



### **How Now Shall We Live?**

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Christianity is more than a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is also a worldview that not only answers life's 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? — but also shows us how we should live as a result of those answers. Colson and Pearcey expose false worldviews in this book, and equip us as believers to understand, live out, and present a Christian worldview in ways that not only transform our own lives, but also help to redeem our culture. Christianity is a comprehensive way of life that answers all of humanity's age-old questions. The book is divided into five parts: worldview, creation, fall, redemption, and application to society. Although the book is quite long, it is very engaging and readable because of the many fascinating stories that included to illustrate their points.

#### **Part I. Worldview and Why It Matters**

"Christianity is a way of seeing and comprehending *all* reality. It is a worldview." (15) "To live in defiance of known physical laws is the height of folly. But it is no different with the moral laws prescribing human behavior." (16)

The dominant conflict of our day is theism versus naturalism. Is ultimate reality God or the cosmos? These two major systems are utterly opposed. (20)

"We must translate God's revelation into the language of the world. We must be able to speak to the scientist in the language of science, to the artist in the language of art, to the politician in the language of politics." (34) "It is especially crucial to cultivate the mind in order to avoid the snares and expose the false values of modern culture." (35)

"We must be men and women 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 that acknowledges the Creator as sovereign over all." (36)

"The contours of a Christian life system ... *creation* - God spoke the universe into existence and created humanity in his image; *fall* - the human condition is marred by sin; *redemption* - God in his grace provided a way to be reconciled to himself; and *restoration* - we are called to bring these principle into every are of life and create a new culture." (36)

## **Part II. Creation: Where Did We Come From, and Who Are We?**

The prevailing idea today is that science is the source of truth while religion is merely subjective opinion. Science argues that life is all there is and nature explains everything. This is based on the philosophy of naturalism.

Every worldview begins with a theory of origins. Naturalism assumes that the forces of nature explain everything. "Naturalism may parade as science, marshaling facts and figures, but it is a religion." And it is being taught everywhere in the public square. (54) "We must challenge the assumption that science by definition means naturalistic philosophy." (55) On the other hand, "The Christian worldview begins with Creation, with a deliberate act by a personal Being who existed from all eternity." (55)

The big bang theory purports that the universe began at a particular time in the primordial past. There is an absolute barrier to science beyond this point. "And God said, 'Let there be light.'" "And the case for creation is even stronger if we look at the nature of our universe. It is a universe that speaks at every turn of design and purpose." (61)

The truth is that scientific experiments have failed to support any naturalistic theory of life's origin. The complexity of information in the DNA begs the question of where the information came from. "Science reveals consistent patterns that allow us to make negative statements about what natural forces cannot do." (79)

"The biblical teaching of creation is not just a theological doctrine; it is the very foundation of everything Christians believe ... Our origin determines our destiny ... A whole network of consequences follows. (92)

"At the heart of every worldview are the intensely personal questions: Who made me, and why am I here?" (97) "If God created all of finite reality, then every aspect of that reality must be subject to him and his truth. Everything finds its meaning and interpretation in relation to God." (98) The basic term *sin* makes no sense to people if they have no concept of a holy God who created us.

"The continued dominance of Darwinism has less to do with its scientific validity than with a commitment to naturalism." (99)

"One effective test of any truth claim is to ask whether we can live by it." (99)

"Christianity is not merely a religion ... It is an objective perspective on all reality.

Only Christianity gives us an accurate road map." (100)

What is the meaning of human existence? Why are we here? "Christians believe that God created human beings in his own image. And because human life bears this divine stamp, life is sacred, a gift from the Creator."(117) "The Christian is driven by a conviction, based on biblical revelation, about the nature of human origins and the value of human life." (118)

The naturalistic ethic is a culture of death that denies that the human species is superior to other biological species, and it ends by threatening life at every stage. (118) "Abortion has always been about more than abortion. It is the wedge used to split open the historic Western commitment to the dignity of human life." (120) Abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia are all ways that reduce a person to a non-person, and as a result, he or she has no rights.

The test of any worldview is whether it conforms to reality. "And the reality is that humans are fundamentally different from animals ... Only the Judeo-Christian view of life conforms to reality ... This becomes abundantly clear when we examine Christianity and naturalism from several perspectives: compatibility with the scientific evidence, human dignity, the ultimate meaning in life, our destiny, and service to others." (130)

"Many modern Americans have lost any sense of a higher destiny. Their lives have no aim or goal ... We are cast free, only to drift helplessly, like someone embarking on a journey with no destination...." (133) "For the secularist, death is like stepping off a cliff into a black abyss of nothingness." (136)

### **Part III. The Fall: What Has Gone Wrong with the World**

The second element of any worldview is how it explains the human dilemma. Why is there war and suffering, disease and death? The biblical worldview says God gave us the unique dignity of being free moral agents free to choose good or evil, to love Him or not. (148) The responsibility of sin lies with the human race. In the choice to disobey God, human nature became morally distorted and bent so that there is a natural inclination to do wrong. This is referred to *original sin* by theologians, and it haunts humanity to this day.

