



CHAPTER

# I

# 1

## *THE BATTLE OF IDEAS*

### **1. THE SECRET TO UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF IDEAS**

To understand the world of ideas, we must figure out how tennis champs return opponents' blazing fast serves and how chess masters memorize the position of every piece on the board.

If you've ever been on a tennis team, your coach probably told you to "keep your eye on the ball." But that's not good enough if you had to return a 150-mile-per-hour serve from former world champion tennis player Andy Roddick . . .

By the time you react to the serve, the ball is already past you. Yet those who played Roddick regularly returned such serves. How could they possibly do this?

**To understand the world of ideas, we must figure out how tennis champs return opponents' blazing fast serves and how chess masters memorize the position of every piece on the board.**

Now think about how chess grand masters read the chess board. After just briefly seeing the board of a partially played chess game, they are able to remember the exact placement of the pieces. Do they have a photographic memory?

Maybe tennis and chess champions are just made differently from the rest of us. Maybe they're more gifted. It would be somewhat of a relief if this were true, because we'd be off the hook for figuring out their secrets and applying them to our own lives. But it's not that simple.

## 2. CHAMPIONS SUCCEED BY MASTERING THE WORLD'S PATTERNS

Champions have learned to see things differently. This gives them a level of success the rest of us find amazing. Understanding how they do it is the key to successfully navigating our complicated, confusing, and contentious world. There are two keys to unlocking the mystery.

**Key #1:** We live in a rule-governed universe. Andy Roddick can't serve the ball anywhere he likes. He has to make it land in a certain square on the court, or it doesn't count. Similarly, pieces on a chess board cannot be moved wherever the player wishes. There are rules about what each piece can do. Life is like that too. There are rules. If we can understand how to make the world a better place.

**Key #2:** When the rules are followed or ignored, patterns emerge. Our friend David Wheaton played against Andy Roddick a few times and describes his serve as "unbelievably enormous." David said, "If Roddick hits a 150-mph serve in the corner, there's no way to touch it unless you've accurately guessed where it is going to hit." Most of us would just stand there while the ball whizzed past. Experienced players don't do this, obviously. They study the patterns of tennis serves. David told us,

Good returners "absorb" several things about a big server so they can learn or get a sense of where the serve might be going: they notice where the ball toss is, they notice where the server likes to serve on big points and where he's been going on previous points, and maybe even where the server looks before he serves . . . just a lot of little things that gives the returner an idea of where the ball might go.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, tennis serves reveal patterns. If you can observe and respond to those patterns, you have a shot at winning, or at least not getting completely crushed.

But what about the chess players? The myth of the photographic memory of chess grand masters evaporated when researchers ran a test in which they *randomly* placed the pieces on the board in a way they would never appear during an actual game. In this condition the memories of the baffled grand masters were almost as poor as the control group of non-chess players.<sup>2</sup>

1. Personal e-mail correspondence between David Wheaton and Jeff Myers, January 14 and 15, 2013.

2. K. Anders Ericsson and Neil Charness, "Expert Performance: Its Structure and Acquisition," *American Psychologist* 49, no. 8 (1994): 725-47.

It turns out that chess experts use their experience about how chess pieces move to make sense of the patterns of play. They divide the board into chunks and remember the position of the pieces in each chunk, which enables them to reproduce with incredible accuracy the position of all of the pieces on the board. But they can only do this when the pieces are placed as they would be during an actual game. These chess grand masters aren't memorizing the entire board; they are making sense of the patterns that emerge when the game is played according to the rules.

Of course, it takes a lot of practice to recognize patterns, whether in tennis or chess or anything else. Malcolm Gladwell refers to what he calls the "10,000-hour rule," the number of hours of intensive concentration and practice it takes to master a subject. If you worked at it eight hours a day, it would take you three and a half years to get that kind of experience.<sup>3</sup> There is no real shortcut to this rule, at least individually. However, if you have a wise mentor, someone who guides you, builds on your successes, and coaches you in avoiding mistakes, you can become an expert more quickly than other people, though it will still take concentrated effort.<sup>4</sup>

*Rules. Patterns.* It doesn't matter whether we're playing a sport or a board game or shopping or just navigating through the streets to a friend's house. We are constantly trying our hand at pattern recognition on the assumption that the world is a rule-based place.

Here's a big question, though: are there patterns that extend to life's big questions? If so, is it possible to discern patterns that reveal where we come from, what the good life looks like, how we should treat others, and what happens when we die? If there are patterns for such things, is it possible to figure out which patterns are good or bad, true or false, just or unjust?

