

INTRODUCTION TO A STUDY OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

*The tragedy in American culture is that
thinking has given way to feeling,
pragmatism has replaced principles,
and "how to" takes the place of "how come."¹*

Introduction

This kind of study may be something completely new to many people. Some may embrace it while others may question whether it is appropriate to be spending time on material like this in a Bible class. After all, we are Christians and we are citizens of Heaven. The kingdom to which we belong is not of this world.

It is this latter way of thinking that demonstrates the need to have a study like this. I myself used to think the same way. My way of thinking used to be this: When it comes to matters of religious doctrine, worship, and spirituality, we deal with these in the church. However, when it comes to matters of medicine, policy, public education, psychology, etc., that is of the world. We do not concern ourselves with such matters in the church. After all, we are not of this world and there is a clear separation of church and state. Therefore we do not concern ourselves with secular matters as Christians.

As we will see, this way of thinking, even though common among Christians and non-Christians alike, is not biblical. God did not create a compartmentalized religion. God is Lord of the universe. The universe is his creation and has been designed according to his laws and his character. God has assigned human beings as his stewards and caretakers of his creation. This means that there is a right and wrong way to view creation and our activities in it. That right way is found in the Bible. As Bible-believing Christians, our view of life should be shaped according to God's view as revealed in scripture and not merely by secular philosophies we encounter every day.

What do we call this "view of life?" It is only recently that many Christians have begun to evaluate the "system" for how they see and interpret the world. Many have referred to it in different ways, such as "life view, world view, etc." For the sake of consistency, we will refer to it as "worldview"

This goal of this study is to give you the tools to develop an intentional, conscious, comprehensive biblical worldview so that you can be faithful to God's mandate as a steward of creation and not uncritically accept a view or philosophy that is unbiblical.

¹ W. Gary Phillips and William E. Brown, *Making Sense of your World from a Biblical Viewpoint* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 22.

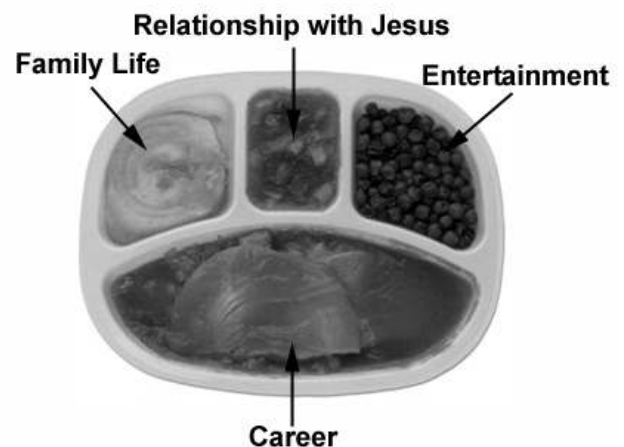
I. Understanding World View

A. What is a World View?

1. Everyone has one
 - a. It is a human necessity
 - b. Some can articulate it
 - c. Others are only vaguely aware of it
 - d. It gives meaning and direction to life
2. A worldview is a mold for culture
 - a. Culture is inherited and passed down
 - b. What can be observed in a culture is a reflection of it's underlying ideology or world view, which gives reasons for the culture's customs.
 - c. "Culture suggests the way a group of people may appear to an anthropologist, worldview suggests how the universe looks to the group."²
3. A worldview is a perspective of the world
 - a. Our view and interpretation of the world is shaped by our underlying presuppositions, which is our worldview
 - b. "Worldviews are the glasses through which we see and understand (or misunderstand) the world around us."³
 - c. There is no such thing as a view of the world that has no presuppositions
 - d. The question then, is which worldview is right?
4. Simply put, a worldview is
 - a. The explanation and interpretation of the world
 - b. The application of that view to all of life

B. An illustration:

1. Compare life to a T.V. Dinner
2. We have different parts of our life, each compartment represents them
3. Where is your worldview in this illustration? It is the tray itself



² Phillips and Brown, *Making Sense of your World*, 35.

³ Greg Johnson, *The World According to God: A Biblical View of Culture, Work, Science, Sex and Everything Else* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 22.

