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HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE?

A Quick Focus

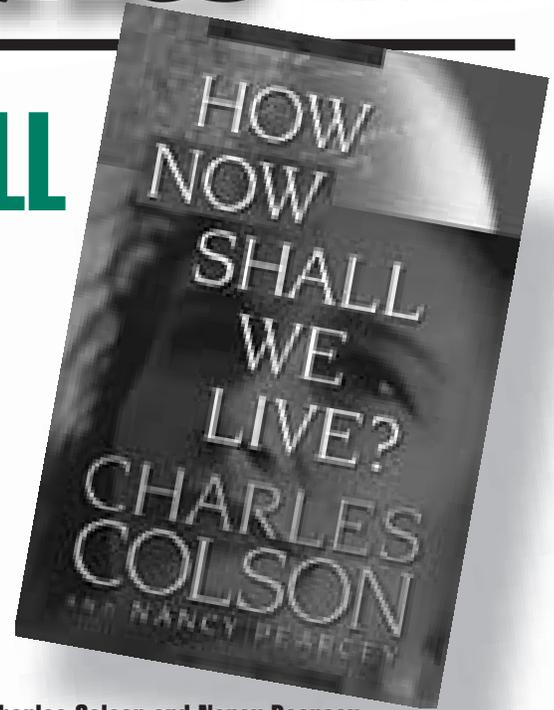
The Book's Purpose

- Challenge Christians to embrace their faith as a way of seeing and understanding and changing the world around them
- Reveal how the clash of two worldviews~naturalism and Christian theism~impacts contemporary issues
- Arm believers with sound responses to assaults on Christianity

The Book's Message

Our faith in Jesus Christ is more than a private relationship with God. It is a way of seeing and understanding and changing the world around us. The Christian worldview contains the ideas for refuting the ungodly opponents of the truth in the public square, and it contains the principles necessary for restoring all of culture.

Christianity is not simply a religion; it is a view of the world. Christ is much more than our Savior. "He is called the logos, which means 'the



By Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey
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plan of creation' ...Nothing has meaning apart from Him."

Christians are saved *from* sin, but are also saved *to* the task of taking the message of redemption and restoration to a dying culture. 

Five Main Points

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WORLDVIEW: Why It Matters:

What is a Worldview?

Our worldview is the sum total of our beliefs about the world, and every choice we make is influenced by the beliefs which make up our worldview. Every worldview answers three basic questions:

- Where did we come from, and who are we?
- What has gone wrong with the world?
- What can we do to fix it?

Christianity is a Worldview

Christianity is more than a private relationship with God; it is a comprehensive vision of the world that should motivate both private practice and public action. The Christian worldview allows us to make sense of reality and equips us to defend truth against opposing worldviews. Christians who understand the full implications of their worldview are able to live happier, more fulfilling, and more productive lives because they know how to live in harmony with the reality that God has created.

“Every worldview has to begin somewhere~God or matter, take your choice. Everything else flows from that initial choice.”

The Clash of Worldviews

Broadly speaking, the today's major ideological battle is the one being waged between naturalism and Christian theism. Naturalism is the belief that the natural world is all that exists. Theism is the belief that a transcendent God has created and continues to sustain the natural world. Naturalism is evident in a variety of forms, including moral relativism, multiculturalism, pragmatism, utopianism, existentialism, and postmodernism.

Christian Truth in an Age of Disbelief

Christians must be prepared to respond to those who become disillusioned with the false beliefs and values of naturalism. We must know why we believe the Christian worldview, we must be ready to defend it, and we must apply its principles in our everyday lives. Loving people and reaching out to them where they are will demonstrate to them that Christian faith is not an irrational leap. Through appeals to reason and the common good, the Christian who knows both his own beliefs and those of opposing worldviews can demonstrate that the Christian worldview gives the best answers to the basic questions of life. Every Christian should be engaged in this type of evangelism and apologetics. 

“In every action we take, we are doing one of two things: we are either helping to create a hell on earth or helping to bring down a foretaste of heaven”

CREATION: Where Did We Come From, and Who Are We?