Here's an even bigger question if all of the above is possible: given the sheer volume of ideas in the world today, is it even possible to accomplish such a massive feat as figuring out the rules and patterns that answer life's ultimate questions? This volume is designed to set you on the course to finding answers to these questions.

This chapter introduces a way of thinking about the world we think you will find compelling and helpful. We'll discuss how ideas become persuasive and how to identify patterns of ideas so you can understand the world around you. We'll examine six worldviews that influence just about everyone in the world today, and we'll see how that influence manifests itself in the key academic disciplines operating in America's institutions of higher learning.

So you know where we're coming from, let's look at the history of the ideas on which this book is based.

### **3. WHERE UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES COMES FROM**

The book you are reading has a history stretching back more than fifty years. As a student at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, David Noebel attended a chapel service addressing the topic of communism. The speaker, an Australian medical doctor named Fred Schwarz, said communism was fast growing and persuasive because it was *religious*. It answered life's

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3. For more information see Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2008).

4. See, for example, Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap, "Expertise: Developing and Expressing Deep Smarts" and "Recreating Deep Smarts through Guided Experience," in *Deep Smarts: How to Cultivate and Transfer Enduring Business Wisdom* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), chaps. 3 and 8.

ultimate questions, inspired ardor and devotion, and gave meaning to people's lives. It had a means of winning and discipling converts, as well as a vision of spreading to the whole world.

Something clicked for Noebel. Maybe the battles of our age are not first and foremost military battles, but battles of *ideas*. And these ideas are compelling because they are religious. As a Christian preparing for ministry, Noebel thought Christians ought to understand the world of ideas in order to not be taken captive by deceptive philosophies.<sup>5</sup> With these thoughts in mind, Noebel approached the speaker to ask a few questions. The college president noted his interest and invited him to form a study group about communism. Noebel took up this challenge and came to see communism as a direct competitor to Christianity. Millions were being misled, and millions of lives hung in the balance. And communism wasn't the only counterfeit worldview, he realized; many ideas were battling for the hearts and minds of people, nations, and cultures.

Years later, in 1991, Noebel compiled his extensive knowledge about worldviews into a 900-page book called *Understanding the Times*, one of the best-selling worldview texts of all time. All together there are more than 600,000 copies in print. If you've heard the term "worldview," you've likely been influenced by Noebel or by someone he influenced.

Soon after the publication of *Understanding the Times*, Noebel asked Jeff Myers to develop an accompanying curriculum featuring videos of Christian thinkers and in-depth reading. More than a hundred thousand people have studied this curriculum. Occasionally *Understanding the Times* has been revised and expanded to keep up with the emergence of new ideas and the repackaging of old ones. You are holding the latest version, one which updates the language, examples, sources, and structure of the original while maintaining its core structure.<sup>6</sup>

But let's go back to the idea of patterns. Do ideas, as well as tennis serves and chess moves, flow in patterns? If so, is it possible to tell whether they are consistent with or different from God's pattern?

#### 4. IDEAS FLOW IN COMPLEX PATTERNS

Imagine walking around a crowded room and then being asked to describe who and what you saw. You might remember a few details, but a trained investigator or spy would remember much more. He could describe the room with astounding detail. Why? Because he's trained in a *way of seeing*. He knows what to pay attention to and what to ignore. In the movies and on television, such a person always looks like a genius who possesses a supernatural awareness. In reality, understanding comes from discipline and training. J. Warner Wallace, a highly-regarded cold-case detective, demonstrates in his book *Cold Case Christianity* how

5. Colossians 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."

6. First published in 1991, *Understanding the Times* covered the Biblical Christian worldview, the Marxist-Leninist worldview, and the Secular Humanist worldview. An appendix briefly surveyed an emerging worldview called Cosmic Humanism. A later edition added Postmodernism and Islam to its consideration. The current edition examines the same six worldviews with the names slightly altered in some cases (such as with Secularism) to reflect the changes in terminology used by the proponents of those views. The biggest change is from Cosmic Humanism to New Spirituality. The term Cosmic Humanism was intended to be a more academic approach to what was then called the New Age Movement. The term never really gained traction. We use the term New Spirituality in this edition because we feel it better reflects both the content and the methods used by people searching for "higher consciousness" today, especially in the ways they incorporate insights from Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.



detectives identify the details they see and go through a mental checklist to figure out which details are clues and which are background noise.<sup>7</sup>

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines an idea as “a thought or suggestion as to a possible course of action.”<sup>8</sup> What we conceive, what we believe, and our general impressions about the world are always based on *something*. If they are not based on an accurate understanding of truth, we’ll always be disoriented, unable to distinguish between genuine clues and background noise. This is why it is important, as the sixteenth-century scientist Johannes Kepler phrased it, to think God’s thoughts after him. God made the rules. To bear his image well, we should try to understand them, discern the patterns they create, and live differently as a result.