4. Reflect on this:

- a. Does this seem rather common way to organize life?
 - 1) For many Christians, this is how their life is organized
 - 2) Many Christians do this unconsciously
- b. Problems with this scheme?
 - 1) Jesus is Lord, creator, and King.
 - 2) Jesus did not come to occupy a compartment of your life
 - 3) Jesus did not come to occupy any compartments, but to "be" the compartments of your life
- c. Rom 12:2
 - 1) Various translations:
 - a) "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (ASV)
 - b) "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (NASB)
 - c) "Do not be conformed to this world, {Gk [age] } but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (NRSV)
 - d) "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (NIV)
 - e) "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mould, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed" (Phillips)
 - f) "Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out" (Message)
 - 2) Questions
 - a) How does this passage apply to this discussion?
 - b) In the illustration above, what is the "pattern" or "mold" that is shaping the various parts of life?
 - c) When you first looked at the above illustration, did you think to evaluate the tray holding the food?
 - d) What should be the mold that shapes all of life?

- d. Thinking about the tray
 - 1) The tray itself can be thought of as your worldview
 - 2) Your worldview is what shapes all aspects of your life
 - 3) Your worldview provides categories, meaning, and determines the relationship each part of your life has with the others
 - 4) Reflect on Phillip's translation of Rom 12:2 and the tray

II. What are the basic elements of a Worldview?

- A. The view on God, or ultimate reality. Where did everything come from?
- B. The view on Man. What is the nature of man?
- C. The view on Nature. What is man's relationship to nature? What is it?
- D. Answer questions: The various worldviews generally seeks to answer the following questions
 - 1. Where did everything come from?
 - 2. What has gone wrong?
 - 3. What will it take to make it right?

III. Why is understanding worldview Important?

- A. It is not merely academic, it has practical implications to all of life
 - 1. The effect of ideas are not limited to philosophical discussions in university philosophy classes, they have serious consequences
 - 2. Example: If everything happened by accident, then morality is nothing more than an illusion, a subjective construct.
- B. Christian faith is not private, not limited to Sunday worship times.
 - 1. Matt 5:14-16
 - a. We are called to be the salt of the earth
 - b. We are called to be the light of the world
 - 2. Eph 5:6-13 - More on the light
 - a. We are to avoid being deceived by empty words
 - b. We are not to be "partakers" with the sons of disobedience
 - c. The light consists of goodness, righteousness, and "truth"
 - d. We are to do more than just avoid participation, but are also to expose them with the light of truth
 - e. Therefore: Light not only draws people and guides them, but it exposes truth and lies

C. Christian faith is not anti-intellectual and anti-science

1. Matt 22:37 - We are to love God with our heart AND our mind
 - a. Intellectual pursuits should not be substantially different than religious pursuits
 - b. Intellectual pursuits should be seen as a pursuit of God's truth
2. John 17:17 - God's word is truth
 - a. Not "a" truth, but simply "truth"
 - b. Therefore, God's word is not opposed to scientific, philosophical, medical, political, and other kinds of truth
 - c. God's word is the foundation of these areas of truth
3. Gen 1:26-28; 2:15 - God gave a stewardship to human beings
 - a. Human beings were to have dominion over the earth
 - b. Human beings are caretakers of God's creation
 - c. All of our intellectual and scientific pursuits are to be in service of God in order to carry out our role as righteous and benevolent rulers/caretakers of God's creation.
4. Since God is the creator and we are the caretakers, any discipline by which we understand and have dominion, whether medicine, science, politics, etc. should have as its foundation and starting point, a biblical and theological foundation.

D. Loss of Children

1. A Christian worldview no longer shapes the education system
2. Children are subjected to a worldview that is not Christian
 - a. They are often unaware of it
 - b. Christian children often become hostile when presented with an authentically biblical worldview
 - 1) "He has his beliefs, I have mine"
 - 2) Which belief is right is often not a concern
 - 3) To take a stand on biblical teaching is often seen as dogmatic, close-minded, and backward
3. 2 Pet 2:18-21 - The lie of non-biblical worldviews
 - a. The worldview and philosophies in our educational system promise freedom, a better life, etc.
 - b. Instead, they have the opposite results
 - c. History has already borne this out
 - 1) The sexual revolution on college campuses ruined lives
 - 2) The dismal failure of Communism
 - 3) The failure of naturalistic science, life is not better

4. 1 Pet 3:15 - Need to be ready to give a defense of your hope
5. An ad placed by Worldview Academy a few years ago showed a rumpled, tweedy professor glaring back at the reader with this caption: Meet your child's first college professor. He is a Marxist Atheist English professor who eats Christian freshmen for lunch.
6. "The politically correct campus today offers countless variations on this Marxist theme, as evidenced by the way the themes overlap and complement one another. The University of California at Santa Barbara offers a course listed as Black Marxism, linking Marxism and black liberation. Brown University connects black and homosexual liberation in a course called Black Lavender: Study of Black Gay/Lesbian plays. UCLA relates Hispanic ethnicity with homosexuality in a course listed as Chicana Lesbian Literature. Villanova combines feminism with environmentalism in a course titled Eco-feminism, and Stanford University mixes everything together in a single cauldron with Women of Color: The Intersection of Race, Ethnicity, Class and Gender. As a result, our college graduates are taking Marxist categories into law, politics, education, family studies, and many other fields.

