creation in that he is greater than it and independent from it. While creation depends on God for its existence, God’s existence is free of all dependency. He is the eternal one, who exists by his own power (John 5:26). God transcends his creation. Reality consists of two substances, creation and the Creator. Everything cannot be reduced to the one-ism of either paganism or naturalism as one argues the universe is one physically, and the other argues that God and nature are

one. Instead, the Christian worldview is a form of two-ism.³ There is God and everything else.

Though distinct from creation, God upholds creation. He is not a detached and disinterested God. Rather, he reigns sovereign over the history of the universe (Isa 46:10; Rev 22:13). He is intimately involved in sustaining and upholding creation as Christ “holds together” everything that exists (Col 1:17). Our ongoing existence comes millisecond by millisecond through God’s sustaining power and grace. This care for his creation finds its pinnacle in God the Son’s incarnation as he adds a human nature to himself and thus enters creation through Christ Jesus (John 1:1-14).

C. God rules over everything

God’s sovereignty is comprehensive. God’s rule extends over every facet of the universe and life. There is nothing outside of his sovereign rule and plan (Eph 1:11). This includes acts of nature (Job 37:6-13), the personal lives and choices of individuals (Ex 9:12), the political actions of nations (Ps 22:28; Isa 10), seemingly random events (Prov 16:33), and even things on an atomic level (Col 1:16-17). God directs all of this according to his will for his glory and the good of his people (Rom 8:28).

Through Christ, God rules the visible/physical world. Christ, as God the Son, reigns over the thing on “earth” and everything that is “visible” (Col 1:16). As integral to the creation and salvation of the physical world, Christ reigns over it as the preeminent Lord of all. Christ’s reign is about more than just spiritual realities.

Through Christ, God rules the invisible/spiritual realm. Colossians 1:16 also tells us that Christ rules over things in “heaven” and that “invisible.” In this way, Paul declares that “all things were created through him and for him.” Everything that exists, from heads of nations to demons, is under the sovereign reign of God through Christ.

God has a purpose for everything that occurs and exists. The reality that God created everything, sustains it, and directs it through his rule should give us great confidence. As Christ reminds us, not even a bird falls to the ground outside of God’s sovereignty (Matt 10:29). His comprehensive reign demonstrates God has a purpose for this universe, and everything that happens serves to bring us to that desired end (Rom 8:28).

D. Creation is good

God made everything “very good” (Gen 1:31). Though God is not contained in creation, we can see his goodness and glory through it (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:20). Contrary to religions like Gnosticism and Buddhism, the physical world is not something evil to be escaped from. Rather, God made the universe “very good.” Though the fall has negatively impacted creation, Christians should still view the universe as something intrinsically good, though scarred and twisted to evil ends.

Humans should receive the goodness of creation and not reject it as less than just because it’s physical. Paul warns of the “teachings of demons,” which teach

³ Peter Jones, *One or Two: Seeing a World of Difference* (Escondido, CA: Main Ministry, 2010), 17-30.

abstinence from the goodness of physical creation in the forms of foods and marriage (1 Tim 4:1-5). Instead, Paul reminds us, everything that was made is “good” and should be accepted with thanksgiving to God (1 Tim 4:4). Forms of asceticism, which deny physical pleasures in the name of holiness, are just as demonic as the hedonism that takes God’s good gifts and abuses and perverts them through practices like sexual immorality. Creation is God’s good gift to us.

Creation groans under its brokenness, awaiting redemption (Rom 8:19-25). God the Son’s incarnation affirms to us the goodness of creation (John 1:14), along with its need for redemption. Creation groans under the weight of the curse, and so God the Son sets to redeem and remake all of it (Rev 21:1-5). This reality breaks into the old creation through Christ’s physical resurrection. Christ did not ascend to the Father in Spirit, but in his physical body, which is the first fruits of the new creation (John 20:24-29; 1 Cor 15:20-23). The story of salvation centers on Christ’s sacrificial death and resurrection on behalf of his people, but it has a cosmic impact since all of creation will be remade.