But it’s harder to pick out patterns when we have lots of information as opposed to when our choices are simple. Let’s say you open the cupboard and find nothing to eat except a packet of seafood-flavored noodles and a packet of chicken-flavored noodles. Noodles are noodles, you tell yourself. Just pick one and eat it. If you’re at the Public Market in Emeryville, California, though, there are seventeen different food stalls offering cuisine from all over the world. Each of these restaurants offers about ten choices. It takes more thoughtfulness to decide when you have 170 choices as opposed to two.

The same is true with religion. Today, largely because of the internet, people have more information about religion—and everything else—than ever before. According to Domo, a company that helps other companies make sense of the internet, *every passing minute* 204,166,667 email messages are sent, YouTube users upload 48 hours of new video, Twitter users send over 100,000 tweets, and Instagram users share 3,600 new photos.<sup>9</sup> By the time you read this, the numbers will be even higher.<sup>10</sup> There is literally so much information on the internet that it distracts people from doing what they ought to do. The *New York Times* reports that the cost of interruptions to people’s work-days—looking at the latest video they’ve been forwarded or checking out someone’s Twitter feed—is around \$650 billion dollars a year in lost productivity.<sup>11</sup>

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Some people try to manage the accelerating growth of information by multi-tasking. Ironically, those who constantly switch between tasks are actually less productive because each activity has its own rules and it takes time for the mind to switch from one set of rules to another.<sup>12</sup> In the case of driving and texting, this literally kills people. The more than 3,000 texting-while-driving deaths each year prove that our capacity is not fast enough to switch between tasks.<sup>13</sup>

7. J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013).

8. See definition of “idea” at [oxforddictionaries.com](http://oxforddictionaries.com).

9. For more statistics and references see this info-graph, <http://visual.ly/data-never-sleeps>.

10. How big is the internet? If each “byte” of data (the size of one letter or number) was the size of the largest bacteria (0.5 mm), the amount of data YouTube users upload each day would be about twenty-one terabytes, enough to wrap around the sun three times. <http://blog.fliptop.com/blog/2011/05/18/how-much-data-is-on-the-internet/>.

11. Steve Lohr, “Is Information Overload a \$650 Billion Drag on the Economy?,” *New York Times*, December 20, 2007.

12. Joshua Rubinstein, David E. Meyer, and Jeffrey E. Evans, “Executive Control of Cognitive Processes in Task Switching,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 27, no. 4 (2001): 763–97.

13. James R. Healey, “Feds: Phoning, Texting Killed 3,092 in Car Crashes Last Year,” *USA Today*, December 8, 2011, <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/driveon/post/2011/12/nhtsa-cell-phones-killed-3092-car-crashes-1#UU5noldnF8E>.

In this world of ballooning information, if you are curious about some obscure religion, you can get answers in two or three clicks. No matter how remote the area in which they live,

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people from all over the world can access all of the world's ideas, and do it with their smartphone while walking down the street. The problem, of course, is that the more information we have, the harder it is to figure out what to do with it all. Even utterly wrong ideas can boast a cool website, making them appear credible. Information's growth is exponential; wisdom's demise is precipitous.

So who can make their way in a world like this?

Those capable of quickly figuring out the rules and recognizing the patterns of ideas. It's true with tennis and chess, and it's true with life's ultimate questions. People with discernment can see the relationship between all of the pieces of information they are trying to process at any given moment. If they are thoughtful about spiritual things, this capacity will enable them to better understand God, the world, and their relationship to God and the world.

## 5. THE WORLD'S PATTERNS ARE DIFFERENT FROM GOD'S PATTERN

What we understand about God and the world affects what we believe about everything else, including what kinds of arguments we find persuasive and how we justify our intended actions. That's why the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." To understand what God wants from us we must identify the world's patterns, refuse to conform to them, and be transformed into a God-pleasing pattern of living.

We call a pattern of ideas a **worldview**. A worldview answers fundamental questions such as *Why are we here? What is the meaning and purpose of life? Is there a difference between right and wrong? Is there a God?* We all develop ideas in our attempt to answer these questions, and our ideas naturally give rise to a system of beliefs that becomes the basis for our decisions and actions. Our worldview is like a map. It helps us know where we are, where we need to go, and the best route to get there.

