



Reformation Society of Western New York

Thursday, June 9, 2022

Worldview Matters: Essential Elements of a Christian Worldview

Tony A. Bartolucci

B.S. Arizona Christian University

M.A. Phoenix Seminary

Post-Graduate Studies Whitefield Theological Seminary

MINISTER OF PREACHING, CHRIST CHURCH OF CLARKSON

8339 W. RIDGE RD. BROCKPORT, NY 14420

CLARKSONCHURCH.COM

Worldview Matters

From the time of my college years, I have come to appreciate the importance of education. While I had ambitions then to pursue a formal teaching career, God had other plans. Instead I found myself doing something I thought I would never do: pastoral ministry. Being a scholar in the pastorate makes being one outside of it quite difficult.¹ There have been men who have done it, men from past history like Martin Luther, but one can imagine being a full-time pastor and also serving as a full-time scholar at a theological institution. You don't see many doing that today. However, I take great pleasure in being a scholar within the pastorate.²

In keeping with education, the Bible places great emphasis on the mind: *what* we think as well as *how* we think. I see this especially needful in a post-Christian culture, one that is increasingly hostile to Christianity. Our coinage may read “In God We Trust,” but that is far from reality. Our coins may as well be stamped, “In Science We Trust.” The scientists have become our saviors, a 21st century version of theologians. That's not to say that science, properly understood, is antithetical to theism, namely Christian theism. Far from it. Christianity affords a worldview from which science can properly operate. However, modern-day science has largely evolved into scientism, a worldview of naturalism that is antithetical to Christianity.

Meanwhile, it seems to me that we will see the proverbial noose continue to tighten around the church, impacting not only the church but the very existence of our nation as a constitutional republic. Indeed, we may be lurching toward global technocratic Marxism. Recent issues such as the LGBTQ+ agenda, globalism, all bathed in a lather of atheistic naturalism, are serving as a modern-day Tower of Babel where men become gods unto themselves. This tower, built as a monument to humanity, is fueled by a ubiquitous technological explosion.

¹I finished my M.A. in 2002. After twenty years (!) I am a dissertation away from earning a Th.D.

²Helpful in this regard is the book by John Piper and D. A. Carson: *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

Our Revolutionary Battle

It has been said that in a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.³ We certainly live in a time of universal deceit. Therefore, let's be revolutionary in truth telling, but let's also take heed that the context within which Christ builds His church is one of war. Remember Ephesians chapter 6. The Apostle Paul, in closing that wonderful letter, exhorts the church with these words: “Put on⁴ the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”⁵

Christians are combatants in a spiritual war that hinges on the fulcrum of truth. I love 2 Corinthians 10:5 where it says that “we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” This is what the church of Jesus Christ is to be about: taking every false idea and concept captive to Christ’s obedience. In that regard, our worldview matters.

What is a Worldview?

The late Christian philosopher, Dr. Ronald Nash, to whom I am greatly indebted in my worldview studies, wrote this, “I am convinced . . . that few Americans have been taught to think in terms of worldviews. . . . No believer today can be really effective in the arena of ideas until he or she has been trained to think in worldview terms.”⁶

What is a worldview? A simple definition is that a worldview is a lens through which every person views the central matters of human existence. There are five areas that sum up what

³These words have been attributed to George Orwell, but apparently this connection is doubtful. See <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/02/24/truth-revolutionary/> (accessed June 9, 2022).

⁴Aorist middle imperative from ἐνδύω.

⁵Ephesians 6:11–12. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

⁶Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 9, 14.

these “central matters” consist of: 1) epistemology (knowledge); 2) theology (God); 3) humanity (mankind); 4) reality (metaphysics); and 5) morality (ethics).

Everyone has a worldview regardless of whether they realize it. We all view the big issues of life through foundational presuppositions. For many, at least in the West, it's *naturalism*, the presupposition that our existence is contained within a closed system. This may be likened to a box. Everything that occurs does so within the box and may be explained by something else within the box. In this view, the God of the Bible does not exist. For many of those who claim belief in a god, he (or she) is an impersonal deity that does not providentially rule over creation.

In contradistinction to the world at large, every Christian ought to be trained to think in worldview terms with the Bible as the foundational axiom. The old aphorism rings true here: “Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day, teach a man to fish and he'll eat for the rest his life.” Similarly, tell a Christian *what* to think and his learning will be limited in scope and power. Teach a Christian *how* to think, by the light of God's Word, and he will take the thoughts of men and devils captive to the obedience of Christ.

