

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

Revised 2nd Edition



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This book is dedicated once again to every student who attended the Summit Ministries' one or two-week programs over the past 45 years either in Colorado, Tennessee, Ohio, Canada, South Africa, Australia or New Zealand. It is also dedicated to my son Brent who literally died persuading young lives what one blind guy and a bunch of teenagers could do for Jesus and the Body of Christ in the Sudan; and to Ronald H. Nash who left this world to be united with his Savior, and who told me many times how much he enjoyed working with and teaching our Summit students over the years.

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COMPARING COMPETING WORLDVIEWS

	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM	SECULAR HUMANISM	MARXISM-LENINISM	COSMIC HUMANISM	POST-MODERNISM
	Bible	Qur'an, Hadith, Sunnah	Humanist Manifestos I, II, III	Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao	MacLaine, Spangler, Chopra, Walsch	Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, Rorty
THEOLOGY	Theism (Trinitarian)	Theism (Unitarian)	Atheism	Atheism	Pantheism	Atheism
PHILOSOPHY	Supernaturalism (Faith and Reason)	Supernaturalism (Faith and Reason)	Naturalism	Dialectical Materialism	Non-Naturalism	Anti-Realism
ETHICS	Moral Absolutes	Moral Absolutes	Moral Relativism	Proletariat Morality	Moral Relativism (Karma)	Cultural Relativism
BIOLOGY	Creationism	Creationism	Neo-Darwinian Evolution	Punctuated Evolution	Cosmic Evolution	Punctuated Evolution
PSYCHOLOGY	Mind/Body Dualism (Fallen)	Mind/Body Dualism (Un-fallen)	Monism (Self-Actualization)	Monism (Behaviorism)	Higher Consciousness	Socially-Constructed Selves
SOCIOLOGY	Traditional Family, Church, State	Polygamy, Mosque, Islamic State	Non-Traditional Family, Church, State	Classless Society	Non-Traditional Family, Church, State	Sexual Egalitarianism
LAW	Divine/Natural Law	Shari'ah Law	Positive Law	Proletariat Law	Self-Law	Critical Legal Studies
POLITICS	Justice, Freedom, Order	Islamic Theocracy (Global Islam)	Liberalism (Secular World Gov't)	Statism (Communist World Gov't)	Self-Government (New World Order)	Leftism
ECONOMICS	Stewardship of Property	Stewardship of Property	Interventionism	Scientific Socialism	Universal Enlightened Production	Interventionism
HISTORY	Creation, Fall, Redemption	Historical Determinism (Jihad)	Historical Evolution	Historical Materialism	Evolutionary Godhood	Historicism

Introduction

Part One

“Where is the philosopher? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of the age? Hasn’t God made the world’s wisdom foolish?”¹

— PAUL THE APOSTLE

0.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Perusing the offerings at a well-stocked newsstand in downtown Chicago, I discovered a microcosm of the modern world in front of me. Headlines, box scores, still pictures, weird pictures, war pictures, pictures of beautiful people. I saw articles on an array of topics—beheadings, gay marriage, a murdered judge, date rape, a “no rules” restaurant, a child molester—and this was just the beginning.

As I scanned further, I discovered even more disturbing phenomena: The sexual revolution is ongoing; grass, LSD, and homemade meth are the latest therapeutic techniques for relieving depression; teen pregnancy affects 14- to 16-year-olds; porn everywhere; rich denounced, poor praised; school shot up, students dead; teen suicide; a third of all children in U.S. born out of wedlock; world to end early next week; those who believe in truth are the root of all evil; concept of absolute values is for morons; there is no evil or good; no right or wrong; witness lies in court; husband kills wife, dumps body in neighbors’ trash bin, gets six years in slammer; twentieth century bloodiest of all centuries; man clones self; world is overpopulated . . .

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:20 (Holman Christian Standard Bible).

0.1.2 FROM NEWSSTAND TO CLASSROOM

University of Chicago law professor Albert W. Alschuler holds that “[a]lmost every measure confirms that America’s youth are in trouble.”² To support his claim, he cites Perry Farrell, the lead singer of Porno for Pyros, who “shouts the central lyrics of twentieth-century American jurisprudence, ‘Ain’t no wrong, ain’t no right, only pleasure and pain.’”³ Alschuler laments these signs of cultural discouragement and decay, saying, “One should expect to hear this lyric from orange-headed, leather-clad rock stars as well as Richard Rorty and Richard Posner.”⁴

Why would he say that? What does Postmodernist intellectual Richard Rorty’s worldview have to do with the worldview of an orange-headed rock star?

0.1.3 WORLDVIEWS IN COLLISION

Competing worldviews are breaking out everywhere if only we have eyes to see, ears to hear, and minds to think true thoughts. They are propagated at newsstands and on the evening news and played out at the United Nations, in the halls of Congress, and most assuredly at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Duke, UC Berkeley, and yes, even the local community college.

This battle for the minds and hearts of young people encompasses much more than politics and ethics.

When we consider the tug-of-war between and among worldviews that currently rages in America and around the world, we tend to think of the battle mostly in terms of political and ethical issues that divide those who hold traditional Christian ideas and values from those who hold various liberal/radical Humanist views (i.e., Secular, Marxist, Cosmic, and Postmodern) or who espouse the beliefs and practices of historical Islam.

But this battle for the minds and hearts of young people encompasses much more than politics and ethics. As believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, we need to consider how our commitment to Him affects not only our political and ethical convictions, but also the way we think and act about theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, and history. This collection of convictions is what we call a worldview. And it is in the arena of worldviews that one of the greatest battles of our time is now being waged 24/7 in each of the ten areas of thought listed above.

This book is about these competing worldviews. Its goal is to help Christian students recognize the significance of some of the most influential ideas and values prevalent in our non-Christian culture and to understand the unbiblical, unrealistic, and, yes, even irrational assumptions about reality from which they arise. If we understand the real differences between the Biblical Christian worldview and the Secular Humanist, Marxist, Cosmic Humanist (New Age), Postmodern, and Islamic worldviews, we will be better prepared to love, live, and defend God’s truth as revealed in the Bible and in His Creation. A clear understanding of these six worldviews will not only help protect us from deception by grounding us more firmly in the Christian faith, but it will also give us tools to more effectively witness for Christ in these conflicting times.

² Albert W. Alschuler, *Law Without Values: The Life, Work, and Legacy of Justice Holmes* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 189. My opening paragraphs were inspired by Alschuler’s “politics of resentment” survey of American life (188).

³ Ibid., 189–190.

⁴ Ibid., 190.

0.1.4 MAKING SENSE OF THE WORLD

Making sense of the world and figuring out what is happening around us is fun! A basic understanding of the six worldviews listed above, each divided into ten significant disciplines, will give students a firm grasp of what, indeed, is going on both around them and around the world. In other words, six worldviews times ten disciplines will provide students with sixty (60) ideas/beliefs/values to help them gain an “understanding of the times,” which is exactly what the Bible exhorts us to do (1 Chronicles 12:32).⁵

C. S. Lewis says that Christians “are tempted to make unnecessary concessions to those outside the Faith.” We give in too much, he says. “We must show our Christian colours, if we are to be true to Jesus Christ. We cannot remain silent and concede everything away.”⁶

We cannot
remain silent
and concede
everything away.

0.1.5 JESUS CHRIST AND WESTERN CULTURE

As Christians, our worldview should be based on the Bible and constructed around the person of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). What would Jesus think? What would Jesus do?

As Christians, our basic assumptions about life are formed by our central beliefs in the person and message of Jesus Christ.

An article in *Newsweek* magazine observes that “for Christians, Jesus is the hinge on which the door of history swings.” But the *Newsweek* writer is quick to point out that our faith commitment affects more than just our view of history. He goes on to say that by “any secular standard, Jesus is also the dominant figure of Western culture. Like the millennium itself, much of what we now think of as Western ideas, inventions and

values finds its source of inspiration in the religion that worships God in his name. Art and science, the self and society, politics and economics, marriage and the family, right and wrong, body and soul—all have been touched and often radically transformed by Christian influence.”⁷

What *Newsweek* notes here is the pervasive influence of Christian faith and thinking upon every area of life, not only how we act and the kind of life we live, but also how we think and the things we hold most important. As Christians, our basic assumptions about life are formed by our central beliefs in the person and message of Jesus Christ. Those who do not hold biblically-based beliefs will usually come to very different conclusions about life and what makes it worthwhile.

As C.S. Lewis notes, “We are now getting to the point at which different beliefs about the universe lead to different behavior. Religion involves a series of statements about facts, which must be either true or false. If they are true, one set of conclusions will follow about the right sailing of the human fleet, if they are false, quite another set.”⁸

Behavior that follows beliefs is exactly what Paul is talking about when he says that part of our responsibility as Christians is to cast down or overthrow arguments and every high

⁵ In fact, we need to understand fewer than 60 ideas/beliefs/values because many humanistic worldviews have similar views.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 262.

⁷ *Newsweek* (March 29, 1999), 54. For further information on the influence of Christ on Western culture see Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001) and D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2005).

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1972), 58.

thing (including naturalistic science and humanistic psychology) that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, “bringing every thought [or idea] into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Paul wants God’s people to have their minds and hearts renewed so they can discern right from wrong and good from evil (Romans 12:2) and to have the spirit of their minds discern the truth found in Jesus (Ephesians 4:21–22). The writer of Hebrews also underscores the importance of this point when he says, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The heart, as well as the mind, has the ability to discern good ideas from bad ideas.

The current conflict of worldviews engulfing Western culture is designed to dethrone Jesus Christ (Psalm 2) and replace the Biblical Christian worldview with the ideas of fallible but very clever human beings. The conflict pits the wisdom of God against the wisdom of the world. As Paul says, “Where is the philosopher? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn’t God made the world’s wisdom foolish? . . . God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Corinthians 1:20, 25, HCSB).⁹

As Paul says, “Where is the philosopher? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn’t God made the world’s wisdom foolish? . . . God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”

1 CORINTHIANS 1:20, 25

0.1.6 WAGING SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Richard Rorty outlines the Postmodernist battle plan in the struggle for students’ allegiance: “The fundamentalist parents [i.e., Christian parents] of our fundamentalist students [i.e., Christian students] think that the entire ‘American liberal establishment’ is engaged in a conspiracy. These parents have a point. When we American college teachers encounter religious fundamentalists, we do not consider the possibility of reformulating our own practices of justification so as to give more weight to the authority of the Christian scriptures. Instead, we do our best to convince these students of the benefits of [humanistic] secularization. Rather, I think these students are lucky to find themselves under the benevolent *Herrschaft* [teaching] of people like me, and to have escaped the grip of their frightening, vicious, dangerous parents.”¹⁰

Rorty further defines his teaching goal as enticing students to read Darwin and Freud “without disgust and incredulity” and to “arrange things so that students who enter as bigoted, homophobic, religious fundamentalists [i.e., Christian students] will leave college with views more like our own.”¹¹ Because of views like Rorty’s, which are antithetical to the goals of Christian education, this book has become necessary.

⁹ An excellent example of human wisdom involves a discussion of the evolution of the eye. The conclusion was reached that it would take approximately 300 million years for a fully functioning eye to evolve by chance and accident (to which a wit quipped that a father and a mother can produce a fully functioning eye in nine months!).

¹⁰ Robert B. Brandom, ed., *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 21–22.

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

Attacks on Christian ideas come from a variety of directions. Here are a few examples:

- Jesus taught that God created human beings male and female (Mark 10:6). Darwin, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Huxley, Russell, Rorty, and their legions of disciples disagree, insisting that humankind is a product of chance, spontaneous generation, and evolution. S. Matthew D'Agostino states it more colorfully: "We're not absolutely sure what life looked like once the process [of evolution] was fully underway: something like algae, the biologists suggest, a foamy blue-green pond scum."¹²
- Jesus warns that we are not to fear those who kill the body, but rather those who can destroy body and soul in hell (Matthew 10:28). But Wundt, Watson, Skinner, and all other atheistic psychologists have developed various psychologies based on their conviction that we have no soul and that there is no hell to shun. These psychologists define us as evolving, physical, sexual animals with no spiritual dimension. We are atoms in motion. We are, to put it bluntly, animals in heat seeking pleasure and avoiding pain.
- Jesus claims that He and the Father are one (John 10:30). But Freud, Nietzsche, Rorty, Dewey, and their followers say that there is no eternal Father, that faith in God is a mark of weakness or insanity, and that persons and cultures create their own reality and morality.
- Jesus says we should love God with our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:30–31). But Marx and Lenin assert that there is no God and that we must eliminate the bourgeois class, by violence if necessary. In another arena, the Qur'an teaches that non-Muslims (Christians and Jews) are the enemies of Allah and may be killed.¹³
- Jesus tells us He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). But Dewey, Rorty, Foucault, and their followers insist there is no resurrection and that life itself is an accident of nature.
- Jesus promises that He will prepare a place in heaven for those who love Him (John 14). But Freud, Marx, Nietzsche, and their disciples believe that all religion is an illusion, wishful thinking, an opiate of the masses, or a chasing after 'pie in the sky.'
- Jesus teaches His followers to render unto Caesar (government) "the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). No Humanist believes this because no Humanist believes anything belongs to God.
- Jesus teaches that people love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). Richard Dawkins maintains that "the universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is at bottom no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."¹⁴

0.1.7 THE BATTLE FOR HEARTS AND MINDS

Clearly a vast chasm divides Christianity and the worldviews with which it battles for the allegiance of the hearts and minds of the human race. But where do these other worldviews manifest themselves?

Dr. James Dobson says, "The [Secular] Humanist system of values has now become the predominant way of thinking in most of the power centers of society. It has outstripped

¹² *Free Inquiry* (Winter 2001/02): 39.

¹³ Qur'an 2:191; 9:123. Cited in Serge Trifkovic, *The Sword of the Prophet* (Boston, MA: Regina Orthodox, 2002), 87–88.

¹⁴ *Claremont Review of Books* (Winter 2004): 50.

Judeo-Christian precepts in the universities, in the news media, in the entertainment industry, in the judiciary, in the federal bureaucracy, in business, medicine, law, psychology, sociology, in the arts, in many public schools and, to be sure, in the halls of Congress.”¹⁵

The influence of the Secular Humanist worldview is prevalent in every sector of our lives. Consider, for example, the way atheistic evolutionary thinking has become the accepted and undisputed truth within the scientific establishment and for those who are teaching the next generation of young people. Although the overwhelming majority of Americans believe in the existence of God, 94 percent of the leadership of the National Academy of Science consider themselves atheists.¹⁶ Their atheistic dogma reaches into every public school in America via naturalistic evolutionary propaganda. Evolution is not treated as a theory, but as an unquestioned scientific fact. Ironically, a Chinese paleontologist writes, “In China we can criticize Darwin, but not the government; in America you can criticize the government, but not Darwin.”¹⁷

As Christians, we were happy to learn that at least one peer-reviewed scientific journal has recently published an anti-Darwinian study: “In the last decade or so a host of scientific essays and books have questioned the efficacy of [natural] selection and mutation [genetic mistakes] as a mechanism for generating morphological novelty, as even a brief literature survey will establish. . . . Genetics might be adequate for explaining microevolution, but micro-evolutionary changes in gene frequency were not seen as able to turn a reptile into a mammal or to convert a fish into an amphibian. Microevolution looks at adaptations that concern the survival of the fittest, not the arrival of the fittest. As Goodwin (1995) points out, ‘the origin of species—Darwin’s problem—remains unsolved’ (p. 361).”¹⁸

We were not happy to learn, however, that the editor of this Smithsonian publication was forced to leave his position in spite of the fact that he possesses two earned Ph.D.s in science. Humanists cannot tolerate any opinion that weakens Darwin’s hold on their worldview.

Michael Ruse would surely agree with his Chinese counterpart quoted above. Such mean-spirited action by the Smithsonian only reinforces Ruse’s contention that evolution itself is a religion. Ruse, an atheistic evolutionist, admits, “Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning and it is true still today. . . . One of the most popular books of the era was *Religion Without Revelation* by Julian Huxley, grandson of Thomas Huxley. . . . As always evolution was doing everything expected of religion, and more.”¹⁹ Secular Humanism would crumble of its own weight if evolution were removed as a building block.

The [Secular] Humanist system of values has now become the predominant way of thinking in most of the power centers of society.

— JAMES DOBSON

0.1.8 MORAL VALUES AWASH

Notwithstanding the importance of the evolutionary underpinning of Secular Humanist beliefs, the atheistic premise in and of itself has had a frightening effect on the moral values

¹⁵ James C. Dobson and Gary L. Bauer, *Children At Risk* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 22.

¹⁶ Phillip E. Johnson, *The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 86.

¹⁷ Quoted in Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2000), 58. Under Wells’ analysis, the 10 most popular arguments favoring evolution are systematically destroyed with scientific data.

¹⁸ Stephen C. Meyer, “The Origin of the Biological Information and the Higher Taxonomic Categories,” *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, D.C., August 28, 2004.

¹⁹ *National Post*, (Canadian edition; May 13, 2000): B3.

of our culture, leaving America awash in cultural and ethical relativism.²⁰ Atheistic thinking has left many feeling unsure that they can hold any moral values with certainty.

In the current politically correct environment, in which all cultures are created equal and beyond criticism (except Nazi culture, which is selectively condemned), the Christian commitment to moral absolutes has been attacked and undermined, especially in the area of sexuality. As Richard John Neuhaus suggests, most of our major current cultural issues are based upon changing (declining) values in the area of human sexuality. Neuhaus notes the comment by Modris Eksteins (in *Rites of Spring*, his historical study of the rise of modernism) that the issue of sexual morality became a “vehicle of rebellion against bourgeois [Christian] values.” The newfound power of homosexual and feminist activists yields a shift away from a Biblical Christian perspective of sexual morality.

For nearly two centuries, Secular Humanist/Atheist thinkers have sought to replace Christian moral values with ideas they envision will enhance human development and social progress. The ideas and philosophies of men and women such as Marx, Freud, Darwin, Nietzsche, Lenin, Stalin, Russell, Heidegger, Adorno, Lukacs, Gramsci, Sanger, Dewey, Kinsey, Sagan, Derrida, Foucault and others have led to an array of practices and lifestyles contrary to biblical values. These practices include free love, pornography, aberrant sex education, homosexuality, shacking up, teen pregnancy, abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, unrestricted embryonic stem cell research, cloning, out of wedlock children, irresponsible parenting, etc.

Clearly the moral values espoused by Secular Humanist thinkers have recently exerted a much greater impact on our culture than have the traditional Christian worldview and its system of ethical values that, to a large degree, have been eradicated from the public square. Secular Humanists have cleverly and methodically gained ascendancy over Christianity in the past two to three generations.

0.1.9 SECULAR RELIGION

Years ago, Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn pointed to the weakness and danger of the humanistic agenda for humanity: “There is a disaster which has already been under way for quite some time. I am referring to the calamity of a despiritualized and irreligious humanistic consciousness. . . . If humanism were right in declaring that man is born to be happy, he would not be born to die. Since his body is doomed to die, his task on earth evidently must be of a more spiritual nature.”²¹

In spite of the wisdom of thinkers like Solzhenitsyn, Humanists proceed with their own agenda. What they offer is essentially their own religious alternative to the Christian faith, a fully-constructed worldview that ignores the reality of God. Indeed, the four Humanist worldviews discussed in this book (Secular, Marxist, Cosmic, and Postmodern) are religious worldviews, each possessing a defining theology.

In our book *Mind Siege*, Tim La Haye and I prove that Secular Humanism, for example, is a religious worldview.²² John Dewey, one of the founders of the Secular Humanist movement, admits as much in *A Common Faith*: “Here are all the elements for a religious faith. . . . Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind.”²³ As Christians, we cannot afford to ignore the implications of such a confession.

²⁰ Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998).

²¹ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “A World Split Apart.” 1978 Harvard University graduation address.

²² Tim LaHaye and David Noebel, *Mind Siege: The Battle for Truth in the New Millennium* (Nashville, TN: Word, 2001), 155f.

²³ John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (1934; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962), 87.

In light of these concerted efforts to replace the Christian understanding of reality, we must take the time to understand the beliefs of our adversaries in the battle for minds and hearts and search out what the Bible teaches about each of the major areas of human thought and culture. A deep understanding of biblical truth is certainly one of our greatest weapons in this battle.

0.1.10 OUT OF THE DESERT

Though the vast forces of humanism and anti-humanism are already ranged mightily against Christ and his followers, another powerful worldview that we must take seriously has taken center stage. “Islam is not only a religious doctrine,” says Serge Trifkovic, “it is also a self-contained world outlook, and a way of life that claims the primary allegiance of all those calling themselves ‘Muslim.’”²⁴ A Muslim, says Trifkovic, “is first and foremost the citizen of Islam, and belongs morally, spiritually, and intellectually, and in principle totally to the world of belief of which Muhammad is the Prophet, and Mecca is the capital.”²⁵ Today, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, and its more radical elements have bonded with the radical Left in the United States and Europe.²⁶

“Radical Muslims,” says Trifkovic, “dominate the Islamic life in the United States to the point that moderates hardly have a voice. Radical Muslims control every major Muslim organization, including the Islamic Association for Palestine, the Islamic Circle of North America, the Islamic Committee for Palestine, the Islamic Society for North America, the Muslim Arab Youth Association, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, and the Muslim Students Association. They also control a growing majority of mosques, weekly newspapers, and communal organizations. They are funded by the Iranians, Libyans, and Saudis, who have for years helped the most extreme groups.”²⁷

David Horowitz agrees with Trifkovic in his analysis of the situation. “In word and deed,” says Horowitz, “both of these allies [radical Islamists and radical Leftists] make it plain that they consider everything about the United States to be evil and unworthy of preservation, that they wish to see American society and its way of life crushed by any means necessary, including violent revolution.”²⁸

Therefore, this book explains the Islamic worldview and the basic differences between Christianity and Islam. We will look at what Christianity and Islam teach about God, the universe, society, and the human condition. We will contrast what we consider Islam’s erroneous conclusions with the truths found in the Bible, the revelational basis of Christianity. You will be challenged to decide what is true and what is not, remembering John’s admonition, “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

²⁴ Trifkovic, 7.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ David Horowitz, *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2004).

²⁷ Trifkovic, 270.

²⁸ David Horowitz and John Perazzo, “Unholy Alliance: The ‘Peace Left’ and the Islamic Jihad Against America,” *FrontPageMagazine.com.*, April 13, 2005, <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=17702>. Horowitz and Perazzo identify the campus Communist groups including Workers World Party, International ANSWER, etc.

0.1.11 MARX ALIVE AND WELL

Some of you may question whether or not Marxism should still be included in our list of influential worldviews, believing as many do that Marxism came crashing down with the Berlin Wall in 1989. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Although the political and institutional forms of Marxism may have changed, Marxism still exerts a huge influence in the academic world and in various political and economic ideologies. *U. S. News and World Report* as late as September 2003 published a lengthy article entitled “Where Marxism Lives Today,” which states, “But Marxism is so entrenched in courses ranging from literature to anthropology, and addressing topics on everything from class systems of Victorian England to the alienation expressed by hip-hop culture, says Joseph Childers, English professor at the University of California, Riverside, that today’s students are virtually bathed in Marx’s ideas.”²⁹

The harsh reality is that the major elements of the Marxist worldview (atheism, materialism, evolution, positive law, denial of soul and spirit, sexual liberation or free love, socialism, etc.) are alive and flourishing in American universities as well as in parts of Eastern and Western Europe, Russia, China, Cuba, and Latin America.

David Horowitz writes about his experience with Marxism in the academic world in *Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey*. He says, “The Marxists and socialists who had been refuted by historical events were now the tenured establishment of the academic world. . . . [M]ore Marxists could be found on the faculties of American colleges than in the entire former Communist bloc. The American Historical Association was run by Marxists, as was the professional literature association, whose field had been transformed into a kind of pseudo sociology of race-gender-class oppression.”³⁰ Serious students, therefore, must continue to consider the influence of the Marxist worldview.

0.1.12 THE ANTI-WORLDDVIEW WORLDDVIEW

The one worldview covered in this book that denies being a worldview is Postmodernism. Postmodernism’s word for worldview is **metanarrative**. A metanarrative is

METANARRATIVE: a single overarching objective interpretation or narrative of reality

a single overarching objective interpretation or narrative of reality. French Postmodernist Lyotard refers to it as “A Big Story” or “The Grand

Narrative.”³¹ Postmodernists deny the existence of metanarratives and all grand narratives.

Postmodernists insist there is no eternal truth or truth that is true around the world. Truth for some Postmodernists is what their community allows each member to say is true, or as Rorty famously stated, truth is whatever his colleagues or peers allow him to get away with believing or saying.

Each Postmodernist included in this work (Foucault, Derrida, Barthes, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Rorty, etc.) is theologically atheist, philosophically skeptical, ethically relativist, biologically evolutionist, psychologically soul-less, legally pragmatist, and politically leftist.

Postmodernists may contend that all truth is relative to one’s peers or community, but they nevertheless insist that atheism, skepticism, relativism, and evolution are true around the world. Postmodernists in China and Postmodernists in New York believe that punctuated equilibrium evolution should be taught as absolute truth. The only truths Postmodernists see

²⁹ *U. S. News and World Report*, September 2, 2003, Special Collection Edition, 86.

³⁰ David Horowitz, *Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997), 405.

³¹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 37.

as relative are truths supporting Christianity. They treat their own published works as universally true.

You cannot read Richard Rorty, a leading Postmodernist, without concluding that what he says he actually believes. When he says that “the United States of America will someday yield up sovereignty to what Tennyson called ‘the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World,’”³² he seems not to be talking relativistically. Rather, he is talking the politics of universal government and the suspension of America’s national sovereignty. When he says that Americans should follow in the footsteps of Walt Whitman³³ and John Dewey³⁴ and abandon belief in God, rendering America a secular state, clearly he believes he is speaking absolute truth.

Therefore, this book treats Postmodernism as a complete worldview, examining what it says in all ten of the disciplines that make up a worldview.

0.1.13 NO MORE CHRISTIAN COWARDS

I agree with C.S. Lewis that we must not remain neutral in this titanic struggle for the hearts and minds of the human race. Elijah, for example, was not neutral when he confronted the prophets of Baal and Asherah at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). Jesus was not neutral when He took on the Greek and Roman gods at Mount Hermon (Matthew 16–17). Paul was not

We must not remain neutral in this titanic struggle for the hearts and minds of the human race.

neutral when he confronted the Secular and Cosmic Humanists of his own day, the Stoics and Epicureans, at Mount Mars (Acts 17). The apostle to the gentiles (Romans 11:13) clearly understood their belief systems and stood against them by demonstrating their weaknesses (2 Corinthians 10:5). He took on the Humanists with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the creation of heaven and earth and the judgment to come. Ideas have not changed a great deal. The spiritual and intellectual battlefield has remained relatively unchanged over the centuries. God is still the Hound of Heaven, pursuing the human race to live as He planned for us to live.

We must do no less than Elijah, Jesus, and Paul did as they withstood those seeking to destroy the wisdom and knowledge of God. If we fail, we will lose every idea and belief that Christians hold dear, as well as the institutions based on them (i.e., home, church, state, education, occupation). It is no accident that wherever Christians establish themselves they build homes, churches, and schools and then work hard for the glory of God. In fact, it is safe to say that Christians founded the first 150 colleges and universities in the United States and all the major universities across Europe.

Regarding the influence of Christ, most of these institutions have been lost. The One who is most responsible for Western Civilization and culture has been shut out and replaced with the follies of humanity. We cannot afford to lose any more territory, and indeed, we must begin reclaiming what we have lost. James Russell Lowell wrote, “Once to every man and

³² Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 3.

³³ See Richard J. Ellis, *The Dark Side of the Left: Illiberal Egalitarianism in America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998) for a look at Whitman’s influence on American radicals, e.g., “Whitman profoundly shaped a host of left-wing literary radicals of the early twentieth century, from Randolph Bourne and Van Wyck Brooks to John Reed and Max Eastman, who tellingly identified himself as an ‘American lyrical Socialist—a child of Walt Whitman reared by Karl Marx’” (p. 79, 80). Whitman, himself, was heavily involved in the eugenics movement desirous to create a new master race (p. 79).

³⁴ John Dewey was the voice of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), which was the American counterpart to the British Fabian Society. The LID also birthed the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a radical student organization. See Ellis, pages 116f, for details.

nation, Comes the moment to decide, In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, For the good or evil side, Then it is the brave man chooses, While the coward stands aside.”

According to Hebrews 11:32–40, God wants His sons and daughters to be brave men and women rather than cowards, men and women who understand the times and know what needs to be done. To summarize Lowell’s poetic call, each of us must choose. Fortunately, millions have chosen to stand firm for Jesus Christ.

My hope is that this book will help prepare thousands more Christian young people to stand firm in the spiritual and intellectual battle of their life—a battle that encompasses body, soul, mind, heart, and spirit. This battle has eternal consequences if, indeed, Christianity’s declarations are true: God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1); God created Adam and Eve (Genesis 1–2); Adam and Eve (and all humanity) disobeyed God and fell into sin (Genesis 3); God sent His only Son into the world (John 3:16); our salvation is through Jesus Christ’s death on the cross and His literal physical resurrection (1 Corinthians 15); and heaven and hell exist as part of a final judgment of the entire human race (Revelation 20).

I have enjoyed the privilege of helping educate thousands of young men and women in the Christian worldview. I have watched them use resources such as this book to help others stand fast in their Christian faith and not fall prey to the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 1:19ff) or the subtlety of the Evil One (2 Corinthians 11:3).

The youth ministry I have been associated with for over 40 years³⁵ receives letters and e-mails every day from former students or their parents, sharing how materials such as this have affected their lives by equipping them to fight the good fight of faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

May our Lord, therefore, use this book to instruct many more students in how to fight the spiritual and intellectual battles of the twenty-first century and grow stronger in their Christian faith. May none of us grow weary in doing good, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

³⁵ Summit Ministries, Manitou Springs, CO 80829, <http://www.summit.org>.

Introduction

Part Two

“Finding one’s way through unfamiliar terrain,” John Lewis Gaddis also wisely observed, “generally requires a map of some sort.” . . . World views and causal theories are indispensable guides. . . .”¹

— Samuel Huntington

0.2.1 INTRODUCTION

“A few years ago, the eminent Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington published in *Foreign Affairs* a widely noted article called ‘The Clash of Civilizations.’ Looking at contemporary international relations from a geopolitical vantage point, he predicted a clash of the world’s major civilizations: the West, the Islamic world, and the Confucian East. Huntington’s article provoked a response from one of his own most brilliant former students—Swarthmore’s James Kurth. In an article in the *National Interest* entitled ‘The Real Clash,’ Kurth argued persuasively that the clash that is coming—and that has, indeed, already begun—is not so much among the world’s great civilizations as it is within the civilization of the West, between those who claim the Judeo-Christian worldview and those who have abandoned that worldview in favor of the ‘isms’ of contemporary American life—feminism, multiculturalism, gay liberation, lifestyle liberation—what I have lump together as a family called the secularist orthodoxy.”²

In this brief paragraph from Princeton’s Robert George we have the major players vying for the hearts and minds of Christian young people today: Christians, Muslims, Marxists,

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1996), 30.

² Robert George, *The Clash of Orthodoxies* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2001), 3.

Secular Humanists, and Postmodernists. The only worldview George doesn't mention is Cosmic Humanism. Needless to say, his "secularist orthodoxy" is standard fare in American public schools.³

Back in the early 1990s, Dr. James C. Dobson and Gary Bauer sought to identify what they saw happening to Christian young people in the United States. Their conclusion was that "nothing short of a great Civil War of Values rages today throughout North America. Two sides with vastly differing and incompatible worldviews are locked in a bitter conflict that permeates every level of society."⁴

This textbook is an in-depth account of this "Great Civil War"—an account of the war for this and succeeding generations. The war, as Dobson and Bauer put it, is a struggle "for the

Nothing short of a great Civil War of Values rages today throughout North America. Two sides with vastly differing and incompatible worldviews are locked in a bitter conflict that permeates every level of society.

— JAMES DOBSON AND GARY BAUER

hearts and minds of people. It is a war over ideas."⁵ While the word "war" may strike some as too drastic a word, one or two semesters in higher education will convince any alert student that it is indeed a battle for his or her mind and heart.⁶

To be more precise, it is a battle between and among worldviews. On one side is clearly the Christian worldview. On the other side are Secular Humanism, Marxism-Leninism, Cosmic Humanism (the New Age movement)

and Postmodernism. While these worldviews don't agree in every detail, they unanimously concur on one point—their opposition to Biblical Christianity. In this context we will seek to understand them while presenting a strong, honest, truthful, and intelligent defense of the Biblical Christian worldview.

Since September 11, 2001, and the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York City, however, another worldview has come to the forefront of our consciousness—Islam. Therefore, this study will also look at the Islamic worldview and note its similarities and differences with Biblical Christianity.

"Someday soon," Dobson and Bauer say, "a winner [in the battle for our children's hearts and minds] will emerge and the loser will fade from memory. For now, the outcome is very much in doubt."⁷ Christians must quickly arrive at an understanding of the times and "know what [they] ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32).

0.2.2 WHAT IS A WORLDVIEW?

Ideas have consequences. Sometimes the consequences are good, but sometimes they are deadly. Whether the result is hopelessness arising from a philosophy that claims God does not exist, or pain and oppression arising from the philosophy of a despotic ruler, ideas *do* have consequences.

³ For a detailed account of how the philosophy of education in America has changed from a biblical orientation to a secular foundation, see B.K. Eakman's *Cloning of the American Mind: Eradicating Morality Through Education* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1998).

⁴ James C. Dobson and Gary L. Bauer, *Children at Risk: The Battle For the Hearts and Minds of Our Kids* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 19.

⁵ Ibid., 19–20.

⁶ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004); Jim Nelson Black, *Freefall of the American University* (Nashville, TN: WND, 2004).

⁷ Dobson and Bauer, 20.

Each of us bases our decisions and actions on a worldview. We may not be able to articulate our worldview, and worldviews are often inconsistent, but we all have one. *But what is a worldview?* Essentially, a worldview is the way we view our world and our place in it. A worldview answers fundamental questions such as *Why are we here? What is the meaning and purpose of life? Is there a difference between right and wrong? Is there a God? Are humans merely highly evolved animals?*

We all have ideas that attempt to answer these questions. Our ideas naturally give rise to some sort of system of beliefs, a system that forms the basis for our decisions and actions. Our worldview does not merely determine what we think the world is like; it determines what we think the world *should be* like. In other words, our worldview determines how we act and respond to every aspect of life. Because our ideas *do* determine how we behave, the bottom line is that our ideas *do* have consequences.

If we were to ask an average person about his or her philosophy of life, we would probably get a blank stare. But if we were to ask this average person about *how life began*, he or she would probably give some sort of answer, even if the answer were not completely coherent. If we were to continue the conversation by asking *why* she believes what she claims to believe, we would most likely discover that she, like most people, simply does not have reasons for what she believes. Often people get their beliefs like they catch colds—by being around other people! We often adopt other people’s beliefs even if we do not realize we are doing so. Such is the power of friends, family, movies, television, books, magazines, etc.

Many of us do not think very deeply about why we believe the things we do. Even when we want to examine our beliefs, we do not really know how. Sometimes we do not even know the questions to ask.

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

The Truman Show (1998, starring Jim Carey) Truman, who is the subject of a 24/7 TV program, has spent his entire life on a stage without knowing it. As the story unfolds, Truman begins to realize something is not right in his “world” and he determines to walk off the set. As he approaches an exit door, the director, with a booming voice coming out of the clouds, addresses Truman. Truman asks a series of three questions: “Who are you?,” “Who am I?,” and “Was nothing real?” As it turns out, these are the real-life questions everyone must ask, since these questions deal with foundational issues that effect every worldview— theology, psychology, and philosophy.*

0.2.3 THE HEART OF A WORLDVIEW

A worldview is a way of viewing or interpreting all of reality. It is an interpretive framework through which or by which one makes sense of the data of life and the world.

— NORMAN GEISLER AND WILLIAM WATKINS

What is a worldview? Norman Geisler and William Watkins explain that “a world view is a way of viewing or interpreting all of reality. It is an interpretive framework through which or by which one makes sense of the data of life and the world.”⁸ To say that a worldview is “an interpretive

⁸ Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 11.