E. Creation is designed, ordered, and knowable

God designed creation. As he spoke everything into existence, God designed creation to function. He spoke light into existence and “separated” it from the darkness (Gen. 1:3-4). From the beginning, there was evening and morning—days. God designed creation to operate like a finely tuned machine so that it meets his purposes to sustain life. God operates through the laws of science, and they reflect his character. If everything came into being through random chance plus time, we should expect to find a chaotic, random, and dead universe. Rather than that, we find a universe that displays design, intentionality, order, and life.

God ordered creation. Similarly, God provided order within his creation. Beyond the cycles of days, nights, seasons, etc., we find plants and animals created according to their “kinds” (Gen 1:11-25). In humanity, God made us male and female in order that humanity may multiply and subdue the earth (Gen 1:26-28). Modern science, while it denies the Creator, recognizes an ordering of creatures through the current taxonomy of species, genus, family, order, class, phylum, kingdom, and domain. In a supposed random universe, such order makes no sense.

Reality (creation) is knowable. In a relativistic age, the idea of knowing truth is questioned, but since God created the universe to reveal his character and made man in his own image, humans can rightly know truths about reality. Humanity’s sinfulness taints and limits our knowledge of reality, but while we cannot have perfect and exhaustive knowledge, we can have truthful knowledge. God speaks and reveals himself to us through his Word to be rightly known. If we cannot rightly know anything, then God speaking is worthless. Moreover, if we cannot know anything, then we cannot even know that we don’t know.

Theology to Worldview Application

A. The Christian worldview begins with a comprehensive picture

God created everything, not just religious or spiritual realities. Whether it be science, math, work, relationships, or sexuality, God created it all. He owns everything, and his truth addresses all of life. As we look at the beginning of the Christian religion, it starts with an all-encompassing picture of life.

Secularism has no compatibility with the foundations of the Christian faith. Secularism is the belief that there are parts of life and reality that are to be ‘secular’ or

free from religious belief. As such, secularism passes itself off as being the neutral view of life, but the Christian worldview affirms there is *no* neutral ground in the universe. If God created everything, then he owns and reigns over everything. All of life belongs to God and is being directed by God. To deny God's law or presence in any area of life is not an act of neutrality but of rebellion. The comprehensive nature of God's creative acts demonstrates the comprehensiveness of the Christian worldview.

B. Creation is not God, and neither are you

Naturalism reduces everything to the created order. In naturalism, there is nothing beyond what is natural. What is physical is worshipped as the highest and greatest good. People refer to 'Mother Earth' and praise the impersonal 'beauty' of a meaningless world. Similarly, recent years have seen a rise in pagan religious practices that teach connection with the divine is found in creation. Thus, many individuals look within creation, especially themselves, to find the divine. The self becomes God.

Modern spirituality points you within; biblical Christianity points to the external God. If there is nothing beyond the physical universe, or if God is one with the universe and the universe is God, then it makes sense to look within ourselves for some religious experience of God. This is the heart of many pagan religions and has even impacted Christian spirituality. While it is true that God, through the Spirit, resides in his people, he still remains transcendent and external to us. He is greater than us and distinct from us. God is not primarily found within his creation. The Christian religious looks externally to the God who is the source of truth, and thus God has revealed himself to us through his Word. The self and creation make terrible gods.

C. The physical universe is glorious, good, and meant to be enjoyed

Holiness is not about escaping the physical universe and denying pleasures. Christianity sometimes slips into a form of Gnosticism which teaches the physical world is evil, and thus true spirituality is found in escaping physical realities and pleasures. Such teaching is the doctrine of demons (1 Tim. 4:1-5). Rather, God created the universe *good*, and it is to be enjoyed by humanity. Things like food, fun, adventures, possessions, and sex are meant to bring us joy and pleasure as they reflect the glory of God. The problem comes when we make those things God-replacements and find our meaning in them or pervert their God-given design and function.