“Every worldview has to begin somewhere, has to begin with a theory of how the universe began.”

Start At the Beginning

Naturalism addresses this issue by appealing to natural forces. But the attempt to explain

the beginning of nature by reference to natural forces is not scientific because it is not empirically verifiable. Naturalism is a surrogate religion that attempts, without reference to God, to explain God's world in a way that satisfies the human longings for meaning and transcendence.

Bad Science vs. Better Science

To combat naturalism on the issue of origins, we should not see religion and science as in conflict. Rather, we should recognize that naturalism is *bad* science and then we should oppose it with *better* science. The evidence being gathered by scientific inquiry is not creating

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new challenges to the rationality of Christianity. In fact, many current scientific findings support theism much more than naturalism.

The Big Bang

Far from disproving the Biblical account of creation, current scientific theories actually support such an idea. Big bang cosmology shows that the natural world is finite and had a definite beginning point in time. This fact reveals the inadequacy of naturalism, for its principles are limited to application in a world that has not always existed. Naturalism cannot answer the ultimate questions of origins. Christians should challenge naturalism by asking questions such as: "What came before the big bang?" and "What caused it?"

Are We Cosmic Accidents?

Scientists today are beginning to consider the possibility that the universe is designed. The so-called *anthropic principle* articulated by some scientists states that the physical conditions of the universe are *exactly* what they would have to be in order to support life. These conditions include everything from the size and position of the earth in relation to the sun, to the strength of fundamental forces such as gravity, electromagnetism, and nuclear forces. Christians should point out that if the universe exhibits design, the most logical explanation of this fact would be the existence of a designer.

Life in a Test Tube?

Evolutionary theory has provided the naturalist with a way of explaining the appearance of order in the universe without reference to a designer. But no one has ever seen evolution occurring, and those laboratory experiments designed to demonstrate that life can emerge by

chance or that chance mutation can produce evolutionary development have failed to do so. In fact, those scientists who have succeeded in synthesizing by chance essential amino acids or other building-blocks of life have succeeded only by virtue of tightly controlled and elaborately designed experiments. So they do not prove that life can emerge by chance, but that life can emerge only from a carefully designed and controlled situation!

Darwin's Dangerous Idea

Darwinism is the key to the debate between theism and naturalism in many areas. Today's culture has given science the authority to define reality, so Darwinism provides a scientific justification for the application in fields ranging from education to morality to sexuality. Consequently, the question of life's origin is one of critical importance. The answer we give—either God or matter, will influence our entire approach to life. Our identity, values, reasons for living, and our view of the value of life itself will be determined by our commitment to naturalism or theism.

“...in the past few decades, science has completely reversed itself on the question of the origin of the universe.”

In the Image of God

Only the Christian worldview gives us an accurate map of reality, thereby providing a solid basis for living and valuing human life. When comparing Christianity and naturalism, it is clear that Christianity is more compatible with current scientific evidence, provides a better foundation for human dignity, and explains more satisfactorily the ultimate meaning in life—our destiny, and why we should serve others.

THE FALL: What Has Gone Wrong With the World?

Whatever Became of Sin?

According to the Christian worldview, sin is a real and undeniable part of reality, and is the source of disorder and suffering in creation. In contrast to this view, godless thinkers have created a wide variety of utopian views based on the idea that sin does not exist because humans are intrinsically good. According to such utopian thinking, the source of disorder and suffering must be something other than sin—for example, poverty, ignorance, or social class. Since, according to utopian thinkers, these factors are not rooted in an essential sin nature, they can be eliminated through education, government intervention, and social reform. In other words, we can perfect ourselves! Unfortunately, this utopian vision

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does not square with reality, so the effort to achieve utopia often leads to tyranny, not perfection. This can be seen in politics, psychology, crime, welfare, and education.

The denial of sin seems, at first glance, to be a reassuring concept because it promises us that we are not as bad as we appear. But in fact, this idea is most destructive. If sin is an illusion and not the product of the individual's will, then suffering, disorder, and misbehavior are rooted in other sources, forces ultimately beyond the control of the individual. These forces are typically thought to be either unconscious psychological forces or social, economic, or biological environmental forces. Sadly, this way of thinking actually devalues the individual, reducing him or her to a cog in a larger machine. This devaluation of the human being inevitably leads to efforts to control human behavior by modifying the causal forces which operate on it, sometimes at any cost.