* Note: Our use of a particular film in the “Pop Culture Connection” throughout this text does not mean we endorse the film. We include these to illustrate how others in society communicate similar ideas through their artistic works. A rationale for using popular movies, music, and art is found in the article “Worldviews in Popular Culture” by Chuck Edwards in the resources section of our website (www.summit.org).

framework” is to say that a worldview is like a pair of glasses—it is something through which you view everything. And the fact is, everyone has a worldview, a way they look at the world.

Have you ever put on someone else’s glasses? If you have, then you know that they do not always help your sight. In fact, putting on someone else’s glasses can give you a headache, a throbbing pain in your eyes, or simply make you dizzy. If the prescription for the glasses is not the right one, what you see through the glasses will be a distorted view of reality. In other words, without the proper prescription, glasses will not help you see the world more clearly; rather, they will keep you from seeing the world as it truly is.

It is the same with worldviews. Just as a prescription for glasses will either help or hinder your eyes, your worldview will either help or hinder your mind as it tries to understand the world. If your worldview is an expression of the truth of God’s Word, then that worldview will help you see the world as it truly is. But if your worldview says that there is no God, then when you look at the design in nature, you see something other than design. You see an accident that happens to look like design.



Another way of understanding what a worldview is would be for you to think about a tree. If you were to draw a tree on a piece of paper right now, you would probably draw a trunk and some fluffy branches. But what part of the tree keeps it from falling over? What part of the tree channels nutrients to the trunk so that the tree can live? What part of the tree do we usually *not* see? The roots, of course. Your worldview is like a tree’s roots—it is essential to your life and stability. Just as we cannot see the roots of a tree, we cannot see your worldview. We see only the exposed part of it—your actions.



The term *worldview*, as used in this textbook, refers to any set of ideas, beliefs, convictions, or values that provides a framework or map to help you understand God, the world, and your relationship to God and the world. Specifically, a worldview should contain a particular (and clear) perspective regarding each of the following ten disciplines: theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, and history. Our approach to articulating a worldview is based on Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians to take every thought or idea into “captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The writer of Hebrews declares “the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (4:12). We contend that *mind* and *heart* are both cognitive elements of our personhood. Scripture uses them interchangeably many times (see 2 Corinthians 3:13,15). We do not, however, deny the possibility that the heart may well see further than the mind regarding knowledge and understanding. For example, when we think of the heavens declaring the glory of God and pouring out speech night after night, communicating knowledge (Psalm 19:1–2), we could understand this as the heart interpreting God’s wisdom and knowledge apart from words.

0.2.4 WHAT CONSTITUTES A WORLDVIEW?

Many people, including many Christians, do not realize that the Bible addresses all ten disciplines listed above. Therefore, according to this definition of a worldview, Biblical Christianity is a worldview. Because it contains a theology, it is also a religious worldview.

As this study will show, Secular Humanism and Marxism-Leninism are also religious worldviews—although from an atheistic perspective.. That is because Secular Humanism has a theology; Marxism-Leninism has a theology. Further, both directly address the nine other disciplines, so they conform to our definition of a worldview. The New Age movement (Cosmic Humanism), although less tightly organized as a worldview, and Postmodernism even less so, are classified and studied here as worldviews. In contrast to them, Islam constitutes a tightly knit and highly organized worldview.

Each worldview offers a particular perspective from which to approach each discipline. Conversely, each discipline is value-laden with worldview implications. Christian students must understand that these various disciplines are not value-free. Each discipline is built on certain basic assumptions about the nature of reality in order to grant meaning to specific approaches to it.

This text analyzes the six worldviews' perspectives on each of the ten disciplines, but it does so without losing sight of how each system of thought integrates its various presuppositions, categories, and conclusions. We are not out to "over-analyze." Rather, we are attempting to understand each discipline and how it fits into each worldview. Dissecting is artificial; integration is real. No discipline stands alone. The worldview disciplines are like grapes—they come in bunches. Each affects all others in one way or another. The line separating theology and philosophy is fragile; the line separating theology, philosophy, ethics, law, and politics is more so. In fact, there is no ultimate line of demarcation, since the convictions held in one area has implications for all the other areas.

Thus, the arrangement of the categories is, to some degree, arbitrary; but we have tried to place them in their most logical sequence. Clearly, theological and philosophical assumptions color every aspect of a worldview. Disciplines such as sociology and psychology are related; but other relations and distinctions are less recognizable. Therefore, one reader may feel that we have done law an injustice by distancing it from ethics, and another may feel history to be almost as foundational to a worldview as philosophy. There is no correct order according to which these chapters must be read.

Regardless of the approach you choose, keep in mind that you are studying the six worldviews that exert the most influence over the whole world. Other worldviews exist, but they wield much less influence. Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Vedantism, Jainism, or Shintoism, for example, may profoundly influence some Eastern countries, but hardly sways the whole world. The major ideas and belief systems influencing and/or controlling the world, and especially the West, are contained in the following six worldviews.

0.2.5 WHY STUDY THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW?

This text focuses on Christianity because it is the one worldview that provides a consistent and truthful explanation of all the facts of reality (including personal experiences, history, reason, intuition, science, revelation, and imagination) with regard to theology, philosophy, ethics, economics, or anything else. Furthermore, the author is Christian and is writing primarily to help Christian young people strengthen their faith by understanding their worldview. As Carl F. H. Henry says, "The Christian belief system, which the Christian knows to be grounded in divine revelation, is relevant to all of life."⁹

This relevance results from the fact that Christianity is, we believe, the one worldview based on truth. "Christianity is true," says George Gilder, "and its truth will be discovered anywhere you look very far."¹⁰ Gilder, who is not only an outstanding economic philosopher but also a sociologist, found Christ while seeking sociological truth.

⁹ Carl F.H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 113.

¹⁰ L. Neff, "Christianity Today Talks to George Gilder," *Christianity Today* (March 6, 1987): 35.

The Christian belief system, which the Christian knows to be grounded in divine revelation, is relevant to all of life.

— CARL F. H. HENRY

Philosopher C.E.M. Joad found Christ because he was seeking ethical truth. “I now believe,” he wrote, “that the balance of reasoned considerations tells heavily in favor of the religious, even of the Christian view of the world.”¹¹ Joad recognized the need for absolute truth, rather than a truth that evolves with each new discovery: “A religion which is in constant process of revision to square with science’s ever-changing picture of the world might well be easier to believe, but it is hard to believe it would be worth believing.”¹²

Christianity is the embodiment of Christ’s claim that he is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). When we say “this is the Christian way,” we mean “this is the way Christ would have us act in such a situation.” It is no small matter to think and act as Christ instructs. The Christian agrees with Humanist Bertrand Russell’s admission that “[w]hat the world needs is Christian love or compassion.”¹³ Such love and compassion are a direct result of following in the footsteps of Christ Himself who is the epitome of love and compassion. No one else has been willing to die for the sins of the world and return from the dead to place a period at the end of the event.

America is often described as a Christian nation. Over one hundred and fifty years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, “There is no country in the whole world, in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America; and there can be no greater proof of its utility, and of its conformity to human nature, than that its influence is most powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation of the earth.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, however, America—and the rest of Western Civilization—are turning away from their heritage. Western nations are eradicating large chunks of Christianity from the public square.

We contend that America should be moving in the opposite direction—embracing the Christian worldview rather than running from it. Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer blames America’s drift toward secularism and injustice on the Christian community’s failure to apply its worldview to every facet of society: “The basic problem of the Christians in this country . . . in regard to society and in regard to government, is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals.”¹⁵

Schaeffer goes on to say that Christians have very gradually “become disturbed over permissiveness, pornography, the public schools, the breakdown of the family, and finally abortion. But they have not seen this as a totality—each thing being a part, a symptom of a much larger problem. They have failed to see that all of this has come about due to a shift in the world view—that is, through a fundamental change in the overall way people think and view the world and life as a whole.”¹⁶

This study is intended to provide a wake-up call for America in particular, but for members of Western Civilization as well. A

The basic problem of the Christians in this country...in regard to society and in regard to government, is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals.

— FRANCIS SCHAEFFER

¹¹ C.E.M. Joad, *The Recovery of Belief* (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1955), 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 240.

¹³ Bertrand Russell, *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (New York, NY: Mentor, 1962), viii.

¹⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, n.d.), 1:294. Elsewhere he declared, “The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds, that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other” (p. 297).

¹⁵ Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

country seeking to promote human rights (including the right to be born) and human liberty must adhere to the only worldview that can account for their existence and their dignity—Christianity. We contend that human rights come from the fact that human beings are created in the very image of God, an uniquely Biblical perspective. Unfortunately, countless Americans are embracing other worldviews—most notably Secular Humanism, Marxism, Cosmic Humanism, Postmodernism, and even Islam.

0.2.6 WHY STUDY THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW?

While most Christians place the beginnings of Christianity at the Cross or Resurrection of Jesus Christ sometime between 29 and 33 A.D., Islam claims its origins on September 24, 622 A.D.

On this date 70 muhajirun including Zaid, Ali, and Abu-Bakr pledged their loyalty to Muhammad, and Medina became the city of the Prophet. Muhammad, born ca. 570 A.D., was an Arabian trader from Mecca whose flight to Medina marked the beginnings of his special revelations from Allah. In fact, the first revelation was permission to fight the Meccans! Muhammad's submission to God's revelations gave Islam its name, meaning "submission." Those who submit to Allah and Muhammad are called Muslims. Hence, the cry of the Muslims is "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is His Prophet." Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last of God's prophets, superseding even Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ Himself.

"Islam," says Serge Trifkovic, "is not a 'mere' religion; it is a complete way of life, an all-embracing social, political and legal system that breeds a worldview peculiar to itself."¹⁷

Norman L. Geisler posits five basic Muslim articles of faith that make up its worldview and five more basic pillars of Islamic practice. The five articles of faith entail (a) There is only one God (monotheism); (b) Muhammad is God's latest prophet following Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Christ; (c) God created angels both good and bad; (d) The Qur'an is God's full and final revelation; and (e) A final day of judgment is coming with either heaven or hell the final resting place. The five pillars of Islamic practice include (a) All that is necessary to become a Muslim is to repeat "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet;" (b) One must pray the salat usually five times a day; (c) One must fast during the month of Ramadan; (d) One gives 1/40th of one's income to the needy; and (e) Every able Muslim makes a trip to Mecca during pilgrimage.¹⁸

**Islam is not a "mere" religion;
it is a complete way of life, an
all-embracing social, political
and legal system that breeds a
worldview peculiar to itself.**

— SERGE TRIFKOVIC

While Christianity and Islam have some teachings in common (including creation of the material universe, angels, immortality of the soul, heaven, hell, judgment of sin, etc.), the major difference is Islam's rejection of the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world. Muslims likewise reject Christ's physical resurrection from the dead and his claim to be the Son of God, although they do accept Christ as a prophet, his virgin birth, his physical ascension, second coming, his sinlessness, miracles, and even messiahship.¹⁹

One major difference between the founder of Christianity and the founder of Islam is the fact that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life and Muhammad had many flaws. "Muhammad's practice and constant encouragement of bloodshed are unique in the history of religions.

¹⁷ Serge Trifkovic, *The Sword of the Prophet* (Boston, MA: Regina Orthodox, 2002), 55.

¹⁸ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999), 368–9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 369.

Murder, pillage, rape, and more murder as depicted in the Koran and in the Traditions “seem to have impressed his followers with a profound belief in the value of bloodshed as opening the gates of Paradise.”²⁰ This translates into how the average Muslim views the world as “an open-ended conflict between the Land of Peace (Dar al-Islam) and the Land of War (Dar al-Harb).”²¹

Islam has not had a positive attitude toward Christians and Jews. In fact, all non-Muslims have been under the gun for centuries. The history of Islam from 622 A.D. to the present has been a history of violence and war toward infidels.

In more recent years, the Islamic worldview has been growing exponentially in power and influence, and, therefore, it is worthy of our study. Muslims’ belief that “tomorrow belongs to Islam” provides an additional incentive to understand its beliefs and goals.

0.2.7 WHY STUDY THE SECULAR HUMANIST WORLDVIEW?

In this study the term Secular Humanism refers primarily to the ideas and beliefs outlined in the *Humanist Manifestoes* of 1933, 1973, and 2000. It will quickly become apparent that humanists have plenty to say in all ten disciplines of a worldview. Secular Humanism is the dominant worldview in our secular colleges and universities. It has also made gains in many Christian colleges and universities (especially in the areas of biology, sociology, politics, and history). Christians considering a college education must be well versed in the Secular Humanistic worldview or risk losing their own Christian perspective by default. In her book *Walking Away From the Faith*, Ruth Tucker, professor at Calvin Seminary, makes it very clear that Christian students *are* walking away from their faith because of Secular Humanist teaching.

Secular Humanists recognize the classroom as a powerful context for indoctrination. Since they understand that many worldviews exist and are competing for adherents, they believe they must use the classroom to flush out “unenlightened” worldviews and to encourage students to embrace their worldview. Secular Humanism, operating under the educational buzz word “liberalism,” controls the curriculum in America’s public schools thanks to the National Education Association, the National Academy of Sciences, and a host of foundations including the Ford Foundation. Christianity has been deliberately, some would say brilliantly, erased from America’s educational system. The same has been the case in all Western nations for a number of years.

Regarding American, the direction of education can be seen as a descent from Jonathan Edwards (1750) and the Christian influence, through Horace Mann (1842) and the Unitarian influence, to John Dewey (1933) and the Secular Humanist influence.

Notes William F. Buckley, “The most influential educators of our time—John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, George Counts, Harold Rugg, and the lot—are out to build a New Social Order. There is not enough room, however, for the New Social Order and religion [Christianity]. It clearly won’t do, then, to foster within some schools a respect for an absolute, intractable, unbribeable God, a divine intelligence who is utterly unconcerned with other people’s versions of truth and humorless inattentive to majority opinion. It won’t do to tolerate a competitor for the allegiance of man. The State prefers a secure monopoly for itself. It is intolerably divisive to have God and the State scrapping for disciples. Religion [Christianity], then, must go....The fight is being won. Academic freedom is entrenched. Religion [Christianity] is outlawed in the public schools. The New Social Order is larruping along.”²²

²⁰ Trifkovic, 51.

²¹ Ibid.

²² William F. Buckley, *Let Us Talk Of Many Things* (Roseville, CA: Forum, 2000), 9–10.

But we contend that Christians theologians and scholars such as Jonathan Edwards or Timothy Dwight have better things to say than John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, George Counts and Harold Rugg, and that Christians should get back into the public square and influence educational policy. The Christian worldview is a fitting competitor to Dewey's religious view (as summarized in his book, *A Common Faith*). But since most Christian teenagers accept their older, "wiser" professors' teachings uncritically and may therefore find themselves subject to Secular Humanistic viewpoints, this study becomes necessary to equalize the battle for the mind.

Hosea's statement, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6), applies in spades to college-bound Christian students. Many never recover from their educational befuddlement, lapsing instead into atheism, materialism, "new" morality, evolutionism, globalism, and other non-Biblical views. Others suffer for years from their near loss of faith. Those who are prepared, however, can not only survive, but thrive as capable ambassadors for Christ.

America's colleges and universities are not the only areas of Secular Humanist influence, however. The mass media continually publish and broadcast the Secular Humanist worldview. The 1990 Humanist of the Year was Ted Turner, former chief executive officer of Turner Broadcasting System, which now owns TBS Super Station, CNN, CNN Headline News, and Turner Network Television (TNT). In 1985, Turner founded the Better World Society; presently he is willing to present \$500,000 to anyone able to invent a new worldview suitable for the new, peaceful earth. According to Turner, Christianity is a "religion for losers," and Christ should not have bothered dying on the cross. "I don't want anybody to die for me," said Turner. "I've had a few drinks and a few girlfriends, and if that's gonna put me in hell, then so be it."²³

Christianity is a "religion for losers," and Christ should not have bothered dying on the cross. I don't want anybody to die for me, I've had a few drinks and a few girlfriends, and if that's gonna put me in hell, then so be it.

— TED TURNER

Turner also maintains that the Ten Commandments are "out of date." He wants to replace them with his Ten Voluntary Initiatives, which include the following statements: "I promise to have love and respect for the planet earth and living things thereon, especially my fellow species—humankind. I promise to treat all persons everywhere with dignity, respect, and friendliness. I promise to have no more than two children, or no more than my nation suggests. I reject the use of force, in particular military force, and back United Nations arbitration of international disputes. I support the United Nations and its efforts to collectively improve the conditions of the planet."²⁴

Still another reason for examining the Secular Humanist worldview is that many Humanists have gained positions of influence in our society. B.F. Skinner, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Erich Fromm, all former Humanists of the Year, have powerfully affected psychology. Scientist Carl Sagan, another Humanist of the Year, preached his Humanism on a widely heralded television series. Norman Lear has produced and otherwise influenced a number of shows on television. Ethical decisions are made for us by Humanist of the Year Faye Wattleton, former director of Planned Parenthood. Humanist science fiction writer Isaac Asimov wrote tirelessly for his causes. Clearly, Humanists are willing to support their worldview—often more faithfully than Christians.

²³ Cal Thomas, "Turner's Takeover Tender," *The Washington Times* (November 6, 1989): F2.

²⁴ Julie Lanham, "The Greening of Ted Turner," *The Humanist* (Nov./Dec. 1989): 6.

For these and other reasons, we will give the Secular Humanist worldview close attention.

0.2.8 WHY STUDY THE MARXIST-LENINIST WORLDVIEW?

Marxism-Leninism is an atheistic, materialistic worldview. It has developed a perspective regarding each of the ten disciplines—usually in great detail. Often, Marxism produces a “champion” of its perspective in the various fields—for example, I. P. Pavlov in psychology or T. D. Lysenko in biology. In addition, Marxism-Leninism is responsible for the death of over 100 million people during the twentieth century alone.²⁵ But the main reason Christians need to understand Marxism is that it has been one of Christianity’s most vocal detractors. All these things make mainstream Marxism worthy of study.

Based on the writings of Karl Marx in the late 1800s, Marxism has flourished and developed into several different strands, including Leninism (from the influence of Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia), Maoism (based on the writings of the Chinese revolutionary, Mao Tse-tung), and Trotskyism (after the Russian Marxist, Leon Trotsky), as well as other offshoots. While Marxism has taken on some new looks in recent years—including debasing culture as a form of revolutionary activity²⁶—its presence continues to be felt around the world. The latest Communist Manifesto, titled *Empire*, was published in 2000 by Harvard University Press in spite of the fact that one of its authors is in an Italian prison. The other author teaches Marxism at Duke University.

This becomes all the more sinister when we realize that some Christian groups have attempted to combine their Christianity with Marxism. Evangelical voices, often referred to as the “Christian Left,” are known to support some aspects of Marxism, and one of its influential proponents has compared Karl Marx to the prophet Amos. Another voice of the “Christian Left” actually cheered on the Communist forces of North Vietnam during the Vietnam War. One can find both men lecturing widely on Christian college campuses.

The World Council of Churches saw no inconsistency in holding its meetings behind the Iron Curtain before it disintegrated. The editors of *National Review* note that “substantial parts of various American churches . . . have been active on the side of communist insurrection. The Maryknoll priests, the liberation theologians, Episcopal and Methodist groups and Jesuits have placed themselves in direct alliance with totalitarianism . . . With an enormous Christian rebirth taking place in Eastern Europe, it is ironic that so much of the American church is decadent.”²⁷

The liberal churches’ position regarding Marxism does not, of course, take into account the profound incompatibility of their faith with the Marxist worldview. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, before the fall of the Iron Curtain, described this incompatibility in concrete terms: “The Soviet Union [under Marxist rule] is a land where churches have been leveled, where triumphant atheism has rampaged uncontrolled for two-thirds of a century, where the clergy is utterly humiliated and deprived of all independence, where what remains of the Russian Orthodox Church as an institution is tolerated only for the sake of propaganda directed at the West, where even today, people are sent to labor camps for their faith, and

²⁵ Stephane Courtois, ed., *The Black Book Of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); R.J. Rummel, *Death By Government* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1994).

²⁶ Paul Edward Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism: The European Left in the New Millennium* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005); David Horowitz, *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2004); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance* (Cambridge, NY: MIT, 1998); Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (third printing; New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003).

²⁷ “No One Here But Us Church Mice,” *National Review* (December 31, 1989): 15.

where, within the camps themselves, those who gather to pray at Easter are clapped into punishment cells.”²⁸

This text delineates the insurmountable differences between Marxism and Christianity. By addressing both worldviews, this study highlights their incompatibility.

0.2.9 MARXISM STILL A THREAT?

Some may point out that the downfall of communist countries all around the world proves that the Marxist-Leninist worldview is a failure, completely incompatible with reality. Why, in light of these historical events, should we still study the Marxist-Leninist perspective? Is Marxist ideology not dead?

Two words should suffice: **Tiananmen Square**. Marxism-Leninism hates resistance and will crush believers in rival worldviews any way possible, even with tanks. While Marxism has crumbled in many countries, it still embraces others in its death grip. Marxism is the dominant worldview in some African and Latin American countries.

And, incredibly, Marxism predominates on many American university campuses. In an article entitled “Marxism in U.S. Classrooms,”²⁹ *U.S. News and*

TIANANMEN SQUARE refers to the June 4, 1989 event where the Chinese government sent heavily armed troops into Tiananmen Square located in Beijing, China, and massacred 11,000 students and adults—the protesters were killed for insisting that the Communist government grant its citizens basic human freedoms

World Report reported that there are ten thousand Marxist professors on America’s campuses. Georgie Anne Geyer says that “the percentage of Marxist faculty numbers can range from an estimated 90 percent in some Midwestern universities.”³⁰ Arnold Beichman says that “Marxist academics are today’s power elite in the universities.”³¹ As noted in Part I, *U.S. News and World Report’s* Special Collector’s Edition contained an article entitled “Where Marxism Lives Today,” which confirms that Marxism in the United States is doing very well indeed.³²

“The strides made by Marxism at American universities in the last two decades are breathtaking,” says New York University’s Herbert London, writing in 1987. “Every discipline has been affected by its preachment, and almost every faculty now counts among its members a resident Marxist scholar.”³³ Duke University Slavic Languages professor

The strides made by Marxism at American universities in the last two decades are breathtaking. Every discipline has been affected by its preachment, and almost every faculty now counts among its members a resident Marxist scholar.

— HERBERT LONDON

Magnus Krynski describes the increasing Marxist presence on his campus—a presence actively encouraged by the university administration, which, he says, is “faddishly” luring Marxist literary critics to Duke with large salaries. In March 1987, Duke University hosted the Southeast Marxist Scholars Conference. Dr. Malcolm Gillis, former vice provost of Duke

²⁸ Reed Irvine, “Soviet Religious Propaganda,” *The Washington Times* (April 3, 1984): 9A.

²⁹ David B. Richardson, “Marxism in U.S. Classrooms,” *U.S. News and World Report* (January 25, 1982): 42–5.

³⁰ Georgie Anne Geyer, “Marxism Thrives on Campus,” *The Denver Post* (August 29, 1989): B7.

³¹ Ibid.

³² *U.S. News and World Report* (September 2, 2003): 86–87.

³³ Herbert London, “Marxism Thriving on American Campuses,” *The World and I* (January 1987): 189.

University, thanked some one hundred Marxist professors, graduate students, and activists for gathering at Duke, saying, “When I left this campus twenty years ago, there were very few Marxists here. When I returned in 1984, I saw Marxists in many parts of the social science faculty.”³⁴ The conference was sponsored by the Marxist Educational Press (based at the University of Minnesota) and Duke’s own Program on Perspectives in Marxism and Society.

The Marxist or “Politically Correct” influence has reached its most alarming heights in American universities’ humanities departments. “With a few notable exceptions,” says former Yale professor Roger Kimball, “our most prestigious liberal arts colleges and universities have installed the entire radical menu at the center of their humanities curriculum at both the undergraduate and the graduate level.”³⁵

William S. Lind is not bashful in identifying the Marxist influence in the United States. Says Lind, “In the United States of America our traditional Western, Judeo-Christian culture is collapsing. It is not collapsing because it failed. On the contrary, it has given us the freest and most prosperous society in human history. Rather, it is collapsing because we are abandoning it.”³⁶

Lind explains how this planned attack hit American shores: “Starting in the mid-1960s, we have thrown away the values, morals, and standards that define traditional Western culture. In part, this has been driven by cultural radicals, people who hate our Judeo-Christian culture. Dominant in the elite, especially in the universities, the media, and the entertainment industry (now the most powerful force in our culture and a source of endless degradation), the cultural radicals have successfully pushed an agenda of moral relativism, militant secularism, and sexual and social ‘liberation.’ This agenda has slowly codified into a new ideology, usually known as ‘multiculturalism’ or ‘political correctness,’ that is in essence Marxism translated from economic into social and cultural terms.”³⁷

0.2.10 GRAMSCI AND LUKACS

In a radio talk on December 13, 1998, Lind traced the Marxist influence of Antonio Gramsci (Italy) and George Lukacs (Hungary) and their planned assault on Western culture. They reasoned that the proletariat (the property-less class) of the world would never rise up in a world revolution while steeped in Christian culture, including Christian marriage and sexual values. Their goal: destroy Christian culture to advance the Marxist cause. Lukacs was responsible for establishing a Marxist think tank called the Institute for Social Research, but more popularly known as The Frankfurt School. This Marxist think tank has had great influence throughout Europe and the United States with its goal to subvert traditional Western culture.

Gramsci referred to his assault on Western culture as “a long march through the institutions,” meaning subverting schools, churches, media, entertainment, and then taking political power to establish a global, socialist paradise.

Such well-known personalities as Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse were involved in remaking traditional Christian sexual morality into the permissive society. Marcuse, a philosophy professor at the University of California (San Diego), is largely responsible for what today is labeled “political correctness.” The idea behind political

³⁴ *Accuracy in Academia Campus Report* (April 1987): 1.

³⁵ Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1990), xiii. Christian young people should read Kimball’s book, then Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1987), and finally Ronald Nash’s *The Closing of the American Heart: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1990) to grasp what Christian students face in America’s colleges and universities.

³⁶ *The Marine Corps Gazette* (December 1994): 37.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

The New Age is the ultimate eclectic religion of self: Whatever you decide is right for you is what's right, as long as you don't get narrow-minded and exclusive about it.

— JOHANNA MICHAELSEN

correctness is the notion of oppression. Women, blacks, Hispanics, and homosexuals are viewed as oppressed minorities due to the influence of Christianity and capitalism, bringing about the need for a revolution to overthrow their white, male, heterosexual, Euro-centric oppressors.³⁸

One voice in the wilderness seeking to expose the Marxist influence in America, but especially on her campuses, is David Horowitz. His book *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American*

Left is not only a “good read,” as former CBS newsman Bernard Goldberg says, but “it’s a must read.” Horowitz spends nearly 300 pages exposing and explaining the Marxist agenda for America. He notes that the popular historian Howard Zinn, author of *A People’s History of the United States* “is a raggedly conceived Marxist caricature that begins with Columbus and ends with George Bush.”³⁹ “Zinn’s book,” says Horowitz, “has been embedded by leftist academics in the collegiate and secondary schools’ curricula.”⁴⁰

The Marxist worldview is alive and well in the American classroom. As worldview expert on Marxism-Leninism Dr. Fred Schwarz says, “The colleges and universities are the nurseries of communism.”⁴¹ Christian students must be aware not only of their prevalence, but also of the subversive goals of Marxist-thinking professors.

0.2.11 WHY STUDY THE COSMIC HUMANIST WORLDVIEW?

Commonly referred to as the New Age movement, this worldview is more accurately described by its real name, Cosmic Humanism. Because it professes a marked disdain for dogma, this worldview is more vaguely defined than the others, except perhaps Postmodernism. Indeed, some members of the New Age movement go so far as to claim that their worldview “has no religious doctrine or teachings of its own.”⁴²

This attitude results from the New Age belief that truth resides within each individual and, therefore, no one can claim a corner on the truth or dictate truth to another. “The New Age,” explains Christian writer Johanna Michaelsen, “is the ultimate eclectic religion of self: Whatever you decide is right for you is what’s right, as long as you don’t get narrow-minded and exclusive about it.”⁴³

The assumption that truth resides within each individual, however, becomes the cornerstone for a worldview. Granting oneself the power to discern all truth is a facet of theology, and this theology has ramifications that many members of the New Age movement have already discovered. Some have grudgingly begun to consider their movement a worldview. Marilyn Ferguson, author of *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (a book referred to as “The New Age watershed classic”), says the movement ushers in a “new mind—the ascendance of a startling worldview.”⁴⁴

This worldview is summed up in its skeletal form, agreeable to virtually every Cosmic Humanist, by Jonathan Adolph: “In its broadest sense, New Age thinking can be

³⁸ Alvin Schmidt, *The Menace of Multiculturalism: The Trojan Horse in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

³⁹ David Horowitz, *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2004), 102.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Newsletter of the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, P.O. Box 129, Manitou Springs, CO 80829, February 1, 1988.

⁴² Jonathan Adolph, “What is New Age?” *New Age Journal* (Winter 1988): 11.

⁴³ Johanna Michaelsen, *Like Lambs to the Slaughter* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1989), 11.

⁴⁴ Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles, CA: J.P. Tarcher, 1980), 23.

characterized as a form of utopianism, the desire to create a better society, a ‘New Age’ in which humanity lives in harmony with itself, nature, and the cosmos.”⁴⁵

While the New Age movement still appears fragmented and without strong leadership, it has grown at a remarkable rate. The Stanford Research Institute estimates that “the number of New Agers in America could be as high as 5 to 10 percent of the population—12 million or more people.”⁴⁶ Others have put the figure as high as 60 million, although this includes people who merely believe in reincarnation and astrology. John Randolph Price, a world leader of the New Age movement, says, “There are more than half a billion New Age advocates on the planet at this time, working among various religious groups.”⁴⁷

Further, people adhering to the Cosmic Humanist worldview are gaining converts in the West and around the world. Malachi Martin lists dozens of organizations that are either New Age or New Age sympathetic. Barbara Marx Hubbard, a spokeswoman for the New Age, made a bid for the 1984 Democratic vice presidential nomination. Clearly, Cosmic Humanism, a transplant from the East, is becoming a presence throughout the Western hemisphere.

0.2.12 WHY STUDY THE POSTMODERN WORLDVIEW?

The sixth and final worldview in our study is Postmodernism, or better, *Postmodernisms*. The Book of Judges concludes with a description of the moral compass of the Israelites of that day—everyone did what was right in his (or her) own eyes (Judges 21:25). So it is with Postmodern adherents—each one holds his or her own definition of the term.

Much of this study concentrates on the thinking of what we consider mainstream Postmodernists—Lyotard, Baudrillard, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Macherey, Mandelbrot, Barthes, DeBord, Deleuze, Guattari, and Rorty. We will study these philosophers and literary critics in more detail in the coming chapters. Although there is scant consensus among these individuals, their writings provide a sampling of the Postmodern worldview.

Forced to face the inhumanity, destruction, and horror brought about by the Third Reich and the Soviet Gulag, a substantial group of Enlightenment humanists and neo-Marxists abandoned their worldview to create one they believed more fitting with reality, resulting in the Postmodern turn. Though Postmodernism comes in many forms, there are three unifying values: (1) a commitment to relativism; (2) an opposition to rationalism; and (3) the promotion of culturally created realities, all of which are designed to deny any true worldview or belief system for which we would be willing to kill or to die.

Postmodernism’s most effective methodological tool is known as Deconstructionism, which means (1) that

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

A short list of movies that exhibit generally Cosmic Humanist subtexts or major themes include the *Star Wars* series, *Poltergeist*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *The Dark Crystal*, *Solarbabies*, *Mulan*, *The Exorcist*, *What Dreams May Come*, and *Sixth Sense*. Cosmic Humanist education with a more neo-pagan flair, specifically animism and ancestor worship, are on display in notable children’s films such as *Pocahontas*, where the main character sings “I know every rock and tree and creature has a life, has a spirit, has a name,” and *The Lion King*, particularly in its theme song, “The Circle of Life.”

⁴⁵ Adolph, 11.

⁴⁶ Ray A. Yungen, *For Many Shall Come in My Name* (Salem, OR: Ray Yungen, 1989), 34.

⁴⁷ John Randolph Prince, *The Superbeings* (Austin, TX: Quartus, 1981), 51.

words do not represent reality, and (2) that concepts expressed in sentences in any language are arbitrary. Some Postmodernists go so far as to deconstruct humanity itself. Thus, along with the death of God, truth, and reason, humanity is also obliterated. Paul Kugler notes the ironic twist: “Today, it is the speaking subject who declared God dead one hundred years ago whose very existence is now being called into question.”⁴⁸

Earlier we defined a worldview as any set of ideas or beliefs, that provides a framework for understanding the world, including a particular perspective on ten disciplines— theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. When we ask whether Postmodernism is a worldview under this definition, we find that the primary writings of the core Postmodernists are atheistic, showing us that Postmodernism does, indeed, contain a perspective on theology. A closer look reveals that while Postmodernists in general insist that all truth is socially constructed by local communities, they insist that their atheistic theology is true for all communities around the world!

This study will show that Postmodernists have a perspective, more or less, on all ten disciplines. Their perspective on ethics is relativistic. Their perspective on biology sees humans as merely clever animals. As Richard Rorty puts it, humans are able to “take charge of [their] own evolution, take ourselves in directions which have neither precedent nor justification in either biology or history.”⁴⁹ Many adhere to the theory of punctuated evolution.

Myron B. Penner says, “Postmodernism is a *Zeitgeist*”⁵⁰, or a worldview; it is a total cognitive interpretation and affects one’s general outlook. In some respects Postmodernism is more descriptive of a personal and social reality than a philosophy—although it quite obviously entails certain philosophical theses.”⁵¹

Kevin J. Vanhoozer seconds Penner’s view that Postmodernism is a worldview when he says, “Postmodernity is more of a condition than a distinct position, a mood rather than a metaphysics; it nonetheless communicates something about human being-in-the-world. It is a world and life view, not in the sense that it yields a system of propositions, but in the sense that it creates an ethos. Postmodernity may be more than a philosophy, but it is not less; it is a world and life view that is in a relation of codependency with modernity.”⁵²

0.2.13 HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF POSTMODERNISM

Historically speaking, we would expect Postmodernism to be something that came after the modern era (modernity). However, many Postmodernists find their roots in thinkers such as Nietzsche and Marx who were associated with modernity. J.P. Moreland notes that Postmodernism refers to a philosophical approach primarily in the area of epistemology, or what counts as knowledge or truth. Broadly speaking, Moreland says “Postmodernism represents a form of cultural relativism about such things as truth, reality, reason, values, linguistic meaning, the ‘self’ and other notions.”⁵³

Perhaps the most descriptive delineation of Postmodernism is this: “Truth is a short-term contract here. You cannot speak in the name of universal human principles and expect them to form a fixed standard by which to judge other people’s perspectives. You can no longer look to ideas like morality, justice, enlightenment or human nature and expect them to form a

⁴⁸ Walter Truett Anderson, *The Future of the Self: Exploring the Post-Identity Society* (New York, NY: Tarcher/Putnam, 1997), 32.

⁴⁹ Robert B. Brandom, ed., *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 3.

⁵⁰ *Weltanschauung* would have been the correct German word.

⁵¹ Myron B. Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 17.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵³ See J.P. Moreland’s website for his article “Postmodernism and the Christian Life.” Also, J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *The Philosophical Foundation of a Christian Worldview*.

globally agreed basis for your own point of view. It is impossible to draw up a complete map [worldview] of the world in such a way that everybody would be able to recognize it as representing their own knowledge and experience. Postmodernists argue that it is no longer possible to write a ‘theory of everything’; you can only take the pragmatic and relativist line that some truths are more useful than others in specific circumstances.”⁵⁴

Such is the essence of mainstream Postmodernism—a worldview that claims there are no worldviews. We like to think of it as an “anti-worldview” worldview, one that certainly merits our attention. To complicate matters even further, we must acknowledge that there even exists a variety of Postmodernism called “Christian Postmodernism.”⁵⁵ This, too, we will examine.