Epistemology (Knowledge)

Again, let's look at those five key areas that directly relate to our existence. The first area is epistemology, a term that speaks to the philosophy of knowledge. Namely, how do we know? What do we know? By what means do we know? Is knowledge about the world even possible? Can we know anything about ourselves? Can we know anything with certainty, or is our existence relegated to the realm of relativity? (If so, how do we know that?) Are there absolutes that are true in every age for all people? Can we trust our senses? What role does reason play in epistemology? Is empirical science the only (or best) way to discern what's true? What is the relationship between reason and faith? These are all questions that relate to epistemology.

Belief Precedes Knowledge

A good place to begin in that regard is to affirm that we must believe something before we can know anything. This goes back to Augustine who rightly observed, “I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but rather, I believe in order that I may understand.”⁷ This maxim establishes the foundational role of presuppositions.

Sometimes you will hear well-meaning people contend that we ought to think apart from any bias (or presuppositions). That is impossible. Everyone has bias. Everyone has presuppositions. Another way to put this is that everyone has a worldview, a lens through which they interpret life. No one is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate. Everyone has what's termed in philosophy “a touchstone proposition,” a foundational presupposition or axiom, in the form of a proposition, upon which all other beliefs are based. For example, my touchstone proposition is that *I believe all of reality is informed by, and centered on, the Bible as God's Word.*⁸ Moreover, you don't defend a touchstone proposition. It's a presupposition that need not be proven.⁹ It's a starting point—and if you have to defend it, then what you use in defense becomes the starting point.¹⁰ This is not to say that evidences are unimportant. I will argue, however, that they are secondary. If my defense of the Bible rests on evidences, then I have risked treading upon the shaky ground of the empiricist. Therefore, one's touchstone proposition is *the* foundation upon which everything else rests.

What is a Touchstone?

It may help to examine that word “touchstone.” A touchstone originally referred to a piece of quartz that would be rubbed (a touch-stone) against a mineral thought to be gold. The

⁷*Credo ut intelligam*. Similarly, C.S. Lewis once said that he doesn't believe in God because he sees Him, but it is through Him that he sees everything else.

⁸This does not put God's mind before God Himself, but it does give me an inviolable understand of *what* and *how* God thinks.

⁹This is referred to as a *properly basic* belief, one that does not require a defense. Belief in God, for example, is a properly basic belief.

¹⁰This is an issue I have with a purely evidentialist apologetic.

color of the mark would help determine if the mineral was indeed gold. The word thereby came to refer to *a standard against which other things are judged*. One writer puts it this way,

The touchstone proposition acts as a gatekeeper to the house of knowledge—or so it is hoped. What we count as knowledge has to pass the quality control of the touchstone proposition. Of course, and here’s the rub, our chosen touchstone may be astray with the result that we are really in the dark but do not know it.¹¹

Apologist John Warwick Montgomery tells a story that makes the point:

Once upon a time there was man who thought he was dead. His concerned wife and friends sent him to the friendly neighborhood psychiatrist. The psychiatrist determined to cure him by convincing him of one fact that contradicted his belief that he was dead. The fact that the psychiatrist settled on was the simple truth that dead men do not bleed, and he put him to work reading medical texts, observing autopsies, etc. After weeks of effort, the patient finally said, “All right! You’ve convinced me. Dead men do not bleed.” Whereupon the psychiatrist struck him in the arm with a needle, and the blood flowed. The man looked with a contorted, ashen face and cried: “Good [Grief]! Dead men bleed after all!”¹²

The confused man in the story had an impregnable touchstone proposition and what he experienced was not going to change it. However, a demonstrably false touchstone proposition only serves to imprison one away from the truth.¹³

Faulty Propositions

Many operate from the perspective of atheistic naturalism, that all of reality is confined to that which can be empirically demonstrated.¹⁴ That is, we live in a closed system. For an example of atheistic naturalism, refer to my earlier “box” illustration. All of reality is confined to a box and may only be explained by something else within the box. Therefore, the universe as we know it was not created; it’s eternal.¹⁵ Therefore:

¹¹“Do Christians Have a Worldview?” Accessed June 7, 2022. <https://christoncampuscci.org/do-christians-have-a-worldview-full-article/2/>.

¹²John Warwick Montgomery, *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1970), 122.

¹³It may be argued, for example, that if the Bible were to clearly propose something that violated a formal law of logic (Eg. the law of non-contradiction) it would cease to serve as a valid foundation for a touchstone proposition. I am grateful that this danger is mute.