The holy person is full of joy and enjoys God's blessings. Good Christians should enjoy good food to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Christians should find joy and sexual pleasure in their spouse, to the glory of God. These things are designed by God and point beyond themselves to him. They are not ultimate but move us to see the goodness of the Creator. A holy person recognizes God's design and morality in the use and expression of these gifts by enjoying them as gifts from God and not as the end goal of life.

Creation reveals the glory of God. All of the goodness, joy, pleasure, and beauties of creation are not ends in and of themselves. Rather, they point to the transcendent God who created everything. Purpose, meaning, and beauty only make sense as they are connected to an infinite, external, and eternal standard. All of this is found in God alone. This world, and all its beauties, joys, and pleasures, is God-designed and God-given.

D. Reality (truth) is objective

Truth is just another word for what is real. God created the universe by speaking, and he made the light, dark, sun, moon, stars, and so much more. There is no “my truth” because there is no “my reality.” This is God’s universe. Those things objectively exist and are not dependent on our preferences or perspective. Truth is about reality and is objective because God created it independent from our perspectives. Truth/reality is there and must be reckoned with.

We cannot fundamentally change God’s design or order of creation. God made the universe and charged man with working it (Gen. 1:28). The fundamental realities of existence are baked into creation and not subject to our manipulation. For example, humanity has two sexes—male and female. While there are such things as birth deformities in a fallen world, people are born as they are born. We cannot fundamentally change how God designed us—a man is a man, and a woman is a woman. Such design is a part of God’s plan and wholly beyond our control. Moreover, his design is good and to be embraced, not raged against.

E. Christ rules over all of creation

Christ’s work is not limited. Sometimes Christians limit the work of Christ to the unseen/spiritual world, but the Bible does no such thing. Christ, as God the Son, was integral to all of creation as he is preeminent in it all (Col. 1:15-20). He is vital to its ongoing existence, and he will remake all of it through his work. Christ rules and redeems over everything, whether visible or invisible. In other words, the reign of Christ opposes any limits applied to it by secularism, and so must the Christian worldview.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bahnsen, Greg L. *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*. Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media, 1996.
- Barnett, Paul. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Bauckham, Richard. *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Matthew*. The New American Commentary, vol. 22. Nashville: B & H, 1992.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*. *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 1. Translated by John King. Grand Rapids: Baker 2005.
- _____. *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*. *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 20. Translated by John King. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- Carson, D. A. *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- _____. *The Intolerance of Tolerance*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Collins, C. John. *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006.
- Dempster, Stephen G. "Genesis." In *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus's Bible*, edited by Jason S. DeRouchie, 61-79. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013.
- Edgar, William. *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017.
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Gentry, Peter J., and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

- Guthrie, George H. *2 Corinthians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015.
- Hagner, Donald A. *Matthew 14-28*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b. Waco, TX: Word, 1995.
- Hamilton, James M. *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.
- Helseth, Paul K., and Douglas S. Huffman. "What Is the Biblical Worldview?" In *Christian Contours: How a Biblical Worldview Shapes the Mind and Heart*, edited by Douglas S. Huffman, 69-84. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Jones, Peter. *One or Two: Seeing a World of Difference*. Escondido, CA: Main Ministry, 2010.
- Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. Rev. ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2019.
- LifeWay Research. "Few Protestant Churchgoers Read the Bible Daily." July 2, 2019. <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/07/02/few-protestant-churchgoers-read-the-bible-daily/>.
- Martin, Ralph P. *2 Corinthians*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40. Waco, TX: Word, 1985.
- Mathews, Kenneth A. *Genesis 1-11:26*. The New American Commentary, vol. 1a. Nashville: B & H, 1996.
- Meyer, Raymond Keith. "A Comparative Analysis of the Factors Contributing to Biblical Worldview of Students Enrolled in a Christian School." EdD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Pao, David. *Colossians and Philemon*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
- Patzia, Arthur G. *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*. The New International Biblical Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990.
- Pearcey, Nancy. *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015.
- _____. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*. Study Guide ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005.
- Penner, Myron B. "Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Some Preliminary Considerations." In *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*, edited by Myron B. Penner, 13-36. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005.