"In denying sin and evil, we actually unleash its worst power."

The utopian vision rests on a denial of sin's impact; this denial is truly a willful blindness to the reality of evil all around us. Those who choose to ignore sin and its effects lose the ability to deal with its reality, and magnify its consequences.

Only two forces are capable of curbing the desires of sinful human nature: conscience and brute force. The more individuals exercise self-restraint on the basis of moral

standards, the less brute force is required to control society. Any culture that willfully ignores the reality of sin will also downplay the role of individual moral constraint. As a result, increasing levels of forceful societal constraint will become necessary. So it is that utopian politics always lead to the destruction of freedom.

A Snake in the Garden

According to the Bible, all of creation is perverted by the effects of sin. We must therefore turn from our rebellion against God and His rules for His creation and return to Biblical morality.

God's original creation was good, and a part of the goodness of that creation was the capacity of God's creatures to choose freely to have a relationship with Him. However, creatures with truly free wills would be capable not only of seeking after a relationship with God, but also of rejecting God. The choice of the original humans to reject God's plan for creation has plunged God's originally good creation into an evil state of disorder and despair, disrupting relationships between God and humans, humans and humans, humans and nature, and God and nature. Our continual choices against God only reinforce and spread this turmoil.

But God's redemptive work renews creation to its original state of order and harmony, and this is the hope that should fuel the Christian's efforts at restoration. Christian faith provides the basis for truly workable programs of education, social reform, economic reform, and criminal justice that uphold human dignity, recognize the true problem of sin, and work to restore human beings to right relationships with God and others.



REDEMPTION: What Can We Do to Fix It?

The Escalator Myth

Utopianism, while dangerously untrue in its denial of the reality of sin, does nonetheless recognize that *something* is wrong in the world. Further, utopian thinkers see the need to remedy that problem, whether it be poverty, racism, oppression, or ignorance. In other words, utopianism implicitly recognizes the need for redemption. For this reason, utopian visions invariably include a secularized version of divine providence, some necessary force compelling human history toward its inevitable perfection. This is the "Escalator Myth:" we are gradually ascending toward a heaven on earth—a paradise of our own making.

Marx is Alive and Well

Marxism is a classic embodiment of the Escalator Myth. For Marx, history is working toward an inescapable end—the full realization of the communist state, that political and economic arrangement that will put an end to all social stratification, oppression, and indeed, all that is bad in human conduct. By perfecting the economic system, says Marx, we perfect human nature.

But Marx's willful ignorance of the evil in human nature has produced disastrous effects across the globe. Marx's view simply does not match reality, and history demonstrates this fact. Since the Marxist sees human behavior simply as a product of economic conditions, Marxist politics place no moral constraints on those in power. This allows those in power to

REDEMPTION continued

accumulate absolute power, power which is inevitably used to gratify sinful human desires, regardless of the expense to others.

Unfortunately, even though Marxism has been largely discredited as a political philosophy, Marxist principles have been adopted by many in the multiculturalist movement. Today, many intellectuals view the interactions of persons of different racial groups, genders, or sexual behaviors through the lenses of Marxist categories of oppression and class warfare. White male heterosexuals are typically depicted as the oppressive ruling class, keeping women, minorities, and homosexuals in a state of oppression. Marx called for the oppressed class to rise up in revolt to throw off oppression, and many multiculturalists champion the very same strategy as the means of resolving cultural conflicts.

Marxism is alive and well as a form of counterfeit redemption.

Salvation Through Sex?

Sex is a part of God's good creation, and God's proscriptions for marriage give us the guidelines for the proper enjoyment of this aspect of God's creation. However, for many today, sex is itself a means of redemption, a source of meaning and transcendence—a means of riding the elevator to utopia.