0.2.14 CONCLUSION

As you go through this study, you will see that Marxism, Postmodernism, and Secular Humanism have a number of similarities. You will, however, also learn how they differ. Secular Humanism is the mother (Humanists trace their heritage to the Greeks 400 years before Christ), while Marxism and Postmodernism are the daughters of Humanism.

From a comprehensive point of view, the differences between Secular Humanism and Marxism are real, but minor. Both Karl Marx and Humanist Paul Kurtz recognize the truth of these assertions. Marx puts it like this: “Communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism.”⁵⁶ And Kurtz says Marx “is a humanist because he rejects theistic religion and defends atheism.”⁵⁷

Furthermore, Cosmic Humanism and Secular Humanism are closely related. The New Age movement is little more than spiritualized Secular Humanism. Cosmic Humanism claims to meet our spiritual needs—something Marxism and Secular Humanism cannot claim—but it is stuck with a vague, impersonal, pantheistic god. Practically speaking, there is little difference between claiming no god exists and claiming everything is god.

We cannot overstate the significance of the similarities between these anti-Christian views. Public schools in America are immersed in many of the same ideas that caused Marxism to crumble in Eastern Europe and today cause suffering to the men and women in India because of their society’s acceptance of a version of Cosmic Humanism. The basis for much of what is taught in the public classroom today comes from secular and Postmodern thinking, taking on a variety of labels: liberalism, multiculturalism, political correctness, deconstructionism, or self-esteem education. Or, in its more sinister form, the labels are dropped and courses are taught from Secular/Marxist/Postmodern/Cosmic assumptions without the students being told the worldview that is being expressed.

Young people will flourish in the light of truth only when the emphasis shifts to a Christian perspective. This dramatic shift in emphasis *can* be brought about through the leadership of thousands of informed, confident Christian students who will become the future leaders in education, business, science, and government.

Our desire to bring about this shift in emphasis to a Christian perspective in education is, then, our fundamental reason for preparing *Understanding the Times*. Too many Christian

Too many Christian young people are ill prepared to take the lead in proclaiming and defending the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout society.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 175.

⁵⁵ See D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996); Myron B. Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005); and D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

⁵⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, 40 vols. (New York, NY: International, 1976), 3:296.

⁵⁷ Paul Kurtz, *The Fullness of Life* (New York, NY: Horizon, 1974), 36.

young people are ill prepared to take the lead in proclaiming and defending the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout society. The vast majority have no concept of the components of their worldview and will stand intellectually naked before their liberal or left-wing professors. Carl F.H. Henry says that evangelical students know more about God than their secular counterparts, but “with some few gratifying exceptions, neither home nor church has shaped a comprehensive and consistent faith that stands noon-bright amid the dim shadows of spiritual rebellion and moral profligacy.”⁵⁸

Christ’s teachings impart just such a noon-bright faith to all Christians who master their worldview, who truly *understand the times*. The foundational Bible verse for this book is 1 Chronicles 12:32, which announces that just 200 individuals who understood the times provided the leadership for an entire nation because they knew “what Israel ought to do.”

The first chapter of the Book of Daniel explains how Daniel and his friends prepared themselves to survive and flourish amid the clash of worldviews of their day. We believe that Christian young people equipped with a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the Christian worldview and its rivals can become “Daniels” who will not stand on the sidelines, but will participate in the great collision of worldviews in the twenty-first century.

⁵⁸ Carl F.H. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 94.

Introduction

Part Three

“There are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world.”¹

— DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

0.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Many believe that when Christians confront or challenge other worldviews and attempt to speak to such “worldly” disciplines as politics, economics, biology, and law, they are overstepping their bounds. Jesus taught His followers, “You are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world” (John 15:19).

How, then, can Christians justify their claim to a worldview that speaks to every facet of life? Should Christians stick to spiritual matters and allow non-Christians to concentrate on the practical matters of running the world? In short, isn’t there a vast chasm between the secular and the sacred? Not according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who says that we should not distinguish between the two: “There are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world.”²

¹ Carl F.H. Henry, ed., *Baker’s Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), 67.

² Ibid.

0.3.2 CREATIVE AND REDEMPTIVE ORDER

From the Biblical Christian perspective, the ten disciplines addressed in this text reflect various aspects of God and His creative and redemptive orders. God created humankind with theological, philosophical, ethical, biological (and so on) dimensions. We live and move and have our being (our very essence and existence) within and about these categories. Why? Because that is the way God created us.

The Christian views these ten categories as sacred, not secular. They are sacred because they are imprinted in the creative order. For example, consider these texts from Genesis in light of the ten disciplines:

Theology and Philosophy: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (1:1)
 Ethics: “knowledge of good and evil” (2:9)
 Biology: “according to its kind” (1:21)
 Psychology: “a living being” (2:7)
 Sociology (and Ecology): “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth” (1:28)
 Law: “I commanded you” (3:11)
 Politics (and Law again): “whoever sheds man’s blood” (9:6)
 Economics: “it shall be for food” (1:29)
 History: “enmity between you and the woman” (3:15)

All ten disciplines are addressed in just the first few chapters of the Bible because they manifest and accent certain aspects of the creative order.

Further, God manifests Himself in the person of Jesus Christ in such a way as to underline the significance of each discipline. Consider how the following references describe Him:

Theology: “the fullness of the Godhead” (Colossians 2:9)
 Philosophy: the Logos of God (John 1:1)
 Ethics: “the true Light” (John 1:9, 3:19–20)
 Biology: “the life” (John 1:4, 11:25; Colossians 1:16)
 Psychology: “Savior” (Luke 1:46–47; Titus 2:13)
 Sociology: “Son” (Luke 1:30–31; Isaiah 9:6)
 Law: “lawgiver” (Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 9:7)
 Politics: “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16; 1 Timothy 6:15; Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:33)
 Economics: Owner of all things (Psalm 24:1; 50:10–12; 1 Corinthians 10:26)
 History: “the Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 1:8)

The integration of these various categories into society has come to be known as Western Civilization and previous to that Christendom or the Holy Roman Empire.³

The Bible and the life of Jesus Christ provide the Christian with the basis for a total life worldview. Indeed, Christians gain a perspective so comprehensive that they are commanded to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

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³ Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

0.3.3 CONFRONTING DECEPTIVE PHILOSOPHIES

Once we have captured each idea and made them obedient to Christ, we are to use these thoughts to “demolish arguments and every pretension [scientific naturalism, ethical relativism, biological evolution, etc.] that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Corinthians 10:4–5). When nations and men forget God⁴ they experience what mankind experienced in the twentieth century. Nazism and communism, two major movements bereft of the knowledge of God, cost the human race tens of millions of lives. Whittaker Chambers says that communism’s problem is not a problem of economics, but of atheism: “Faith is the central problem of this age.”⁵ Alexander Solzhenitsyn echoes him: “Men have forgotten God.”

In Colossians 2, the Apostle Paul insists that those who have “received Christ Jesus the Lord” (Colossians 2:6) are to be rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as they were taught (Colossians 2:7). While Christians work to strengthen their faith, they must see to it that no one takes them “captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Colossians 2:8, NIV).

From the Christian point of view, Islam, Secular, Cosmic, Postmodern and Marxist Humanism fall within the confines of “the basic principles of this world.” They are based on the wisdom of this world (1 Corinthians 1:19f) and not upon Christ. And Paul says that God has made the world’s wisdom foolishness. Only fools can tell themselves “there is no God.” Only fools can scan the heavens and argue for chance and accident. Only fools can scan the human body and not see intelligent design. Only the fool can experience the seasons of life and never sense the witness of God. Only fools can listen to Handel’s Messiah and actually think they are listening to evolving monkeys making music.

These were not empty ideas for Paul. He practiced what he preached. In Acts 17, Paul confronted the vain and deceitful philosophies of the atheistic Epicureans and pantheistic Stoics—the professional Humanists of his day. The Apostle countered their ideas with Christian ideas, he reasoned and preached, and he accented three truths—the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:18), the creation of the universe by God (Acts 17:24), and the judgment to come (Acts 17:31).

Can we do less? We, too, must fearlessly proclaim the good news of the gospel: God created the universe and all things in it; humankind rebelliously smashed the image of God through their sin; Jesus Christ died for our sin, was raised from the dead, and is alive forevermore (1 Corinthians 15:1–4). And we must stand fast in the context of the same worldview as Paul: creation, resurrection, and judgment.

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0.3.4 THE RELIGION OF MARXISM-LENINISM

Paul recognized that we cannot compartmentalize aspects of our life into boxes marked “sacred” and “secular.” He understood not only that Christianity was both a worldview and a religion, but also that all worldviews are religious by definition. Indeed, he went so far as to tell the Epicureans and Stoics that they were religious—they just worshiped an “unknown God” (Acts 17:22, 23).

⁴ See Psalm 2.

⁵ Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York, NY: Random House, 1952), 17.

Most people have no problem recognizing that certain non-Christian worldviews are religious. Cosmic Humanists talk about god, so they must practice a religion. But how can the “religious” label apply to atheists like Marxists or Secular Humanists? It applies because all worldviews contain a theology—that is, all begin with a religious declaration. Christianity and Islam begin with, “In the beginning God.” Marxism-Leninism, Postmodernism, and Secular Humanism begin with, “In the beginning no God.” Cosmic Humanism or New Age begins with the declaration, “Everything is God.”

The Marxist view is religious in a number of other ways as well. Marxism’s philosophy of dialectical materialism grants matter god-like attributes, as Gustav A. Wetter acknowledges in *Dialectical Materialism*:

[T]he atheism of dialectical materialism is concerned with very much more than a mere denial of God. . . . [I]n dialectical materialism . . . the higher is not, as such, denied; the world is interpreted as a process of continual ascent, which fundamentally extends into infinity. But it is supposed to be matter itself which continually attains to higher perfection under its own power, thanks to its indwelling dialectic. As Nikolai Berdyaev very rightly remarks, the dialectical materialist attribution of “dialectic” to matter confers on it, not mental attributes only, but even divine ones.⁶

We will discuss this further in the Marxist philosophy chapter. For now, it is enough to understand that Wetter perceives communism as religious in character.

Even Secular Humanists such as Bertrand Russell recognize the religiosity of Marxism: “The greatest danger in our day comes from new religions, communism and Nazism. To call these religions may perhaps be objectionable both to their friends and to their enemies, but in fact they have all the characteristics of religions. They advocate a way of life on the basis of irrational dogmas; they have a sacred history, a Messiah, and a priesthood. I do not see what more could be demanded to qualify a doctrine as a religion.”⁷

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

Based on the memoirs of World War II veteran Ernest Gordon and accounts from other POW’s, the major motion picture, *To End All Wars* (2001, starring Kiefer Sutherland) tells the story of four Allied prisoners who endure harsh treatment from their Japanese captors while being forced to build a railroad through the Burmese jungle. Ultimately, they find true freedom by forgiving their enemies. In weaving the story together, Christian screenwriter Brian Godawa clearly contrasts the worldviews of secularism, the imperial Japanese warrior code, and Biblical Christianity.*

0.3.5 THE RELIGION OF SECULAR HUMANISM

Secular Humanism is more openly religious than Marxism. Charles Francis Potter, a signatory of the first *Humanist Manifesto*, wrote a book in 1930 entitled *Humanism: A New Religion*. Potter claims to have organized a religious society—the First Humanist Society of New York.

The first Humanist Manifesto (1933) describes the agenda of “religious” Humanists. The 1980 preface to the *Humanist Manifestos I & II*, written by Paul Kurtz, says, “Humanism is a

⁶ Gustav A. Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1977), 558.

⁷ Bertrand Russell, *Understanding History* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1957), 95.

*Visit Godawa’s website to order his commentary of the film: www.godawa.com

philosophical, religious, and moral point of view.” John Dewey, a signatory of the 1933 Manifesto, wrote *A Common Faith*, in which he says, “Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class or race. . . . It remains to make it explicit and militant.”⁸

While the *Humanist Manifesto II* (written primarily by Kurtz and published in 1973) drops the expression “religious humanism,” it nevertheless contains religious implications and even religious terminology, including the statement that “no deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”⁹

Lloyd L. Morain, a past president of the American Humanist Association, wrote a book with his wife Mary entitled *Humanism as the Next Step* (1954). In this work the authors describe Humanism as the fourth religion. The Morains were co-winners of the 1994 Humanist of the Year award.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Torcaso v. Watkins* (June 19, 1961) declared, “Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others.”¹⁰ A few years later (1965) the Supreme Court allowed Daniel Seeger conscientious objector status because of his religious beliefs. He claimed to be a Secular Humanist. Building on both Supreme Court decisions, the Seventh Court of Appeals on August 19, 2005, decreed atheism to be a religion.¹¹

Auburn University’s *Student, Faculty and Staff Directory* contains a section entitled “Auburn Pastors and Campus Ministers.” Included in the listing is a Humanist Counselor, Delos McKown, who also happens to be the head of Auburn’s philosophy department. This is not an isolated example. The University of Arizona lists Humanism under religious ministries. Harvard University has a Humanist chaplain who is one of 34 full or part-time chaplains that comprise the United Ministry at Harvard and Radcliffe. He is sponsored by the American Humanist Association, the American Ethical Union, the Fellowship of Religious Humanists, and, until his death, “generous gifts from [Secular Humanist] Corliss Lamont.”

In fact, the American Humanist Association “certifies humanist counselors who enjoy the legal status of ordained priests, pastors, and rabbis.”¹² In its preamble, the Association states that one of its functions is to extend its principles and operate educationally. Toward this end it publishes books, magazines, and pamphlets; engages lecturers; selects, trains, and “accredits humanistic counselors as its ordained ministry of the movement.”¹³

0.3.6 SECULAR HUMANISM AS A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

Kurtz—who has written a book that denies that Humanism is a religion throughout its first half and, in the second half, encourages the establishment of Humanist churches, calling them Eupraxophy Centers—admits that the organized Humanist movement in America is put in a quandary over whether Humanism is a religion. Why? Simply because “the Fellowship of Religious Humanists (300 members), the American Ethical Union (3,000 members), and the Society for Humanistic Judaism (4,000 members) consider themselves to be religious.

⁸ John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1934), 87.

⁹ Paul Kurtz, ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1980), 87.

¹⁰ *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163. Also see *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970).

¹¹ In *The United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit No. 04–1914*, August 19, 2005, *Kaufman v. McCaughtry*, the Court decided that “Atheism is Kaufman’s religion, and the group that he wanted to start was religious in nature even though it expressly rejects a belief in a supreme being” (8).

¹² See *American Education on Trial: Is Secular Humanism a Religion?* (Cumberland, VA: Center for Judicial Studies, 1987), 34.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Even the American Humanist Association,” says Kurtz, “has a [501(c)3] religious tax exemption.”¹⁴

Kurtz’s recent denial that Secular Humanism is a religion is not based on truth; it is a calculated political maneuver. Kurtz seeks to dodge the all-important question: If Secular Humanism is a religion, then what is it doing in the public schools? If Christianity is thrown out of secular schools under the guise of separation of church and state, why shouldn’t we banish Secular Humanism as well? Kurtz understands this, admitting that if Secular Humanism is a religion, “then we would be faced with a violation of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.”¹⁵

Christians who have seen their worldview effectively eliminated from the public schools are rightfully outraged by Humanists’ violations of the present interpretation of the First Amendment. They are angered that a mere 15 million Humanists can control the content of American public schooling while the country’s Christians provide the lion’s share of students and bear the majority of the cost through their tax dollars.

Humanists attempt to downplay their violation of the present interpretation of the First Amendment by claiming that they present a neutral viewpoint. But no educational approach is neutral, as Richard A. Baer notes: “Education never takes place in a moral and philosophical vacuum. If the larger questions about human beings and their destiny are not being asked and answered within a predominantly Judeo-Christian framework [worldview], they will be addressed with another philosophical or religious framework—but hardly one that is ‘neutral.’”¹⁶

In 1954, Archie J. Bahm organized the Southwestern Regional American Humanist Association. At that time he was professor of philosophy at the University of New Mexico. In 1964 he wrote a book published by Southern Illinois University entitled *The World’s Living Religions*. Included in the religions were Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Vedantism, Yoga, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Humanism. The first four words in his chapter on Humanism: “Humanism is a religion.”¹⁷

In 1996, Ian S. Markham edited a book entitled *A World Religions Reader*. In this work, used in many colleges and seminaries, Markham lists the following religions: Secular Humanism, Buddhism, Chinese Religions, Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism. His definition of religion: “Religion, for me, is a way of life (one which embraces a total worldview, certain ethical demands, and certain social practices) that refuses to accept the secular view that sees human life as nothing more than complex bundles of atoms in an ultimately meaningless universe.”¹⁸ Secular Humanism, in contrast to Secularism, has an ethical dimension, observes certain social practices, and embraces a total worldview.

Clearly, both Secular Humanism and Marxism are religious worldviews. Thus, in order to provide a just educational system for our young people, we must recognize that all worldviews have religious implications and that it is discriminatory to bar some worldviews and not others from the public classroom.

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¹⁴ Paul Kurtz, “Is Secular Humanism a Religion?” *Free Inquiry* (Winter 1986/87): 5.

¹⁵ Paul Kurtz, *Eupraxophy: Living Without Religion* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1989), 80.

¹⁶ Richard A. Baer, “They are Teaching Religion in Public Schools,” *Christianity Today* (February 17, 1984): 15.

¹⁷ Archie J. Bahm, *The World’s Living Religions* (Fremont, CA: Jain Publishing, 1992), 335.

¹⁸ Ian S. Markham, *A World Religions Reader* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 2000), 5.6.

0.3.7 AN EVEN-HANDED APPROACH

After many years of study, contemplation, and teaching, we believe that the Biblical Christian worldview is spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and practically far superior to all other worldviews. Christianity is something that, as C.S. Lewis said, we “could not have guessed,” but that, once revealed, is recognizable as indisputable truth. Therefore, we believe that if students are given the opportunity to study and seriously think through creation versus evolution, for example, the vast majority will choose the creationist or Christian position.

This book represents an effort to allow individuals such opportunities by comparing the ideas and beliefs of six dominant worldviews. We present these views and their approach to the ten disciplines as accurately as possible. We do not represent non-Christians as either stupid or insane, despite their tendency to describe Christians in such unflattering terms. While Humanists such as Albert Ellis call Christians “emotionally disturbed: usually neurotic but sometimes psychotic,”¹⁹ this text resists such name-calling and treats Secular Humanists, Marxists, Postmodernists, New Agers, and followers of Islam simply as individuals who have not yet recognized the inconsistent and erroneous nature of their worldviews.

No Muslim, Marxist, Humanist, or Postmodernist, upon reading this text, should feel that we deliberately misrepresent their ideas, values, beliefs, or positions. We quote the exact words of adherents to each worldview in their corresponding chapters, so that Cosmic Humanists describe the New Age position, Marxists the Marxist position, and so on. When we say Secular Humanism is atheistic, we believe students should hear what the Secular Humanists say about the issue themselves. When we contend that Marxism-Leninism relies biologically on punctuated equilibrium, students should hear that from the Marxist. Further, no quote is purposely taken out of context. In the best tradition of Christian scholarship, we allow competing non-Christian worldviews to have their say as they wish to say it.

We contend that by seeing these worldviews contrasted with each other, Christian students will have a clearer picture of both their own worldview and the alternatives and will be able to enunciate and defend their position more persuasively and intelligently. Many young people do not know what they believe; our duty as Christians is to share our faith with such a spiritually and intellectually rootless generation. The Apostle Peter says as much when he exhorts believers in Jesus Christ to “be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

0.3.8 A WORD ABOUT SOURCES

There is no lack of resources for each worldview we have chosen to analyze, and we have focused on the best of these materials. Whether we are describing the Islamic, Marxist, or Postmodern position, we quote their ideological leaders.

The most important source for Islam is the Qur’an, considered by devoted Muslims to be the most accurate and final revelation from God (Allah). Muslims also derive their worldview from the words and actions of Mohammed as recorded in the Hadith, as well as the opinions of Muslim scholars found in the Sunna. These sources, as well as the writings of current Muslim theologians, form the bulk of our assessment of the Islamic worldview.

The primary Secular Humanist publishing house is Prometheus Books, located in Buffalo, New York. Their leaders include John Dewey, Roy Wood Sellars, Corliss Lamont, Paul Kurtz, Isaac Asimov, Sidney Hook, Carl Sagan, Julian Huxley, and Erich Fromm. The list of signatories of the *Humanist Manifestos* includes scores of men and women who endorse the Secular Humanist position. Those chosen as “Humanist of the Year” also provide

¹⁹ Albert Ellis, “The Case Against Religiosity,” from a section reprinted in “Testament of a Humanist,” *Free Inquiry* (Spring 1987): 21.

a rich source of Humanistic viewpoints, as do contributing authors in *The Humanist* and *Free Inquiry* magazines. Through strict adherence to these resources, we are able to describe Secular Humanism without distortion.

Marxism-Leninism is even easier to document. None deny the major roles Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, V.I. Lenin, and Joseph Stalin played in formulating the Marxist position. International Publishers, in New York City, prints and distributes hundreds of books from the Marxist-Leninist point of view. English translations of works published in the former Soviet Union are easily accessible, thanks to various distribution centers located in the United States.

The New Age worldview fills entire bookstores in America today. Cosmic Humanist leaders include Shirley MacLaine, David Spangler, Neale Donald Walsch, Joseph Campbell, John Denver, and Robert Muller. Many feminist leaders, including Marianne Williamson and Gloria Steinem, have begun to embrace the New Age movement. Many publishers woo New Age authors; the Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group has a special New Age Books imprint.

There are a handful of individuals who stand out as the founders and advocates of Postmodernism. Among them are French philosophers Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard; French literary critics Pierre Macherey, Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida; French psychoanalyst Jaques Lacan; and American Professor of Comparative Literature, Richard Rorty. The works of these men undermined the foundations of modernism and laid the groundwork for the emergence of Postmodernism. For this reason, they are our main sources.

The Bible, of course, is the primary source for the Christian worldview. We contend that Christianity explains the facts of reality better than any other worldview because it relies upon divine inspiration, observation, reason, personal experience, history, and intuition. If the Bible is truly God's special revelation to humanity, as we believe it is, then the only completely accurate view of the world must be founded on Scripture.

Christianity explains the facts of reality better than any other worldview because it relies upon divine inspiration, observation, reason, personal experience, history, and intuition.

The divine inspiration of Scripture explains not only its miraculous coherency but also the incredible power of the figure of Christ. Atheist historian W.E.H. Lecky admits that the character of Jesus "has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists."²⁰

Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian worldview. When the Samaritan woman at the well spoke to Him about the coming Messiah, Jesus told her, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:26). His claim was fundamental truth. The truths Jesus spoke about Himself, the Father, the human condition, and the only way to eternal salvation constitute the central precepts of the Christian worldview. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Even Leonard Sweet, who considers himself "a Postmodern pilgrim," concedes the power and influence of the life and legacy of Jesus Christ: "In a world of Cheshire-cat absolutes, one absolute remains absolute. That absolute is Jesus: the Way, the Truth, and Life, and a cornucopia of 117 other scriptural names like The Bright Morning Star, The Dayspring from on High, The Sun of Righteousness, The Light of the World, The Lily of the Valley,

²⁰ W.E.H. Lecky, *History of European Morals (from Augustus to Charlemagne)*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: George Braziller, 1955), 2:8-9.

The Rose of Sharon, The Bread of Life, The Door of the Sheepfold, The Good Shepherd, The Horn of Salvation, The Lamb of God, The Lion of Judah, The Root of David . . .”²¹

0.3.9 TAKING THE BIBLE LITERALLY?

When presenting the Christian worldview, then, we take the Bible at face value. Call it “literal” interpretation if you wish, but it is difficult to see how else the writers of the Old and New Testaments meant to be taken. Figures of speech, yes; typologies, yes; analogies, yes; but overall they wrote in simple, straightforward terms. When a writer says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” we understand him to say that there is a God, there was a beginning to creation, that heaven and earth exist, and that God made them.

It does not take a Ph.D. or a high IQ to comprehend the basic message of the Bible. God’s special revelation is open to everyone. There is no room for an “intellectual elite” in Christianity; only one “high priest” need intercede between God and us: Jesus Christ. For this reason, each of us may “come boldly to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:14–16).

This text also relies on Christian men and women to describe the Christian worldview; their words, however, must always conform to the truth of Scripture. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.” (1 John 5:9). The Christian worldview stands or falls on the accuracy of the Bible.

Perhaps after reading this text, you will decide that the Bible is not right, and that another worldview most conforms to the truth. If the facts support such a conclusion, personal integrity demands that you adopt that view. We have examined the facts and wrestled with the possibilities, and we have found that intellectual integrity demands adherence to Biblical Christianity.

Most social ills, problems of every kind, and sins are ultimately matters of the mind, soul, and spirit. Materialistic and pantheistic worldviews are unable to solve these ills; instead they contribute more problems. Only the worldview based on Jesus Christ—a worldview that promotes and sustains the proper attitudes toward family, church, and state—can effectively speak to these areas. However, we cannot force our conclusion on others. All we can do is encourage you to “taste and see that the LORD is good.” We believe the Lord is good, His ways are good, and His teachings form a consistent, truthful, well-rounded Christian worldview.

0.3.10 APPROACHES TO THIS TEXT

Background reading suggestions: If you wish to build a foundation for thinking about worldviews before reading this text, we recommend the following: James Orr’s *A Christian View of God and the World* (1989); James W. Sire’s *The Universe Next Door* (1976); Francis Schaeffer’s *A Christian Manifesto* (1981); Karl Marx and Frederick Engel’s *Communist Manifesto* (1848); and the three *Humanist Manifestos* (1933, 1973, 2000). Read these texts with the notion in mind that *ideas have consequences*.

Following Albert Einstein’s dictum that everything should be made as simple as possible but not simpler, this text attempts to paint the categorical positions of each worldview with broad and general strokes. We do not address every subtlety of each position. Rather we attempt to capture the kernel of each of the six worldviews’ perspectives on each of the ten disciplines. As C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* (1952) attempted to capture the essence of

²¹ Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion For The 21st Century World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 155.

Christianity that all Christians could agree upon, so we attempt to capture the essence of mere Cosmic Humanism, Marxism, Secular Humanism, Postmodernism, Islam, and of course Christianity. For example, the heart of Christian theology will always be theism, just as the heart of Humanist ethics will always be relativism and the heart of Marxist biology will always be evolution. By examining the core of each worldview, we hope that this text will not become outdated.

We envision two possible approaches to this text. You may wish to proceed section by section, examining one discipline at a time and how each of the six worldviews approaches that discipline. Or you may wish to examine one worldview at a time, examining how it approaches each of the ten disciplines. We trust that the final outcome will be the same regardless of your approach—that you will gain helpful insight through the comparative analysis of the various ideas central to each worldview.

0.3.11 SHUT NO DOOR?

Sometimes we gain insight from examining the complaints of earlier decades in relation to current controversies. In 1925, evolutionists in America were bemoaning the fact that they were not allowed to teach their viewpoint in the public schools. John Scopes' attorney, Dudley Field Malone, arguing in favor of the teaching of evolution, said, "For God's sake, let the children have their minds kept open—close no doors to their knowledge; shut no door from them."²² Today the situation is reversed. Teaching creationism in public schools is barred by law. Displaying the Ten Commandments and using the words "In God We Trust" are in jeopardy, and even Christian crosses on tombstones in federal and state cemeteries are threatened. Christianity rarely receives a fair hearing in the public square, Jesus Christ is ridiculed, and His name is profaned.

New challenges to the Biblical Christian worldview arise each day. How can you determine truth when certain worldviews cannot be discussed in public classrooms? How can you develop a consistent worldview without comparing and contrasting it with other worldviews? We believe that you will improve your overall conceptual skills by learning to compare and contrast the merits of different worldviews. Perhaps some feel that Christians should be shielded from non-Christian views. We disagree. Knowing and understanding what others believe is essential preparation for facing the world, especially the world of the university. Jesus sent His followers out as sheep among wolves (Matthew 10:16). We believe that as sheep, you should be prepared!

0.3.12 FACING THE CHALLENGE

The Apostle Paul faced the religious humanists of his day, and Christians must be alert and faithful in facing the humanists of our day—whether they be Secular or Cosmic Humanists, Postmodernists, or Marxists. Preparation to do so requires hard work!

Although this study does require work, the result can be that you understand the ideas that make the world turn as well as the differences among them: theism, atheism, pluralism, agnosticism, supernaturalism, teleology, naturalism, materialism, dialectics, relativism, deconstruction, spontaneous generation, evolution, creationism, biblical morality, class morality, new morality, freedom, totalitarianism, private property, socialism, capitalism, Eurocentrism, heterocentrism, globalism, mind, soul, spirit, self-actualization, sin, law, etc. The invaluable reward of struggling with complex and conflicting ideas is this: "an all-

²² W.R. Bird, *The Origin of Species Revisited: The Theories of Evolution and of Abrupt Appearance*, 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 2:367.

encompassing belief system, grander than the individual and larger than the family, to explain disparate facts and to furnish meaning in life.”²³

Christianity not only gives your life meaning, it also best fits the facts of history, science, reason, and the experience of the real world.

We believe that the Christian worldview is the only proper “all-encompassing belief system” and that it is larger than both the individual and the family, but it destroys neither. Christianity not only gives your life meaning, it also best fits the facts of history, science, reason, and the experience of the real world—a world described by the Bible, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and other literary giants.

Humanist Will Durant says, “The greatest question of our time is not communism versus individualism, not Europe versus America, not even the East versus the West—it is whether man can live without God.”²⁴ The goal of this resource is to demonstrate a theistic worldview so comprehensive that it renders all questions of atheism obsolete. Christianity is so consistent and faithful to the truth that we should ask instead why we would *want* to live without God. Indeed, loving God and our fellow human beings summarizes the Christian worldview, bringing to mind the confession of Secular Humanist Bertrand Russell who said that what the world needs is more Christian love.

We pray that this resource will help you recognize the value, truthfulness, and superiority of the Christian worldview, to grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and to share His with those in the world who need it so badly.

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior’s blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou my God shouldst die for me?
— Charles Wesley

²³ Ken Adelman, “Beyond Ideology,” *The Washington Times* (December 25, 1989): D4.

²⁴ Quoted in Charles Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 225.

Theology

Christianity

Theism, the belief that God is, and atheism, the belief that God is not, are not simply two beliefs They are two fundamental ways of seeing the whole of existence. The one, theism, sees existence as ultimately meaningful, as having a meaning beyond itself; the other sees existence as having no meaning beyond itself.¹

— STEPHEN D. SCHWARZ

1.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Christian worldview affirms **theism**, the belief in the existence of a supernatural God. Christian theism rests primarily on two

THEISM: The belief in a supernatural God

solid foundations: special revelation (the Bible) and general revelation (the created order). While the Bible reveals the character and personality of God page after page, the “whole workmanship of the universe,” according to John Calvin, reveals and discloses God day after day. The Psalmist says, “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19).

James Orr explains that the theistic position is established not by any single clue or evidence, but by “the concurrent forces of many, starting from different and independent standpoints.”² Christians see evidences of God everywhere. It is the Christian position that

¹ Roy Abraham Varghese, *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God* (Dallas, TX: Lewis and Stanley, 1984), 98.

² James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Andrew Elliot, 1897), 111.

history, theology, philosophy, science, mathematics, logic, and personal experience all point to the existence of a Creator and Redeemer.

1.1.2 SPECIAL REVELATION

Christian theists believe that God has revealed Himself to people in a general way through creation and in a special (personal) way evidenced by His divine words and acts contained in the Bible and especially in the person of Jesus Christ. Millard Erickson defines the two forms of revelation this way: “On the one hand, **general revelation** is God’s communication of Himself to all persons, at all times, and in all places. **Special revelation** on the other hand, involves God’s particular communications and manifestations which are available now only by consultation of certain sacred writings.”³

GENERAL REVELATION: God’s communication—through nature and conscience—regarding his existence

SPECIAL REVELATION: God’s more specific communication—through the Bible and Jesus Christ—about salvation and his nature

General revelation has been viewed consistently throughout church history by a variety of Christian theists as a necessary but insufficient means for providing knowledge about the Creator and His character. It is better theology and philosophy to begin with the God of the Bible to explain the universe than to begin with the universe to explain God.

According to the Christian view, the destiny of created humanity involves both salvation and judgment. It is not general

revelation but special revelation (the Bible) that answers such questions as *How can I be saved? From what must I be saved? Why will judgment occur?* Special revelation, then, is “special” because it is the key that opens the door to both heaven and earth.

One of the most basic tenets of Christian belief is the divine inspiration of the Bible. When you accept Scripture as the Word of God, the teachings and events described in the Bible become the most important basis for understanding all reality. Without faith that the Bible is God’s Word, you are left adrift—forced to trust your own (unfounded) thought processes as the ultimate criteria for discerning truth. No one can deny the Bible’s divine inspiration and still claim to be a Biblical Christian for the simple reason that Scripture proclaims itself to be God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16–17). If you believe the Bible to be a true and accurate document, then you must accept its claim to be divinely inspired.

The evidence for the Christian’s belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible is convincing. For example, the unity of teaching in the Bible is startling in light of the fact that its books were authored by different men in very different circumstances over many centuries. Further, the astounding ability of the Bible to metamorphose the lives of individuals (for the better) who accept its authority strengthens its claim to be special revelation from God. The degree of moral truth contained in the Bible also supports its divine inspiration. All these arguments support the belief that the Bible is God’s Word; however, the most convincing witness for divine inspiration is the Bible itself. Those hesitant to accept Scripture as God’s special revelation are most often convinced by a thorough, open-minded study of the Bible.

In studying the Bible, the reader meets God’s most direct form of special revelation: the person of Jesus Christ. “In Jesus of Nazareth,” writes Carl F. H. Henry, “the divine source of revelation and the divine content of that revelation converge and coincide.”⁴ Christ’s

³ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 1:153.

⁴ Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976ff), 2:11.

teachings, actions, and most significantly, His resurrection, as revealed in the Bible, provide the cornerstone for special revelation and a solid foundation for Christian theism.

The purpose of divine revelation lies in its communication to the Christian of the significance of Christ's teachings and actions. The third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, plays an important role in this dialogue. Henry explains: "Scripture itself is given so that the Holy Spirit may etch God's Word upon the hearts of his followers in ongoing sanctification that anticipates the believer's final, unerring conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Word."⁵ This is the ultimate reason God chose to reveal Himself and His plan for us in the Bible.

Christ's teachings and actions as revealed in the Bible provide the cornerstone for special revelation and a solid foundation for Christian theism.

For this reason, the Christian's reliance on the Bible should be profound and constantly renewed—the Christian doesn't read the Bible once and set it aside; rather, we study it as the living Word of God and seek constantly to conform ourselves to its teachings. We spend our lives studying to understand the powerful message of the Bible.

1.1.3 DESIGN AND GENERAL REVELATION

Special revelation, then, is the linchpin of Christianity, while general revelation serves as a prod that encourages us to recognize the ultimate truths set down in Scripture and embodied in Jesus Christ.

Although God's revelation through nature, in and of itself, fails to bring us to a saving knowledge of God, it is capable of bringing us to a general knowledge of God. A great majority of intellectuals agree that the concepts of purpose and design, for example, have validity in regard to the question of the existence of God.

Anglican clergyman William Paley argued in *Natural Theology* (a book about which Charles Darwin admitted, "I do not think I hardly ever admired a book more . . .")⁶ that a person chancing upon a watch in the wilderness could not conclude that the watch had simply always existed; rather, the obvious design of the watch—not only its internal makeup but also the fact that it clearly exists for a purpose—would necessarily imply the existence of its designer. Paley went on to substitute the universe for the watch and contended that a mechanism so obviously designed as the universe necessitated the existence of a grand Designer.⁷ This is most often referred to as the **argument from design** and is an excellent example of the way in which the created order reveals the existence of God

The universe forces its sense of design (and thus a Designer) on all people who are open to such a possibility. Antony Flew, the legendary British philosopher and champion of atheism, now in his eighties, describes his personal odyssey from atheism to theism and the central place the design argument had in his journey. Flew currently believes ". . . the most impressive arguments for God's existence are those that are supported by recent

ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN: Argument that purports that if something exists that is designed then it has a designer

⁵ Ibid., 15.