This isn't satisfactory to many. The utopian view asserts that humans are intrinsically good. People don't have to live under the shadow of guilt and moral judgment or moral rules. But the doctrine of original sin is clearly validated by 35 centuries of recorded human history. Denial of our sinful nature leads not to beneficial social experiments but to tyranny. (149) The utopian world-view promises to liberate individuals. It tells us we are good but it unleashes the worst evil. It is the worldview that gave rise to the modern totalitarianism of Marx, Hitler, Mao etc..

"If we turn human beings into objects for scientific study, we implicitly assume that they are objects [just complex animals] to be manipulated and controlled, like scientific variables."

We inevitably dehumanize and demoralize people, placing them at the mercy of social scientists. The end result is another form of despotism. (176)

The utopianism of the Great Society offers no real answer to the dilemma of moral breakdown. When we deny sin and moral responsibility, we actually end up treating people as less than human. (179) "We have bred an entitlement mentality wherein people believe that government owes them support even if they do not fulfill the basic duties of citizenship – or even engage in harmful or illegal behavior." (180) "Scientific utopianism expands government control while gradually sapping citizens of moral responsibility, economic initiative, and personal prudence." (180) Approaches to criminal justice fail when we do not recognize the ability to make morally significant choices. Denial of sin may appear comforting, but it is demeaning and destructive for it denies the significance of our choices and actions. (183)

Sin unleashes the capacity for raw evil and blinds us to anything beyond our own selfish desires. Sin is effectively choosing what we know is wrong. Have we lost touch with this fundamental truth? The myth of human goodness fails to match the reality of our own ordinary experience. "When we cannot name or identify evil, we lose the capacity to deal with it – and ultimately we compound its deadly effects." (190)

"In any society, only two forces hold the sinful nature in check: the restraint of conscience or the restraint of the sword. The less that citizens have of the former, the more the state must employ the latter." (191) "The only alternative to increased state control is a return to biblical realism about the human potential for evil...." (192)

"The consequences of sin affect the very order of the universe itself." (197) It disrupts our relationships with God and with each other, and injects disorder into all of creation ... No one looking at human history should be able to swallow the notion that if only we liberate people from oppressive moral traditions and rules, they will be spontaneously good/generous." (200)

#### **Part IV. Redemption: What Can We Do To Fix It?**

"All human beings yearn, deep in their hearts for deliverance from sin and guilt." This is the great human predicament. (227) Every worldview offers a solution. Advertisers are attuned to this yearning and exploit it. "The powerful allure of religion and advertising is the same ... we will be rescued." (229 quoting James Twitchell)

All liberation ideologies promise redemption by rising up against the oppressor. The idea of inevitable progress -- that we are moving in an endless progress toward perfection -- has fueled the great utopian movements. Marxism has been reborn as multiculturalism and the political correctness movement. "Apply Marxism in any country you want, and you will always find a Gulag in the end." (236 quoting French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levi, a former Marxist)

"The tragic results of sexual licentiousness have spread across our entire society, producing epidemics of abortion, sexually transmitted disease, and children born out of wedlock...."

"We base our lives on some vision of ultimate reality that gives meaning to our individual existence. If we reject God, we will put something in his place; we will absolutize some part of creation." (243)

Is science our saviour? Science can be a worldview, a substitute for the kingdom of God. Technological advances will save us. We can create a new and improved race. But science gives no moral guidelines or standard of values. Scientific optimism includes no change of heart. Technology simply gives people bigger and better means to carry out good or evil choices.

For many, the alternative to Christianity is a free fall into pessimism and despair. There is no apparent higher purpose or goal or meaning to life. All life-forms are driven to compete for the next rung on the evolutionary ladder, leaving the weak behind. Tooth and claw. Consciousness, will, and choice are reduced to genes and humans are machines that carry out their orders. The genes become the deity, the ultimate creators and controllers of life. "Atheism is presented as the *conclusion* when it is, in fact, the hidden *premise* ... A universe without God is indeed impersonal, meaningless, and purposeless." (259)

Christianity offers the only real answers to how we can be saved. It begins with an accurate diagnosis of the human dilemma. It provides the answer to the problem of sin. And it is based on historical truth. "Only Christianity provides true redemption - a restoration to our created state and the hope of eternal peace with God." (279)

#### **Part V. Restoration: How Now Shall We Live?**

"When God makes us new creations, we are meant to help create a new world around us" (294) It is the work of humans to obey God's command to fill and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28) This "cultural mandate" is the task of building a civilization. "Redemption is not just for individuals; it is for all God's creation." (296) Christianity is meant to function as a creative force in the culture. We redeem culture from the inside out, from the individual to the family to the community and ever outward.