What all this means is that Marxism, though largely discredited as a political ideology, is still very much alive and well in Western intellectual life. Reborn as multiculturalism and political correctness, it remains one of the most widespread and influential forms of counterfeit salvation.⁴

- E. If we have not consciously developed a comprehensive worldview, we may unconsciously adopt the wrong one(s).
 1. Many things pretend to be authentic and true knowledge and wisdom
 2. Col 2:8-10 - A warning
 - a. Do not be duped by worldly philosophies
 - b. Completeness is found in Christ, not in a worldly philosophy
 3. Rom 1:21-25 - An example of a godless worldview
 - a. They engaged in futile speculations that disregarded God Whether scientific, philosophical, religious, or otherwise
 - b. Their God became something in the "image of Man" or animals. Man becomes his own god
 - c. Exchanged the truth of God for a lie
God's truth is no longer the foundation for intellectual

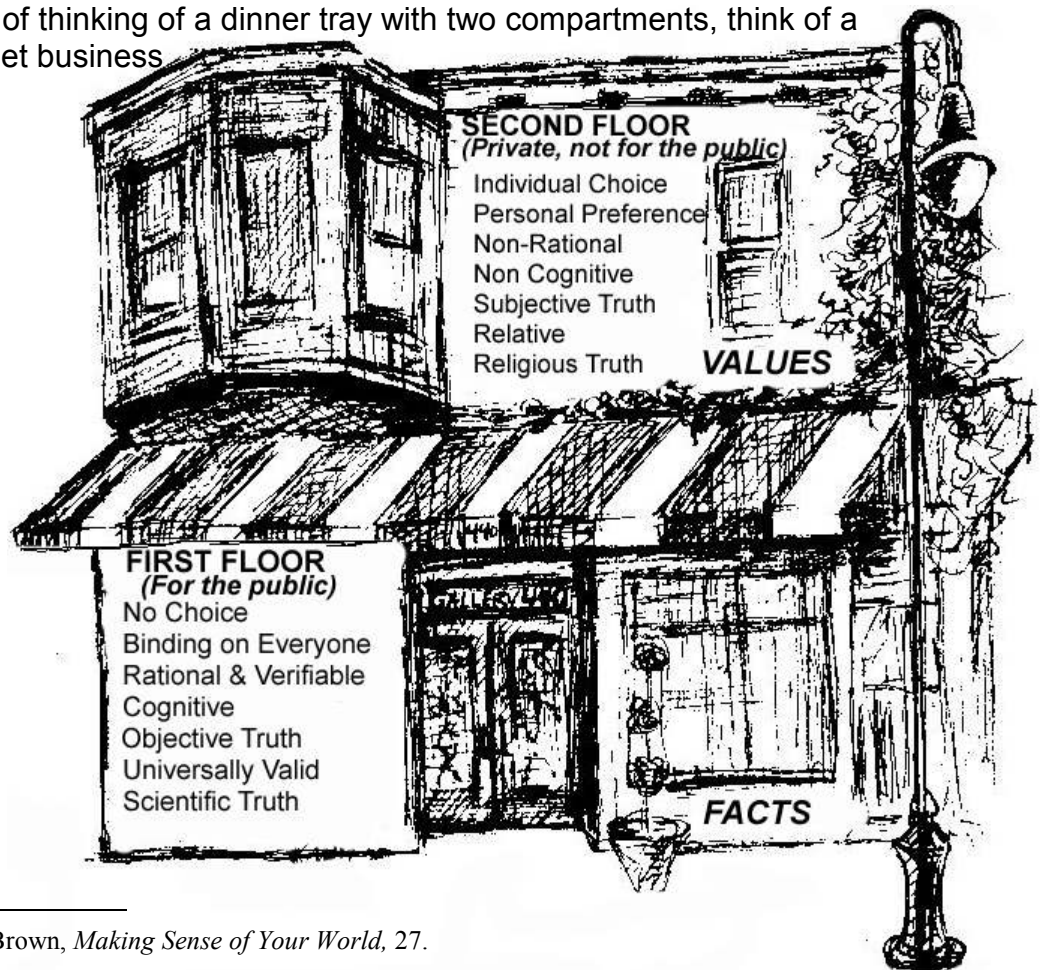
⁴ Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Nashville: Lifeway, 1999), 101.