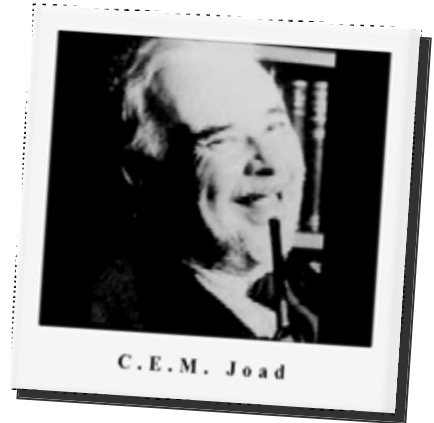
⁶ Charles Darwin, *Autobiography* (New York, NY: Dover Publishing, 1958), 59.

⁷ See Geoffrey Simmons, *What Darwin Didn't Know* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004) for an up to date argument for creation from design.

scientific discoveries.” He came to this conclusion because “the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design.”⁸

Many discover God through the general revelation of a structured universe; many more encounter God in the general revelation of the purposeful nature of reality. **C.E.M. Joad**, who was an atheist for much of his professional career, shortly before his death wrote a book entitled *The Recovery of Belief*. This book traces his gradual advance toward God and Jesus Christ. Joad was largely convinced by his observation of human nature—his realization that a moral law exists, and that we often flaunt that law.

C. S. Lewis presents still another twist on the argument for the general revelation of God’s existence. Suppose there were no intelligence behind the universe, says Lewis. In that case nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. Thought is merely the by-product of some atoms within my skull. “But if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true?” asks Lewis. “But if I can’t trust my own thinking, of course, I can’t trust the arguments leading to atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an atheist, or anything else. Unless I believe in God, I can’t believe in thought; so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God.”⁹



The evidence points to what Christians believe—that a personal God has revealed Himself through a created world, and that He has a plan and ultimate destiny for that world.

1.1.4 WHAT DOES REVELATION TELL US ABOUT GOD?

The Christian is concerned not only with the existence of God in general, but also with the relationship that exists between God and us, and particularly with the redemption of all people. While Humanists declare in the *Humanist Manifesto II* that no God can save us—“we must save ourselves”—Christian theism echoes Thomas, who referred to Jesus as “My Lord and My God” (John 20:28), and Peter, who said to Jesus, “You alone have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). God, as revealed throughout the Bible and especially in the person of Christ, is clearly knowable and desires to be known.

To say that God is knowable is also to say that God “relates” or has personality—that He is “personal.” God’s self-awareness, His emotions, and His self-determining will make up the core of His divine personality. The Bible is emphatic in describing God as a person aware of Himself. In Isaiah 44:6, God says, “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides me.” In Exodus 3:14, God says to Moses, “I Am Who I Am.”

Besides possessing a sense of self-awareness, the God of the Bible (like people) has sensibilities. At times God is portrayed as being sorrowful (Genesis 6:6), angry (Deuteronomy 1:37), compassionate (Psalm 111:4), jealous (Exodus 20:5), and able to show satisfaction (Genesis 1:4). Theologians do not feel that such scriptures suggest that God is limited, but rather that God is willing to reveal Himself in an anthropomorphic, personal way to us.

⁸ Taken from an interview at <http://www.biola.edu/antonyflew/>.

⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Broadcast Talks* (London, UK: G. Bles, 1944), 37–8.

1.1.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSONAL GOD

Besides believing that God is a personal God and has communicated His nature to us, Christians believe that God is self-determining—that is, sovereign in regard to His will. God’s self-determination is described in Daniel 4:35: “And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but he does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What hast Thou done?’”

In addition to being self-determining, the God of the Bible is moral. Proverbs 15:3 warns us that God distinguishes between good and evil, and that He is concerned with our morality. (See also Proverbs 5:21.) God’s uncompromisingly moral character is one of the most crucial aspects of His being. A true understanding of God’s absolute goodness leads us unerringly to the conclusion that each of us has an acute need for a Redeemer.

Long-suffering patience and faithfulness are also personality traits of God. God’s willingness to delay His judgment upon the Israelites when they worshipped the golden calf (Exodus 32:11–14) and His faithful promise to save the believer from eternal judgment (John 10:28) are prime examples of His patience and faithfulness.

Perhaps the most astounding characteristic of God’s personality is that He is **triune**. The Christian believes that God is three co-existent, co-eternal persons in one, who are equal in purpose and in essence, but who differ in function.

The God of the Christian is also a God of power, evidenced by His works in creation and providence. Hebrews 1:10 declares, “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands.” Christian theology asserts that God is the source of all things and that He created the cosmos out of His own mind, according to His plan. “Christianity,” says C. S. Lewis, “thinks God made the world—that space and time, heat and cold, and all the colors and tastes, and all the animals and vegetables, are things that God ‘made up out of his head’ as a man makes up a story. But it also thinks that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that God insists, and insists very loudly, on our putting them right again.”¹⁰

TRINITARIAN THEISM: The belief in one God who exists as three separate persons—Father, Son, and Spirit

Each created thing has an appointed destiny—God has a plan for His world, and nothing takes Him by surprise.

God also demonstrates His power by moving His world to its purposeful end. Each created thing has an appointed destiny—God has a plan for His world, and nothing takes Him by surprise. The Bible is emphatic on this point. Romans 9:25–26 says, “I will call those who were not my people, My people, and her who was not beloved, beloved. And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them ‘you are not my people,’ there they shall be called sons of

the living God.” Scripture makes it clear that God manifests His power by a sovereign and holy plan—a plan that generally collides with our plans, but a sovereign plan that includes human choice and human responsibility.¹¹

“Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels [transgressors]. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of

¹⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1974), 45.

¹¹ Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2003), 2:543, 574.

prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do” (Isaiah 46: 8–11).

1.1.6 GOD AS JUDGE

The judgment of God is not a popular subject—even among Christians. A great majority of people abhor the thought that the “God of love” could also be the “God of wrath.” One cannot read the Bible, however, without encountering the judgment of God.¹²

The holiness of God necessitates the judgment of God. Christian theists agree that God must be a judge because His holy nature is antithetical to sin. Such acts in the Bible as the great flood (Genesis 6:17–7:24), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1–7), the fall of the Canaanites (Leviticus 18–20), and indeed the fall of Israel (2 Kings 17) and Judah (2 Chronicles 36) are all demonstrations of God’s judgment as motivated by His holy nature.

Christianity teaches that God is fair and always right, because His nature is perfect. God is not a giant bully or a cosmic killjoy brooding in the heavens, waiting for every opportunity to spoil our fun. The Bible teaches that God is truly interested in good winning over evil, and in holiness being the victor over moral depravity. In short, God is the judge of people because all people are sinners. The Bible is clear in communicating that God does not take pleasure in the judgment of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11), but the wicked must be judged because God is holy (Jude 15).

1.1.7 GOD AS REDEEMER

Only one thing can protect us from God’s justice on the Day of Judgment: God’s mercy. In His mercy, God has provided an advocate for every individual—an advocate so righteous that He washes away the sin that should condemn us. God as the Redeemer, in the person of Christ, saves humanity from His wrath.

The central theme of redemption is the love of God. John 3:16 tells us, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Using John 3:16 as a text for portraying God’s love, theologian Floyd Barackman points out the following characteristics of this love:

- God’s love is universal. God loves every nation, tribe, race, class, and sex (male/female) equally. There were no social prejudices when God offered His Son. Christ died for the rich and for the poor; for the free and for the enslaved; for the old and for the young; for the beautiful and for the ugly.

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe

(a 2006 film based C.S. Lewis’ classic work)—in this film Aslan serves as a Christ figure and allegory for Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection—Aslan serves the Emperor Beyond the Sea (God the Father) and yet is also creator of Narnia (compare Colossians 1:16). Even though Aslan clearly has power over the White Witch, he chooses to work through human beings to accomplish his will to free Narnia. And he offers his own innocent blood to pay for Edmund’s sin (Romans 5:8).*

¹² Ibid., 3:398.

* <http://www.pluggedinonline.com/movies/movies/a0002447.cfm>

- God's love is gracious. God loves sinners even when they hate Him and are undeserving of His love. Romans 5:8 clearly outlines the nature of God's love: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How could God love the sinner? This question is answered by the Christian doctrine of grace. Christianity declares that God's love and mercy are so awesome that He can love the sinner while hating the sin. He expects His children to do likewise (Jude 22, 23).
- God's love is sacrificial. God did not send His only Son to earth just to be a good example or simply to be a teacher, but to be a perfect and atoning sacrifice for humanity's sin. Christ's substitutionary death was sacrificial and closely resembles the Old Testament concept of atonement. The main difference between the Old Testament concept of atonement and the New Testament concept is that atonement in the Old Testament was temporary, whereas in the New Testament Christ atoned for sins once and for all (1 John 2:2). Through the death of Christ, God has reconciled the world to Himself, and offered a way for His wrath to be appeased (Colossians 1:20)—humanity now must be reconciled to God through faith in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- God's love is beneficial. For all those who receive Christ (John 1:12), for all those who are born from above (John 3:3), for all those who believe (John 3:16), there await certain eternal benefits given by God. Scripture declares that through God's grace, the believer will not be condemned (Romans 3:24) and will not be captive to sin (Romans 6:11). Further, the believer is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) who has been declared righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21), redeemed (1 Peter 1:18), forgiven (Ephesians 1:7), and the recipient of the gift of eternal life (John 3:16).

1.1.8 CONCLUSION

Christian theology is Christ-centered. The God who "so loved the world that He gave His only Son" has allowed for a personal relationship between Himself and fallen humanity. Theoretical atheistic possibilities belittle the God who has revealed Himself propositionally through His creation and His word and has sacrificed His incarnate and holy Son. If this story is true, then anyone who lives in unbelief should be fearful, for he or she sits under the judgment of God until recognizing and experiencing the ever-faithful promise of Jesus: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

Theology

Islam

La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadu Rasool Allah. [There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.]

THE ESSENTIAL MUSLIM PROFESSION OF FAITH

1.2.1 INTRODUCTION

There are several sources for the study of Islam. Of foremost importance is the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an, (from the verb qara'a "to read" or "to recite"), is the holy book of Islam. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the literal word of God (Arabic Allah) and the culmination of God's revelation to mankind as revealed to Muhammad, the final prophet of humanity, over a period of twenty-three years through the angel Jibril. In this text we use primarily the translation of A. Yusuf Ali.¹ While it is an older translation (sounding much like the King James Version of the Bible), it is well respected and widely known.

Ranking second to the Qur'an are the Hadith. The Hadith record the teachings, rulings, and actions of Muhammad as recounted by his early associates. Muslims believe that the Hadith are inspired by God, and thus are to be obeyed. Unlike the Qur'an, the Hadith enjoy a diversity of sources and divergence of readings. It is not uncommon to find a variety of forms of particular sayings or recollections of Muhammad's actions. Different Muslim factions have different collections or highlight different actions or sayings recorded in the Hadith.

¹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Washington, DC: The American International Printing Company, 1946). In some quotations from Ali's translation, we have taken the liberty of smoothing out the text, removing unnecessary punctuation and poetic capitalization of letters.

In addition to the Qur'an and the Hadith, we also turn to the works of noted scholars of Islam, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, as well as works popularly promoted by Islamic organizations. Throughout our presentation of Islam, we strive to be fair to the central features of the worldview, as well as to the diversity found among Muslims.

1.2.2 CENTRAL BELIEFS

There are several central beliefs of Islam. First, Muslims believe in **Unitarian theism**. They reject the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and deny the deity of Jesus Christ. The one unforgivable sin is *shirk*, associating partners with God (i.e., polytheism). God is viewed as sovereign over humans and history, which has led to a discussion of the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility that parallels the same discussion among Christians.

UNITARIAN THEISM: The belief in one God in one person (i.e. no trinity)

with Gabriel at the top. Some believe that two angels attend each person, one recording good deeds and the other recording bad deeds.

The Qur'an teaches that God has sent prophets to every nation under heaven, though the final prophet is Muhammad.

Also, while God gave special books to Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad, only the one given to Muhammad, the Qur'an, has been preserved without error, and is thus the ultimate authoritative scripture.

Capping off the central beliefs of Islam is the Day of Judgment, a day when every human being will face a weighing of deeds, both good and evil. Only if the weight of one's good deeds surpasses that of one's bad deeds can each person hope to enter into Paradise rather than descending into Hell.

1.2.3 PRACTICE

Building upon the central beliefs of Islam (meaning "submission"), a devout Muslim ("one who submits") is expected to practice the following five (or six) "pillars" of their religion:

1. The first pillar of Islam is the confession of faith: *There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet*. If a person pronounces this confession with sincerity of mind and heart, then he or she is a Muslim.
2. The second pillar is prayer. Muslims are expected to engage in prayer five times a day, facing Mecca. On Friday, Muslim men (and, in some cases, women) are expected to meet at a mosque to engage in noon prayer.

ISLAMIC HOLY BOOKS

QUR'AN: Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the literal word of God (Arabic Allah) and the culmination of God's revelation to mankind as revealed to Muhammad (the final prophet of humanity) over a period of twenty-three years through the angel Jibril

HADITH: The traditions of the teachings, rulings, and actions of Muhammad and his early and chief companions. From these traditions are derived the Sunna, which are the actions of Muhammad that are viewed as exemplary

sovereignty and human responsibility that parallels the same discussion among Christians.

Muslims also affirm the existence of angels and *jinn*, the latter being mischievous spirits made from fire. The angels exist in a hierarchy,

JINN: Mischievous spirits made from fire

3. The third pillar is fasting during Ramadan. This involves refraining from food, smoking, and sexual relations during daylight hours, though these may be enjoyed after sundown.
4. The fourth pillar is almsgiving. Muslims are expected to give 2.5 percent of their annual capital to the poor, either directly or through Muslim charitable organizations.
5. The fifth pillar is pilgrimage. All Muslims are expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime, if their finances and health permit.
6. Some would add a sixth pillar, that of *jihad*, which has two facets. First, it is the battle against temptation and sin for the sake of self-control. Second, it is the battle against any and all who oppose Islam.²

1.2.4 REVELATION

Christians and Muslims believe that God exists, that He has revealed His will through prophets, and that all humans are accountable to Him. But the similarities largely cease here, for while Muslims affirm that God has revealed His will through prophets and enclosed that revelation in scripture, they deny that the Bible is a trustworthy source of that revelation, and instead affirm other sources of revelation.

Muslims believe that God graciously sent messengers to every nation to teach them submission to God and to warn them against false religious teachings and practices (Qur'an 16:36; 35:24). Moses and Jesus are considered prophets of Islam, as well as Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob (3:67; 61:6; 2:136). Muslims are expected to honor these prophets and their respective books (4:136). The religions that predated Muhammad are understood as having been originally Islamic and their prophets Muslims (15:10).

Muhammad is seen as the successor of the prophets of old (Qur'an 61:6), their books containing prophecies about him (7:157). Many Muslims even believe the Bible contains prophecies regarding Muhammad, most significantly Deuteronomy 18:15–18 and John 14:16. These prophets' missions were geographically and temporally limited, while Muhammad is considered to be *the one prophet for all humankind* (7:158; 34:28), and the last of the prophets (33:40). As a well-known Hadith illustrates: "Allah's Apostle said, 'My similitude in comparison with the other prophets before me, is that of a man who has built a house nicely and beautifully, except for a place of one brick in a corner. The people go about it and wonder at its beauty, but say: "Would that this brick be put in its place!" So I am that brick, and I am the last of the Prophets.'"³

Not only do Muslims ascribe superlative status to Muhammad, they ascribe such status to the Qur'an as well. The Qur'an is the incomparable, infallible, and final revelation from God (Qur'an 17:88–89), confirming all previous revelations (10:37; 46:12). Unlike the previous revelations, such as the Bible—deemed to be textually corrupted and confused by human interpretations—the Qur'an is inscribed on a tablet in heaven (85:21–22) and is kept incorruptible by God: "We have, without doubt, sent down the Message [the Qur'an]; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)" (15:9).

² The notion of *opposition* varies among Muslims. Some attempt to limit it to actual aggression, primarily of a military variety, and thus view *jihad* as exclusively defensive in posture. The history of Islam relegates this perspective to a minority view—in its early years, Islam spread through conquest. Many contemporary Muslims understand "defense" as the response needed against anything or anyone who would seek to inhibit Islam from becoming a global civilization. Additionally, since Muslims believe that the world originally was Islamic, and that every person is born a Muslim, they can easily move toward holding any and all non-Muslims as inherently in opposition to Islam.

³ Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 56, Hadith 735. <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/056.sbt.html#004.056.735> (accessed August 14, 2004).

The other primary source for Islamic theology today is the Hadith. The Hadith are traditions of the teachings, rulings, and actions of Muhammad and his early and chief companions. From these traditions are derived the Sunna, which are the actions of Muhammad that are viewed as exemplary.⁴ Muslims believe these two sources are inspired and authoritative. They provide the two lenses through which Muslims see all of reality.

Khurshid Ahmad describes the Qur'an and the Hadith as follows: "... [T]he teachings of Islam have been preserved in their original form and God's Guidance is available without adulteration of any kind. The Qur'an is the revealed book of God which has been in existence for the last fourteen hundred years and the Word of God is available in its original form. Detailed accounts of the life of the Prophet of Islam and his teachings are available in their pristine purity. There has not been an iota of change in this unique historic record. The sayings and the entire record of the life of the Holy Prophet have been handed down to us with unprecedented precision and authenticity in the works of the *Hadith* . . ."⁵

1.2.5 MONOTHEISM

Muslims believe that God exists, that He created the world, and that all humans will one day give an account before Him at the judgment. On these basics (though not in all details), the three monotheistic religions of the world Judaism, Christianity and Islam agree. The 112th Sura (chapter) of the Qur'an, though only four verses long, summarizes the Islamic understanding of the unity and nature of God: "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him."⁶

Though God has ninety-nine names in the Qur'an (see 59:22–24 for some examples), every Muslim affirms **monotheism**. It is encased in their fundamental creed: "There is no God but God and Muhammad is his prophet."

Muslims affirm that God created the universe.

The Qur'an often appeals to the grandeur and order of the world as evidence of God's existence and His creative intelligence, but the Qur'an itself is held as the most important proof of God's existence. Sura 2:22–23 not only attributes the multiplicity of good things throughout creation to God's creative power, but challenges anyone who doubts the Qur'an to produce something comparable. "Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto God when ye know (the truth). And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant [Muhammad], then produce a Sura like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides God, if your (doubts) are true."

MONOTHEISM: The belief in one God

⁴ Faslor Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979): "The difference between the two is that whereas a Hadith as such is a mere report . . . the Sunna is the very same report when it acquires a normative quality and becomes a practical principle for the Muslim" (45); "this authority of Muhammad refers to the verbal and performative behavior of the Prophet outside the Qur'an" (50); and "to his Companions his life was a religious paradigm and as such normative" (52).

⁵ Khurshid Ahmad, ed., *Islam: Its Meaning and Message*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1999), 43.

⁶ We have updated punctuation and decreased the frequency of capital letters. Different versions of the Qur'an vary not only in translation but also in versification. Thus the chapters and verses we use, from Ali's translation, may differ somewhat from other versions.

Muslims firmly believe that the Qur'an is the best and most beautiful book on earth. There is no equal, and nothing surpasses it in content or quality.⁷

Muslims believe that theirs is the original faith, the faith of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, John the Baptist, and Jesus. They also believe that Christians have distorted and denied that original faith, especially in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. The Qur'an denounces the Trinity in no uncertain terms:

O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion; nor say of God aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an Apostle of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him; so believe in God and His apostles. Say not "Trinity"; desist: for God is One God: Glory be to Him: (far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is God as a Disposer of affairs. (4:171)

They do blaspheme who say, "God is Christ the son of Mary." But said Christ, "O Children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with God, God will forbid him the Garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help. They do blaspheme who say "God is one of three in a Trinity," for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them. (5:75–76)

And behold! God will say, "O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, 'Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God?'" He will say, "Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, Thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine, for Thou knowest in full all that is hidden. (5:119)

Muslims also deny that Jesus was crucified. Sura 4 in the Qur'an (vv. 157–158) says the following: "They that said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God'; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for a surety they killed him not: nay, God raised him up unto Himself; and God is Exalted in Power, Wise . . ."

1.2.6 ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Because Muhammad was the final prophet and the Qur'an God's final revelation, Muslims reject all claims to new divine revelation or inspired prophets. Thus they are highly

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

Hidalgo (a 2004 film set in 1890)—this is the story of an ex-Pony Express courier, Frank T. Hopkins (Viggo Mortensen), who travels to Arabia with his horse, Hidalgo, to compete for a large prize in a dangerous 3,000 mile cross-country horse race. During the race Frank finds the leading Muslim rider languishing in quicksand. The rider resigns his fate as Allah's will. But Frank refuses to accept this and pulls him out. At another point, the Muslim says it is Allah's will who wins the race, to which Frank replies, "What about your will? Seems to me that's what gets you across the finish line."

⁷ These assertions are addressed in some detail in Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb's book, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2002). See chapter 9, "An Evaluation of the Qur'an," 183–210.

critical of groups branching off of Islam, such as the Baha'i,⁸ the Ahmadiyyah,⁹ and the Nation of Islam (i.e., "Black Muslims"),¹⁰ which assert prophetic continuation past Muhammad.

Even though there was a time when Muslims embraced adherents of other monotheistic faiths (such as Jews and Christians), this came to an end with the finished work of Muhammad and the full revelation of the Qur'an. Now only Muslims are accepted by God: "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)" (3:85).¹¹

Even though there was a time when Muslims embraced adherents of other monotheistic faiths (such as Jews and Christians), this came to an end with the finished work of Muhammad and the full revelation of the Qur'an.

1.2.7 CRITIQUE OF ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, it has become increasingly common to hear that "Christians, Jews, and Muslims worship the same God," even from government leaders. But to claim that these three monotheistic faiths worship the same God is misleading. For example, even if they worship the same God, does each religion teach the same basic things about that God? In point of fact, careful examination uncovers significant theological differences.

One major difference between Muslim and Christian theology is found in their respective views on the nature of God. While we affirm that only one God exists (monotheism), we also affirm that this one God has revealed Himself as triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Muslims deny the doctrine of the Trinity, viewing it as the greatest of sins (Jews also reject the Trinity).¹² Unfortunately, many Muslims are quite confused about the doctrine of the Trinity. This is probably due to how the Qur'an misrepresents it. A careful reading of Sura 5:119 (cited above) reveals how the Qur'an defines the Trinity as essentially *polytheistic*, that is, affirming the existence of more than one true God.

Because these misrepresentations are encased in the Qur'an, and Muslims attribute absolute authority to the Qur'an, despite our appeals to Scripture¹³ and our explanations of the doctrine, it is extremely difficult to persuade Muslims that Christianity is unwaveringly and unqualifiedly *monotheistic*.

Regarding Jesus' death on a cross, Muslims find repugnant the idea that God would allow one of His holy prophets to die such an ignominious death. Yet both the Bible (e.g., 2 Chronicles 36:16; Matthew 5:12; 23:31; Acts 7:52) and the Qur'an (4:155) testify that the

⁸ See www.bahai.org and www.us.bahai.org. For Christian interactions with the Baha'i faith, see, Francis J. Beckwith, *Baha'i* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1985) and William M. Miller, *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library Publications, 1984).

⁹ See John Gilchrist, "A Study of the Ahmadiyyah Movement," found at <http://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Vol1/9c.html>.

¹⁰ See C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994) and Steven Tsoukas, *The Nation of Islam: Understanding the 'Black Muslims'* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001).

¹¹ See Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹² We recommend the works of Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000); Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Theological Objections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000); and *idem*, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Messianic Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003).

¹³ E.g. Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; Isaiah 44:6–8; 43:10–11; 1 Corinthians 8:5–6; Ephesians 4:4–6.

prophets often faced persecution and terrible deaths. In addition, the Bible presents the crucifixion not as an illustration of the weakness of God or Christ, but rather as an expression of His power (1 Corinthians 1:18). Indeed, it was Jesus' desire to lay down His life (John 10:14–18) in fulfillment of God's promises (Matthew 26:53–54; Isaiah 53). Without this submission of His will, no one *could* have killed Him (Matthew 26:54; John 10:18). Jesus' resurrection from the dead illustrates that He is the Son of God (Romans 1:4) and has power over death (1 Corinthians 15:23–26).

One of the most profound Islamic claims is that *Islam fulfills Christianity as Christianity fulfills Old Testament religion*. This can be seen in the Muslim view that all the prophets taught Islam, each in succession, with Muhammad being the final and ultimate prophet. Yet if one religion is to fulfill another, there must be significant *continuity* between the two. In other words, essential elements of the first must not be denied by the second; there must be continuity of essence, though not necessarily of form. It is here that the Islamic claim to have fulfilled Christianity faces the greatest difficulties.

We already noted some commonalities between Islam, Christianity, and Old Testament Judaism—that there is only one God; that He created the universe; that He is sovereign, that He is our judge; that He is maximally powerful; that He interacts with His creation; that He has spoken to humanity through messengers; and that He inscripturated His message in holy books. Even with such substantial agreements, several distinct differences exist. Here we will address only the issue of revelation, as the infallibility and authority of Scripture are foundational to Christianity.

Muslims hold that the biblical prophets of the Old and New Testaments originally taught Islam, though Muslims are forced to deny the reliability of the Old and New Testament scriptures as they stand today for the simple reason that the Bible does not teach Islam. Yet, they have never successfully shown that the Bible is corrupted.

In contrast to Muslim criticism, the New Testament affirms the entire Old Testament as inspired by God, even providing wisdom for salvation through Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:14–17). The Old Testament prophets are acknowledged to have been inspired (1 Peter 1:21; cf. 2 Samuel 23:2). Furthermore, both the Old and New Testaments contain divine declarations that God's Word will not pass away (Isaiah 40:6–8; 1 Peter 1:24–25). Jesus confirmed the truthfulness of the Old Testament in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7, especially 5:17–18) and elsewhere (Luke 16:31; 24:27; John 10:35; 17:17).¹⁴ This is significant because we have portions of Old Testament texts, dating to and before the first century AD, which illustrate that the texts we have are substantially the same as those Jesus and Paul had. Thus Muslims cannot prove that the Old Testament was corrupted and cleansed of Islamic teachings sometime after Jesus' death.¹⁵ We are compelled to ask our Muslims acquaintances, "If God can sustain the Qur'an throughout the ages, can He not sustain the biblical texts?" The evidence shows that He has preserved His Word.¹⁶

In addition to these straightforward statements regarding the Word of God, throughout the New Testament we find regular appeals to the Old Testament as the source and confirmation of Christianity. For example, consider some of the numerous affirmations and teachings of the apostle Paul in the book of Romans.¹⁷

¹⁴ See John W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984).

¹⁵ See Walter Kaiser, *Are the Old Testament Documents Reliable and Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

¹⁶ See Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Some critics, including Muslims, assert that the teachings of the apostle Paul are different than the teachings of Jesus. In response, see David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), David Wenham, *Paul and Jesus: The True Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

Paul both introduces and concludes his letter to the Romans by noting how the gospel he proclaims stems from the Old Testament (1:1–2; 16:25–27; see Galatians 3:6–8). Paul also noted that the law and the prophets testified to the heart of the gospel—the righteousness of God (3:21). He taught that his ministry and message of Christ confirmed God’s promises to the Patriarchs: “For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy” (15:8–9a).

Even though some of his contemporaries charged Paul with being unlawful (Romans 3:8; see 6:1, 15), he denied their accusations: “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law” (3:31). He even viewed himself and his congregations as accountable to the Old Testament scriptures, noting that they have a continuing validity for the Church as the people of God. “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope” (15:4; cf. 4:23–24 and 1 Corinthians 10:1ff). Paul’s dependence upon the Old Testament is amply verified by the many explicit quotations he culled from the law, the writings, and the prophets (3:10–18; 10:5–21; 15:8–12), as well as his innumerable allusions to the Old Testament.¹⁸

1.2.8 CONCLUSION

Rather than denying that the Old Testament is the Word of God, Christians affirm—in direct contrast to Muslim criticisms of the Bible—that it is God’s inspired Word and is useful for teaching, correction, rebuke, and instruction in godliness (1 Timothy 3:16–17). Islam is *not* to Christianity as Christianity is to the Old Testament. We can begin to illustrate the truthfulness of God’s Word to Muslims by showing the New Testament’s appeals to, dependence upon, and development from the Old Testament, as well as demonstrating our own high regard for the *whole* Bible—both Old and New Testaments.

¹⁸ Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 630–642; Ben Witherington, *Paul’s Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Nashville, TN: Westminster/John Knox, 1994); and the relevant discussions in *Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, Gregory K. Beale, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996).

Theology

Secular Humanism

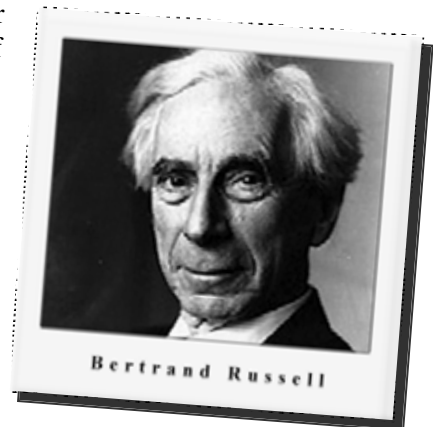
Humanism cannot in any fair sense of the word apply to one who still believes in God as the source and creator of the universe.¹

— PAUL KURTZ

1.3.1 INTRODUCTION

After thinking about religion and the supernatural for three years, **Bertrand Russell** abandoned the notion of God. He later admitted, “I believed in God until I was just eighteen.”² Russell, one of Secular Humanism’s most famous international voices, maintained that the whole idea of God was a conception derived from the ancient Oriental despotisms, and therefore concluded, “I am not a Christian . . . I do not believe in God and in immortality; and . . . I do not think that Christ was the best and wisest of men, although I grant Him a very high degree of moral goodness.”³

While eighteen might seem a tender age to determine whether or not God exists, Miriam Allen



¹ Paul Kurtz, ed., *The Humanist Alternative* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1973), 177.

² Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denonn, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 40.

³ *Ibid.*, 586.

deFord, an American Humanist, had already concluded by age thirteen that there was sufficient evidence for denying the existence of all gods. Furthermore, she was convinced that people possessed no soul and that immortality (life after death) was a hoax. “To put it bluntly and undiplomatically,” deFord says, “Humanism, in my viewpoint, must be atheistic or it is not Humanism as I understand it.”⁴

Corliss Lamont, author of *The Philosophy of Humanism*, insists that Humanism, “rejecting supernaturalism” and “seeking man’s fulfillment in the here and now of this world,” has a long honored tradition of **atheism**, beginning with Democritus in ancient Greece and Lucretius in ancient Rome and continuing through history to John Dewey and Bertrand Russell in the twentieth century.

ATHEISM: The denial of the existence of a supernatural God

1.3.2 THEOLOGICAL BELIEFS OF LEADING HUMANISTS

The theology of the Humanist is surprisingly unshakeable in its dogmatic belief that the supernatural—including God, Satan, angels, demons, and souls—does not exist, a theology which is spelled out in all its certitude by various Humanist leaders.

Lamont believes that the fundamental principle of **Humanism**, which distinguishes it from all other worldviews, is that “Humanism . . . considers all forms of the supernatural as myth.”⁵ The supernatural—that is, anything outside nature, “does not exist.”⁶ “Humanism,”

HUMANISM: The belief that humanity is the highest of all beings and truth and knowledge rest in science and human reason

says Lamont, “in its most accurate philosophical sense, implies a worldview in which Nature is everything, in which there is no supernatural.”⁷

Lamont asserts that “intellectually, there is nothing to be gained and much to be lost for philosophy by positing a supernatural Creator or First Cause behind the great material universe.”⁸ There is no place in the Humanist worldview for God and, insists Lamont, instead of the gods creating the cosmos, “the cosmos, in the individualized form of human beings giving rein to their imagination, created the gods.”⁹

Some years earlier than Lamont’s first edition of *The Philosophy of Humanism* (1949), many Humanists, including John Dewey and Roy Wood Sellars, published *Humanist Manifesto I* (1933). It described the universe as “self-existing and not created.” Further, the Manifesto declared, “the time has passed for theism . . .”¹⁰

Forty years after the 1933 *Manifesto*, the Humanists published *Humanist Manifesto II* and reiterated, “We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the

HUMANIST MANIFESTO: The title of three manifestos laying out a secular humanist worldview. They are Humanist Manifesto I (1933), Humanist Manifesto II (1973), and Humanist Manifesto III (2000), although the latter is actually titled Planetary Humanism. The central theme of all three is the elaboration of a philosophy and value system that does not include belief in God*

⁴ Kurtz, *The Humanist Alternative*, 82.

⁵ Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York, NY: Frederick Ungar, 1982), 145.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁰ *Humanist Manifesto I* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1980), 8.

* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanist_Manifesto

human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.” Again, “. . . we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”¹¹ Hundreds of Humanists signed this declaration of atheism, as did hundreds more the following *Humanist Manifesto 2000*.

No deity will save us;
we must save ourselves.

HUMANIST MANIFESTO II

Isaac Asimov served as the director of the American Humanist Association from 1989 to 1992. Writing in *Free Inquiry*, Asimov leaves no doubt regarding his personal theology: “I am an atheist, out and out. It took me a long time to say it. I’ve been an atheist for years and years, but somehow I felt it was intellectually unrespectable to say one was an atheist, because it assumed knowledge that one didn’t have. Somehow it was better to say one was a humanist or an agnostic. I finally decided that I’m a creature of emotion as well as reason. Emotionally I am an atheist. I don’t have the evidence to prove that God doesn’t exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn’t that I don’t want to waste my time.”¹²

Bold atheism is proclaimed by every orthodox Humanist, including **Paul Kurtz**. Kurtz is the long-time editor of *Free Inquiry*, the quarterly magazine for skeptics and atheists. He declares, “Humanism cannot in any fair sense of the word apply to one who still believes in God as the source and creator of the universe. Christian Humanism would be possible only for those who are willing to admit that they are atheistic Humanists. It surely does not apply to God-intoxicated believers.”¹³

For Kurtz, “God himself is man deified.”¹⁴ Such theology, of course, is quite close to the Marxist point of view. In fact, Kurtz refers to Marx as “one of history’s great humanist thinkers.” Kurtz says Marx is a Humanist because “he rejects theistic religion and defends atheism.”¹⁵ British biologist and author Julian Huxley said, “I disbelieve in a personal God in any sense in which that phrase is ordinarily used.” He went on to say, “For my own part, the sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a supernatural being is enormous.”¹⁶

American philosopher Harold H. Titus says that Humanism is a “religion without God,”¹⁷ adding, “Humanistic naturalists regard the universe as ‘self-existing and not created.’ They have abandoned all conceptions of a supernatural and all forms of cosmic support.”¹⁸



1.3.3 JOHN DEWEY: GURU TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The atheism of leading Humanist **John Dewey** has had such an impact on American culture that it requires more intense scrutiny. Because of Dewey’s status as an educator, and

¹¹ *Humanist Manifesto II* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1980), 16.

¹² Isaac Asimov, “An Interview with Isaac Asimov,” *Free Inquiry*, (Spring 1982), no. 2, 9.

¹³ Kurtz, *The Humanist Alternative*, 178.

¹⁴ Paul Kurtz, *The Fullness of Life* (New York, NY: Horizon Press, 1974), 35–6.

¹⁵ Ibid.

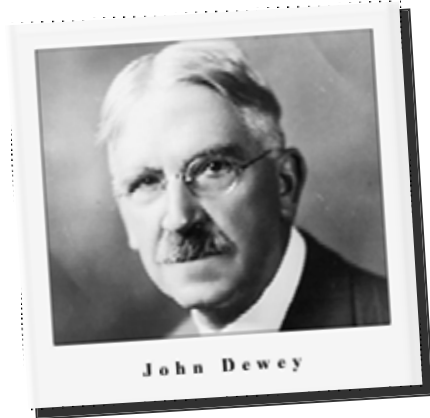
¹⁶ Julian Huxley, *Religion Without Revelation* (New York, NY: Mentor, 1957), 32.