If a person sees the Bible as a human document, he/she will not consider it normative for their life. Scripture will be "filtered through a mental grid set by a non-Christian worldview, resulting in a distorted understanding of doctrine and personal ethics." (308)

Moral choices determine the health of the entire society. "The dominant cultural voices have argued that individuals have a right to live in any way they choose, and that society has a responsibility to pick up the tab for any negative consequences that result ... Sexual behavior is a prime example. Sexual relationships outside marriage are responsible for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), for most abortions, for fatherless homes, and for chronic welfare dependency." (308) "Society simply can't keep up with the costs of personal and moral irresponsibility ... morality is not merely an arbitrary constraint on individual choice but a protection against social disintegration." (310) "We cannot escape the consequences of our own choices." (316)

Nowhere is the clash of worldviews more pronounced than in family relationships. Liberty has been defined as absolutely free choice. It doesn't matter what we choose as long as we don't claim that our choice is based on an objective, normative standard of truth that applies to everyone. If marriage is simply a matter of individual choice, then we can alter it by choice. In fact, all choices are morally equal. No lifestyle may be criticized and no one must ever be made to feel guilty. "Every Christian parent is called to make the home a ministry. That means instructing our children in a biblical worldview and equipping them to have an impact on the world. In the long run, this is the best way that Christians can restore and redeem the surrounding culture." (326)

"Instead of being an arena where students can learn to weigh conflicting ideas dispassionately, the classroom is becoming a place where students are indoctrinated in political radicalism and enlisted in the culture wars." Education has been greatly influenced by a therapeutic model of redemption where teachers are particularly concerned with the children's psyches (335) Students have developed an almost paranoid certainty of their own absolute virtues and correctness and have become unteachable. Asked to "clarify their values," i.e. to list the things they love doing, some list "sex, drugs, drinking, and skipping school." Horrified teachers are powerless since the values are presented as matters of preference, not matters of transcendent truth and morality! (336)

"It is only Christians who have a worldview capable of providing workable solutions to the problems of community life." (369) "How can we achieve the virtue necessary to maintain a good society...?" Relativism provides no sure foundation. If all people are free to choose for themselves what is right, how can a society agree on and enforce even minimal standards? To have objective, universal ethical principles requires an absolute source, a transcendent authority. (374-6)

Question of the book: "How now shall we live - by the Judeo-Christian tradition or by the moral nihilism of today's relativistic, individualistic culture?" (377)

"Creation tells us that we owe our existence to a holy God, whose character is the standard of all righteousness, the measure of all morality ... The Fall tells us we are prone to evil, and thus need moral restraints for society to function ... People without personal morality inevitably fail in their efforts to create public morality." (377)

"The secular view of ethics offers no salvation, no power to change the human heart. For we humans have an infinite capacity for self-rationalization; we can justify anything." (380)

"God expects us to use our talents - both our abilities and our money - toward productive ends in order to serve others. [Christians'] beliefs about the value of work and entrepreneurial talent shaped what became known as the Protestant work ethic. It, in turn, became the driving force behind the industrial revolution, which has raised the standard of living immeasurably for vast numbers of societies around the globe. The impact of the work ethic is one of the great examples of the way a Christian worldview can revolutionize a culture." (388)

[But] "the Protestant work ethic has been separated from its Christian context of stewardship and service, and degraded into a creed of personal success." Work has become solely a means of fulfilling one's self-interest. "Capitalism is astonishingly efficient at generating new wealth, but it operates beneficently only when the market is shaped by moral forces coming from both the law and the culture - derived ultimately from religion." (390)

"A healthy democracy comprises political liberty, economic freedom, and moral responsibility." (391) Weaken any of these legs, and the tri-pod topples over.

Americans have lost a higher purpose for work as a means of serving and loving God. (392)

"Only a Christian worldview provides the moral foundation essential to preserving free economic systems..." (395)

"Unless there is a God who is himself Goodness and Justice ... there can be no ultimate moral basis for the law. For if there is no God, nothing can take his place. No human standard – no person, no group of people, no document - is immune to challenge." (408)