This way of thinking can be seen clearly in the politics of sexual liberation which are being played out in the sex education classes in our nation's schools. In these classes, uninhibited sexual expression is presented as a means of redeeming ourselves from the fallen state of sexual repression created by antiquated moral mandates. The current clamoring for sexual autonomy, the demand for the right to deviant sexual activities such as homosexuality, is an evidence of the fact that sex today is about more than just

biology. Sex today is a path to redemption.

But the current state of our culture bears witness to the devastating effects of living out this vision. Sexually transmitted diseases, broken homes, abuse, and other social pathologies are rampant. It does not pay to live in rebellion against God's established rules for His creation.

Science: Source of Hope or Drama of Despair?

As already seen, scientific naturalism, or scientism, is itself a religious worldview. As such, it provides a surrogate account of the fall and redemption. According to scientism, the problem with the world is ignorance and superstition. So any activity which diminishes superstition and increases our knowledge of the world provides a path to redemption. In this view, science is just such a savior. It provides us with the knowledge we need to overcome superstition and gain control of our environment and our destiny. Knowledge is power!

Those who are committed to the naturalistic view of the world look to technology as a key source of this salvation. The knowledge gained through science can be applied in the form of technologies that will lead to our perfection. Current research into genetic manipulation is one manifestation of such utopian scheming. It is hoped that if we gain knowledge of how to alter the human genome, we can eradicate disease, pathological behavior, physical weakness, and all other traces of original sin!

But, technology can be applied to carry out both good and evil purposes. And science does not provide any moral guidelines for the development or use of technology. So where does the naturalistic worldview suggest we look for such guidance? To the stars. Many very

intelligent people, such as Carl Sagan, have pinned their hopes for salvation and moral guidance on the possibility of extraterrestrial life. Perhaps an alien race, more advanced than ourselves, could provide for us the crucial insights we need to make wise choices with our technologies, to survive "technological adolescence."

Such hopes are clearly religious in nature, and thus distort the true nature of science. Science is a powerful way to explore God's creation, but it does not provide all the answers. Science cannot settle moral questions, and it cannot answer the most basic questions which any worldview must answer. This is why some who exalt science as the sole source of truth ultimately come to a state of despair. They are convinced that since science cannot answer life's basic questions, there must not be any answers to be found. This is a more honest outlook than those who hope for salvation from E.T., but it rests upon the false belief that only science can provide the answers.

Ironically, this despairing outlook is often held with an almost religious fervor. The person who can accept this bleak outlook is exalted as the strong, noble hero who has the courage to face life as it is. In the end, though, in a world stripped of transcendence, death becomes the one source of transcendent significance.

Ernest Hemingway exemplifies the only appropriate responses to death available to one who is committed to naturalism. He lived a life of cheating death, staring danger in the face and laughing. When this proved hollow and unsatisfactory, in a last desperate move, he attempted to control his fate by choosing the moment of his death. If followed consistently, the naturalistic worldview brings humans to a point at which transcendence is gained only by embracing death. A worldview such as this certainly does not give us a reliable map to reality because a worldview that leads directly to death is quite obviously not one by which we can live.

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Real Redemption

When compared to competing ideologies, Christianity stands out on its own as the only worldview which provides true and livable answers to the questions of redemption. Christianity accurately identifies the central human problem: guilt before God. Christianity provides the only plausible resolution to that dilemma: God Himself has made a way to reach across the moral divide that separates guilty humans from a holy God. Christianity's account of salvation is grounded in history, not in far-flung hopes for a utopian state yet to be achieved, an extraterrestrial race yet to be discovered, or a new level of cosmic consciousness yet to be realized. Jesus Christ has already entered history and has already defeated sin. It is simply up to us to believe this fact and commit our lives to it.

“Redemption is not just for individuals; it is for all God’s creation.”

Each of the worldviews presented above is simply a pathetic imitation of the gospel. Each worldview promises to free us from an imperfect state, and each promises some form of paradise. But one cannot have the hope of the gospel without the moral and spiritual demands of the gospel. We cannot redeem ourselves. Any worldview that refuses to admit this fact is doomed to failure. 