¹⁷ Harold H. Titus, “Humanistic Naturalism,” *The Humanist* (1954), no. 1, 33.

¹⁸ Ibid., 30.

* Photo by Gary Wiepert. Copyright 2006 Center for Inquiry.

especially because he had such a profound influence on America's public school system, his theological views must be understood by everyone seeking to understand modern education.



In his work *A Common Faith*, Dewey distinguishes between the words “religion” and “religious.” He reserves the term “religion” for the supernatural while maintaining the term “religious” for the world of the natural (especially as it involves human relations, welfare, and progress). Dewey rejects the supernatural and a supernatural God. He accepts only evolving nature, with all of its “religious” ramifications. “I cannot understand,” says Dewey, “how any realization of the democratic ideal as a vital moral and spiritual ideal in human affairs is possible without surrender of the conception of the basic division to which supernatural Christianity is committed.”¹⁹ For

Dewey, democracy cannot ingest the Christian notions of saved and lost. He considers such notions “spiritual aristocracy” and contrary to the ideals of democracy. A democratic church must include both believer and unbeliever.

Dewey makes it clear that he believes science has largely discredited Biblical Christianity. “Geological discoveries,” he says, “have displaced Creation myths which once bulked large.”²⁰ Biology, says Dewey, has “revolutionized conceptions of soul and mind which once occupied a central place in religious beliefs and ideas.”²¹ He also says that biology has made a “profound impression” on the ideas of sin, redemption, and immortality. Anthropology, history, and literary criticism have furnished a “radically different version of the historic events and personages upon which Christian religions have built.”²² And psychology is already opening up “natural explanations of phenomena so extraordinary that once their supernatural origin was, so to say, the natural explanation.”²³ For Dewey, science and the scientific method have exiled God and the supernatural to the dustbins of history.

1.3.4 HUMANISTIC THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Secular Humanism's primary publishing arm is Prometheus Books, located in Buffalo, New York. Among other things, Prometheus publishes atheistic children's books, including *What About Gods?* by Chris Brockman. This book is designed to indoctrinate children with dogmatic atheistic sentiments like, “Many people say they believe in a god. Do you know what a god is? Do you know what it means to believe in a god? A god is a mythical character. Mythical characters are imaginary, they're not real. People make them up. Dragons and fairies are two of many mythical characters people have made up. They're not real. . . .”²⁴

Prometheus also publishes atheistic literature geared toward adult audiences. Paul Blanshard's *Classics of Free Thought* was published, “to keep atheism before the public.” *Critiques of God*, edited by Peter Angeles, contains 371 pages supporting Humanist theology's denial of the existence of God.

In *Critiques*, Angeles explains that belief in the supernatural has all but vanished from our culture. He says that God has lost His spatial location as a monarch in heaven and His temporal precedence to the universe as its Creator ex nihilo. “It is not that God is being

¹⁹ John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1934, renewed 1962), 84.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Chris Brockman, *What About Gods?* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1978).

Without God, what is left? Man and the Universe. That should be enough. That has to be enough because that is all there is.

— PETER ANGELES

relegated to a remote region,” Angeles insists. “It is not that God has become a bodiless abstraction (a sexless It). It is the realization that there is no God left to which to relate. Without God, what is left? Man and the Universe. That should be enough. That has to be enough because that is all there is.”²⁵

The Secular Humanists’ 1980 declaration does not diverge from their earlier *Manifestoes* (1933, 1973) or their latest published in 2000. Written by Kurtz and published in *Free Inquiry*, it contends that “Secular Humanists may be agnostics, atheists, rationalists, or skeptics, but they find insufficient

evidence for the claim that some divine purpose exists for the universe. They reject the idea that God has intervened miraculously in history or revealed himself to a chosen few, or that he can save or redeem sinners.”²⁶

Humanist theology, start to finish, is based on the denial of God and the supernatural. This denial, however, leads the Humanist to another necessary theological conclusion: humanity is the Supreme Authority. (It is possible that Humanism’s deification of humanity preceded its atheistic assumptions because the existence of God becomes a decided nuisance after one has declared oneself sovereign.)

1.3.5 CONCLUSION

Ultimately, it is of little importance whether the dethroning of God or the deification of man was Humanism’s first theological presupposition. The crux of their theology remains anti-God. This is the heart and soul of Secular Humanism: man setting himself up in place of God. Unfortunately for the Humanist, this theology often strips him of all sense of purpose. As Ernest Nagel explains, atheism “can offer no hope of personal immortality, no threats of divine chastisement, no promise of eternal recompense for injustices suffered, no blueprints to sure salvation . . . A tragic view of life is thus [an undeniable] . . . ingredient in atheistic thought.”²⁷

Perhaps it was this “tragic view of life” that finally caught up to Antony Flew, one of *Free Inquiry*’s contributing editors. At

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

Contact (1997)—a film adapted from the novel by Carl Sagan, in which *SETI* (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) researcher and atheist, Ellie Arroway (Jodi Foster) identifies a coded message from an alien source, including plans to build a machine to take humans to other civilizations in distant galaxies. Sagan’s beliefs about God and humanity are revealed in the following statements:

Ellie: So what’s more likely? That an all-powerful, mysterious God created the Universe, and decided not to give any proof of his existence? Or, that He simply doesn’t exist at all, and that we created Him, so that we wouldn’t have to feel so small and alone?

Ellie: For as long as I can remember, I’ve been searching for something, some reason why we’re here. What are we doing here? Who are we? If this is a chance to find out even just a little part of that answer... I don’t know, I think it’s worth a human life. Don’t you?

Alien to Ellie: You’re an interesting species, an interesting mix. You’re capable of such beautiful dreams and such horrible nightmares. You feel so lost, so cut off, so alone, only you’re not. See, in all our searching, the only thing we’ve found that makes the emptiness bearable is each other.

²⁵ Peter Angeles, ed., *Critiques of God* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1976), xiii.

²⁶ Paul Kurtz, “A Secular Humanist Declaration,” *Free Inquiry* (Winter 1980/81), no. 1, 5.

²⁷ Angeles, *Critiques of God*, 17.

81 years of age Dr. Flew abandoned his atheism and joined the ranks of the theists (he claims some form of Deism²⁸). Richard Ostling describes his spiritual journey this way: “A British philosophy professor who has been a leading champion of atheism for more than a half-century has changed his mind. He now believes in God more or less based on scientific evidence and says so on a video. At age 81, after decades of insisting belief is a mistake, Antony Flew has concluded that some sort of intelligence or first cause must have created the universe.”²⁹

The important point is that science and reason drove Flew to this conclusion, not revelation or history. Secular Humanists continue to stress that science and reason will drive one from the Christian point of view of creation. Dr. Flew more than answers this claim. As it turns out, biology and science in general are not confining the supernatural to any dustbin of history, as Dewey claimed.³⁰

²⁸ Deism is the belief that God exists and created the universe, but then vacated it for humanity to manage by itself without any external interference.

²⁹ Richard Ostling, *The Associated Press* (December 9, 2004).

³⁰ See Stephen C. Meyer, “The Origin of the Biological Information and the Higher Taxonomic Categories,” Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington, August 28, 2004; John Angus Campbell and Stephen C. Meyer, *Darwinism, Design, and Public Education* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Geoffrey Simmons, *What Darwin Didn't Know* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004); Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge To Evolution* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996).

Theology

Marxism-Leninism

Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze. . . .¹

— V.I. LENIN

1.4.1 INTRODUCTION

“We Communists are atheists,”² declared Chou En-lai at the Bandung, Indonesia Conference in April, 1955. This Chinese communist leader captured the fundamental theological ingredient of Marxism-Leninism in one word: atheism. Today, Marxists-Leninists prefer two words: scientific atheism.

From the university days of Karl Marx to the present, official spokesmen for Marxism have been consistent about the content of their theology—that God, whether known as a Supreme Being, Creator, or Divine Ruler, does not, cannot, and must not exist.³

God is considered an impediment, even an enemy, to a scientific, materialistic, socialistic outlook. The idea of God, insists Lenin, encourages the working class (the proletariat) to drown its terrible economic plight in the “spiritual booze” of some mythical heaven (“pie in the sky by and by”). Even a single sip of this intoxicant decreases the revolutionary fervor necessary to exterminate the oppressing class (the bourgeois), causing the working class to forfeit its only chance of creating a truly human heaven on earth: global communism.

¹ V.I. Lenin, *Complete Collected Works*, 45 vols. (Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers, 1978), 10:83.

² James D. Bales, *Communism: Its Faith and Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1962), 37.

³ See David B.T. Aikman's Ph.D. dissertation entitled “The Role of Atheism in the Marxist tradition.” (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1979). Aikman covers all aspects of Marxist atheism in his 500+ page dissertation.

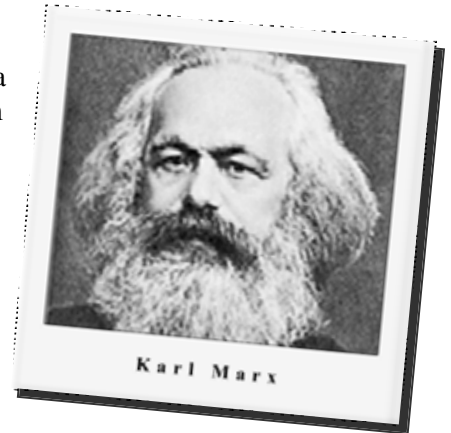
1.4.2 MARX'S THEOLOGICAL BELIEFS

Religion as the opium of the masses, however, was a later development in the mind of **Karl Marx**. His atheism was conceived in the heady arena of philosophy, not economics or sociology. When Marx became an atheist at the University of Berlin, he was not thinking about surplus value or the dictatorship of the proletariat. He was thinking about the philosophies of Prometheus, Georg W. F. Hegel, Bruno Bauer, David Strauss, and Ludwig Feuerbach.

"Philosophy makes no secret of it," said Marx. "Prometheus's admission: 'In sooth all gods I hate' is its own admission, its own motto against all gods, heavenly and earthly, who do not acknowledge the consciousness of man as the supreme divinity. There must be no god on a level with it."⁴

In a circle of radical Young Hegelians that included Ludwig Feuerbach and Frederick Engels, Marx became an atheist. Atheism was embraced by the group, with Feuerbach proclaiming, "It is clear as the sun and evident as the day that there is no God; and still more, that there can be no God."⁵

Accepting Feuerbach's conclusion that God is a projection of humanity's own making, Marx boasted, "Man is the highest being for man." Indeed, Marx explains that this view signals the demise of all religion: "The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man. . . ."⁶



THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO was first published on February 21, 1848, and is one of the world's most influential political tracts. Commissioned by the Communist League and written by communist theorists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, it laid out the League's purposes and program. The *Manifesto* suggested a course of action for a proletarian revolution to overthrow capitalism and, eventually, to bring about a classless society*

For Marx, then, humanity is God. We created God in our own image. We created religion in order to worship ourselves. The notion that God is merely our projection is contained in Marx's assertion that man "looked for a superhuman being in the fantastic reality of heaven and found nothing there but the reflection of himself."⁷

Because Marx believes that we are God, he also believes we must seize control of reality and shape it to our specifications. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways," says Marx; "the point, however, is to change it."⁸ Because the institutions of society rested on a foundation of theism, Marx determined to change all social institutions and re-establish them on atheistic foundations. To this end, Marx

⁴ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Religion* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), 15.

⁵ See Richard Wurmbrand, *My Answer to the Moscow Atheists* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1975), 16. Also, see Wurmbrand's *Marx & Satan* (Bartlesville, OK: Voice of the Martyrs Publishers, 1990), 13, for Marx stating, "Then I will be able to walk triumphantly, Like a god, through the ruins of their kingdom. Every word of mine is fire and action. My breast is equal to that of the Creator." Wurmbrand contends that Marx was involved in Satanism.

⁶ Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *Collected Works*, 40 vols. (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1976), 3:175.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3:182.

* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Manifesto

⁸ Karl Marx, *On Historical Materialism* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1974), 13.

and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto*, called for the “forcible overthrow” of all existing social conditions.

This call was based on Marx’s dogmatic atheism, and not on dispassionate societal observation. Marx’s economic theories—and, indeed, his entire worldview—were tailored to fit his theology.

1.4.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THEOLOGY IN MARXIST THEORY

While some attempts have been made to minimize atheism’s role in Marxist theory (especially in recruiting naive Christians and other religious people to participate in Marxist-Leninist activity, such as the Liberation Theology movement), Marxists are privately aware of their fundamental need for an atheistic foundation.

Marx’s search for “scientific truths” to bolster his atheism led him to conclusions that shaped his communist theory. As he moved from the philosophical basis for atheism into the socioeconomic realm, he reached the conclusion (based upon his atheistic assumptions) that religion is merely an anti-depressant for the oppressed working class. His summary of this explanation has been quoted throughout the world, even though it was not his original basis for atheism. “Religion,” said Marx, “is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”⁹

We have once and for all
declared war on religion
and religious ideas and
care little whether we
are called atheists or
anything else.

— FREDERICK ENGELS

Marx’s friend and fellow atheist, Engels, declared, “We want to sweep away everything that claims to be supernatural and superhuman, for the root of all untruth and lying is the pretension of the human and the natural to be superhuman and supernatural. For that reason we have once and for all declared war on religion and religious ideas and care little whether we are called atheists or anything else.”¹⁰

As with Marx, Engels foresaw a time when all religion would cease. He contended that when society adopts socialism, i.e., when society takes possession of all means of production and uses them on a planned basis (thus eliminating the working class’s economic bondage), religion itself will vanish.

1.4.4 LENIN’S THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO MARXISM

Some years later, V. I. Lenin affirmed the conclusions of Marx and Engels: “The philosophical basis of Marxism, as Marx and Engels repeatedly declared, is . . . a materialism which is absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion.”¹¹ Elsewhere, Lenin made it clear that fighting religion was an essential ingredient in a materialistic reality. “We must combat religion,” he said, “that is the ABC of all materialism, and consequently of Marxism.”¹²

In his “Socialism and Religion” address, Lenin insists that the communist program is based on a scientific, materialistic world outlook and therefore “our propaganda necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism.”¹³ Lenin went on to urge his fellow communists to

⁹ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 3:175.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:463.

¹¹ Lenin, *Selected Works*, 15:402.

¹² *Ibid.*, 405.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10:86.

follow Engels' advice and translate and widely disseminate the atheistic literature of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment.

Lenin made it clear that any idea of God was taboo, claiming, "Every religious idea, every idea of God, even flirting with the idea of God, is unutterable vileness . . . vileness of the most dangerous kind, 'contagion' of the most abominable kind. Millions of sins, filthy deeds, acts of violence and physical contagions . . . are far less dangerous than the subtle, spiritual idea of a God decked out in the smartest 'ideological' costumes. . . . Every defense or justification of the idea of God, even the most refined, the best intentioned, is a justification of reaction."¹⁴

Clearly, Lenin's theology unerringly corresponds with that of Marx and Engels. Together they established the foundations for future communist declarations of atheism.¹⁵

1.4.5 ATHEISM IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Marxist theology has remained consistent throughout the history of communism. From Marx's time to the present, communists everywhere have vehemently denied the existence of God. This becomes especially obvious when one considers the theological stance of the former U.S.S.R. The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, published in Moscow in 1950, called on the Communist Party to oppose religion and "to fight for the 'full victory' of atheism."¹⁶ The Young Communist League's list of Ten Commandments contains the declaration "If you are not a convinced atheist, you cannot be a good Communist. . . . Atheism is indissolubly bound to Communism."¹⁷

In 1955, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev said, "Communism has not changed its attitude of opposition to religion. We are doing everything we can to eliminate the bewitching power of the opium of religion."¹⁸

The Atheist's Handbook was published in Moscow in 1959 in conjunction with Khrushchev's campaign to eliminate the remaining traces of religion in the U.S.S.R. This text attacks the Bible, the Qur'an, Christianity, and Islam. "Science," says the *Handbook*, "has long since established that Jesus Christ never existed, that the figure of the alleged founder of Christianity is purely mythical."¹⁹ And according to the *Handbook*, the Apostle Paul, too, turns out to be "a mythical figure."²⁰

1.4.6 THE MARXIST ASSAULT ON THE CHURCH

This Marxist hatred of anything supernatural—and especially anything Christian—is most often vented on religious peoples and institutions in Marxist countries.

Although the July 10, 1918 Constitution of the former U.S.S.R. recognized freedom of both "religious and anti-religious propaganda" as the right of every citizen, the Soviet state constantly worked to suppress theistic religion. Article 65 of the 1918 Constitution declared priests and clerics to be "servants of the bourgeoisie" and had them disenfranchised. This meant, among other things, that priests were denied ration cards and their children were barred from attending school above the elementary grades. Paul Kurtz, a Secular Humanist, points out that from 1918 to 1921 "religious persecution continued unabated. . . . All church

¹⁴ Ibid., 35:122.

¹⁵ Aikman, for an in-depth look at Lenin's atheism and its influence in the U.S.S.R.

¹⁶ *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (Moscow, USSR: 1950), quoted in Bales, *Communism*, 37.

¹⁷ Young Communist League's "Ten Commandments of Communism," quoted in Bales, *Communism*, 37.

¹⁸ Nikita Khrushchev, speech, September 22, 1955, quoted in Bales, *Communism*, 165–6.

¹⁹ *The Atheist's Handbook*, [Sputnik Ateista], (Moscow, USSR: Gos. Izd. Politicheskoi Literatury, 1961), reproduced in English by U.S. Joint Publications Research Service (Washington, DC), 117.

²⁰ Ibid., 69.

property was nationalized, and it is estimated that tens of thousands of bishops, clerics, and laymen were killed or imprisoned.”²¹

In the former Soviet Union, church after church was declared counter-revolutionary and shut down.²² Churches were turned into cinemas, radio stations, granaries, museums, machine repair shops, etc. Before the revolution, Moscow had 460 Orthodox churches. On January 1, 1930, the number was down to 224, and by January 1, 1933, the figure was about 100.

Even though the 1936 Soviet Constitution again guaranteed “freedom of religion,” Marxist attacks on religious peoples continued unabated. In the days following the new Constitution, some Christians attempted to conform to laws by registering with the government. The Soviet government required these believers to collect fifty signatures. When the Christians presented the signatures to the government officials, all fifty “conspirators” would be deemed “members of a secret counter-revolutionary organization”²³ and arrested.

Such persecution will continue as long as the Marxist worldview rules any country. Modern times have not made Marxists more tolerant of religion. In 1993 in the People’s Republic of China, Marxist leaders tore down an Islamic mosque, ostensibly because it was not “government sanctioned.” The Marxist government can sanction only one religion: the religion of atheism—the “ABC of Marxism.”

1.4.7 CONCLUSION

In theory and practice, Marxism reflects its atheistic base. To be a Marxist demands adherence to atheism. To be a good Marxist entails being a propagator of atheism. To be the *best* Marxist is to see atheism as part of the scientific, materialistic, socialistic outlook and to strive to eradicate all religious sentiment.

From the heady days of Marx and Engels through the era of Lenin and Stalin and on to the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Marcuse, etc.), the Red Brigades, Herbert Aptheker, William Z. Foster, Paul Robeson (winner of the Stalin Peace Prize), the Communist Party USA, Gerda Lerner, Eric Foner, Howard Zinn, International ANSWER, Antonio Gramsci, Gyorgy Lukacs, Walter Benjamin, Eric Hobsbawm—the trial of Marxism continues along its atheistic theology.

From *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)²⁴ to the latest manifesto entitled *Empire* (2000), the quest for a godless world continues. *Empire* was written by Michael Hardt of Duke University and Antonio Negri and published by the Harvard University Press. Negri, associated with the Red Brigades, was responsible for much mayhem across Europe. He and Hardt instruct us, “Our pilgrimage on earth, however, in contrast to Augustine’s has no transcendent telos beyond [purpose beyond this world]; it is and remains absolutely immanent [here and now]. Its continuous movement, gathering aliens in community, making this world its home, is both means and end, or rather a means without an end.”²⁵

²¹ Paul Kurtz, “Militant Atheism Versus Freedom of Conscience,” *Free Inquiry* (Fall 1989): 28.

²² See Stephane Courtois, et al., *The Black Book Of Communism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). Also, see R. J. Rummel, *Death By Government* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 79f. Chapter four is entitled, “61,011,000 Murdered—The Soviet Gulag State.”

²³ Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), 209. Many of the facts concerning the closing of the churches are found in Conquest’s chapter “The Churches and the People.”

²⁴ The latest American edition of *The Communist Manifesto* was published by Haymarket Books (Chicago, 2005), and edited by Phil Gasper, a professor of philosophy at Notre Dame de Namur University in northern California.

²⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 207.

National Review referred to *Empire* as “the Communist ‘hot, smart book of the moment’”²⁶ and *Foreign Affairs* magazine referred to it as “[a] sweeping neo-Marxist vision of the coming world order.”²⁷

Theists everywhere recognize, as did Feodor Dostoevsky, that “[t]he problem of Communism is not an economic problem. The problem of Communism is the problem of atheism.”²⁸

²⁶ *National Review*, September 17, 2001, 28.

²⁷ Hardt, back cover.

²⁸ Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York, NY: Random House, 1952), 712.

Theology

Cosmic Humanism

What is God? God is the interlinking of yourself with the whole.¹

— KEVIN RYERSON

I've investigated a number of religions. I was into Zen Buddhism for a while. But voodooism is the one that stuck more. It's very interesting. Not that I practice it or anything.²

— ACTRESS KRISTANNA LOKEN

1.5.1 INTRODUCTION

Like every other worldview, Cosmic Humanism's theology forms the foundation for all other aspects of its worldview. However, Cosmic Humanism (the New Age movement) differs from Christianity, Islam, and the secular worldviews in that it embraces neither theism nor atheism.

Cosmic Humanism begins by denying the preeminence of any purported special revelation over any other. That is, Cosmic Humanists believe that the Bible is no more the word of God than is the Qur'an, or the teachings of Confucius. New Age advocate David Spangler says, "We can take all the scriptures, and all the teachings, and all the tablets, and

¹ Kevin Ryerson, *Spirit Communication: The Soul's Path* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1989), 106.

² *Rolling Stone*, July 24, 2003, 46.

We can take all the scriptures, and all the teachings, and all the tablets, and all the laws, and all the marshmallows and have a jolly good bonfire and marshmallow roast, because that is all they are worth.

— DAVID SPANGLER

all the laws, and all the marshmallows and have a jolly good bonfire and marshmallow roast, because that is all they are worth.”³

Obviously, if the Bible is valuable only as fuel, this nullifies the significance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Cosmic Humanist sees Christ’s life as important only in the sense that it showed humanity to be capable of achieving perfection, even godhood. An article in the New Age publication *Science of Mind* states, “The significance of incarnation and resurrection is not that Jesus was a human like us but rather that we are gods like him—or at least have the potential to be.”⁴

This interpretation of Christ allows the New Age theologian to postulate, as John White does, that “The Son of God . . . is not Jesus but our combined Christ consciousness.”⁵ Jesus is looked on as one of a select company, having achieved Christ consciousness. Every person is encouraged to acquire this same level of consciousness.

How can anyone hope to achieve such a divine consciousness? Because everyone is a part of God. Cosmic Humanists believe that we and God are ontologically one.

1.5.2 EVERY PERSON IS GOD

“Each of us has access to a supraconscious, creative, integrative, self-organizing, intuitive mind whose capabilities are apparently unlimited,” says John Bradshaw. “This is the part of our consciousness that constitutes our God-likeness.”⁶

Most Cosmic Humanists state the case more forcefully. Ruth Montgomery supposedly channeled a spirit that spoke through her, claiming, “We are as much God as God is a part of us . . . each of us is God . . . together we are God . . . this all-for-one-and-one-for-all . . . makes us the whole of God.”⁷ White states that “sooner or later every human being will feel a call from the cosmos to ascend to godhood.”⁸

Meher Baba declares, “There is only one question. And once you know the answer to that question there are no more to ask. . . . Who am I? And to that question there is only one answer—I am God!”⁹ Shirley MacLaine recommends that every person should begin each day by affirming his or her own godhood. “You can use I am God or I am that I am as Christ often did, or you can extend the affirmation to fit your own needs.”¹⁰

Special revelation need not exist in books or in any other form outside of us, because each of us has our own special revelation in our higher consciousness, our own



³ David Spangler, *Reflections on the Christ* (Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Publications, 1982), 73.

⁴ *Science of Mind* (October 1981): 40–2. Cited in Ray A. Yungen, *For Many Shall Come in my Name* (Salem, OR: Ray Yungen, 1989), 164.

⁵ John White, “A Course in Miracles: Spiritual Wisdom for the New Age,” *Science of Mind* (March 1986): 10.

⁶ John Bradshaw, *Bradshaw on the Family* (Pompono Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1988), 230.

⁷ Ruth Montgomery, *A World Beyond* (New York, NY: Ballantine/Fawcett Crest Books, 1972), 12.

⁸ John White, ed., *What is Enlightenment?* (Los Angeles, CA: J.P. Tarcher, 1984), 126.

⁹ Meher Baba, quoted in Allan Y. Cohen, “Meher Baba and the Quest of Consciousness.” Cited in White, *What is Enlightenment?*, 87.

¹⁰ F. LaGard Smith, *Out On a Broken Limb* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1986), 181.

ability to get in touch with the part of us that is God. Inner soul-searching becomes the only significant means of discovering truth. By asserting that man is God, the Cosmic Humanist grants each individual the power of determining reality by creating or co-creating truth.

1.5.3 ALL IS ONE

It is important to understand that the belief that every individual is God and God is every individual is tied inextricably to the concept of consciousness. Because Cosmic Humanists have this “all is one” mentality, they necessarily believe that humanity can become attuned to all the powers of its godhood by achieving unity of consciousness. “Once we begin to see that we are all God,” says Beverly Galyean, “that we all have the attributes of God, then I think the whole purpose of human life is to reown the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence, and when we do that, we create back to that old, that essential oneness which is consciousness.”¹¹ Robert Muller says, “Only the unity of all can bring the well-being of all.”¹²

The concept of humanity’s unity, the idea that all is one, tends to support the theological concept of reincarnation. Virtually every “orthodox” adherent of the New Age movement believes that each individual’s soul was present in other material forms earlier in history and that it will manifest itself in still other forms after its present body dies. The body may pass away, but the soul will continue its quest for godhood in other bodies. This belief in reincarnation caused MacLaine, when recalling her daughter’s birth, to muse, “When the doctor brought her to me in the hospital bed on that afternoon in 1956, had she already lived many, many times before, with other mothers? Had

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

Mentor of Modern Mythologies: Joseph Campbell (d. 1987), American professor and writer, is best known for his work in comparative mythology and comparative religion and for mentoring a generation of Hollywood directors and screenwriters. In his influential book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), Campbell discusses the “monomyth” cycle of the hero’s journey, a pattern, he claims, found in many cultures. The monomyth involves the hero receiving a “call to adventure” and passing “threshold guardians” (often with the aid of a wise mentor or spirit guide) before entering a dreamlike world. There, after a series of trials, the hero achieves the object of his quest—often an atonement with the father, a sacred marriage, or an apotheosis (elevation to divine status). He then returns home. Campbell wrote that almost all hero myths, religious and secular, throughout history and across cultures, contain at least a subset of these patterns. Thus, Campbell concluded that all religions tell the same story. George Lucas was the first Hollywood filmmaker to publicly credit Campbell’s influence on his own work. Lucas stated that the *Star Wars* series re-invented mythology for today’s generation. Campbell’s influence also is seen in a number of other successful Hollywood films, including Disney’s 1993 film, *The Lion King*, and blockbuster series such as *The Matrix* and *The Legend of Bagger Vance*. More recently, computer game companies have used Campbell’s ideas for developing storyboarding techniques and new products.

¹¹ Cited in Francis Adeney, “Educators Look East,” *Spiritual Counterfeits Journal* (Winter 1981): 29. SCP Journal is published by Spiritual Counterfeits Project, P.O. Box 4308, Berkeley, CA 94704.

¹² Benjamin B. Ferencz and Ken Keyes, Jr., *Planethood* (Coos Bay, OR: Vision Books, 1988), 92.

she, in fact, been one herself? Had she, in fact, ever been my mother? Was her one-hour-old face housing a soul perhaps millions of years old?”¹³

In order to understand oneself (and one’s path to godhood), a person must be cognizant of at least some of his or her past lives. Gary Zukav explains: “If your soul was a Roman centurion, an Indian beggar, a Mexican mother, a nomad boy, and a medieval nun, among other incarnations, for example, . . . you will not be able to understand your proclivities, or interests, or ways of responding to different situations without an awareness of the experiences of those lifetimes.”¹⁴ Reincarnation can serve little purpose unless people can know about and learn from their past lives.

1.5.4 EVERYTHING IS GOD

Reincarnation, however, is not the only logical consequence of a theology based on the unity of God and man and the concept that all is one. If we cannot delineate between God and ourselves, how can we be certain that we can delineate between other living or dead things and God? Indeed, if all is one, perhaps everything that exists is God.

And so it is. Stars are God, water is God, plants are God, trees are God, the earth is God, whales and dolphins are God, everything is God. Cosmic Humanists worship the creation and the creator at the same time. For them, there is no difference.

The belief that everything is God and God is everything is known as **pantheism**. This ancient concept forms the theological foundation of the New Age movement. “Everything has divine power in it,” says Roman Catholic New Ager Matthew Fox, and this divine force is what gives the planet its “sacredness.”¹⁵ An example of pantheistic theology occurs in a New Age children’s book entitled *What is God?*: “There are many ways to talk about God. Does that mean that everything that everybody ever says about God is right? Does that mean that God is everything? Yes! God is everything great and small! God is everything far away and near! God is everything bright and dark! And God is everything in between! If everything is God, God is the last leaf on a tree, if everything is God, God is an elephant crashing through the jungle.”¹⁶

PANTHEISM: The belief that god is everything and everything is god

The god-as-cosmic-energy concept has been popularized in George Lucas’ now classic film series, *Star Wars*. In a 1999 interview with Bill Moyers, Lucas explained why he made the series, “With *Star Wars*, I consciously set about to re-create myths and the classic mythological motifs. I wanted to use those motifs to deal with issues that exist today. . . . I see *Star Wars* as taking all the issues that religion represents and trying to distill them down into a more modern and easily accessible construct . . . I’m telling an old myth in a new way.” What Lucas fails to mention is “the old myth” he refers to is Eastern religion, not western Christianity. In this way, New Age mysticism was thrust from the big screen into the consciousness of countless viewers, young and old.¹⁷ Weaving pantheistic religion throughout *Star Wars* was not an accident. While most viewers enjoyed this film saga for its entertainment value, producer Lucas sees his role as an educator as well as entertainer. He notes, “I’ve always tried to be aware of what I say in my films because all of us who make motion pictures are teachers, teachers with very loud voices.”¹⁸ Likewise, Irvin Kershner

¹³ Quoted in Smith, 12.

¹⁴ Gary Zukav, *The Seat of the Soul* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 29.

¹⁵ Mathew Fox, in an interview with Laura Hagar, “The Sounds of Silence,” *New Age Journal* (March/April 1989): 55.

¹⁶ Etan Boritzer, *What is God?* (Willowdale, CA: Firefly Books, 1990), 26.

¹⁷ “Of Myth and Men: A Conversation between Bill Moyers and George Lucas on the meaning of the Force and the true theology of *Star Wars*,” *Time*, April 26, 1999, 92.

¹⁸ Quote attributed to George Lucas in www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/lucas_g.html.

revealed his religious intention for directing: *The Empire Strikes Back*. Kershner stated in one interview,

“I wanna introduce some Zen here because I don’t want the kids to walk away just feeling that everything is shoot-em-up . . . but that there’s also a little something to think about here in terms of yourself and your surroundings.”¹⁹

1.5.5 CONCLUSION

The all-encompassing God of the Cosmic Humanist is not a personal God,²⁰ but merely *a* cosmic force. There is no transcendent God “out there” apart from His creation. God is the creation. Marilyn Ferguson states, “In the emergent spiritual tradition God is not the personage of our Sunday School mentality. . . . God is experienced as flow, wholeness . . . the ground of being. . . . God is the consciousness that manifests as Lila, the play of the universe. God is the organizing matrix we can experience but not tell, that which enlivens matter.”²¹

Unlike the Marxist and the Secular Humanist, the Cosmic Humanist believes in a supernatural realm consisting of spiritual relationships. However, the New Age version of God differs infinitely from the Christian concept of God. While the Christian believes that God created us and all that exists and that we can know His will only through the general revelation of nature and conscience and the special revelation of the Bible, the Cosmic Humanist believes that every person and all reality is God, and therefore that any “truth” our inner self discovers is God’s truth. If we fail to realize our godhood in this lifetime, never fear! We’ll soon have another incarnation and another chance to achieve Christ consciousness.

Ultimately, every person will achieve godhood, and total unity will be restored. New Age theology, like fairy tales, guarantees a happy ending.

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

In the 1977 original episode of *Star Wars*, Obi-wan Kenobi explains the nature of the god-force as he tells Luke Skywalker, “The Force is what gives the Jedi his power. It’s an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us and binds the galaxy together.” In four other scenes throughout the film, Obi-wan gives Luke additional information about the Force.

During an extended scene in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), Yoda, the Jedi master, takes Luke as an apprentice and instructs him more fully in the ways of the Force. In true guru fashion, Yoda tells Luke, “For my ally is the Force, and a powerful ally it is. Life breeds it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. You must feel the force around you, here between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere, yes, even between land and ship.”

Talk about the Force takes place in other scenes throughout the *Star Wars* series, providing a comprehensive initiation into Cosmic Humanist theology.

¹⁹ Irvin Kershner, *Rolling Stone*, July 24, 1980, 37.

²⁰ One of India’s Swamis, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada (d. 1977), has cast the *Bhagavad-Gita* into a “theistic science” mould and identifies Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa (Hare Krishna) as the Supreme Personality of the Godhead. According to Prabhupada, Hare Krishna (or God) descends to earth once every eight trillion, six hundred million years. See A. C. Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita: As It Is* (Los Angeles, CA: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, 2004), xviii, 33.

²¹ Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles, CA: J.P. Tarcher, 1980), 383.

Theology

Postmodernism

I might have written an account of how even atheists like myself are impressed, improved and morally instructed by [reading] *Pilgrim's Progress*.¹

— RICHARD RORTY

1.6.1 INTRODUCTION

Atheism is the theological belief that there is no God, no supernatural Creator, no Divine moral lawgiver, and no ultimate Judge of man's actions. It is the theological backbone of not only Secular Humanism and Marxism, but it is also the predominant theological view of classical Postmodernism.

Although more subtle in some ways than their fellow atheists,² Postmodernists have their theological underpinnings in atheism. Kevin J. Vanhoozer says, "Postmodernists agree with Nietzsche that 'God'—which is to say, the supreme being of classical theism—has become unbelievable, as have the autonomous self and the meaning of history."³

¹ Robert B. Brandom, ed., *Rorty and his Critics* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 344.

² See Mark Goldblatt's article "Can Humanists Talk to Poststructuralists?" in *Academic Questions* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 59. "In *Dissemination* Derrida states: 'It is thus not simply false to say that Mallarme is a Platonist or a Hegelian. But it is above all not true. And vice versa.'" As Goldblatt says, "the 'vice versa' undermines any attempt to get at what Derrida means." Derrida also regularly employs terminology that simultaneously affirms and denies. Says Goldblatt, "the only way to read Derrida on his own terms is mentally to insert the phrase 'or not' after every one of his statements."

³ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12.

1.6.2 MARXIST INFLUENCE

According to Glen Ward, the vast majority of mainstream Postmodernists emerged from the Marxist atheistic tradition.⁴ Michel Foucault, for example, was at one time a member of the French Communist Party and one other Maoist organization.⁵ Jean Baudrillard's writings were "within a loosely Marxist framework,"⁶ thinking it was his responsibility to "bring Marx up to date."⁷ Pierre Macherey was "a Marxist critic . . . concerned with how texts act to reproduce the values of capitalism."⁸ A sympathetic critic defined Postmodernism as Marxism-lite dressed in a French tuxedo, sippin' French wine in a French café on the campus of the *College International de Philosophie*. A less sympathetic critic referred to Postmodernism as linguistic sophistry seeking to save Marxism's irrelevant posterior.