¹⁴This, of course, ignores that there are truths we normally accept that cannot be so verified, such as facts of history or whether I like anchovies on my pizza (I do).

¹⁵That’s not to say that naturalists believe that the universe was eternal in its present form.

- God does not exist.
- Miracles are not possible—and anything that appears miraculous has a naturalistic explanation “within the box.”¹⁶
- Darwinian evolution best explains creation.

Welcome to the American governmental education system! However, according to a biblical worldview, God created the box and stands outside of it. We live in an open system, not one which is closed.

Other examples of faulty presuppositions include skepticism, the belief that we cannot know anything with certainty (a self-referentially absurd contention); solipsism, the belief that only self exists; the concept of *maya* in Hinduism, the belief that everything is an illusion; and Descarte’s starting point of the self expressed in his famous *cogito ergo sum*. Other examples could be added. So whenever we talk about knowledge (substantial), or knowing (existential) we are within the realm of epistemology, an arena in which philosophers have wrestled for millennia.

Knowledge is Possible

A biblical worldview contends that knowledge—absolute knowledge—is possible, it exists. We are not captive to illusions. We live in a predictable, consistent universe that makes science possible. In fact, there's a reason why modern science emerged from a Christian base. There is a God-ordained order to the creation. Inductive inference, foundational to science—indeed to life—finds its genesis in the will of the Triune God.¹⁷

¹⁶It is trusted that those phenomenon that defy present scientific explanation will one day be empirically verified. Thus, the naturalist, who accuses the theist of playing “God of the gaps” is guilty of playing “science of the gaps.”

¹⁷David Hume argued that there is no philosophical basis for knowing that A will always follow B, a by-product of a faulty presupposition. Christians, on the other hand, know why there are consistencies in the creation, that by virtue of a Creator.

The touchstone proposition for the Christian must be centered upon God's Word as contained in the canonical Scriptures. This thereby becomes the foundation, the axiom. God relates His mind in a way understandable to us. We can have knowledge, even absolute knowledge.¹⁸

Logic Foundational

Logic becomes a key component of a biblical worldview. Take, for example, the law of non-contradiction. Formally stated, the law of non-contradiction states that A cannot be B and non-B at the same time and in the same sense. Practically speaking, it is impossible that a circle be a circle and a triangle at the same time, in the same sense. A denial of formal logic results in pure skepticism in which nothing can be proven and human life reverts to chaos. If the right side of the road can also be the left side of the road, it doesn't matter which side you drive on. If a red light can also be a green light, at the same time, in the same sense, we would have no idea if we are to stop or go. I contend that logic, deductive reasoning, the law of non-contradiction, are attributes of God, part of His nature as revealed in the Bible.¹⁹

Consider something as simple as darkness and light. According to Genesis 1:4, God separated the light from the darkness. Light and dark represent two absolutes in that pure light cannot be pure darkness at the same time, in the same sense (the law of non-contradiction). 1 John 1:5 tells us that “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.” How could that be rationally understood if the Bible didn't uphold the law of non-contradiction? These are absolutes.

¹⁸One debate among Christian philosophers and theologians is whether God's knowledge is univocal or analogical. I confess that while I hold to univocality, I have not studied this issue in detail. It may be simplistic, but I think we have the same knowledge as God does in propositions such as $2+2 = 4$, or that David chose five smooth stones with which to slay Goliath.

¹⁹Therefore, there are some things that God cannot do. God, for example, cannot sin. He also cannot swear by a name greater than Himself because there is no name greater than His (Hebrews 6:13). And because logic is integral to His nature, God cannot make $2+2$ equal anything other than 4.

The Bible and the Mind of God

The Bible testifies to the fact that it is the very breath (θεοπνευστος), the very Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). It is, therefore, foundational. The one holding to a Christian worldview must have the Bible as foundational to his or her touchstone proposition as that which answers the questions of our existence.

Theology (God)

The second key area that informs our worldview is theology, namely God.²⁰ Almost without exception, everyone has an opinion about God. Opinions vary as to His existence, whether one can know Him, whether He's benevolent or malicious, even as to His nature (Eg. is God triune or unitarian?).

What is God Like?