pursuit

- d. Worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator
Something created by God becomes god for humans
- e. Rom 1:28-32 - The result of this is disastrous
 - 1) Godless societies are filled with violence and evil
 - 2) Whether fascism, communism, nazism, etc.
- 4. "Worldview evangelists are everywhere: The New Age actress, the television scientist, the libidinous teenagers in the latest Hollywood youth movie, and even the characters on Saturday morning TV cartoons."⁵

IV. Example of practice effect of Worldview: Mental Secularization as GateKeeper

- A. The "secular worldview" today divides truth into two different spheres.
- B. Instead of thinking of a dinner tray with two compartments, think of a main street business



⁵ Phillips and Brown, *Making Sense of Your World*, 27.

1. This scheme functions as a gatekeeper⁶
 - a. Delegitimizes biblical truth in the public square
 - b. Secularists say they are not opposed to religion
 - 1) As long as it stays on the "values" floor where it belongs, not on the "fact" floor.
 - 2) As long as it does not pretend to be knowledge, but belief
2. How can Christians react?
 - a. We can critique the culture, but that is not all we are called to do
 - b. We need to understand that God has provided us the tools to develop a sound, biblical, comprehensive world view
 - c. Scripture is the tool for developing this worldview
 - 1) The Bible provides more than a means for personal salvation
 - 2) The Biblical message does not begin with, "repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins"
 - 3) Gen 1:1 - The Biblical message begins with, "In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth."
 - 4) Ps 24:1 - God not just our redeemer; but the Lord of Creation
 - d. 1 Cor 14:33 - God not a God of disunity, but of peace & wholeness
 - 1) This is his world, and it conforms to his design
 - 2) There is no values/fact split in the world
3. Note: When Christians unconsciously accept this dualism, ordinary work is actually denigrated as less important than real ministry
 - a. The assumption is that the real way to serve God is full time ministry
 - b. Everything else exists to support the real work of full time ministers
 - c. Those in secular professions exist to support the stars - the ministers
 - d. Nearly snuffed out created talents of creator of Veggie Tales
 - 1) Phil Vischer always wanted to make movies
 - 2) But was taught that only valid way to serve God was in full time ministry
 - 3) Went to Bible College to train
 - 4) The more he saw the powerful influence movies had on kids, the more he thought it was important to create quality films
 - 5) Dropped out, and he and his friend started a video

⁶ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 19-22.

company

- 6) As former classmates went on to become ministers and missionaries, he and his friend went on to become the voices of Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber

V. Others have thought and written about the loss of a comprehensive Christian worldview. Read the following quotations and discuss each:

A. Harry Blamires:

"There is no longer a Christian mind. There is still, of course, a Christian ethic, a Christian practice, and a Christian spirituality. As a moral being, the modern Christian subscribes to a code other than that of the non-Christian. As a member of the Church, he undertakes obligations and observations ignored by the non-Christian. As a spiritual being, in prayer and meditation, he strives to cultivate a dimension of life unexplored by the non-Christian. But as a *thinking* being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization. He accepts religion - its morality, its worship, its spiritual culture; but he rejects the religious view of life, the view which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal, the view which relates all human problems - social, political, cultural - to the doctrinal foundations of the Christian Faith, the view which sees all things here below in terms of God's supremacy and earth's transitoriness, in terms of Heaven and Hell.

Everywhere, one meets examples of the Church's abdication of intellectual authority which lies at the back of the modern Christian's easy descent into mental secularism."⁷

"...The mental secularization of Christians means that nowadays, we meet only as worshipping beings and as moral beings, not as thinking beings. We agree that it is right to be present on the Lord's own day in the Lord's own house. We agree that it is sinful to commit adultery or to slander our neighbours. But we cannot meet, as thinking Christians, over the controversial political, social, and cultural issues whose airing constitutes the vigorous intellectual life of many both inside and outside the Church. This is not because there are no propositions on which we can agree with fellow-Christians, but because there is no common field of discourse in which we can dispute either harmoniously or inharmoniously, unless we first step out of our theological skins."⁸

1. What does the author identify as a problem
2. Discuss some of the key terms he uses:
 - a. Mental secularization
 - b. Religious View of Life
 - c. Field of common discourse

⁷ Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1963; American edition, Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1978), 3-4 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁸ Ibid., 16.