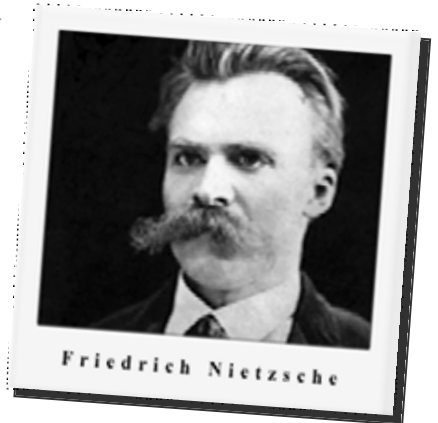
During its early years Marxism promised a this-world salvation for the enlightened irreligious. However, with the passage of time and countless body bags, the idea of a Marxist utopia was eventually revealed for what it was—a mirage. As a result, Postmodernism was birthed as a "wayward stepchild of Marxism, and in a sense a generation's realization that it is orphaned."⁹

Thus, Postmodernism became a reaction against Marxist dogma of violent revolutions, Marxist dialectical logic, and the Marxist worldview itself. On the other hand, Postmodernism is a continuation of other Marxist ideas, namely atheism, socialism, punctuated evolution, and the socially constructed self, among others.

1.6.3 NIETZSCHE'S INFLUENCE

In the pre-modern era God, revelation, and the clergy were the ultimate sources for truth about reality. However, in the modern era science and reason became the key resources for truth about reality. Well into the age of modernism, **Friedrich Nietzsche** stated the obvious from a modernist perspective: "God is dead; we have killed him." By this statement Nietzsche did not mean to imply that humanity killed God or that God was once alive and had died. Rather Nietzsche meant that *belief in* God was no longer necessary.

Foucault later checked the vital signs of modernity and discovered a corpse as cold as Nietzsche's God. He discovered that the modernist era had given way to another—Postmodernism. With this coming new era both Nietzsche and Foucault predicted a period of violence, death, destruction, and ultimately the end of humanity itself. Nietzsche put it down as follows:



Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!"—

As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked

⁴ See Glen Ward's *Teaching Yourself Postmodernism* (Chicago, IL: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 78f.

⁵ Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (New York, NY: New York Review Books, 2001), 150.

⁶ Ward, *Teaching Yourself Postmodernism*, 78.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁹ Lawrence E. Cahoon, ed., *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 4–5. Also see Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 75–76.

another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated?—Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes.

“Whither is God?” he cried; “I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

“How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.”

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. “I have come too early,” he said then; “my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves.

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: “What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?”¹⁰

Foucault elaborates: “. . . Nietzsche indicated the turning-point from a long way off; it is not so much the absence or the death of God that is affirmed as the end of Man . . . it becomes apparent, then, that the death of God and the last man are engaged in a contest with more than one round: is it not the last man who announces that he has killed God, thus situating his language, his thought, his laughter in the space of that already dead God, yet positing himself also as he who has killed God and whose existence includes the freedom and the decision of that murder? Thus, the last man is at the same time older and yet younger than the death of God; since he has killed God, it is he himself who must answer for his own finitude; but since it is in the death of God that he speaks, thinks, and exists, his murder itself is doomed to die; new gods, the same gods, are already swelling the future Ocean; Man will disappear.”¹¹

Both Nietzsche and Foucault agree that after humanity kills God, they sign their own death certificate. A worldview perspective reveals how theological beliefs have implications for other areas of life. Nietzsche and Foucault understand the connection.

¹⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. and comm. by Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York, NY: Random House, 1974), 181. For a clear and understandable analysis of Nietzsche’s anti-God and anti-Christ positions, see chapter nine of Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1994), 385. Students reading Foucault need to keep in mind his own admission, “I am fully aware that I have never written anything other than fictions.” Quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow’s *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 204. Cited in Myron B. Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 30.

1.6.4 ATHEISM . . . POSTMODERN STYLE

The classical Postmodern theological spectrum stretches from militant atheism to village atheist. All the major Postmodern writers were atheists, including Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Bataille, Barthes, Baudrillard, Macherey, Deleuze, Guattari, and Lacan.

Charlotte Allen noted that Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, “and their [followers] . . . were all militant atheists, with all the intolerance and totalitarian tendencies of that breed.”¹²

Yet at times Derrida himself was more cryptic about his atheism. Speaking before a convention of the American Academy of Religion in 2002, Derrida commented, “I rightly pass for an atheist.”¹³ However, when asked why he would not say more plainly ‘I am an atheist,’ he replied, “Maybe I’m not an atheist.”¹⁴ How can Derrida claim to be and not be an atheist? Both the existence or nonexistence of God requires a universal statement about reality, but Derrida is unwilling to make such an absolute claim. In this regard Derrida’s theology is consistent with his Postmodern inclination for ambiguity.¹⁵

Likewise, Richard Rorty at one time admitted he was an atheist,¹⁶ but in a subsequent work, *The Future of Religion*, he says he now agrees with Gianni Vattimo that “atheism (objective evidence for the nonexistence of God) is just as untenable as theism (objective evidence for the existence of God).”¹⁷ Thus, Rorty insists that atheism, too, must be abandoned in favor of something he labels “anti-clericalism.” Ecclesiastical institutions are dangerous, but not necessarily the local congregation of believers. “Religion,” he says, “is unobjectionable as long as it is privatized.”¹⁸

1.6.5 DECONSTRUCTION AND “THE DEATH OF GOD” THEOLOGIANS

If God is dead, the belief that there is no ultimate reality or eternal truth becomes a philosophical necessity. A firm believer in this, Derrida concluded further that words and sentences have no inherent meaning. He insisted that human beings construct reality through their use of language. In other words, as you read this page, you will construct your own meaning shaped by your culture and life experiences. The author’s meaning is thus “deconstructed” or altered by the reader. In other words, the author’s meaning becomes captive to the reader. As Ward says, “Deconstruction is a [literary] method of reading which effectively turns texts against themselves.”¹⁹

DEATH OF GOD THEOLOGY: A movement that flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, essentially promoting the idea that religion did not need to invoke “God” in the area of theology

For example, according to Derrida’s theory of deconstruction, the Bible is merely a book written by men who were locked in their own culture, experiences, and language. Thus, the Biblical authors were writing about their own subjective experiences, not communicating objective or eternal truths about God and humanity. Therefore, when someone reads the Bible

¹² *National Review*, September 13, 2004, 52.

¹³ See Simon Barrow’s “Derrida’s Enduring Legacy” on the FaithInSociety weblog.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Truth or Consequences: The Promise & Perils of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 131: “Derrida’s own statements are seldom unequivocal [having one meaning]. He either makes a statement and conjoins it with its contradictory, or makes a statement and then in another place says something very different on the subject.”

¹⁶ Brandom, *Rorty and his Critics*, 344.

¹⁷ Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo, *The Future of Religion* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), 33, quoted in *Philosophia Christi* 7, no. 2 (2005): 525.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ward, *Teaching Yourself Postmodernism*, 211.

today, he or she brings a personal interpretive grid to the text. The theory of deconstruction can thus be used to explain how some cultures can read the Bible and proceed to slaughter another race, while other cultures reading the same Bible build hospitals, schools, orphanages, and homeless shelters.

Derrida's theory of deconstruction influenced a group of theologians in 1960s England. Bishop John A.T. Robinson in his book *Honest to God* sought to explain what it meant to be a Christian in the Postmodern world. This group became known as the "Death of God" theologians. According to Graham Ward, these theologians²⁰ saw "the potential of [Derrida's] deconstruction for furthering their project of announcing the end of theology [the death of God]." ²¹

The "death of God" theologians fastened onto Derrida's idea that words refer only to other words in a textual setting and cannot be used to describe external realities such as God. They therefore claimed that God is not the Supreme Being who is literally "up there" in heaven somewhere, but instead we should think of God as being "out there" in a spiritual sense. God is "there" when we love another person, and this becomes the main Christian message. In this sense, the traditional concept of God ruling over His Creation is lifeless.²²

Alister McGrath in *The Twilight of Atheism* speaks of the relationship between Postmodernism, atheism, and deconstruction. He says, "Many Postmodern writers are, after all, atheist (at least in the sense of not actively believing in God). The very idea of deconstruction seems to suggest that the idea of God ought to be eliminated from Western culture as a power play on the part of churches and others with vested interests in its survival."²³

Derrida also supposed that the Western powers, because of their belief in the existence of God, went off the edge toward violence. However, this notion is far off base. The three "isms" of the 20th century responsible for the slaughter of tens of millions²⁴ (Communism, Nazism, and Fascism) were not exactly bastions of theism and Christianity. As a matter of fact, all three were grounded in atheism, evolution, and socialism—the very stuff of Postmodernism.

1.6.6 RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

The Postmodern idea that religious beliefs are private preferences has filtered down from the academy to the "unenlightened" commoner, many of whom now embrace pluralism.

Religious pluralism is the belief that one must be tolerant of all religious beliefs because

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: The conviction that we should be tolerant of all religious beliefs because no one religion can be true

no one religion can be true.²⁵ This notion agrees with the defining tenets of the Postmodern mood—skepticism of absolute truth, skepticism of a discernable foundation for knowledge, and, in the end, skepticism of all metanarratives (any overarching story that

²⁰ Besides Robinson, other "death of God" theologians included William Hamilton, Thomas J. J. Altizer, Mark C. Taylor, Robert Scharlemann, Charles Winquist, Max Meyer, and Carl Raschke.

²¹ Graham Ward, "Deconstructive Theology." Cited in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 76.

²² A good example of "Death of God theology" can be found in Mark C. Taylor, "A Postmodern Theology," in Cahoone, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 435–46.

²³ Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2004), 227.

²⁴ R. J. Rummel, *Death By Government* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

²⁵ D.A. Carson, "Christian Witness in an Age of Pluralism," in D.A. Carson and John Woodbridge, eds., *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F.H. Henry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993).

defines reality).²⁶ As such, many of those immersed in the present Postmodern culture deny religious truth claims.²⁷

This trend can be seen in how our present society often thinks about religious claims in general. In the pre-modern and modern eras, religious claims were judged to be either true or false. For example, either there is a God or there is not. Either Jesus is Savior or He is not. Either miracles happen or they do not.

However, in our Postmodern climate where truth is denied, religious claims are based on *preference* rather than on objective standards. For example, either you prefer the notion of the existence of God or you do not. Either you like the idea of Jesus being Savior or you do not. Either miracles appeal to you or they do not.²⁸ This attitude accommodates *all* religious preferences.

A problem arises when certain religions claim to go beyond personal preferences and convey objective truth, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But making exclusive truth claims runs counter to the Postmodern condition. For that reason, the only religions *not* tolerated are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

1.6.7 POST-CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANS

Another theological trend is that of Postmodern Christianity or post-conservatism, or the **emergent church**.²⁹ A small yet influential group of Christian thinkers make up the leadership of this group—Stanley Grenz, Nancy Murphey, Roger Olson, Robert Webber, James K. A. Smith, Merold Westphal, and **Brian McLaren**. These “Postmodern” thinkers should not be identified with such atheistic thinkers as Nietzsche, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, or Rorty.³⁰ McLaren makes it clear that although he and his followers accept the term “Postmodern,” they are not “nihilistic, relativistic, anti-Christian, and otherwise slimy and bad.”³¹ Most in this camp believe the term best applies to their disposition rather than their dogma.

POST-CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANITY

[OR EMERGENT CHURCH]: A relatively new movement of Christians who are incorporating elements of Postmodernism within their theology

Although the movement is young, a number of common characteristics are emerging: (1) a critique of the negative aspects of modernism;³² (2) a strong emphasis on community;³³ (3) a strong emphasis on putting one’s faith into action;³⁴ and (4) a reminder that not all truth is

²⁶ A more complete list of what Postmodernism is against can be found in Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 725.

²⁷ The logic of this position is very similar to the religious pluralism championed by some liberal theologians—John Hick, William Cantwell Smith, and S. Wesley Ariarajah. We must be careful not to equate these liberal theologians with outright Postmodernists. David S. Dockery, ed., *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2001), 135, 142.

²⁸ Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn’t What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and Other Wonders of the Postmodern World* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1990).

²⁹ The term “Post-conservative” is used by Roger Olson; Brian McLaren uses the term “emergent church;” Robert Webber uses the term “younger evangelicals;” and “Post-evangelical” has also been mentioned as a fitting label.

³⁰ Merold Westphal, *Overcoming onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy No. 21* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2001), xi.

³¹ Brian McLaren, “Why I Still Use the Word Postmodern,”

<http://www.emergingchurch.info/reflection/brianmclaren/index.htm>.

³² Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 10.

³³ John R. Franke, *The Character of Theology: An Introduction to Its Nature, Task, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books, 2005), 165–198.

³⁴ Ibid.



propositional³⁵—e.g. the *story* of “the good Samaritan” expresses the same truth that is found within the *proposition* “love your neighbor.”

On the other hand, several troubling traits are also emerging: (1) a denial of the Bible’s inerrancy;³⁶ (2) a skepticism of foundational knowledge;³⁷ and (3) an orthodoxy that is perhaps *too* generous.³⁸ Thus, although they claim to be evangelical,³⁹ the jury of orthodoxy is still in deliberations.⁴⁰

Myron B. Penner contends that culturally and philosophically the West is “in the throes of Postmodernity.”⁴¹ His suggestion: “Christians must come to terms with and work through the Postmodern turn and its implications for faith, not ignore or retreat from it. Above all, Christians must persevere in our faith through hope and love.”⁴² Penner warns Christians flirting with Postmodernism to be careful not to get caught up in the subjectivity of language to the point where words become emptied of all truth.⁴³

1.6.8 CONCLUSION

We recognize that some individuals become atheists because they think Darwin solved the question of life’s ultimate origins. Others become atheists because they look upon God’s moral order as “too restrictive.” Still others believe because they agree with Freud that, “God was a projection. When children have problems, they run to their father for protection. When adults have problems, they project their earthly father into the skies, and they run to this entity for comfort.”⁴⁴ Some look at all the evil in the world and decide that no loving God could allow such a situation.⁴⁵ In the end, however, Postmodernists offer no new rationale for defending their brand of atheism. Our critique of atheism has been presented in other sections of this work, so it will not be repeated here.

In response to religious pluralism, we contend that the problem with this system in particular is the problem with Postmodernism in general—namely that neither our perspectives nor our preferences can dictate reality. Real people may end up in a literal Hell

³⁵ See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture’s Diverse Literary Forms,” in D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 53–104.

³⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), 34, 70–84.

³⁷ Ibid. Also, see Nancey C. Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion, and Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 27.

³⁸ Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (El Cajon, CA; Grand Rapids, MI: Emergent YS; Zondervan, 2004). Also, see Jeremy Green’s online book review in the 2005 Volume 8 Denver Seminary Journal: <http://www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles2005/0400/0406.php>

³⁹ Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, eds., “Post-Conservative Evangelical Theology and the Theological Pilgrimage of Clark Pinnock,” in *Semper Refromandum: Studies in Honour of Clark H. Pinnock* (Carlisle, PA: Paternoster, 2003), 20.

⁴⁰ Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjos Helseth, and Justin Taylor, eds., *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*, 30.

⁴⁴ Ian S. Markham, ed., *A World Religious Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 24.

⁴⁵ McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism*, 229.

regardless of whether or not they prefer the doctrine of eternal punishment.⁴⁶ In the end, *reality is what it is* whether one prefers that reality or not. For example, many may not prefer a number of Christianity's tenets—creation, fall, salvation, judgment, abstinence, sobriety, etc. However, our preferences about Christianity or even reality itself cannot change the true nature of reality.

The Bible, of course, has a descriptive term for a person who says in his or her heart there is no God (Psalm 14:1). We will explore in later chapters the consequences of atheism as lived out in the areas of ethics, psychology, sociology, and each of the other disciplines. In these chapters we will find that those who embrace this theology have followed a foolish path indeed.

In the final analysis, atheism is a belief system of the intellectual elite (“the people of fashion”) because only they possess enough faith to believe in it. The common, everyday working man cannot believe that everything in the universe is a result of random chance. As Mary Midgley says, “It may simply not be within our capacity—except of course by just avoiding thought—to think of [the universe] as having no sort of purpose or direction whatever.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 193–4.

⁴⁷ Mary Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion* (London, UK: Routledge Classics, 2002), 159–160.

Philosophy

Christianity

A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion.¹

— SIR FRANCIS BACON

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Because it requires faith in biblical revelation, you might assume that the Christian worldview cannot possibly have a philosophy of its own. According to the secular worldviews, naturalism and materialism are grounded firmly in modern scientific methodology and enlightened human experience. How can we as Christians, who are required to postulate existence or reality outside the material realm, ever hope to prove that our beliefs are true, reasonable, rational, and worth living and dying for?

Unfortunately, some Christians adopt just such an attitude, concluding that their faith is indefensible. They attempt to avoid the whole problem by stating that what they believe is “beyond reason.” These Christians point to Colossians 2:8, where Paul writes “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy . . .” and from this they draw the conclusion that God does not want us to meddle in such a vain and deceitful discipline as philosophy. However, people who use this verse as an anti-philosophical proof-text often omit its ending, in which Paul describes the kind of philosophy he is warning against—philosophy “which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

The Bible does not ask us to abandon reason in order to accept its truth. “Come now,” records Isaiah, “and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they

¹ Hugh G. Dick, ed., *Select Writings of Francis Bacon* (New York, NY: Random House, 1955), 44.

shall be white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). The Apostle Peter encourages Christians to present logical, compelling reasons for their hope in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). But is this possible? Is Christian faith, and more specifically Christian philosophy, defensible?

C.E.M. Joad, who lived most of his life believing that the concept of God was unacceptable, finally concludes, “It is because . . . the religious view of the universe seems to me to cover more of the facts of experience than any other that I have been gradually led to embrace it.”² He concluded his long personal pilgrimage by admitting “I now believe that the balance of reasonable considerations tells heavily in favor of the religious, even of the Christian view of the world.”³ This is the same Joad who appeared on BBC radio with Humanist Bertrand Russell attacking Christianity.

It is because . . . the religious view of the universe seems to me to cover more of the facts of experience than any other that I have been gradually led to embrace it.

— C.E.M. JOAD

Many who finally begin to reflect on the deeper things of life—“How did I get here? Why am I here? Where am I going?”—simply discover that Christianity answers these questions more completely than any other worldview. Those

who earnestly seek truth will ultimately find themselves face-to-face with the God of the Bible. While some may enjoy debating about whether or not God exists, for the average person such debate is irrelevant—he or she is aware of His existence on a soul-deep level. Even today the vast majority of people (some polls place the figure as high as 95 percent) believe in a God, a fact Paul also found to be true in the Athens of his day (Acts 17:23).

2.1.2 FAITH AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The basic tenets of Christian philosophy are rational because they are held by average, rational men and women. But surely Christianity must still run into an epistemological problem—how does the Christian “know” without clashing with science and experience? How can the knowledge we gain through faith in Biblical revelation compare to knowledge gained by a scientific investigation of the universe?

The answer is not as difficult as you might imagine. All knowing requires faith. Faith precedes reason or, as W. J. Neidhardt puts it, “Faith correctly viewed is that illumination by which true rationality begins.”⁴ In other words, every worldview begins with a basic assumption about the nature of reality that cannot be proven by using the scientific method or logical deduction. This becomes the starting point from which to build a total view of life.

While Marxists and Humanists wish to portray science as primary knowledge and faith in biblical revelation as blind second-class **epistemology** or even superstition, the fact remains that all methods of knowing ultimately rely on certain assumptions. Edward T. Ramsdell writes, “The natural man is no less certainly a man of faith than the spiritual, but his faith is in the ultimacy of something

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other than the Word of God. The spiritual man is no less certainly a man of reason than the natural, but his reason, like that of every man, functions within the perspective of his faith.”⁵

² C.E.M. Joad, *The Recovery of Belief* (London, UK: Faber and Faber Limited, 1955), 16.

³ Ibid., 22.

⁴ Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 1:169. Henry mentions W.J. Neidhardt’s work “Faith, the Unrecognized Partner of Science and Religion” as the source for his comments.

⁵ Edward T. Ramsdell, *The Christian Perspective* (New York, NY: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), 42.

The basic problem of philosophy is not the problem of faith versus reason. “The crucial problem,” says Warren C. Young, “is that some thinkers place their trust in a set of assumptions in their search for truth, while other thinkers place their trust in a quite different set of assumptions.”⁶ That is, Humanists and Marxists place their trust in certain findings of science and experience, neither of which can be rationally demonstrated as the source of all truth.

Christians also appeal to science, history, and personal experience, but they know such avenues for discovering truth are not infallible. Christians know that scientists make mistakes and scientific journals can practice discrimination against views considered dangerous. Christians know that history can be perverted, distorted, or twisted and that personal experience is not a good source of fact or knowledge. On the other hand, Christians believe that Biblical revelation is true and that God would not mislead His children.

Christian philosophy does not reject reason or tests for truth. Christianity says the New Testament is true because its truths can be tested. Christians do not ask non-believers to put their faith in a revelation of old wives’ tales or fables, but instead to consider certain historical evidences that reason itself can employ as an attorney building a case uses evidences in the law to determine questions of fact. Christian epistemology is based on special revelation, which in turn is based on history, the law of evidence, and the science of archaeology.

Philosophical naturalists also make assumptions that they, by definition, accept on faith. All naturalists agree that there is no supernatural. “This point,” says Young, “is emphasized by the naturalists themselves without seeming to be at all troubled by the fact that it is an emotional rather than a logical conclusion.”⁷

Faith is critical in every philosophy. When developing a philosophy, we must be extremely careful to base our case on the most truthful assumptions—otherwise, should one of the assumptions prove to be untrue (as it appears the assumptions of the theory of evolution will be), the whole philosophy will crumble. If evolution crumbles (which is quite possible—Dr. Karl Popper believes evolution does not fit the definition of “a scientific theory”), Marxism and Humanism are intellectually dead.

So far, we have established two things regarding Christian philosophy: many hold it to be the most rational of all worldviews, and it requires no more faith than any other philosophy. Indeed, we could argue that it takes a great deal *more* faith to believe in the spontaneous generation of Darwinian evolution or the randomness of all nature (i.e., that the universe happened by accident) than it does to accept the Christian doctrine of Creator/Creation.

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

In *Revolutions*, the third of the Matrix trilogy, the final scene shows a girl asking the Oracle if she always knew Neo was “the One.” “Oh no,” replies the Oracle. “But I believed, I believed.” The Oracle’s statement reflects a common misconception about the nature of belief, or faith. Many people think faith refers to a strong belief apart from any reason or evidence to back it up. Yet, the Bible does not use “faith” in that way. According to Hebrews 11:1, faith “is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” The Greek terms used for “sure” and “certain” mean assurance and proof or conviction. Thus, the Bible defines faith as a sure conviction based on evidence, not a blind emotional state devoid of rational thought and evaluation.

⁶ Warren C. Young, *A Christian Approach to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 37.

⁷ Ibid., 182.

2.1.3 RECONCILING SCIENCE AND CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

People tend to believe in the most likely solution to a problem. That is why most people believe that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1) and “all things therein” (Acts 17:24). Jean Piaget, a child psychologist, has found that a seven-year-old believes almost instinctively that everything in the universe has a purpose.

Believing the truth of Genesis 1:1 makes more sense than believing that a series of cosmic accidents brought about the orderly, beautiful, meaningful cosmos. Two skeptics, Peter D. Ward and Donald Brownlee, wrote a work entitled *Rare Earth*⁸ in which they detail a number of incredibly precise measurements related to the elements and parameters of the earth that had to be exactly correct in order to sustain life on this planet. Yet they concluded that it all happened by accident. On the other hand, the producers of “The Privileged Planet” cannot accept the notion that the earth “got it just right” as a mark of chance. The God of the universe is responsible for such a magnificent creation.⁹

It has often been represented that the conclusions of science are hostile to the tenets of religion. Whatever grounds there may have been for such a view in the past, it is hard to see with what good reason such a contention could be sustained today.

— C.E.M. JOAD

The wise Christian philosopher recognizes the scientific method as a limited but valuable ally. In addition to lending support for the teleological argument (that design in the universe implies a Designer), science also shores up the cosmological argument (that God is the “first cause” of the universe). Joad reinforces the idea that science does not threaten Christianity, stating, “It has often been represented that the conclusions of science are hostile to the tenets of religion. Whatever grounds there may have been for such a view in the past, it is hard to see with what good reason such a contention could be sustained today.”¹⁰

Stephen D. Schwarz cites four particular scientific discoveries that support the conclusion that God exists: the Second Law of Thermodynamics (stating that the universe is running out of usable energy and cannot be infinitely old),¹¹ the impossibility of spontaneous generation of life from non-life (verified by Pasteur over 150 years ago), genetic information theory (which postulates that specified complexity, like that found in DNA, comes from a mind, never by chance),¹² and the Anthropic Principle (that the universe as well as planet earth are specifically “fine-tuned” to accommodate life).

For the Christian, then, science need not be an enemy—indeed, science should be accepted as a somewhat successful method of obtaining knowledge about God’s design in the universe. As C.S. Lewis says, “In science we have been reading only the notes to a poem; in Christianity we find the poem itself.”¹³

⁸ Peter D. Ward and Donald Brownlee, *Rare Earth: Why Complex Life is Uncommon in the Universe* (New York, NY: Copernicus, 2000).

⁹ “The Privileged Planet” was produced by Illustra Media (www.illustramedia.com).

¹⁰ Joad, *The Recovery of Belief*, 107.

¹¹ J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations For A Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003): “According to the second law of thermodynamics, processes taking place in a closed system always tend toward a state of equilibrium . . . The universe is, on a naturalistic view, a gigantic closed system, since it is everything there is there is nothing outside it. This seems to imply that, given enough time, the universe and all its processes will run down, and the entire universe will come to equilibrium. This is known as the heat death of the universe.”

¹² See Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996) for the workings of DNA.

¹³ Clyde S. Kilby, ed., *A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C.S. Lewis* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 240.

2.1.4 THE ORIGIN OF SCIENCE

An examination of the history of modern science reaffirms the supernaturalist's premise that science is not hostile to the Christian position. Modern science was founded by those who viewed the world from a Christian perspective. Francis Schaeffer writes, "Since the world had been created by a reasonable God, [scientists] were not surprised to find a correlation between themselves as observers and the thing observed—that is, between subject and object. . . . Without this foundation, modern Western science would not have been born."¹⁴

Christianity was "the mother of modern science."¹⁵ Norman L. Geisler and J. Kerby Anderson's *Origin Science* contains a chapter titled "The Supernatural Roots of Modern Science." Both Alfred North Whitehead and J. Robert Oppenheimer defended this view. Philosopher and historian of science Stanley L. Jaki notes that historically the belief in creation and the Creator was the moment of truth for science: "This belief formed the bedrock on which science rose."¹⁶ Jaki powerfully defends this position in the *Origin of Science* and the *Savior of Science*. Rodney Stark comes to the same conclusion.¹⁷

Re-examine the statements by Schaeffer and Jaki for a moment. Notice that each claim is grounded on the fact that science assumed an orderly universe. If we believe the universe is disorderly or chaotic, we would not have the philosophical basis for modern science, which assumes matter will behave in certain meaningful ways under controlled conditions. On earth, we always expect an apple to fall down rather than up because we believe in consistent law—the Law of Gravity. Lewis says people became scientific because they expected Law in Nature and "they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Legislator."¹⁸ In other words, the origin of modern science itself provides grounds for the teleological argument—the argument from design to Designer.



2.1.5 METAPHYSICS: ONTOLOGY/COSMOLOGY

The Christian view of **metaphysics**—of ultimate reality (**ontology** and **cosmology**)—is part of what C.S. Lewis termed "Mere Christianity." There are certain things virtually all Christians believe, and one is that God is the supreme source of all being and reality. He is the ultimate reality.

Because of this, we and the entire space-time creation, says Carl F.H. Henry, depend on the Creator-God "for its actuality, its meaning and its purpose."¹⁹ This creation is intelligible

METAPHYSICS: The study of ultimate reality

COSMOLOGY: The study of the structure, origin, and design of the universe

ONTOLOGY: The study of the existence of being

¹⁴ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976), 134.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Stanley L. Jaki, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* (South Bend, IN: Regnery Gateway, 1979).

¹⁷ Rodney Stark, *For The Glory Of God* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹⁸ Kilby, *A Mind Awake*, 234.

¹⁹ Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 5:336.

because God is intelligent and we can understand the creation and Creator because He made us in His image with the capacity to understand Him and His intelligent order.

The Christian view of metaphysics is clearly spelled out in Scripture: “In the beginning [of the cosmos] was the Word [Logos, mind, reason, though, wisdom, intelligence, idea, law, order, purpose, design], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same [Word] was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1–4).

The flow of this passage sets the parameters of Christian philosophy—mind before matter; God before people; plan and design before creation; life from life; and enlightenment from the Light. The orderly universe was conceived in the orderly and rational mind of God before it was created. Without the Logos there would be no cosmos. From the Christian perspective it is no surprise to see philosophers and scientists refer to the universe as a manifestation of mathematical law, order, design, and beauty.

It is no accident that at every level of the cosmos—sub-atomic, atomic, organic, inorganic, sub-human, human, earth, moon, sun, stars, galaxies—all things manifest amazing order and rationality that can be reasonably explained only as the result of a deliberate, creative act of God.

The current theory of evolution declares the cosmos to be the result of a series of random accidents. Christianity considers this view an entirely irrational notion. Such a position is tantamount to claiming that a skyscraper can come together without an architect, plan, or engineer. It doesn’t happen that way in the real world; only in the minds of those who assume there is no supernatural Designer.

2.1.6 MIND/BODY PROBLEM AND THE MENTAL PROOF

The supernaturalist believes that the mind, or consciousness, exists as a separate entity from the purely physical. As Christians, we believe that our mind is a reflection of the Universal Mind, and we see the mind as an additional proof for the existence of the supernatural.

We perceive that our thinking process is something different from the material world. Young says, “Man is so made that his spirit may operate upon and influence his body, and his body is so made that it may operate upon his mind or spirit.”²⁰ This distinction between brain and mind implies a distinction about the whole order of things: matter exists (i.e., the brain), and something other than matter exists (i.e., the mind). “We find in the created universe an important difference between beings which think, and beings which are spatially extended, or spiritual beings and material beings. . . . In the body and mind of man we see integrated interaction between the spiritual thinking being, and the material extended being.”²¹

Many Christian thinkers believe this distinction between the brain and the mind is intuitively obvious, and this is the beginning of the mental proof for the existence of a Higher Mind responsible for our minds. Other Christian thinkers begin with the untenability of the materialist position that the mind is only a material

MIND/BODY PROBLEM: The study of the relationship of the mind (e.g. mental events, mental functions, mental properties, and consciousness) to the physical body

MIND/BODY DUALISM:

Contents that the body is material in substance while the mind is immaterial

MIND/BODY MONISM:

Contents the body and mind are both purely material substances

²⁰ Ibid., 120.

²¹ James Oliver Buswell, Jr., *A Christian View of Being and Knowing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), 8.

phenomenon and draw the conclusion that because the materialist explanation is irrational, the supernatural explanation must be the acceptable position.

Young says, “Christian realists are contingent dualists but not eternal dualists. They hold that there are two kinds of substance: Spirit (or God) and matter which was created by God ex nihilo as Augustine suggested. Matter is not spirit, nor is it reducible to spirit, but its existence is always dependent upon God Who created it out of nothing.”²² Young chooses to use the term Christian **realism** to represent the Christian philosophy. In an effort to stress the existence of something other than the material, we employ the term **supernaturalism**.

At this juncture, science aids the Christian philosopher in undermining the materialist worldview. Writes Buswell, “The mind is not the brain. The ‘brain track’ psychology has failed. . . . It is a known fact that if certain parts of the brain are destroyed, and the functions

corresponding to those parts impaired, the functions may be taken up by other parts of the brain. There is no exact correspondence between mind and brain.”²³

Sir John Eccles has made a voluminous contribution to this discussion in recent years. His three works, *The Self and Its Brain* (with Karl

REALISM: The belief that what one encounters in the world exists independently of human thought

Popper), *The Human Mystery*, and *The Human Psyche* are considered classics in the field. Eccles maintains that having a mind means one is conscious, and that consciousness is a mental event, not a material event. He further contends that there are two distinct, different orders, i.e., the brain is in the material world and the mind is in the “world of subjective experience.”

Lewis cuts to the heart of the materialist and naturalist dilemma when he writes, “The Naturalists have been engaged in thinking about Nature. They have not attended to the fact that they were thinking. The moment one attends to this it is obvious that one’s own thinking cannot be merely a natural event, and that therefore something other than Nature exists. The Supernatural is not remote and abstruse: it is a matter of daily and hourly experience, as intimate as breathing.”²⁴

D. Elton Trueblood believes that supernaturalism is unavoidable: “How can nature include mind as an integral part unless it is grounded in mind? If mind were seen as something alien or accidental, the case would be different, but the further we go in modern science the clearer it becomes that mental experience is no strange offshoot. Rather it is something which is deeply rooted in the entire structure.”²⁵ Implied, then, is the existence of a God that could create an entire structure with mind as an integral part. Once an individual grants the existence of an orderly mind separate from the physical universe, belief in the Ultimate Mind becomes the only rational option.

We must remember, however, that God is much more than an “Ultimate Mind.” The mental proof may help to establish the existence of God, but the God of rational “proofs” alone is unworthy of worship—only the Christian God, in all His power and holiness, elicits awe and love in their proper proportion.

SUPERNATURALISM: The belief that reality is more than nature; that a transcendent agent intervenes in the course of natural law

²² Young, *A Christian Approach to Philosophy*, 37.

²³ Ibid., 142.

²⁴ Kilby, *A Mind Awake*, 205.

²⁵ D. Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1957), 206.

2.1.7 CONCLUSION

Supernaturalism is more than a philosophy in the narrow sense. Christian philosophy represents an entire worldview, a view that is consistent with the Bible throughout. In the end, you must choose between a materialist/naturalist worldview and a supernaturalist worldview—and your choice will create repercussions throughout every aspect of your life.

The Christian philosophy embraces the meaningful, purposeful life, a life in which you shape your beliefs according to a coherent, reasonable, truthful worldview. As a Christian with such a worldview, you will not be tossed to and fro by every secularist doctrine. “In the same way,” says Dr. Young, “it can be said that the Christian philosopher and theologian must be acquainted with the contending world-views of his age. Philosophy after all is a way of life, and the Christian believes that he has the true way—the true pattern for living. It is the task of the Christian leader to understand the ideologies of his day so that he may be able to meet their challenge. The task is a never-ending one, for, although the Christian’s worldview does not change, the world about him does. Thus the task of showing the relevance of the Christian realistic philosophy to a world in process is one which requires eternal vigilance. To such a task, to such an ideal, the Christian leader must dedicate himself.”^{26, 27}

²⁶ Young, *A Christian Approach to Philosophy*, 228–9.

²⁷ See Ronald H. Nash, *Life’s Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999); J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations For A Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); and Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Philosophy

Islam

Belief in angels originates from the Islamic principle that knowledge and truth are not entirely confined to the sensory knowledge or sensory perception alone.¹

— HAMMUDA ABDALATI

2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Islamic and Christian philosophies agree in some ways because both are theistic and share some Biblical roots. Both affirm the supernatural and miracles. Both also use faith and reason to support their religious beliefs. Thoughtful Muslims would agree with most of what J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig say in *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*.² In tandem with it, a fuller treatment of Islamic philosophy is available in Oliver Leaman's *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy*.³

¹ Hammuda Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (Indianapolis, IN: Amana Publications, 1975), 13.

² J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations For A Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

³ Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Also, a good summary of Islamic philosophy is in Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 265f.