Through the knowledge gained from the Bible we learn about the character of God and what He requires of his subjects. For example, we know that within the essence of the one God there are three, coequal, coeternal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We know that God is holy, good, and sovereign. We know that mankind is fallen into sin and unable to save himself from his plight.²¹ Indeed, he faces certain and eternal judgment. We know that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to redeem a people for Himself. The question is, how can we know these things apart from our epistemological foundation, the Bible? This is why doctrinal statements such as the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith have as their starting point the doctrine of Scripture.²²

Therefore, we know by virtue of our epistemic foundation that forms of dualism are out of the question, as are forms of polytheism and pantheism. We know that God is distinct from

²⁰We began with epistemology rather than theology because the Bible informs us as to the nature of God. Again, epistemology is foundational.

²¹When I use the word "man" in this paper I am using it in the once commonly accepted sense of encompassing both male and female.

²²Certainly, every single person, even those without a biblical witness, have the testimony of creation that witnesses to God's existence and power (Romans 1-2). We call this *general revelation*. However, we need *special revelation*, the Bible, to know the specifics.

His creation, that He loves and we can love Him. We know from Scripture that Jesus is God and Creator.²³ Everything that exists, that isn't God, was created by Him and depends upon Him for its very existence. If God were to cease to be, everything else would cease to be as well.

Toward a Definition of God

Theologians have given various definitions of God based on Scripture. I find the definition given in the Westminster Shorter Catechism sufficient in its brevity: “God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”

It is noteworthy that the Bible doesn't seek to prove God's existence, but assumes the fact that He is. In fact, the Bible call those who deny His existence “fools” who “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them.
[Romans 1:18-19]

The word “suppress” in the original is *κατεχόντων*, a present active participle that paints a picture of pushing down against an opposing force, such as a spring.²⁴

Humanity (Man)

What is man? This is a rather simple yet profound question, one that the biblical authors themselves ask:

17 What is man that You magnify him, and that You are concerned about him, 18 that You examine him every morning and try him every moment? [Job 7:17-18]

4 What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet . . . [Psalm 8:4–6]

²³John 1:1, 8:58; Philippians 2:10 (cf. Isaiah 45:23); Colossians 1:15-17; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:2, 8; Revelation 4:11.

²⁴Cf. Faithlife, LLC. “To Check ⇔ Hold down.” Logos Bible Software, Computer software. Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, LLC, June 7, 2022. <https://ref.ly/logos4/Senses?KeyId=ws.check+to+hold+down.v.01>.

The rank and file of mankind also ask questions pertaining to the existence of man:

- Are we just the tallest on the evolutionary chart, or are we separate and unique?
- Do humans possess moral freedom, or is biology destiny?
- Do we have purpose?
- Is our existence merely physical, or do we possess eternal souls?
- Is the mind a by-product of the 3 pound organ that is our brain, or is there a distinction between the mind and the brain
- Is there life after death?
- Is there a final judgment?

Darwinism and Equality

I find it interesting that secularists constantly beat the drum of equality when they have no foundation for doing so. It seems to me that Darwinian evolution is quite contrary to equality. If you can't survive (survival of the fittest) you go to the back of the line. Moreover, Darwinism was at its inception racist. Consider the words of Thomas Huxley, known as Darwin's bulldog. Huxley was apparently a true bigot who used evolutionary theory to support racism:

No rational man, cognizant of the facts, believes that the average Negro is the equal, still less the superior, of the white man. . . . It is simply incredible [to think] that . . . he will be able to compete successfully with his bigger-brained and smaller-jawed rival, in a contest which is to be carried on by thoughts and not by bites.²⁵

Huxley was echoing his mentor, Charles Darwin, who reportedly said: "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world."²⁶ We could include the tireless work of Margaret Sanger, whose racist eugenics against blacks formed the back-bone of Planned Parenthood and abortion on demand.²⁷ Sanger wrote, "We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population, and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members."²⁸ Her ambitions were

²⁵Thomas H. Huxley, *Lay Sermons, Addresses and Reviews* (New York: Appleton, 1871), 20.

²⁶Charles Darwin, "Letter from Charles Darwin to W. Graham, 3 July 1881," *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, 1:318. Cited in Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959, 343.

²⁷I bring up these anecdotes to demonstrate that the Darwinian worldview naturally allows for racism and eugenics, and has no base upon which to judge such things as immoral.

²⁸Arina Grossu, "Margaret Sanger, Racist Eugenicist Extraordinaire," *Washington Times*, accessed June 13, 2022. <https://m.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/may/5/grossu-margaret-sanger-eugenicist/>

realized. For example, a recent report demonstrated that in New York City alone more black babies were aborted than with born.²⁹ Nearly 80 percent of Planned Parenthood’s surgical abortion facilities are located within walking distance of minority communities.³⁰

Imagine

A recent New Year’s Eve celebration featured the John Lennon song, “Imagine” (a song that has been championed as a new American national anthem).

I Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today. . .

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace . . .

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world . . .

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one*

²⁹Carole Novielli, “Tragic report: More Black Babies are Aborted in New York City Than are Born,” Live Action News, accessed June 13, 2022. <https://www.liveaction.org/news/black-babies-aborted-new-york-city-born/>

³⁰Arina Grossu, “Margaret Sanger, Racist Eugenicist Extraordinaire,” Washington Times, accessed June 13, 2022. <https://m.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/may/5/grossu-margaret-sanger-eugenicist/>

This seems to be where the West is moving. Imagine a world without God, a world of socialism, a world of predefined equality, the brotherhood of man. This effectively becomes his deification. Yet, the world at large must borrow from the Christian worldview in order to make sense of life.³¹ Man is unique with special dignity and purpose. Only man can think about what he thinks about, the ability to self-reflect and reflect upon that self-reflection.

A Trip to the Zoo

I'm always amazed at a trip to the zoo. What a testimony of the wonderful omnipotence of our Creator. The vast variety of the animals, some humorous, some beautiful, others less so. Then I look at the people walking around. What a testimony to the nature of man! Man who toils at various jobs, has hobbies, love of family. Man who can design skyscrapers and write great works of music, not to mention the accomplishments of the computer age. We have the animal creation and man, with no intervening species. Mankind stands light years apart from the most intelligent of animals, be it a pig or chimps. Yes, we are unique with special dignity and purpose.

One Race: Humanity

And that's true for all people regardless of what they look like; they are created in God's image. Meanwhile we live in a culture that has rebelled from that unifying truth. We are a divided people, divided by race and special interests. Of race and ethnicity, the National Geographic wrote this:

“Race” is usually associated with biology and linked with physical characteristics such as skin color or hair texture. “Ethnicity” is linked with cultural expression and identification. However, both are social constructs. . . .³²

We have one unifying race and that's humanity created in the *imago Dei*:

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 God created

³¹I'm reminded of the oft-quoted phrase by the late apologist Dr. Greg Bahnsen, that the proof of Christianity is the impossibility of the contrary.

³²Erin Blakemore, “Race and Ethnicity: How Are They Different?,” National Geographic, accessed June 8, 2022. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/race-ethnicity>

man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” [Genesis 1:26-28]

Acts 17:26-28 similarly reads:

26 And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, “For we also are His children.”

All people have inherent worth and dignity. We are all equal (and united) in the sight of God.

The departure from this basic fact of a Christian worldview only serves to tear us apart.

We also learn from the Bible that which is borne out in our experience, that evil exists—not only around us, but in us. Man is an enigma, as Blaise Pascal observed:

What a chimaera then is man, what a novelty, what a monster, what chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, yet an imbecile earthworm; depository of truth, yet a sewer of uncertainty and error; pride and refuse of the universe. Who shall resolve this tangle?”³³

That tangle was resolved by Jesus Christ.

Reality (Metaphysics)

The fourth area we want to look at is reality, or metaphysics. By this we mean *ultimate reality*.³⁴ Nash outlines some of the relevant questions that fit within this category:

What is the relationship between God and the universe? Is the existence of the universe a brute fact? Is the universe eternal? Did an eternal, personal, omnipotent God create the world? Are God and the world coeternal and interdependent? Is the world best understood in a mechanistic (that is, nonpurposeful) way? Or is there a purpose in the universe? What is the ultimate nature of the universe? Is the cosmos ultimately material or spiritual or something else? Is the universe a self-enclosed system in the sense that everything that happens is caused by (and thus explained by) other events within the system? Or can a supernatural reality (a being beyond the natural order) act causally within nature? Are miracles possible?³⁵

³³Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*.

³⁴Compare the three transcendentals of *goodness, truth, and beauty*.

³⁵Nash, 28.

Most people take these issues for granted. To put them in the form of two questions: “What is the foundational reality that informs what people think about those things?” “What worldview best answers those questions?”

Nietzsche

The Bible answers metaphysical questions much differently than will naturalism, science divorced from God. As for the latter, the 19th century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, wrote that, “God is Dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.”³⁶ Nietzsche was claiming that God has been effectively nullified, but there are always going to be superstitious people who will attempt to keep the empty shadow alive, a shadow that must be done away with as well. This is what we see in the post-Christian West and a reason why it is essential that the church of Jesus Christ be trained to *think* in worldview terms with the Bible as the foundational axiom.