B. Gordon Haddon Clark:

"Clearly the idea of God does not dominate contemporary thinking. The topics of the day are discussed in private conversations and in the popular periodicals without any suggestion that theology might have a bearing on them. Even devoted Christians fail to see any close connection between their faith and other matters of interest. Similarly, in the colleges, not only have the specific courses in Theism been dropped, but the Christian presuppositions that previously pervaded the entire curriculum have been abandoned, and the philosophy that most influences the students in all departments is humanism or naturalism."⁹

"The attitude that even if God exists, he is not particularly important for the problems of society, is mirrored in several reviews of the American educational system. As a distinguished example, consider the Report of the Harvard Committee. This document admits that a stable society requires a common philosophy, the lack of which produces social disintegration and war. It then complains that after the common curriculum with its central theistic philosophy was discarded and replaced by vocationalism, the schools failed to provide their students and their subject matter with any unifying principles."¹⁰

1. What does the author identify as a problem
2. Discuss some of the key terms he uses:
 - a. Humanism or Naturalism
 - b. A Common Philosophy, Unifying Principle
 - c. Vocationalism

C. Francis Schaeffer:

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

They 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 world view - that is, through a fundamental change in the overall way people think and view the world and life as a whole. This shift has been away from a world view that was at least vaguely Christian in people's memory (even if they were not individually Christian) *toward* something completely different - toward a world view based upon the idea that the final reality is impersonal matter or energy shaped into its present form by impersonal chance. They have not seen that this world view has taken the place of the one that had previously dominated Northern European culture, including the United States, which was at least Christian in memory, even if the individuals were not individually Christian."¹¹

⁹ Gordon Haddon Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things: An Introduction to Philosophy*, 4th ed. The Works of Gordon Haddon Clark (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 1952, 2005), 15.

¹⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹¹ Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, revised ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 17-18.

"The central ideas of the Enlightenment "stands in total antithesis to Christian truth at every point - including the denial of the supernatural; belief in the all-sufficiency of human reason; the rejection of the fall; denial of the deity of Christ and his resurrection; belief in the perfectibility of Man; and the destruction of the Bible. And with this has come a nearly total moral breakdown. There is no way to make a synthesis of these ideas and Christian truth. They stand in total antithesis."¹²

1. What problems does the author identify?
2. Discuss some of the key terms he uses:
 - a. World View
 - b. Final Reality

D. Matrick Morley

"Every person operates from a *base*, or *life view*. This base may be Christian, humanistic, or syncretistic. Some carefully chisel out their life view; others merely assume the default values of the cultural majority.

Many Christians do not operate from a distinctly Christian life view. Instead they have built on the shifting sands of shallow thinking; they live by their own ideas. Some Christians, not anchored in the Word, watch in exasperation as the cross currents of trendy thinking guide their most important choices."¹³

1. What problems does the author identify?
2. Discuss some of the key terms he uses:
 - a. Base, or Life View
 - b. Syncretistic
 - c. Default Values

E. Nancy Pearcey:

"Clearly, developing a Christian mind involves much more than merely earning and advanced degree. Many Christians with Ph.D.'s have simply absorbed a two-track approach to their subject, treating science or sociology or history as through it consisted of religiously neutral knowledge, where biblical truth has nothing important to say. In these areas, the attitude seems to be that God's word is not a light to our paths after all, and that we must simply accommodate to whatever the secular experts decree. God's Word is robbed of its power to transform our minds, and we become inwardly divided, deprived of the joy of living whole and integrated lives."¹⁴

1. What problems does the author identify?
2. Discuss some of the key terms she uses:
 - a. A Christian mind
 - b. Two-track approach

¹² _____, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1984), 35-36.

¹³ Patrick M. Morley, *The Rest of Your Life: Your Personal Plan for Finding Authentic Meaning and Significance* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 106

¹⁴ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 38.