2.2.2 TRADITIONS OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

The history of Islam contains significant examples of Islamic philosophers, who sought to appropriate what they could of various philosophical traditions: Al-Farabi (872–950); Avicenna (980–1037); Averroes (1126–1198); and Al-Ghazali (1058/1111).⁴

Islamic philosophers were greatly influenced by Greek philosophy and sought to use it to understand, defend, and further their faith. However, their theorizing often led them astray from orthodox Islamic teachings. For example, some of them believed, following Aristotle, that the material world was eternal, though they also affirmed that it existed only because God made it to exist. Others denied physical resurrection, substituting the continued existence of the soul. Still others proposed a replacement body that looked like the original, but actually was not. Most philosophers advocated the idea that God was a Necessary Being (a being who could not *not* exist) and that the world was dependent upon God for its existence.⁵

The **Kalam Cosmological Argument** for the existence of God was developed by Islamic philosophers and is both commended and employed by Christian philosophers today. The cosmological argument, for example, is the argument from creation to a Creator. ‘It argues *a posteriori*, from effect to cause, and is based on the principle of causality. This states that every event has a cause, or that every thing that begins has a cause. The Kalam (Arabic: ‘eternal’) argument is a horizontal (linear) form of the cosmological argument. The universe is not eternal, so it must have had a Cause. That Cause must be considered God. This argument has a long and venerable history among such Islamic philosophers as Alfarabi, Al Ghazali, and Avicenna. Some scholastic philosophers also used it, especially Bonaventure.’⁶

KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT: A rational reflection of three exhaustive dilemmas regarding the origin of the cosmos: 1) Did the universe have a beginning or has it always existed? 2) Was the beginning caused or uncaused? 3) Is the agent of cause personal or impersonal?

Some Islamic philosophers ventured into mysticism. Rahman asserts that much of the Islamic philosophic tradition fell away from orthodox Islam, but was retained and furthered in Sufism, a semi-mystic sect of Islam.

Though some traditionalist Muslims believe such ventures into philosophy inherently conflict with the Qur’an and the Hadith, many others believe such attempts to explain and defend Islam with philosophical tools are entirely appropriate (though they would not be able to affirm *all* that Islamic philosophers have concluded).

Though some traditionalist Muslims believe such ventures into philosophy inherently conflict with the Qur’an and the Hadith, many others believe such attempts to explain and defend Islam with philosophical tools are entirely appropriate (though they would not be able to affirm *all* that Islamic philosophers have concluded).

2.2.3 AFFIRMING SUPERNATURALISM

Islam argues for the existence of entities beyond the natural world; affirmation of the existence of God, for example, illustrates that Islam denies naturalism in favor of super-

⁴ Al-Ghazali was a brilliant Muslim scholar, a Sufi, who challenged the philosophers and sought to defend orthodox Islamic theology.

⁵ See the discussion in Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 117–127, as well as the full-scale survey and discussion in Leaman.

⁶ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999), 399.

naturalism. Islam also affirms the existence of the human spirit beyond death, as well as the existence of angels and jinn.

Abdalati writes, ‘The true Muslim also believes in the angels of God. They are purely spiritual and splendid beings whose nature requires no food or drink or sleep. They have no physical desires of any kind nor material needs. They spend their days and nights in the service of God. There are many of them, and each is charged with a certain duty. If we cannot see the angels with our naked eyes, it does not necessarily deny their actual existence . . . Belief in angels originates from the Islamic principle that knowledge and truth are not entirely confined to the sensory knowledge or sensory perception alone . . .’⁷

In admitting the existence of angels, Abdalati also alludes to the Islamic view of epistemology: not all things may be known through human senses, nor may we limit the field of existence to what our senses perceive.

2.2.4 LIFE AFTER DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Fundamental to Islam is the belief in final judgment, necessitating an implied belief in life after death. Muslims further affirm the bodily resurrection of the dead (though they deny that Jesus died and was resurrected). ‘See thee not that God, Who created the heavens and the earth . . . is able to give life to the dead? Yea, verily He has power over all things (Qur’an 46:33). And he [unbelieving man] makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own (origin and) Creation: He says, ‘Who can give Life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?’ Say, ‘He will give them Life Who created them for the first time! For He is well-versed in every kind of creation’’ (36:78–79).

2.2.5 MIRACLES

The story of Islam begins with Muhammad receiving divine visions and communicating with the angel Gabriel, indicating an acceptance of the supernatural. Indeed, the Qur’an affirms that prophets of old performed many miracles. Consider some passages regarding Moses:

(Pharaoh) said: ‘If indeed thou hast come with a Sign, show it forth, if thou tellest the truth.’ Then (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)! And he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to all beholders! (7:106–107)

Said Moses [to the sorcerers of Pharaoh’s court]: ‘Throw ye (first).’ So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and struck terror into them: for they showed a great (feat of) magic. We put it into Moses’ mind by inspiration: ‘Throw (now) thy rod’: and behold, it swallows up straightaway all the falsehoods which they fake! Thus truth was confirmed and all that they did was made of no effect. (7:116–118)

‘Then we sent Moses and his brother Aaron, and with Our Signs and Authority manifest.’ (23:45; see, 7:106–108)

⁷ Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, 13.

The miracles Jesus performed are also acknowledged.

Then will God say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother . . . and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold, thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold, I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the Clear Signs. . . . (5:113)

These stories presuppose a view of supernaturalism wherein God intervenes in the world (miracles) and seeks to convey His will to human beings (revelation). Orthodox Islamic philosophy affirms the occurrence of miracles and the existence of supernatural beings.

2.2.6 MUHAMMAD’S LACK OF MIRACLES

Oliver Leaman observes that despite a stated belief in miracles, ‘it is worth emphasizing that Islam as a religion does not make much use of miracles.’⁸ Leaman is referring to the fact that the Qur’an records Muhammad performing no miracles in support of his claim to be a prophet, a lack that led people to challenge his claims.

And the unbelievers say: ‘Why is not a Sign sent down to him [Muhammad] from his Lord?’ But thou art truly a warner and to every people a guide. (13:7)

God hath heard the taunt of those who say, ‘Truly, God is indigent and we are rich!’ We shall surely record their word and (their act) of slaying the Prophets in defiance of right, and We shall say: ‘Taste yet the Penalty of scorching Fire! This is because of the (unrighteous deeds) which your hands sent on before ye: For God never hams those who serve Him.’

Any man can do what Mahomet has done; for he performed no miracles . . . No man can do what Christ has done.

— BLAISE PASCAL

They also said: ‘God took our promise not to believe in an apostle unless He showed us a sacrifice consumed by fire (from heaven).’ Say: ‘There came to you Apostles before me [Muhammad] with Clear Signs and even with what ye ask for: why then did ye slay them, if ye speak the truth?’

Then if they reject thee, so were rejected apostles before thee, who came with Clear Signs, Books of dark prophecies, and the Book of Enlightenment. (3:181–184)

We could suppose that ‘the greatest of the prophets’ of Islam would perform the greatest of miracles. Jesus was the greatest prophet in the Bible and He walked on water, multiplied loaves of bread and fishes to feed thousands, and was resurrected from the dead (though Muslims deny it). Throughout His lifetime, Jesus performed great and wondrous signs to support His claim to be Israel’s Messiah. Paul notes that even the apostles performed miracles (‘The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders, and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance’ 2 Corinthians 12:12). Muhammad not only claimed to be a prophet of God, he also claimed to be greater than Jesus. In this light, the conclusion of the Christian philosopher Blaise Pascal is apropos:

⁸ Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy*, 102.

‘Any man can do what Mahomet has done; for he performed no miracles . . . No man can do what Christ has done.’⁹

2.2.7 MUHAMMAD AND BIBLICAL PROPHECY

Christianity and Islam conflict not on the *possibility* of the miraculous, but on the content and competing claims attending such miracles. For instance, the Muslim convictions that Muhammad is a prophet and the Qur’an is divine revelation are convictions with which Christians disagree. Given Muhammad’s denial of the deity, death, and resurrection of Jesus, Christians simply cannot see Muhammad as a reliable source of information, let alone a prophet of God.

Muslims believe that the Qur’an is only one of several holy books (including the Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David, and the Gospel of Jesus). However, Muslims’ belief that the Qur’an is the only holy book preserved through time without error conflicts sharply with the Christian belief in God’s preservation of the Bible (a belief confirmed by impressive historical evidence). Muslim apologists join forces with critics of the Bible, asserting that biblical miracles and narratives are merely legends.

One of the best ways to illustrate the contrasts between Muslim and Christian belief relates to the Muslim belief that passages in the Bible foretell Muhammad’s coming. If these Islamic claims were true, then Christians would be obligated to become Muslims. But if these claims are not true, then an important support of the Islamic worldview is lost. Muslims appeal to Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah, Habakkuk, and the Gospel of John. Most prominent among these references are Deuteronomy 18:15,18 and John 14:16.

2.2.8 DEUTERONOMY 18:15,18

Muslims believe the promised prophet in the following Old Testament verses is Muhammad rather than Jesus: ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among your own brothers. You must listen to him . . . I [God] will raise up for them a prophet like you [Moses] from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him’ (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18).

Moses says in these verses that God will raise up (1) a prophet, (2) like Moses, (3) from among the Israelites, that (4) He will put His words in his mouth, and (5) he will proclaim to the Israelites everything God commands him. The earliest Christians believed that this prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who was a prophet, as well as God incarnate.

Several Bible passages record that Jesus describes Himself as a prophet: ‘And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor’ (Matthew 13:57; cf. Mark 6:4 and John 4:44). ‘In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!’ (Luke 13:33).

Not only does Jesus describe Himself as a prophet, but some of the people of Israel do as well. John writes about Jesus miraculously feeding five thousand people: ‘After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world’’ (John 6:14). Matthew writes about Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem: the crowds proclaimed, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee’ (Matthew 21:11). Luke records part of a conversation between Jesus and some of His

⁹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, #600, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pascal/pensees.x.html> (Accessed May 12, 2006).

followers after His crucifixion. While their eyes were temporarily blinded to the fact that they were actually talking to Jesus, their description of Him as a prophet remains: ‘One of them, named Cleopas, asked [Jesus], ‘Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?’ ‘What things?’ [Jesus] asked. ‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people’’ (Luke 24:18–19).

Peter and Stephen also proclaimed the same message, specifying that Jesus was the promised prophet like Moses: ‘Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people’’ (Acts 3:19–23) Here Peter quotes the prophecy from Deuteronomy 18, applying it to Jesus (see also Stephen’s speech in Acts 7:37–53).

These passages show that according to the New Testament authors, including Jesus Himself, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18 long before Muhammad arrived.

2.2.9 JESUS AND MOSES

Muslims contend that Jesus could not have fulfilled the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18 because He did not proclaim the law like Moses. However, the biblical account clearly shows that Jesus sought to restore the people of God to the purity of the law. This is seen most clearly in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Consider Jesus’ thesis statement in Matthew 5:17–20: ‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.’

In proclaiming the endurance of the law, as well as the importance of obeying the law, Jesus surely sounds like Moses (see Deuteronomy 30:11–16). In addition, Jesus gave laws to His people. In John 14:34, Jesus says, ‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.’ Later New Testament authors even speak of ‘the law of Christ’ (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21).

So, Jesus is a prophet and, like Moses, a proclaimer of the law, but Muslims do not agree that the phrase ‘from among their brothers’ refers to an Israelite prophet. They believe the passage refers to non-Israelites, as it does in Deuteronomy 2:4 and 2:8, which refers to the descendants of Esau.

Yet within the context of Deuteronomy 18:15,18 ‘brethren’ cannot be taken to mean anything other than a reference to fellow Israelites. For example, Deuteronomy 17:15 provides the stipulation for the installment of a king over Israel. He was to be ‘from among your own brothers,’ not ‘a foreigner’ (and Muhammad definitely was a foreigner to Israel). The king was to write a copy of the law for himself and read it all the days of his life, so he will not ‘consider himself better than his brothers’ (17:20). Deuteronomy 18:2 explains that the Levites would not be granted an allotment of the promised land, having ‘no inheritance among their brothers.’ And as the Israelites prepare for the battles they will face as they enter the promised land, they are told that if one of them is fearful, ‘Let him go home so that his brothers will not become disheartened too’ (20:8). Thus Jesus fulfills completely this aspect

of the prophecy, for He (in contrast to Muhammad) was an Israelite (see the genealogies of Matthew 1 and Luke 3).

In addition to the evidence that Jesus, His disciples, and other New Testament authors agree that Deuteronomy 18:15,18 was fulfilled in Jesus, John says that the words Jesus spoke were from God and that He proclaimed them to Israel: ‘Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from him [God] who sent me’ (John 7:16). ‘So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me’’ (John 8:28). ‘For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it’ (John 12:49).

That Jesus proclaimed the word of God to Israel is a truth evident in even a cursory reading of the New Testament gospels. The weight of the evidence supports the Christian conviction that the promise of Deuteronomy 18:15,18 was fulfilled in Jesus, not in Muhammad. Thus Jesus’ challenge rings true, ‘If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me’ (John 5:46).

2.2.10 JOHN 14:16—ANOTHER COUNSELOR: MUHAMMAD?

Muslims also believe the promised Counselor or Comforter in the following New Testament verse is Muhammad rather than the Holy Spirit: ‘And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever’ (John 14:16). Yusuf Ali makes the case in a footnote to Qur’an 3:81:

That argument is: You (People of the Book) are bound by your own oaths, sworn solemnly in the presence of your own Prophets. In the Old Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in Deut. xviii. 18; and the rise of the Arab nation in Isaiah, xlii. 11, for Kedar was a son of Ismail and the name is used for the Arab nation: in the New Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in the Gospel of St. John, xiv. 16, xv. 26, and xvi.7: the *future* Comforter cannot be the Holy Spirit as understood by Christians, because the Holy Spirit already was present helping and guiding Jesus. The Greek word translated ‘Comforter’ is ‘Paracletos’, which is an easy corruption from ‘Periclytos’, which is almost a literal translation of ‘Muhammad’ or ‘Ahmad’...¹⁰

Yusuf Ali goes further in a footnote to Qur’an 61:6.

‘*Ahmad*,’ or ‘*Muhammad*,’ the Praised One, is almost a translation of the Greek word *Periclytos*. In the present Gospel of John, xiv. 16, xv. 26, and xvi. 7, the word ‘Comforter’ in the English version is for the Greek word ‘*Paracletos*,’ which means ‘Advocate,’ ‘one called to the help of another, a kind friend’ rather than ‘Comforter.’ Our doctors contend that *Paracletos* is a corrupt reading for *Periclytos*, and that in their original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our holy Prophet *Ahmad* by name.¹¹

Simply put, the argument is that in New Testament Greek manuscripts the word *paracletos* is a corruption of *periclytos*. But there is absolutely no manuscript evidence to support this claim. Of the over 5,000 manuscripts now available, not one witnesses to *periclytos*, making the charge of textual corruption in this example without historical or textual support.

¹⁰ A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’an*, 144, n. 416.

¹¹ Ibid., 1540, n. 5438.

Further, while Muslims claim that identifying the promised Counselor with the Holy Spirit is a misinterpretation, Jesus states this exact connection in the context of John 14:16: 'But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you' (John 14:26). Muslims can claim that this statement was made up by later Christians, but such an accusation would need at least *some* evidence.

Numerous other difficulties attend the Muslim attribution of John 14:16 to Muhammad. The Counselor was to be with Jesus' early disciples 'forever' (14:16), but Muhammad was *never* with them, nor is the answer that the message of Muhammad has continued to this day in the Qur'an a sufficient response. Jesus also said the Counselor would be 'in you' (14:17), which harmonizes perfectly with the role of the Holy Spirit, but not Muhammad. The Counselor would also be sent in Jesus' name (14:26), but Muhammad was not.

We hope that any Muslim who would seek to accredit the prophecy of John 14:16 to Muhammad would first read John 14–16 in its entirety. As these chapters clearly demonstrate, the qualities of the Counselor cannot be plausibly attributed to Muhammad.

Muslims use additional Bible passages to support their claim that the Bible prophesies the coming of Muhammad, but the same difficulties that accompany their attempts to use Deuteronomy 18:15,18 and John 14:16 in this way trouble the other (less significant) passages.

Philosophy

Secular Humanism

Humanism is naturalistic and rejects the supernaturalistic stance with its postulated Creator-God and cosmic Ruler.¹

— ROY WOOD SELLARS

2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Secular Humanists list a variety of philosophical positions that fit their worldview: **naturalism**, physicalism, materialism, organicism, or other theories “based upon science.” But this choice is not as broad as it sounds—each doctrine listed holds to the same core tenet: the material world is all that exists. In fact, each option presented is really little more than a synonym for naturalism, the philosophical view of Secular Humanism.

NATURALISM [OR MATERIALISM]: The philosophical belief that reality is composed solely of matter and that all phenomena can be explained in terms of natural causes e.g., law of gravity

This dogmatic position is summarized in *Humanist Manifesto II*: “Nature may indeed be broader and deeper than we now know; any new discoveries, however, will but enlarge our knowledge of the natural.”² The essence of naturalism, then, is this—whatever exists can be explained by natural causes. Thus, in a Humanist’s mind, the supernatural cannot exist. While some Humanists prefer to call themselves organicists or materialists (or “scientific”

¹ Paul Kurtz, ed., *The Humanist Alternative* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1973), 135.

² Paul Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto II* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1980), 16.

materialists), the name makes little difference. As **Corliss Lamont** notes, “Materialism denotes the same general attitude toward the universe as Naturalism.”³

2.3.2 DENIAL OF THE SUPERNATURAL

The key tenet of naturalism is its denial of the supernatural. People either believe that only the supernatural exists, or that some supernatural things and some natural things exist, or that only natural things exist. By “supernatural,” philosophers generally mean things that are not material, such as the soul, personality, or God. Naturalists deny everything that is not made up of matter or that does not exist in nature.

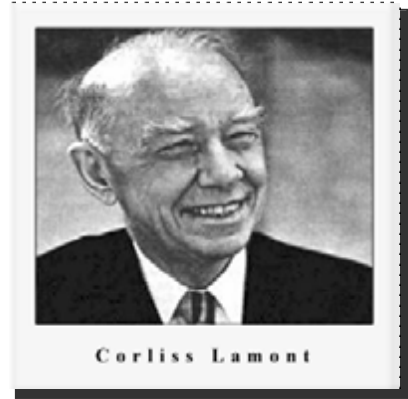
This current of thought runs throughout Humanist beliefs. Sellars writes, “Christianity, for example, had a supernaturalistic framework in a three-tier universe of heaven, earth and hell. . . . The Humanist argues that the traditional Christian outlook has been undercut and rendered obsolete by the growth of knowledge about man and his world.”⁴ Humanists rely on this “growth of knowledge” to provide a more accurate worldview. Naturalism insists that an object be observable and measurable to be believable.

Naturalists are especially unwilling to believe in a universe that exudes too much design, because this design could be construed as evidence for a Designer.⁵ The naturalist cannot accept a Designer or a personal First Cause. Henry Miller plainly states, “To imagine that we are going to be saved by outside intervention, whether in the shape of an analyst, a dictator, a savior, or even God, is sheer folly.”⁶

Naturalistic Humanism, then, is a complete philosophy. Corliss Lamont puts it this way: “To define naturalistic Humanism in a nutshell: it rejects all forms of supernaturalism, pantheism, and metaphysical idealism, and considers man’s supreme aim as working for the welfare and progress of all humanity in this one and only life, according to the methods of reason, science and democracy.”⁷ This definition is important from a philosophical perspective because it outlines both the metaphysics and epistemology of naturalism. This chapter will focus on the metaphysics (specifically the cosmology) of naturalism first, and then explore its epistemology.

2.3.3 METAPHYSICS: COSMOLOGY

Cosmology refers to the philosophical study of the universe, especially its origin. Secular Humanists believe that the physical universe came into being by accident and that it is all that exists. Denying the existence of a supernatural Creator, Secular Humanists instead believe that eternal matter spontaneously generated life, and ultimately the human mind, through an evolutionary process.



³ Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York, NY: Frederick Ungar, 1982), 28.

⁴ Kurtz, *The Humanist Alternative*, 133.

⁵ Paul Amos Moody, *Introduction to Evolution* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), 497: “The more I study science the more I am impressed with the thought that this world and universe have a definite design—and a design suggests a designer. It may be possible to have design without a designer, a picture without an artist, but my mind is unable to conceive of such a situation.” Also, William A. Dembski, *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance Through Small Probabilities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999). High school students will enjoy observing “The Privileged Planet” distributed by Illustra Media at www.illustramedia.com.

⁶ Roger E. Greeley, ed., *The Best of Humanism* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 149.

⁷ Ibid.

Carl Sagan, the 1981 recipient of the Humanist of the Year award, sums up the cosmology of naturalism: “The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”⁸ For Secular Humanists, no personal First Cause exists—only the cosmos. “Nature is but an endless series of efficient causes. She cannot create but she eternally transforms. There was no beginning and there can be no end.”⁹



Secular Humanists have no need for a God in order to explain the origin of the cosmos. Humanists assign a different basis for reality to the universe, a non-sequential group of first causes, avoiding God as the First Cause. Lamont calls these the “ultimate principles of explanation and intelligibility.”¹⁰ These ultimate principles are a sufficient cause for the rest of reality. Interestingly, Paul Kurtz, editor of *Free Inquiry*, pays his respects to science, saying that “the discoveries of astronomy, physics, relativity theory, and quantum mechanics have increased our understanding of the universe,”¹¹ but he never mentions the “Big Bang”

metaphor. Acknowledging such a metaphor suggests a creative point like that in Genesis 1:1, which is outside the purview of Secular Humanist cosmology.

Worth noting, in contrast, is the controversy among Christians about the age of the universe, not whether a Big Bang occurred (if a Big Bang refers to the moment of Creation).¹²

Also worth noting is Einstein’s conclusion regarding the origin of the cosmos: “The harmony of natural law . . . reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection.”¹³ More recently, Robert Jastrow startled his fellow scientists with a similar conclusion: “The **Anthropic principle** is the most interesting development next to the proof of the creation, and it is even more interesting because it seems to say that science itself has proven, as a hard fact, that this universe was made, was designed, for man to live in. It is a very theistic result.”¹⁴

ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE: Either of two principles in cosmology: (a) conditions that are observed in the universe must allow the observer to exist; (b) the universe must have properties that make inevitable the existence of intelligent life

⁸ Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York, NY: Random House, 1980), 4. For an in-depth look at how Sagan fared in his confrontation with Immanuel Velikovsky, see Charles Ginenthal, *Carl Sagan & Immanuel Velikovsky* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon Publications, 1995).

⁹ Greeley, *The Best of Humanism*, 162.

¹⁰ Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, 170–1.

¹¹ Paul Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto 2000: A Call For A New Planetary Humanism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), 15.

¹² See Normal L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House), 2:632f, for a good summary of the issue. *Creation and Time* by Hugh Ross presents the case for an older universe, while *Refuting Compromise* by Jonathan Sarfati presents the case for a younger universe, along with Walter Brown, *In The Beginning* (Phoenix, AZ: Center for Scientific Creation, 2003) and volumes 1 and 2 of Larry Vardiman, Andrew A. Snelling, Eugene F. Chaffin, *Radioisotopes: And The Age Of The Earth* (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 2005).

¹³ Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (New York, NY: Crown, 1982), 40, quoted in Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 2:666.

¹⁴ Robert Jastrow, “A Scientist Caught Between Two Faiths,” *Christianity Today*, August 6, 1982, quoted in Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 2:591.

2.3.4 METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology refers to our theory of knowledge and answers the questions *How much can we know about reality?* and *How do we obtain this knowledge?* Secular Humanist naturalism answers that we can know everything in the physical world (which is the extent of what exists) through science. According to Roy Wood Sellars, “The spirit of naturalism would seem to be one with the spirit of science itself.”¹⁵

Most Secular Humanists agree with Sellars. The *Humanist Manifesto II* states, “Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence,”¹⁶ eliminating the possibility of the supernatural, which is neither measurable nor observable. Naturalists, whose epistemology is grounded in science, find truth in what they can see with their eyes—that is, only the physical universe.

The epistemology of Secular Humanism shapes its metaphysics. A worldview consistent with the belief that the physical universe is all that exists and that science is our only source of knowledge precludes the existence of knowledge about anything supernatural. However, belief in science as the ultimate means to knowledge (truth) requires as much faith as belief in the existence and truth of the supernatural. Admitting this self-contradiction, Carl Sagan announced, “[S]cience has itself become a kind of religion.”¹⁷

Lamont rationalizes the Secular Humanist position of placing faith in science rather than in religion: “It is sometimes argued that since science, like religion, must make ultimate assumptions, we have no more right to rely on science in an analysis of the idea of immortality than on religion. Faith in the methods and findings of science, it is said, is just as much a faith as faith in the methods and findings of religion. In answer to this we can only say that the history of thought seems to show that reliance on science has been more fruitful in the progress and extension of the truth than reliance on religion.”¹⁸

The epistemology of the naturalist is inseparable from science. In order to properly know and understand the world around us, Secular Humanist naturalism requires that we apply science to every aspect of life, including the social and the moral.

2.3.5 THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM

The epistemology and metaphysics of naturalism create a specific problem for Secular Humanist philosophy. This dilemma is traditionally referred to as the mind-body problem, which asks *Does the mind exist solely within nature, just as the body does, or is the mind more than matter?*

Humanists believe that the mind (also referred to as consciousness, personality, or soul) is simply a manifestation of the brain. The mind is an extension of the natural world, explainable in purely physical terms. This stance arises from the Secular Humanist epistemological belief that knowledge comes from science and science supports the belief that life arose spontaneously and has evolved to its present state. Since matter is all that exists, the mind is a strictly physical phenomenon. The belief that the mind is no more than a conglomeration of matter is called *monism*. The opposing view, that the mind supersedes mere matter, is called *dualism*.

Secular Humanist philosophy thus concludes that the amazingly complex human mind is the result of evolutionary processes. According to Lamont, “Naturalistic Humanism . . .

¹⁵ Roy Wood Sellars, *Evolutionary Naturalism* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1922), 5.

¹⁶ *The Humanist Manifesto II*, 16.

¹⁷ Carl Sagan, *UFO's—A Scientific Debate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), xiv.

¹⁸ Corliss Lamont, *The Illusion of Immortality* (New York, NY: Frederick Ungar, 1965), 124–5.

take[s] the view that the material universe came first and that mind emerged in the animal man only after some two billion years of biological evolution upon this material earth.”¹⁹

2.3.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE MONISTIC VIEW

Based on the Secular Humanist belief in a monistic view of the mind, two further implications are exposed. The first deals with the question of humanity’s immortality. Lamont’s answer is the only one open to the naturalist: “If . . . the monistic theory of psychology is true, as Naturalism, Materialism, and Humanism claim, then there is no possibility that the human consciousness, with its memory and awareness of self-identity intact, can survive the shock and disintegration of death. According to this view, the body and personality live together; they grow together; and they die together.”²⁰

Therefore, denial of life after death is inherent in the Secular Humanist worldview. Lamont goes further in stating that a belief in mortality is the first step to becoming a Humanist. “The issue of mortality versus immortality is crucial in the argument of Humanism against supernaturalism. For if men realize that their careers are limited to this world, that this earthly existence is all that they will ever have, then they are already more than half-way on the path toward becoming functioning Humanists.”²¹

The second implication of the monistic view of the mind arises from the belief that the mind arose through evolutionary processes. If this is so, the mind is still evolving, and a better mutation is not unlikely. Some Humanists believe that this more efficient mind is arising today in the form of computer technology. Victor J. Stenger, author of *Not By Design*, claims, “Future computers will not only be superior to people in every task, mental or physical, but will also be immortal.” He believes it will become possible to save human “thoughts which constitute consciousness” in computer memory banks, as well as program computers in such a way as to give them the full range of human thought. He says, “If the computer is ‘just a machine,’ so is the human brain.” Stenger also foresees the possibility of computers becoming the next step in the evolutionary chain—the new higher consciousness. He concludes, “Perhaps, as part of this new consciousness, we will become God.”²²

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

I Robot (a 2004 film based on novelist Isaac Asimov’s 1950 seminal sci-fi work “I, Robot”)—The original collection consisted of a series of short stories detailing a world where humans and robots coexisted—the latter operated under a preset series of laws that prevented them from harming or allowing harm to occur to their human counterparts. The 2004 film by the same name, starring Will Smith and James Cromwell, offers bits and pieces of Asimov’s original work and thinking.

Stephen Spielberg’s 2001 film, *A.I.*, is a story about a highly advanced robotic boy (Haley Joel Osment) longing to become “real” so that he can regain the love of his human mother.

Such speculations are not mere science fiction for the Secular Humanist. In their naturalistic, monistic worldview, the human mind resulted from the evolution of matter and natural selection is still at work to improve the mind through evolution.

¹⁹ Corliss Lamont, *Voice in the Wilderness* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1975), 82.

²⁰ Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, 82–3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

²² Victor J. Stenger, *Not By Design* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 188–9.

Philosophy

Marxism-Leninism

The real unity of the world consists in its materiality, and this is proved . . . by a long and protracted development of philosophy and natural science. . . . But if the . . . question is raised: what then are thought and consciousness, and whence they come, it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain and that man himself is a product of nature, which has been developed in and along with its environment.¹

— FREDERICK ENGELS

2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of dialectical materialism is the Marxist-Leninist approach to understanding and changing the world. Many of the attributes we as Christians ascribe to God—eternality, infinitude, an uncreated being, indestructibility, the Lawgiver, the Life, and the Mind—Marxists-Leninists ascribe to dialectical matter. Marxist philosophy affirms matter as ultimately real, rather than God. Thus it is a godless philosophy.

Karl Marx wrote in a letter to Frederick Engels, “[A]s long as we actually observe and think, we cannot possibly get away from materialism.”² Engels explained his epistemology by writing, “The materialist world outlook is simply the conception of nature as it is.”³

¹ V.I. Lenin, *The Teachings of Karl Marx* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1976), 14.

² *Ibid.*, 15.

³ Joseph Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1977), 15.

Marxist-Leninist philosophy holds that the matter we see in nature is all that exists. This materialistic interpretation of the world is an essential ingredient of Marxist thought.

Lenin wrote, “Matter is primary nature. Sensation, thought, consciousness are the highest products of matter organized in a certain way. This is the doctrine of materialism, in general, and Marx and Engels, in particular.”⁴ Lenin further contended that matter is a philosophical category denoting objective reality—people, plants, animals, stars, and so on. “Matter is the objective reality given to us in sensation.”⁵

When Lenin says that matter is primary, he means that matter is eternal and uncreated, that life spontaneously emerged from non-living, non-conscious matter billions of years ago, and that mind, thought, and consciousness eventually evolved from it.

2.4.2 MARXIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Science plays a crucial role in the Marxist theory of knowledge. According to Lenin, “The fundamental characteristic of materialism arises from the objectivity of science, from the recognition of objective reality, reflected by science.”⁶ Marxist epistemology, like that of the Secular Humanists, places faith in the truth of science and denies all religious truth claims. Putting their faith in science as the infallible source of all knowledge logically follows from Marxist beliefs about reality. According to Lenin, “Perceptions give us correct impressions of things. We directly know objects themselves.”⁷ The objects Lenin speaks of are strictly material—“Matter is . . . the objective reality given to man in his sensations, a reality which is copied, photographed, and reflected by our sensations.”⁸

In contrast, anything supernatural lacks objective, material reality, so according to Marxism we have no means of perceiving it or of gaining knowledge about it. Thus, Marxists deny the supernatural. They distinguish between knowledge of the material world and what they term *true belief* in an attempt to allow for scientific speculation while ignoring speculation about God. “What we call ‘knowledge’ must also be distinguished from ‘true belief.’ If, for example, there is life on Mars, the belief that there is life on Mars is true belief. But at the same time we certainly, as yet, know nothing of the matter. True belief only becomes knowledge when backed by some kind of investigation and evidence. Some of our beliefs may be true and others false, but we only start getting to know which are true and which are false when we undertake forms of systematic investigation. . . . For nothing can count as ‘knowledge’ except in so far as it has been properly tested.”⁹

Therefore, Marxist epistemology declares that we can never know belief in the supernatural as “true belief” because we cannot test it scientifically or empirically. We can determine as true beliefs only our speculations about the material world because only these can undergo systematic investigation. Thus, knowledge can apply only to the material world.

Marxists believe that practice—testing knowledge throughout history—is also a valuable tool for gaining knowledge. We can test knowledge by applying it to our lives and society, and this application will eventually determine its truth or falsity. By examining history, we can determine which beliefs are true and which are not.

Marxist epistemology is inextricably tied to Marxist dialectics. In fact, it is virtually impossible to separate Marxist materialism, dialectics, and epistemology. This is true largely

⁴ V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1927), 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁹ Maurice Cornforth, *The Open Philosophy and the Open Society* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1968), 82.

because Marxists claim that dialectics operates in the place of metaphysics in their philosophy.

2.4.3 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

The notion of *dialectical process* was modified and polished into a broad-based philosophy by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who died when Marx was thirteen years old. The dialectical process is not a creation of Marxist philosophy. Instead, Marxists combine the theory with materialism, creating a hybrid philosophy—**dialectical materialism**. Marx and Engels simply adopted Hegel's ideas (which were built on an idealistic foundation—that is, the dialectic was thought to be a mental construct) and redesigned them to fit into a materialistic scheme of reality. Thus Lenin could write of the “great Hegelian dialectics which Marxism made its own, having first turned it right side up.”¹⁰

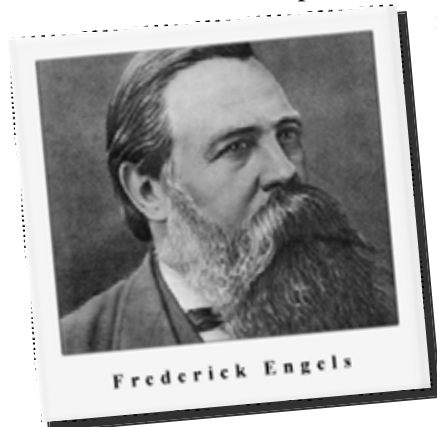
Gustav A. Wetter summarizes the Hegelian dialectic: “In Hegel’s sense of the term, dialectic is a process in which a starting-point [a thesis, e.g., Being] is negated [the antithesis, e.g., Non-Being], thereby setting up a second position opposed to it. This second position is in turn negated i.e., by negation of the negation, so as to reach a third position representing a synthesis [e.g., Becoming] of the two preceding, in which both are ‘transcended,’ i.e., abolished and at the same time preserved on a higher level of being. This third phase then figures in turn as the first step in a new dialectical process [i.e., a new thesis], leading to a new synthesis, and so on.”¹¹

Frederick Engels best sums up the fundamental perspective with regard to dialectics: “The world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made [created] things, but as a complex of [evolutionary] processes.”¹² This notion is inherent to the dialectic, which views all of life as a constantly evolving process resulting from the clash of opposing forces.

In the dialectical process, the thesis must always attract an antithesis, and this tension must always result in a synthesis, which in turn becomes a new thesis. This new thesis is always more advanced than the last thesis, because dialectics perceives the developmental process as an upward spiral. Simply stated, dialectics sees change or process due to conflict or struggle as the only constant, and this change and conflict always lead to a more advanced level.

Marxists believe the proof for dialectics is all around us. Engels notes, “When we reflect on Nature, or the history of mankind, or our own intellectual activity, the first picture presented to us is an endless maze of relations and interactions.”¹³ These interactions are

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM: The dialectic says that in everything there is a thesis (the way things are) and an antithesis (an opposition to the way things are), which must inevitably clash. The result of the struggle and merging that comes from the clash is the synthesis, which becomes the new thesis. This new thesis will eventually attract another antithesis, and produce a new synthesis.



¹⁰ V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 45 vols. (Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers, 1977), 7:409.

¹¹ Gustav A. Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 4.

¹² Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1974), 44.

¹³ Lenin, *The Teachings of Karl Marx*, 27.

always in the process of thesis/antithesis/synthesis. This constant development or process of evolution implies that the world (indeed, the universe) is always in motion—always moving, always changing.