Purpose?

Does life have any ultimate purpose, any eternal, absolute purpose? It seems to me that consistent naturalism relegates itself into the realm of hedonistic nihilism. I see that regress as logically consistent. Albert Camus wrote in this regard: “If we believe in nothing, if nothing has any meaning and if we can affirm no values whatsoever, then everything is possible and nothing has any importance.”³⁷ Similarly, Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer, in *Bioethics: An Anthology*, write, “Since Darwin, we know that we do not exist for any purpose.”³⁸ Such is the dilemma of our existence apart from the revelation of God in the Bible.

From God’s first act of creation to the consummation of all things, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is teleological. Man, created in the image of God, has inherent worth and

³⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 108.

³⁷Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 5.

³⁸Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer, eds., *Bioethics: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 4.

dignity—marred by sin, to be sure. But even with that, there’s hope. In Jesus Christ that which is lost has been restored—already, and not-yet.³⁹

Morality (Ethics)

There are many questions that arise in connection with morality. For example, are there absolute ethics, those things that are wrong everywhere for all time, or are ethics relative, related to time and culture? Does evil exist, or is moral goodness an evolutionary by-product? To affirm any form of evolutionary relativism is to necessarily divorce morality from an ontological reality. In contrast, the Christian worldview offers an objective standard for morality:

According to the Christian worldview, God is the ground of the laws that govern the physical universe and that make possible the order of the cosmos. God is also the ground of the moral laws that ought to govern human behavior and that make possible order between humans and within humans.⁴⁰

No Basis for Evil Apart from God

Furthermore, I see no basis for the existence of evil apart from an absolute Good, namely God. After all, who’s to say that the torture of children is immoral if there is no absolute, ontological standard by which to judge? To draw from a recent example of history, who’s to say that the leaders of Nazi Germany were immoral apart from the existence of God? From a naturalistic perspective, who’s to say that we won’t evolve back to that? What moral standard does evolution, or culture for that matter, operate upon? I’m afraid that apart from God all we are left with is the sentiment expressed by the late novelist Blaise Cendrars:

What are you looking for? There is no Truth. There's only action, action obeying a million different impulses, ephemeral action, action subjected to every possible and imaginable contingency and contradiction, Life. Life is crime, theft, jealousy, hunger, lies, disgust, stupidity, sickness, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, piles of corpses. What can you do about it, my poor friend?⁴¹

³⁹Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54-48; Revelation 22:1-4.

⁴⁰Nash, 41.

⁴¹Blaise Cendrars, “Moravagine Quotes” accessed June 8, 2022. <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1454478-moravagine>.

As Long as it Doesn't Hurt Anyone . . .

The dominant philosophy of our culture seems to be that which follows the utilitarian “do no harm” ethic of John Stuart Mill. According to this principle, people should be free to act however they want, so long as their actions cause no harm to someone else. The issue runs much deeper, however. How do we define “freedom”—or “harm” for that matter? This principle does not bode well within the animal kingdom. What makes man any different?

Written on Their Hearts

The fact is that there's a universal understanding among people that some things are immoral. Even the atheist is perturbed if you snag his theater seat while he steps out for popcorn.⁴² The lion doesn't cry foul when a pack of hyenas steal his capture! As I'm fond of saying, everyone draws the line somewhere. The question is where do you draw it, and why.

The Bible (remember our touchstone proposition) answers the question of ontological ethics and why man is universally offended at crimes like murder and theft. There is a law written on each person's heart by virtue of being created in the image and likeness of God.

14 So, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, instinctively do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this. Their competing thoughts will either accuse or excuse them. [Romans 2:14–15]⁴³

Conclusion

Pascal also wrote that, “Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect.”⁴⁴ Christianity is not contrary to reason, far from it. Christianity establishes the basis for reason—and for real peace. St. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, noted that “God made us for Himself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Him.” We who believe in Jesus Christ have entered that rest (Hebrews 4:3).

⁴²Compare the modern social justice movement which pontificates about justice while affirming no base upon which to ground it.

⁴³The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2009.

⁴⁴Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*.

A Christian worldview adequately addresses the core issues of life: Epistemology; Theology; Morality; Reality; and Anthropology. As the notable Christian philosopher Gordon C. Clark wrote:

If one system can provide plausible solutions to many problems, while another leaves too many questions unanswered, if one system tends less to skepticism and gives more meaning to life, if one worldview is consistent while others are self-contradictory, who can deny us, since we must choose, the right to choose the more promising first principle.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1991), 34.