RESTORATION: How Now Shall We Live?

The Cultural Commission

Culture can be renewed, but only if Christians move beyond the mistaken belief that a relationship with Christ is simply a private personal experience. Christians must recognize the public dimension of their worldview and must work for cultural restoration.

“God does not call his people simply to run around putting out fires after the secular world has lighted them. He calls us to light our own fires, to renew the culture.”

A part of God's original intention for humans was to be fruitful and multiply—to develop societies and to create culture. When God redeems an individual from the enslaving blindness of sin, that individual is freed to begin working to restore order to God's creation, fulfilling God's original purposes once again. This cultural commission is inseparable from the great commission because salvation is not just an issue of *personal* freedom from sin; it is an issue of being restored to the original task for which we were created—the creation of culture.

“Christians are saved not only from something (sin) but also to something (Christ's lordship over all of life).”

The redeemed should be submitting every aspect of life to Christ. Doing so means living according to God's principles in every aspect of life, including family, church, business, art, education, politics, and law.

Truth in Teaching

What happens in the classroom today directly shapes what society will be tomorrow. Thus, Christians should place a priority on reforming education, restoring it to the original purposes for which God intended it. To accomplish this task, we must understand and challenge the godless worldviews that inform many of today's educational theories. Decline in the quality of education is unavoidable if today's classrooms are run on a utopian basis. Education that begins by denying the reality of sin and transcendent truth and morality ends in moral decay and degraded intelligence.

“The decline in American public education is not due to poor teaching or lack of funding; it is due to educational theories that deny the existence of transcendent truth and morality, that renounce standards of excellence, and that ultimately render children unteachable.”

Christians must challenge the assumption that children (or any of us) are capable of reaching ultimate truth on their own. The message of Scripture is that God has graciously revealed to us those truths which we could never achieve for ourselves. But we must acknowledge our weakness and sinfulness if we are to accept the truth God offers. A genuine education would be aimed at liberating children by teaching them to submit to the universal truths of God's design for the universe.

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Fixing Broken Windows

Research has shown that if a broken window is left unrepaired for a period of time, eventually all of the windows in the building will be broken. The failure to repair the first window sends a message to the community that no one cares about the property. This same process is at work in our cities today. When "broken windows" such as trash-filled vacant lots, vagrancy, public drug-dealing, graffiti, etc. are left unfixed, the community gets the message that no one cares about what happens to them, and entire neighborhoods become centers of misery and decay.

Christians, however, have a reason to fix broken windows. The Biblical concept of *shalom* should inform our efforts to revitalize our communities, to clean up neighborhoods, and to push for laws enforcing standards of public decency. *Shalom* is the Hebrew word for peace, a rich word that implies more than just the absence of visible conflict. The full realization of *shalom* requires the restoration of relationships between people living together in a rightly ordered community. In a community characterized by *shalom*, there is less need to punish wrongdoing because the atmosphere of the community as a whole actually discourages wrongdoing before it happens. The Bible teaches that humans are made for community, both with one another and with God, who is Himself by nature communal (the Trinity). God's Word provides the structures which lead to the development of a community truly blessed by *shalom*.

The Work of Our Hands

The Christian worldview provides the basis for a just economic system. According to the Bible, humans are created in God's image, and a portion of that image is reflected in our creative abilities.

However, sin distorts this aspect of the image of God, and the godless view of work degrades work to a means of gaining material wealth. Only a Biblical understanding of the true nature and purpose of work can restore order and eliminate oppression from the world of work.

Scripturally speaking, we do not own anything; ultimately everything belongs to God. Thus, we should approach the issue of property stewardship according to God's standards. The Bible supports the possession of private property, but condemns the use of immoral means to gain wealth, and cautions against the perception of the accumulation of wealth as an end in itself. Money itself is not the root of all kinds of evil, but the love of money is.

Since private property is a gift from God, we must use it to further God's purposes in this world. Thus, we cannot have everything we want; nor can we do whatever we want with that which we have. We must gain and use our possessions justly and mercifully, always recognizing that God calls Christians to use property to care for the poor, the needy, the fatherless, the widows, and the afflicted. God's laws insure that true economic success requires morality.