Now we can begin to see how dialectics affects the materialist view. In Marxist philosophy, we can understand matter only when we understand that it is constantly involved in an eternal process of change. The evolutionary process best illustrates this idea—life on earth has been undergoing changes throughout time, beginning with simple living forms and evolving onward and upward to more advanced states. Engels says, “Nature is the proof of dialectics.”¹⁴

Marxist philosophy fixes evolutionary theory as a universal law for both organic and inorganic matter, as Engels makes clear: “All nature, from the smallest thing to the biggest, from a grain of sand to the sun, from the protista [the primary living cell] to man, is in a constant state of coming into being and going out of being, in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change.”¹⁵

2.4.4 DIALECTICS OPPOSED TO METAPHYSICS

Dialectics is a means of understanding the processes of life. Marxism took this system of thought and applied it to its own philosophy, which is foundational for its entire worldview. Marxists hasten to point out, however, that dialectics is a method directly opposed to metaphysics, which they claim is an outdated mode of viewing the world.

Yet in making this delineation, Marxists define metaphysics in a peculiar way. Normally understood, metaphysics is “the branch of philosophy that deals with first principles and seeks to explain the nature of being or reality (ontology) and of the origin and structure of the world (cosmology),”¹⁶ questions that every philosophy must confront sooner or later. Marxists, however, attempt to dodge this branch of philosophy by claiming that metaphysics assumes that nature and being are stagnant and unchanging, while dialectics views life as a constant process, and that metaphysics views reality in disjointed parts, while dialectics views reality as an interconnected whole.

If we grant the Marxists their definition of metaphysics, then we cannot argue with their conclusion that dialectics is directly opposed to it. In the strict sense of the word, however, Marxists most definitely do maintain metaphysics, and they are not shy about articulating it. Because understanding any philosophy’s beliefs about the nature of being and the origin and structure of the universe is crucial to understanding the philosophy as a whole, we will now examine Marxist metaphysics (in the traditional sense of the word), beginning with its cosmology and moving on to its ontology.

2.4.5 MARXIST METAPHYSICS

As previously noted, Marxist theology and philosophy deny the supernatural. The universe is all that exists and all that ever will exist. “Materialism gives a true picture of the world, without any irrelevant adjuncts in the shape of spirits, of a god who created the world, and the like. The materialists do not await the help of supernatural powers, they believe in man, in his capacity to transform the world by his own hand.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1935), 48.

¹⁵ Frederick Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1976), 13.

¹⁶ *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed., unabridged (New York, NY: Collins & World, 1977), 1132.

¹⁷ Raymond S. Sleeper, ed., *A Lexicon of Marxist-Leninist Semantics* (Alexandria, VA: Western Goals, 1983), 168.

Whether Marxists choose to admit it or not, their philosophy includes a metaphysical cosmology. They are far from bashful about declaring the absence of a God or anything supernatural in the universe, just as they are more than willing to proclaim that the material universe is all that exists and that it has always existed and always will.

Marxist philosophy relies on a specific ontology, as well. For Marxists, the ultimate substance and the ultimate cause is ever-changing dialectical matter. Perhaps this is why they choose to avoid metaphysics—it is difficult, in the face of modern physics, to argue that matter is the ultimate substance. Nonetheless, Marxist philosophy holds tenaciously to the view that matter is all that exists, that it is eternal, and that it is the ultimate substance or reality.

Matter is the only existing objective reality: the cause, foundation, content and substance of all the diversity of the world.

— ALEXANDER SPIRKIN

Alexander Spirkin, a modern Marxist author, writes that “matter is the only existing objective reality: the cause, foundation, content and substance of all the diversity of the world.”¹⁸ Engels says we know from experience and theory “that both matter and its mode of existence, motion, are uncreatable.”¹⁹

Marxist dialectics, then, is not opposed to metaphysics in the traditional sense of the word. In truth, Marxist philosophy relies on its metaphysics (ontology and cosmology), which it assumes in its entirety without rational defense, to provide a basis and explanation for being, the nature of the universe, and ultimately humanity itself.

2.4.6 THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM

Like every philosophy, dialectical materialism must address the mind-body problem. Marxists rely on the key word *reflect* when addressing this issue. They contend that our mind reflects matter in a way that makes our perception accurate. For Marx, “the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.”²⁰ However, Marx does not address the origin of this *ideal*. Lenin echoes Marx: “The existence of the mind is shown to be dependent upon that of the body, in that the mind is declared to be secondary, a function of the brain, or a reflection of the outer world.”²¹ To avoid calling consciousness supernatural, Marxists rely on the notion that consciousness is just a subjective reflection of objective reality.

For the dialectical materialist, everything must have proceeded from matter, even societal interrelationships and the mind. Maurice Cornforth writes, “Mental functions are functions of highly developed matter, namely, of the brain. Mental processes are brain processes, processes of a material, bodily organ.”²² Although Marxists may refer to thought as a *reflection* of objective reality, they must admit that in their view the mind is simply a function of matter.

2.4.7 CONCLUSION

Dialectical materialism, the philosophy of Marxism, contains an epistemology, a cosmology, an ontology, and an answer to the mind-body problem. For the Marxist, science

¹⁸ Alexander Spirkin, *Dialectics and Materialism* (Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers, 1983), 66.

¹⁹ Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 337.

²⁰ Karl Marx, *Introduction to Capital*, 3 vols. (London, UK: Progress Publishers, 1889), vol. 1.

²¹ Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, 66.

²² Maurice Cornforth, *The Theory of Knowledge* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1963), 22.

and practice refine knowledge; the universe is infinite and all that will ever exist; matter is eternal and the ultimate substance; life is a product of this non-living matter; and the mind is a reflection of this material reality. But the Marxist philosophy embraces an even broader view of the world than is generally meant by the term *philosophy*. In truth, dialectical materialism is an entire method for viewing the world—it colors the Marxist perception of everything from ethics to history.

Marxist philosophy as a worldview must be understood by anyone who claims to support the Marxist cause. “One cannot become a fully conscious, convinced Communist without studying Marxist philosophy. This is what Lenin taught.”²³ Why? Because, according to Marxism, the dialectic can explain every process and change that occurs. Marxist philosophy is process philosophy. This process is written not only within the metaphysical make-up of our matter, but also in the evolution of humanity and the evolving social and historical context of our existence. This materialist belief affects the Marxist view of history, causing Marxists to view the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as thesis and antithesis, clashing to form a synthesis. This clash is in essence an evolutionary struggle. While evolutionists believe that animals evolved certain physical characteristics to aid in their survival, Marxists believe their philosophy of dialectical materialism evolved to meet the needs of the proletariat.

Every knowledgeable Marxist recognizes this and is prepared to act in accordance with dialectical materialism. While many philosophies are chiefly theoretical, Marxism is concerned with theory and practice. Dialectical materialism is a worldview and a philosophy of evolution and revolution—the call to action is implicit in its makeup. Every good Marxist understands his philosophy and is prepared to act upon it, because Marx himself requires it: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.”²⁴

Unfortunately from a Marxist point of view, all such change is merely transitory, because each new synthesis (including the long-anticipated communist classless society) inevitably becomes a new thesis in the never-ending process of dialectical materialism. Even the victorious dictatorship of the proletariat will be but a brief moment in evolutionary history. Communist dialectics decrees that communism itself is transitory. The synthesis of communism today will become the new thesis of tomorrow, and new struggles will evolve according to the laws of dialectical materialism.

²³ F.V. Konstantinov, ed., *The Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy* (Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers, 1982), 78.

²⁴ Karl Marx, *Collected Works*, 40 vols. (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1976), 5:8.

Philosophy

Cosmic Humanism

The mystery of life is beyond all human conception. . . .
We always think in terms of opposites. But God, the
ultimate, is beyond the pairs of opposites, that is all
there is to it.¹

— JOSEPH CAMPBELL

All things are One Thing. There is only One Thing, and
all things are part of the One Thing That Is.²

— NEALE DONALD WALSCH

2.5.1 INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Cosmic Humanist movement has its roots in the Romantic poets of the 1800s, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Henry David Thoreau. These men rejected the God of the Bible, instead writing at length about a transcendent quality of spirituality experienced purely through personal introspection. These ideas did not attract a broad audience until the 1960s, when popular recording artists, movie stars, and Eastern gurus began trumpeting their New Age views across the nation. More recently, well-known recording artists such as Madonna and Alanis Morissette have identified themselves with Hinduism, while popular personalities such as Tiger Woods, Phil Jackson, and Richard Gere

¹ Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 49.

² Neale Donald Walsch, *The New Revelations: A Conversation with God* (New York, NY: Atria Books, 2002), 360.

openly embrace **Zen Buddhism**. Other luminaries, such as Tom Cruise and John Travolta, express a belief in scientology.

ZEN: A branch of Mahayana Buddhism that believes enlightenment can be attained through meditation, self-contemplation

As a result, Cosmic Humanist ideas are being widely disseminated through movies, television, and burgeoning book sales. Since its publication in 1993, *The Celestine Prophecy* has sold over 8 million copies in more than 32 countries, achieving distinction as the bestselling American hardcover book in the world for two consecutive years. Author James Redfield wrote in the 1997 afterword, “[W]e are manifesting nothing less than a new world view that will flourish in the next millennium.”

Another “modern day spiritual messenger” is **Neale Donald Walsch**, the author of fifteen books on spirituality in everyday life. His first five books in the *Conversations with God* series all made the *New York Times* bestseller list (the first book remained there for well over two years). His books have been translated into 27 languages, selling more than 7 million copies worldwide.

Because of this extensive New Age influence, it is important that Christians are equipped to counter New Age beliefs. This begins with understanding Cosmic Humanism’s answers to the questions of theology and philosophy.



2.5.2 WHAT IS REAL?

Cosmic Humanists reject naturalistic and materialistic philosophies because such explanations deny the all-pervasive supernatural. David Spangler says, “From a very early age I was aware of an extra dimension or presence to the world around me, which as I grew older I came to identify as a sacred or transcendental dimension.”³ If Spangler’s perspective is correct, and if (as pantheism declares) every aspect of existence is sacred, then everything must have a spiritual nature.

If the spiritual aspects of life lead to higher consciousness and inner truth, we should view all reality from a supernatural perspective. This perspective leads Cosmic Humanists to a philosophy of **non-naturalism**—nothing is natural, everything is supernatural. The philosophical stance of Cosmic Humanism is that ultimate reality is in the spiritual dimension.

NON-NATURALISM: The belief that everything is a part of God and in essence, spiritual. The things that we can see and feel are only a manifestation of spirit, and all matter will melt away when universal consciousness is achieved

Cosmic Humanists believe that all reality is God—from a grain of sand to the Milky Way. Their philosophy reflects this belief by focusing on such principles as the Gaia hypothesis, which views planet

Earth, and indeed, the whole universe, as a living organism. (Gaia is sometimes referred to as Mother Earth.) According to Fritjof Capra, “The universe is no longer seen as a machine, made up of a multitude of objects, but has to be pictured as one indivisible, dynamic whole

³ David Spangler, *Emergence: The Rebirth of the Sacred* (New York, NY: Delta/Merloyd Lawrence, 1984), 12.

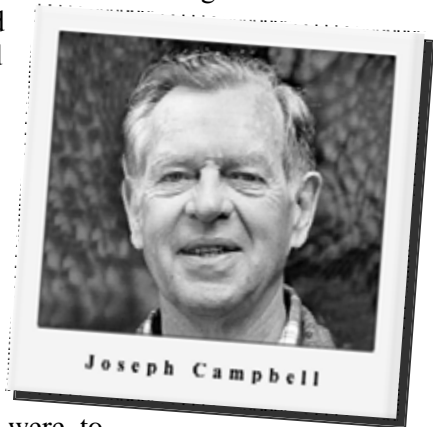
whose parts are essentially interrelated and can be understood only as patterns of a cosmic process.”⁴

2.5.3 COSMIC HUMANIST EPISTEMOLOGY: HOW DO WE KNOW?

The Cosmic Humanist philosophy of non-naturalism affects both its epistemology and its ontology. In terms of epistemology (theory of knowledge), proponents of the New Age movement emphasize the importance of getting in touch with our higher self. When we get in touch with the God-force within, we can intuitively *know* truth without limits. Shakti Gawain says, “When we consistently suppress and distrust our intuitive knowingness, looking instead for [external] authority, validation, and approval from others, we give our personal power away.”⁵

When we look within, we will find truth, but this is not *truth* as it is commonly understood. New Age truth is emotive rather than descriptive. **Joseph Campbell**, in one of the New Age movement’s most influential books, says, “What’s the meaning of the universe? What’s the meaning of a flea? It’s just there. That’s it. And your own meaning is that you’re there. We’re so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget that the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it’s all about.”⁶ To Cosmic Humanists, truth—what we can know—is a feeling or an experience. Knowledge does not contain the meaning of life.

Each of us creates our own truth according to the principle *if it feels like truth to you, it is*. All knowledge exists in the God-force within us, and if we connect with that power, we tap into knowledge. Jack Underhill explains what would happen if everyone in the world were to connect with his or her godhood, “They can turn off the sun and turn it back on. They can freeze oceans into ice, turn the air into gold, talk as one with no movement or sound. They can fly without wings and love without pain, cure with no more than a thought or a smile. They can make the earth go backwards or bounce up and down, crack it in half or shift it around. . . . There is nothing they cannot do.”⁷



2.5.4 COSMIC HUMANIST ONTOLOGY: WHAT IS ULTIMATE REALITY?

The Cosmic Humanist ontology also stems from a non-naturalistic philosophy. Ultimate reality or substance is the God-force or Christ-consciousness. God is “the essence of existence, the life force within all things.”⁸ Cosmic Humanist philosophy, like Secular Humanism and Marxism-Leninism, is monistic—all reality is one—but in a very different sense. In Cosmic Humanism, ultimate reality is spiritual rather than material. Robert Muller suggests this when he says, “Oh God, I know that I come from you, that I am part of you, that I will return to you, and that there will be no end to my rebirth in the eternal stream of your splendid creation.”⁹

⁴ Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (Toronto, ON: Bantam, 1982), 77–8.

⁵ Shakti Gawain, *Living in the Light* (San Rafael, CA: New World Library, 1986), 69.

⁶ Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 6.

⁷ Jack Underhill, “My Goal in Life,” *Life Times Magazine*, Winter 1986/1987, 90.

⁸ Dean C. Halverson, *Crystal Clear: Understanding and Reaching New Agers* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1990), 91.

⁹ Robert Muller, *The New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality* (New York, NY: Image Books, 1984), 189.

Whereas Muller's statement only implies that God is the essence of humanity, Spangler more accurately describes New Age ontology: "This worldview encourages us to treat all things not only as ourselves, as the holistic view would see it, but as honored and precious manifestations of God."¹⁰

This ontological perspective may prove problematic since it does not specify the substance that makes up the God-force. However, Cosmic Humanists seem unconcerned with this question since each of us arrives at our own truth and our interpretations will differ.

To Gary Zukav, consciousness is ultimate reality: "All that is can form itself into individual droplets of consciousness. Because you are part of all that is, you have literally always been, yet there was the instant when that individual energy current that is you was formed. Consider that the ocean is God. It has always been. Now reach in and grab a cup full of water. In that instant, the cup becomes individual, but it has always been, has it not? This is the case with your soul. There was the instant when you became a cup of energy, but it was of an immortal original Being. You have always been because what it is that you are is God, or Divine Intelligence, but God takes on individual forms, droplets, reducing its power to small particles of individual consciousness."¹¹

Other Cosmic Humanists may answer the question differently based on their own personal *experience* of the truth, preferring to acknowledge their godhood without insisting on dogmatic views of its ultimate nature. Marilyn Ferguson states, "We need not postulate a purpose for this Ultimate Cause nor wonder who or what caused whatever Big Bang launched the visible universe. There is only the experience."¹²

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

Lost (ABC TV, premiered September, 2004)—"Why are we here? Is there an intelligent force controlling our destiny? How am I connected to others in the grand scheme of things? Rarely does a network TV series ponder such existential issues. But on the Emmy-winning drama *Lost*, those questions haunt every castaway who survived the crash of Oceanic Air flight 815 . . . For its compelling characters and cryptic sci-fi sleight of hand, *Lost* has been called 'the next great cult-pop sensation.' . . . [T]he creators of *Lost* seem intent on exploring faith in the supernatural sense. Miracles. Visions. Chance encounters that aren't random after all. Is it fate? Karma? Divine intervention? It's hard to say what the writers believe or want loyal followers to accept since the show's spirituality lacks context. And it's all over the map . . . Episodes . . . have incongruously featured depictions of the staunch faith of a martyred African priest *and* the heretical assertion by one (influential) character that Jesus' baptism by John was orchestrated to absolve Christ of His 'sins.'""*

2.5.5 ZEN PHILOSOPHY IN POPULAR CULTURE

Cosmic Humanist philosophy finds its way into popular culture through music and movies. For example, in *The Matrix*, Neo goes to see the Oracle. While waiting, he focuses on a boy in Buddhist robes sitting cross-legged on the floor, bending metal spoons simply by staring at them. The boy explains to Neo, "Don't try to bend the spoon. That's impossible.

¹⁰ Spangler, *Emergence*, 83.

¹¹ Gary Zukav, *The Seat of the Soul* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster), 85–6.

¹² Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles, CA: J.P. Tarcher, 1980), 383.

* From a review on <http://www.pluggedinonline.com/tv/television/a0001947.cfm>.

Only understand the truth . . . there is no spoon.” The boy’s statement reflects a classic Hindu/Buddhist conception of reality—that what we see is an illusory world. There is no objective world, only the reality of our mental state.

Larry and Andy Wachowski, the writing/directing team behind *The Matrix*, are candid about their purpose in bringing a Cosmic Humanist dimension into their film: “We think the most important sort of fiction attempts to answer some of the big questions. One of the things that we had talked about when we first had the idea of *The Matrix* was an idea that I believe philosophy and religion and mathematics all try to answer . . . a reconciling between a natural world and another world that is perceived by our intellect.”¹³ In the same interview, the Wachowskis admit Buddhism plays a major role in their understanding of religion.

As pop culture commentator Roberto Rivera observes, “You can see Zen’s fingerprints everywhere, including the way Morpheus talks to Neo. Instead of answering Neo’s questions in a straightforward manner, he insists on [Buddhist-style] koans such as, ‘I can only show you the door, you must walk through,’ and ‘when the time comes, you won’t need to dodge the bullet.’ Or my favorite, ‘[the Oracle] didn’t lie, she told you exactly what you needed to hear.’”¹⁴

2.5.6 CONCLUSION

In Cosmic Humanist philosophy, all is one, so only one type of ultimate reality can exist. This ultimate reality must be spiritual because God, which is everything, is ultimately spiritual. Spirit is the only substance that exists, and matter is only a manifestation of spirit.

The purpose of knowing is not to explain or describe reality; rather, knowledge is useful only as experience, and experience is getting in touch with our godhood. Each of us may experience different truth because truth resides in the individual and manifests itself in our godhood.

Cosmic Humanist philosophy is a useful tool to help us think thoughts that lead to feelings of unity rather than a system for discovering and interpreting reality. Marianne Williamson, a popular New Age feminist author, says that although most people do not think this way, they should: “To say, ‘God, please help me,’ means, ‘God, correct my thinking.’ ‘Deliver me from hell,’ means ‘Deliver me from my insane thoughts.’”¹⁵ The best thoughts are not necessarily logical, but they are *sane* in that they remind us to feel at one with God.

¹³ Interview with Larry and Andy Wachowski, November 6, 1999, <http://www.dvdtwb.com/matrixevents/wachowski.html>.

¹⁴ Roberto Rivera, “So, What is The Matrix? Rethinking Reality,” <http://www.boundless.org/1999/departments/atplay/a0000115.html>.

¹⁵ Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of “A Course in Miracles”* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992), 22.

Philosophy

Postmodernism

We . . . [should] give up the correspondence theory of truth, and start treating moral and scientific beliefs as tools for achieving greater human happiness, rather than as representations of the intrinsic nature of reality.¹

— RICHARD RORTY

2.6.1 INTRODUCTION

The philosophical ideas of Postmodernism divide modern-day academia. Today's college students will find Postmodernism ruling the day in their humanities and social studies courses, but will also find Modernism still prevalent in their science, engineering, and mathematics courses.² As well, there is little acceptance of the Postmodern approach to knowledge and truth in America's philosophy departments. The Postmodern notion that truth is community-oriented likewise appeals to few Christian theologians.³

While there is no single cohesive Postmodern philosophy (rather, there are several), a few consistent themes emerge from each mainstream Postmodern writer.

¹ Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought In Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 96.

² Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 107, 113.

³ Myron B. Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 210f.

2.6.2 SUBJECTIVE TRUTH

One of these themes is a denial of universal, objective truth. This is clearly declared in **Jean-Francois Lyotard**'s famous statement "incredulity towards metanarrative."⁴ A metanarrative refers to a unifying story that seeks to explain how the world is—in other words a metanarrative is a worldview. Lyotard suggests that we should be skeptical of such broad explanations. For example, the statement "God so loved the world" is nonsensical to Postmodernists for two reasons: (1) they deny the existence of God, and (2) statements reflecting the whole world (metanarratives) are impossible.



For Postmodernists, since there is no universal Truth (capital "T"), there are only "truths" (small "t") that are particular to a society or group of people and limited to individual perception. Written or verbal statements can reflect only a particular localized culture or individual point of view. A well-worn catchphrase we hear in this regard is, "That may be true for you, but not for me."

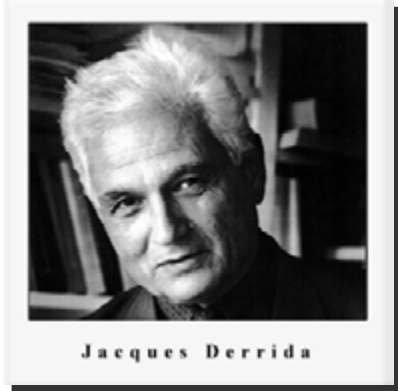
Yet, by making the universal statement that there are no metanarratives, Postmodernists have put themselves in the position of creating a metanarrative. Their story that explains the world is that there are no explanations of the world, only local stories told by various cultures. For this reason, we refer to Postmodernism as the anti-worldview worldview.

2.6.3 LANGUAGE AND DECONSTRUCTION

Regarding literature, Postmodernists are highly concerned with the language of written texts. The term defining the major literary methodology of Postmodernists is **deconstruction**. Associated with the work of the French philosopher **Jacques Derrida**, deconstruction involves reading a text to ferret out its hidden or multiple meanings (polysemy).

DECONSTRUCTION: A means of textual criticism that considers a text open to the reader's interpretation and laden with hidden bias, assumptions, and prejudices

In this way, a reader's interpretation of the text becomes more important than the text itself. Also significant is the subjectivity of the reader in determining what the author intended. For example, a reader may feel that a particular text really means an author is racist, even though the written text makes it clear that the author deplors racism.



In 1968, Roland Barthes wrote a short essay entitled "The Death of the Author." In this essay he argued that the *origin* of the text is not the important thing, rather it is the *destination*—the reader. By allowing the reader to invent new meanings, the text is freed from the tyranny of the author's single intended meaning.

⁴ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

For example, there is no reason to assume “that a Shakespearean play means exactly the same thing today as it did when first performed.”⁵ Each author (or artist) is the product of his or her own cultural setting and uses language to fit his or her condition. Thus, Postmodern literary criticism claims that words never describe the objective world but only refer to other words.⁶ Therefore, no matter how a writer constructs a sentence, it can never tell us about the real world, but only about the world as understood by the reader. This concept is summed up in the phrase, “That’s just *your* interpretation.”

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

Mona Lisa Smile (a 2003 film set in the year 1953)—an art-history professor, Katherine Watson (Julia Roberts), hopes to open the minds of her students at conservative Wellesley College. In class she shows a slide of the painting, *Carcass*, by Suteen (1925) and asks, “Is it any good? Come on, ladies. There’s no wrong answer. There’s also no textbook telling you what to think. It’s not that easy, is it?” While some of her students defend accepted standards for determining good art, others claim personal preference as the overarching guide. Watson’s approach promotes the assumption that there are no standards of truth, beauty, or goodness.

2.6.4 ANTI-REALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

This concept of deconstruction is taken far beyond the area of literature. Just as you, the reader, are creating the meaning of this text, you also construct the world according to your culture and experiences. In other words, there is no “real world” out there—only six billion constructions of the world, a belief known as **anti-realism**.⁷

ANTI-REALISM: The belief that reality is subjectively constructed by human thought

Traditionally, Truth (with a capital “T”) was understood as the relationship between the real, objective world and statements that correspond to the real world. This view is called the **correspondence theory of truth**. However, Postmodernists claim this kind of Truth is impossible to achieve. There is no universal “Truth,” only personal, subjective truths that exist only in a particular situation or cultural surrounding. Thus, according to the postmodernist paradigm of anti-realism, there is no real world to which truth can correspond. Rather, our words correspond only to other words and, in the end, create our understanding of reality. If words signify only other words, then words can never be used in the pursuit of Truth.

CORRESPONDENCE THEORY OF TRUTH: The belief that truth corresponds to reality

A classic example of the concept that words do not refer to reality is found in Foucault’s essay entitled, “This Is Not a Pipe.” In this essay, he analyzes a 1966 painting by Magritte that shows a picture of a pipe on a blackboard with the written phrase “This is not a pipe.” Above the blackboard is an abstraction of a pipe hanging in the air. Foucault insists that none of these is a pipe, but merely a text that simulates a pipe.⁸

⁵ Glen Ward, *Postmodernism* (Chicago, IL: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 162.

⁶ What the very first words refer to is never explained because there were no other words to which to refer.

⁷ For a more complete definition of “anti-realism,” see Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33.

⁸ See Foucault’s *This Is Not a Pipe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 49.

The primary idea behind this “word play” is the Postmodern insistence that all human beings are conditioned by their culture and language—their situation in life—and that no one is able to break through his or her situation to engage a universe with objectively true statements of fact. ‘Water wets’ is true for only a small community of individuals locked in their own language and culture. In addition, it is true only as long as this community agrees upon this particular usage. In fact, the community determines what is truth through the words it chooses to use.

Richard Rorty has said that truth for him is whatever his community of scholars allows him to get away with. If Rorty says the moon is made of green cheese and his community does not disagree with him, then for him the moon is made of green cheese. Again, reality is not what objectively exists; reality is produced by our agreement of what it is. We do not discover true facts about the real world—we create it.

French cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard took this concept to its logical conclusion. In 1991 he claimed that the Gulf War was not real, but merely simulated for CNN television. The truth that real people were killed did not seem to enter the equation. In actuality, not all Postmodernists take the concept of language and reality to Baudrillard’s extreme. Yet, as Glenn Ward notes, this piece has been used “. . . to discredit not only Baudrillard, but Postmodernism’s abandonment of truth and evaluation.”⁹

THE POP CULTURE CONNECTION

The Matrix (the 1999 Wachowski brothers film)—gives a nod to Jean Baudrillard. In an early scene, Neo reaches into a hidden compartment in a book to retrieve a computer disk. The book’s title is *Simulacra and Simulation*, the title of Baudrillard’s 1981 book where he discusses how we create reality from the signs of culture and the media. Later in the film, Morpheus introduces Neo to “the desert of the real,” a phrase taken from Baudrillard.

2.6.5 RORTY AND HIS CONVERSATIONS

Rorty also thinks we need to abandon the search for objective truth and instead concentrate on areas where we can all agree. He refers to this quest as “hermeneutic conversation.” Rorty invites his opponents to dialogue with him to see if they can reach agreement, or at least a fruitful disagreement. He says that the “hope of agreement is never lost as long as the conversation lasts.”¹⁰

But does truth result from such a conversation? Not really. Rorty’s insistence on give and take and final agreement only sets the stage for another round of conversations where give and take results in further agreement or disagreement. Truth is never the result of continuing conversation, because the conversation will never be finished.¹¹

For Rorty, this use of language and dialogue is “edifying philosophy”—a chance to create some type of reality with the realization that we can never discover true or objective reality outside the boundaries of language, culture, and locality. Since there is no objective, universal Truth, Rorty suggests that perhaps we can reach some type of agreeable truth (small “t”) in order to get along with others.

⁹ Ward, *Postmodernism*, 77. For a systematic analysis and critique of Postmodernism, we recommend Christopher Norris’ *The Truth About Postmodernism* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

¹⁰ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 318.

¹¹ This is reminiscent of the Marxist dialectic (thesis, antithesis, and synthesis) in which the synthesis of agreement becomes a new thesis, disagreement is the antithesis, and the process is never-ending.

2.6.6 SUMMARY OF POSTMODERN PHILOSOPHY

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is a shrewd observer of the Postmodern scene and a somewhat sympathetic critic. In addition, he understands the important role Nietzsche played in expressing the foundational ideas for Postmodernism.¹² He writes, “Nietzsche, the patron saint of postmodernity, prophesied accurately: if God is dead, then it’s interpretation ‘all the way down.’ . . . [O]ne word only points to another word and never to reality itself. No one interpretation can ever be regarded as final. As in interpretation, so in life: everything becomes undecidable.”¹³

Vanhoozer points us to the late C. S. Lewis, who foresaw the shift toward Postmodernist thinking. Lewis’ term for this movement is “bulverism” after its imaginary inventor Ezekiel Bulver. Vanhoozer explains: “Lewis imagines the moment that bulverism was born, when five-year-old Ezekiel heard his mother say to his father, ‘Oh, you say that because you are a man.’ Bulver intuitively grasped the stunning implication: arguments need not be refuted, only situated. One rebuts a thought simply by calling attention to the genealogy or location of its thinker.”¹⁴ Probably nothing in Postmodernism today would surprise Lewis.

Vanhoozer offers a concise summary of Postmodern philosophy:

- a) The mark of the Postmodern condition of knowledge is a move away from the authority of universal science toward narratives of local knowledge.¹⁵
- b) Postmodernists reject the notion of universal rationality; reason is always situated within particular narratives, traditions, institutions, and practices.
- c) Postmodernists reject unifying, totalizing, universal schemes in favor of new emphases on difference, plurality, fragmentation, and complexity.
- d) Postmodernists reject the notion that the person is an autonomous individual with a rational consciousness that transcends his or her particular place in culture, language, history, and gendered body.
- e) Postmodernists agree with Nietzsche that “God” (that is to say, the supreme being of classical theism) has become unbelievable, as have the autonomous self and the meaning of history.
- f) What we know about things is linguistically, culturally, and socially constructed.
- g) Language stands for the socially constructed order within which we think and move and have our being.¹⁶

2.6.7 SUBJECTIVE TRUTH, DECONSTRUCTION, AND ANTI-REALISM

Postmodernists have difficulty living with their view of reality. They claim that “reality” is constructed by language. On one level we can agree that the statement “The train is

¹² See Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997), Will Durant’s *The Story of Philosophy*, and John P. Koster, *The Atheist Syndrome* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, 1989) for background material on Nietzsche.

¹³ Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*, 78.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵ Postmodernists were not the first to offer such a view of knowledge. Bertrand Russell held a similar view—“all truths are particular truths.” See Mary Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion* (London, UK: Rutledge Classics, 2002), 127. Midgley offers a classic critique of this position, quoting Wittgenstein that “particular propositions cannot always be prior to general ones. Both are elements in language, which is itself an element in our whole system of behaviour. In a crucial sense, the whole is always prior to its parts. And unquestionably this kind of belief in a law-abiding universe . . . is a precondition of any possible physical science.”

¹⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 10–13.

coming” may convey a multitude of interpretations to different people. To some it may even simulate a train. But we contend that if people fail to get off the tracks, the result of their interpretation could prove fatal. There are indeed objective, non-verbal referents to words and texts. Real life, however, is not open to infinite interpretations. At any particular moment in time, either a train is coming down the track or a train is not coming down the track. This real-world fact is not a matter of our personal interpretation. Regardless of the word games Postmodernists play there is a reality. Postmodernists have a hard time escaping the correspondence theory of truth.

Consider also the Postmodern phrase, “That’s just *your* interpretation.” As D. A. Carson points out, this view is problematic. Carson says he has never met a deconstructionist who would be pleased if a reviewer misinterpreted his work. He notes, “. . . in practice deconstructionists implicitly link their own texts with their own intentions.”¹⁷ In other words, deconstructionists believe in authorial intent when they are the authors, but deny authorial intent when it comes to works by anyone else.

Likewise, we recognize a dilemma with the well-worn Postmodern slogan, “That may be true for you, but not for me.” If the person making that statement means that it applies only to him, than who cares what he says—he is only talking to himself. On the other hand, if the person means to apply his statement also to *you*, then you can properly respond, “I get the impression that you think I should believe what you just said. If that is the case, why are you trying to impose your concept of what is true on me?” Either way, the Postmodernist has made a statement he cannot live with himself. It is a position that is self-defeating and ultimately absurd. If you try to apply the Postmodernist view of truth in day-to-day life, the result is a total breakdown of your ability to communicate.

Another serious problem arises from a Postmodern philosophy of language: if each community determines what is true through its use of language, which community gets to decide between rival communities when it comes to conflicting ideas? Take for example such disputed ideas as suttee (the Hindu practice of burning widows on their deceased husband’s pyre), exterminating the Jewish race, or abolishing private ownership of property. Since no community can claim to be “right” on these or other issues, the result is an increased competition for which group will dominate the others. We are witnessing this kind of escalation between warring factions in many areas of society, from the college campus to the political arena to the international scene.

Elaborating on this problem is Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher speaking from a Secular Humanist point of view. Ward explains: “Habermas sees Postmodernism’s apparent embrace of irrationality as morally bankrupt and believes, contrary to Lyotard, that some sort of universally agreed-upon framework is both possible and necessary in order to ensure that freedom and justice are achieved. Habermas disputes the claims of some Postmodern thinkers that human identity is unstable, fragmented, or ‘in process:’ for him we all, deep down, share eternal human needs and desires. The failure of the Postmodernists is that they refuse to propose a route towards the fulfillment of these.”¹⁸

Paul Kurtz, in *Humanist Manifesto 2000*, agrees with Habermas and says that Postmodernism—“a philosophical-literary movement”—is nihilistic (the view that nothing can be known or communicated). In contrast to the idea that objective truth is unknowable, Kurtz declares that science offers “reasonably objective standards for judging its truth claims.” He says, “Science has become a universal language, speaking to all men and women no matter what their cultural backgrounds.”¹⁹

¹⁷ D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 103.

¹⁸ Ward, *Postmodernism*, 179.

¹⁹ Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto 2000*, 22.

Kurtz fails, however, to acknowledge Christianity's role in the foundation and development of modern science.²⁰ Also, while Kurtz is correct in his statement that scientific knowledge can lead to Truth concerning the physical world, the Biblical Christian philosophy of knowledge also emphasizes revealed truth as a means for understanding other Truths, including our relationship to God.

Yet far more significant than these criticisms is the negative consequences of a Postmodern approach to language. For a telling example, look at the results of applying deconstruction to law revealed by the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case. In handing down their decision, the majority of the Supreme Court justices chose to look at the Constitution as a "living document"—that is, open to many interpretations (polysemy). As a result, they invented new meanings from the original text—meanings that were not openly stated—and came up with a novel interpretation regarding a woman's reproductive rights that has apparently gone unnoticed for almost 200 years. One consequence of that reinterpretation is that since 1973 over forty million unborn children have been murdered at the request of their mothers.

Postmodernists are correct about one thing—interpretation is important. Confucius is quoted as saying, "When words lose their meanings, people lose their freedom."²¹ However, it is worse than that. In reality, when words lose their meaning, people not only lose their freedom, but their lives as well.

2.6.8 CONCLUSION

Christian students need to understand that according to the Christian worldview "Truth" exists. Nearly everything about Christianity is *universal* in scope and application. God created the whole universe, including men and women. Sin is a *universal* condition affecting every human being. God loved the *whole world*, including every human being. Christ died for the sins of the *whole world*, not just one or two particular communities. Christians are to love God with all their heart and mind and their fellow human beings around the *world*.

Most importantly, God chose to communicate the Truth about Himself and His world by words contained in the Scriptures and the language of the heavens (Psalm 19). God's words do not depend upon a reader's interpretation. Instead, the reader is to interpret the Bible according to God's intention. The Apostle Peter is clear when he writes, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19–21).

To correctly understand the meaning of any text of Scripture, we should heed Paul's advice to Timothy: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15) By acknowledging that God has communicated in language Truth about the real world, and by diligently studying the Bible, you can know the Truth that sets you free (John 8:32).

²⁰ See the chapter on Biblical Christian Biology.

²¹ F.A. Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 106.