- Pew Research Center. "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace: An update on America's changing religious landscape." Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life. October 17, 2019. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.
- Pluckrose, Helen, and James Lindsay. *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity—and Why This Harms Everybody*. Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020.
- Poplin, Mary. *Is Reality Secular? Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014.
- Ryken, Philip G. *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide*. Edited by David S. Dockery. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- Schaeffer, Francis. *A Christian Manifesto*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1980.
- _____. "The God Who Is There." In *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, vol. 1, *A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, 5-202. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982.
- _____. *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1972.
- Sire, James W. *Discipleship of the Mind: Learning to Love in the Ways We Think*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990.
- _____. *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015.
- Smith, James K. A. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.
- Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007.
- Truman, Carl R. *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to the Sexual Revolution*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021.
- Turner, David L. *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and Cathi J. Fredricks. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Wells, David F. *Above all Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- _____. *God in the Whirlwind: How the Holy-Love of God Reorients Our World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.
- Wellum, Stephen J. *Christ Alone: The Uniqueness of Jesus as Savior*. The Five Solas Series. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017.

_____. *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL; Crossway, 2016.

Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.

ABSTRACT

ALL OF CHRIST FOR ALL OF LIFE: DISCIPLING BELIEVERS IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW AT RIVERVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH IN WEST SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Levi James Secord, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stephen J. Wellum

The goal of this project was to disciple believers in the Christian worldview by teaching the foundational beliefs of Christianity and then applying the Christian worldview to the major areas of life. Chapter 1 lays out the project's context, rationale, purpose, goals, research methodology, definitions, and limitations/delimitations. Chapter 2 establishes the theological foundations by demonstrating the comprehensive nature of the Christian worldview by examining Christianity's theological foundations in Genesis 1:26-31, Colossians 1:15-20, Matthew 28:18-20, and 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. Chapter 3 addresses the challenges secularism and postmodernism pose to the Christian worldview. Chapter 4 explains the specifics and details of how this ministry project was conducted. Chapter 5 evaluates the project's success, and examines its strengths and weaknesses, while also offering theological and personal reflections on the process.

VITA

Levi James Secord

EDUCATION

BA, University of Northwestern-St. Paul, 2009
MDiv, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013

PUBLICATIONS

- “A Christmas Worldview.” *Fight, Laugh, Feast Magazine* 2, no. 4 (2021), 61-63.
- “How Then Should We Preach? What Today’s Pastors Must Learn from Francis Schaeffer.” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 24, no. 2 (2020): 109-124.
- “Justice Redefined: How Social Justice Undermines the Gospel.” *CrossPolitic: Blogazine*. March 19, 2019. <https://crosspolitic.com/justice-redefined-how-social-justice-undermines-the-gospel/>.
- “Losing Our Virtue: Relativism, Social Justice, and Intersectionality.” *CrossPolitic: Blogazine*. June 22, 2019. <https://crosspolitic.com/losing-our-virtue-relativism-social-justice-intersectionality/>.
- “Pastor vs. Superintendent: Transgenderism in the Local School.” *CrossPolitic: Blogazine*. November 9, 2019. <https://crosspolitic.com/pastor-vs-superintendent-transgenderism-in-the-local-school/>.
- “Pastors vs. Tyrants: Or, Death to Tyrants.” *Fight, Laugh, Feast Magazine* 2, no. 3 (2021): 79-81.
- “Wal-Mart Churches and the Need for Community.” *Front Porch Republic*. September 4, 2019. <https://www.frontporchrepublic.com/2019/09/wal-mart-churches-and-the-need-for-community/>.

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Pastor of Youth and Young Adults, Riverview Baptist Church, West Saint Paul, Minnesota, 2013-2015
Pastor of Christian Life and Growth, Riverview Baptist Church, West Saint Paul, Minnesota, 2015-2021
Head Pastor, Christ Bible Church, Roseville, Minnesota, 2021-