Taking Down the Ten Commandments

Contemporary legal views regard laws as human creations, reflecting our own values, not a transcendent moral law. This loss of a genuine moral basis for the law has several disastrous consequences. First of all, the separation of law from morality removes any real constraints on individual behavior. If the law is an arbitrary human creation, why should I conform my behavior to it? Secondly, if the law has no moral basis, then there can be no moral debate about legal issues. The law becomes the final arbiter, and no one can challenge it on the basis of morality. Finally,

this view makes humans the ultimate authorities. The law is whatever the law says it is and nothing more. Tyranny is a short step away.

To restore the law to its true moral basis, Christians must first endeavor to convince individual citizens of the truth of the Christian worldview. Secondly, we must challenge the individualism of today's culture in the name of the common good, pointing out that some laws higher than the individual are necessary for the preservation of society (traffic laws would be an obvious illustration of this). Thirdly, we must submit ourselves to genuinely moral laws, but be willing to challenge immoral laws in a way that upholds respect for the moral basis of the rule of law itself. The church must hold the state morally accountable to God's law.

At the practical level, Christians must live by what they claim to believe, allowing others to see the difference that the Christian worldview makes in everyday life. We must also be good citizens, involved in the life of our communities. Furthermore, Christians should be involved directly in politics. For some, this will mean voting, campaigning for candidates, or joining civic organizations. For others, this may mean running for office. Collectively, the church must provide a moral conscience for the nation, challenging unjust laws and exhorting government to seek morality.

Soli Deo Gloria

Christians need to penetrate cultural arenas such as the visual arts, music, and literature. Believers should make prudent use of these avenues to disseminate God's truth. Literature has the power to illustrate truths in ways that sermons or lectures cannot. Music can express the order and grandeur of God and His creation, and the visual arts can exalt the beauty and majesty of God's world.

Individually, each Christian can participate in the renewal of

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the arts by exploring the tremendous Christian heritage in many of them, and by making the home a place where God-glorifying works of art are truly appreciated. Corporately, the church can encourage Christian involvement in the arts by giving it a more prominent place. Drama, painting, music, architecture, and other art forms can be used to enhance the worship experience. Art must be rescued from nihilistic individualism and restored to its proper place as a revelation of God, thereby giving it the freedom to promote glory and beauty, inspiring and lifting up culture.

Does the Devil Have All the Good Music?

Today's pop culture is the product of a philosophy of art that links art to romantic individualism. This view of art finds more value in the expression of individual emotions than in the expression of universal truths. The logical development of this view has produced entertainment forms that promote immediate sensory gratification, constant change, and raw emotion—at the expense of self-discipline, controlled thinking, or truth.

Christians see the need to link art to truth, so they should be discerning consumers and creators of pop culture. Entertainment has a place in the properly balanced life, but just as eating too much junk food can weaken us and destroy our appetite for healthy food, so too an overconsumption of pop culture, even in its Christian forms, can sap our intellectual and

spiritual strength, leading us to shun the disciplines of careful thinking, daily Bible study and prayer.

Christians who create popular forms of entertainment must be careful that they do not simply take the form of the entertainment from the world and insert within that form some Christian content. We must recognize that even the form of music or visual images communicates some message, and that message may be at odds with the message of the gospel. Christians must strive to create art forms that glorify God in both form and content.

And Now We Must Live...

The Christian worldview is more consistent, more livable, and more supported by rational evidences than any competing worldview. It gives sound answers to the basic questions of life, answers that can be supported through evidence and through life experience. But no worldview is purely theoretical; it is a set of beliefs that affects the way we live.

"The mission for the church as we begin the new millenium is nothing less than producing men and women of 'another type' who will dare to wrest Christianity free from its fortress mentality, its sanctuary stronghold, and establish it once again as the great life system and cultural force whose Creator is sovereign over all."

If Christians will grasp the full implications of the Christian worldview and live it out consistently, God will use us as a mighty force for change in this world—and we will give our world a glimpse of God's glorious kingdom.



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