VI. Worldview has consequences. Examples:¹⁵**A. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)**

1. Was born on Oct 15, 1844 in Rocken, Prussia.
2. His father, a Lutheran minister, died when he was four. He was raised by his mother
3. His philosophy:
 - a. Declared the death of God
 - b. He denounced Christian morality as a morality for slaves, concocted by those who wanted to use guilt to control other people for their own self interests.
 - c. Believed that the biblical ethic was a pathology that humans needed to move beyond
 - d. For him, progress would mean the rise of a race of superhumans that lived by an ethic of power, not weak Christian morality.
 - e. This is exactly what the Nazis hoped to create from the Aryan race.
4. "Nietzsche never flew a Nazi flag. He never commanded a Panzer division, but his ideas gave birth to the Nazis. Hitler simply translated Nietzsche's ideas into actions and cost the lives of fifty million people in the World War II."¹⁶

B. Rene Descartes (1596-1650)

1. Born in a small town near Tours, reared by mother after father died
2. Was a French mathematician and lifelong Catholic
3. Resolved to doubt everything that could be doubted (except doubt itself)
 - a. Purpose was to demolish all belief and start from the foundations
 - b. When you are left with what you cannot possibly doubt, this is truth
4. He doubted everything, except that he was a thinking being - "I think, therefore I am"
5. Opened the door for Naturalism
 - a. He promoted idea that the human mind, not God, is the source of certainty
 - b. Although he himself did not subscribe to naturalism, his ideas gave rise to it

C. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

1. Born in Geneva. Mother died at birth, father abandoned him
 - a. Tried two apprenticeships, but ran away to escape the discipline

¹⁵ Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?*, 11-25.

¹⁶ Ibid., 12.

- b. Served in two households, charged with theft in one
- 2. Believed that people are basically good. They are naturally loving, virtuous, and selfless
- 3. Believed that society corrupts people with artificial rules that confine people and makes them envious, hypocritical, and competitive.
- 4. Believed that individuals must be free to create and discover their own identity, which can only happen from free from the chains of institutions, rules, customs, and traditions.
- 5. Since humans are basically good and corrupted by society, he believed that the state's role should be to rescue humans from evil society
- 6. The natural conclusion to these ideas is that the government would be justified to do what it needs in order to destroy the forces of an evil society

D. Charles Darwin (1809-1882)

- 1. Born in Shrewsbury, England. Mother died when he was 8.
 - a. Studies medicine, then studied for the clergy
 - b. Spent several years sailing, where he documented his "discoveries"
- 2. Did not invent the idea of evolution, but rather hypothesized the method of evolution, "Natural Selection," which made it believable by sounding scientific.
- 3. Although his original theory has been scientifically discredited, "Neo-Darwinism" has taken its place, which identifies genetic mutations as being responsible for evolution rather than gradual change.
- 4. Darwin's theory eliminated the need to have God in the picture by providing a naturalistic view of origins
- 5. Darwin's theory also reduced humans to another animal

E. Practical consequences of these ideas

- 1. These ideas provided the following worldview on humans and society:
 - a. Human nature is basically good
 - b. It was corrupted by something (everyone is a victim)
 - c. The State is the savior
 - d. The result is the perfect, utopian society
- 2. "Have you wondered how communists could believe what they do? How could Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot murder millions of their own people in the name of good? Marx took the building blocks provided by previous thinkers and built the most destructive ideology yet seen on earth. His thinking fuels not only communism but dozens of other systems at work today.

Since he believed that human nature was good until corrupted by the family or society (Rousseau), Marx said we must destroy those forces of corruption. The state must tear down the sources of evil

so the perfect society can emerge. Marx thought the private ownership of property and the division of labor was the source of corruption....these ideas lead to the ultimate irony: to build, we must destroy."¹⁷

VII. Summary:

- A. There has been a shift in our culture from biblical theism as the foundation for all academic disciplines to something else
- B. Ideas and their worldviews have logical and practical consequences
- C. Many Christians have not consciously developed a biblical view and philosophy for all of life
- D. Many Christians have submitted to mental secularization and have accepted pieces of various non-biblical worldviews for various parts of their life
- E. There is a correct and comprehensive worldview that comes from scripture

VIII. Review these Scriptures. How do they illuminate the discussion on worldview?

- A. Mt 22:37 - Love the Lord with all of your...mind
- B. Col 2:8-10 - Everything we need to be complete is in Christ, don't be duped
- C. 1 Cor 1:20-21 - Wisdom of this world vs. wisdom of God
- D. 1 Cor 3:18-19 - Don't be duped by worldly wisdom that is not of God
- E. Rom 1:21-25, 28-32 - Example of godless wisdom, autonomy, human reason, etc. and the disastrous results
- F. Rom 12:1-2 - Don't "think" like the world
- G. 2 Cor 10:5 - Take every thought captive for Christ
- H. 1 Pet 3:15 - Ready to make a defense for the hope in you
- I. Eph 6:10-18 - We are not in a physical battle, but spiritual battle for mind and soul

¹⁷ Colson and Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* 24-25.