**Worldview: a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world.**

Our worldview does not merely reflect what we think the world *is* like; it directs what we think the world *should be* like. In other words, our worldview not only

*describes* reality, it *prescribes* how we how we act and respond to every aspect of life. Because our ideas *do* determine how we behave, the bottom line is that our ideas *do* have consequences.

This doesn't mean that everyone is aware of his or her deeply held ideas. If we were to ask a person on the street about her philosophy of life, we would probably get a blank stare. But if we asked how life began, she would probably offer some sort of answer, even if the answer was not completely coherent. Still, her belief would impact the way she lived her life. It's also often the case that people are unaware of where their deeply held beliefs come from. If we were to continue our street conversation by asking *why* she believes what she claims to believe, she

might shrug and reply, “I don’t know, I just believe it.” Often people get their beliefs like they catch colds—by being around other people! And since ideas are everywhere—on television, in books and magazines, at the movies, and in conversation with friends and family—it’s easy to pick them up without considering whether they’re worth believing.

Regardless of where they come from, the ideas we embrace about the nature of reality lead to a set of core beliefs, which in turn form convictions about how we should live meaningfully. This “beefs up” our definition

of “worldview.” A worldview is a *pattern of ideas but also a pattern of beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world.*

Of course, some Christians don’t act Christianly. There are also Muslims and Secularists whose lifestyles are inconsistent with what they believe. The Christian idea of sinful nature predicts this. Human *actions* fall short of human *aspirations*. For example, if a person embraces the idea of sexuality as an expression of love between a married man and woman he or she will probably believe in abstaining from sexual activity outside of marriage, a value of sexual purity and a conviction to safeguard it. This does not mean, however, that the person will never indulge in pornography in a moment of weakness. Such indulgence does not invalidate the person’s ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits, but it will produce guilt because the person knows pornography is harmful. On the other hand, a person with no existing beliefs about love and marriage will still feel guilty but may not understand why. People who continue to indulge in pornography may end up in a habitual pattern shaped by the culture’s permissive stance rather than what God wants.

Ideas have consequences. They form our beliefs, shape our convictions, and solidify into habits.

There are hundreds of different worldviews. Is it possible to know which of them, if any, is actually true? If you look in the religion section of a bookstore you’ll see books on Christianity and Islam, of course, but also on Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Vedantism, Jainism, Shintoism, and many others. Each **religion** attempts to explain what the world is like and how we should live. You’ll also notice books on “secularism” and “atheism” in the religion section. This might seem odd, but when you think about it, even atheists have a set of beliefs about the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe. They’re religious.<sup>14</sup> Even people

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***Religion*: a system of belief that attempts to define the nature of God and how human beings can understand and interact with the divine; any system of belief that prescribes certain responses to the existence (or non-existence) of the divine.**

**Ideas have consequences. They form our beliefs, shape our convictions, and solidify into habits**

14. John Dewey, the father of modern education, helped to organize a group of philosophers into what he hoped would be a new worldview that replaced Christianity. He called it “secular humanism.” The word “secular” means that which pertains to worldly things rather than religious things. And yet, Dewey was forthright about the fact



who don't care about any of this are religious; their religion says the ultimate questions don't matter. All worldviews are religious.

If everyone is religious we would expect their beliefs to lead to certain actions. C. S. Lewis put it this way:

“We are now getting to the point at which different beliefs about the universe lead to different behavior. Religion involves a series of statements about facts, which must be either true or false. If they are true, one set of conclusions will follow about the right sailing of the human fleet, if they are false, quite another set.”<sup>15</sup>

Here's where we are so far. All people try to make sense of the rules of the world by developing ideas. These ideas flow in patterns, which we call worldviews. People's worldviews lead them to value certain things, which lead to particular convictions governing their behavior. These convictions solidify into habits that affect the way they—and others—live.

## 6. WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

As people try to figure out the rules and patterns of the world, they diagnose what is wrong with the world and suggest prescriptions. As in medicine, a wrong diagnosis could mistreat a disease or leave a serious illness untreated. If everyone lived in isolated caves, the consequences of our actions wouldn't affect others. But we aren't isolated. We live in families, communities, cities, and countries. The consequences of bad beliefs can cause serious pain. Some ideas in history have led to death for millions. Nazism systematically exterminated 21 million people, not counting the tens of millions who died in battles initiated by the Nazi regime.<sup>16</sup> Communist regimes slaughtered well over 100 million people in the twentieth century. As we will see in the chapter on Marxism in this volume, the slaughter continues to this day.

Every one of these deaths was in the service of an idea. Ideas have consequences, sometimes unspeakably tragic ones. Like a wildfire, these ideas began with a single flame and rapidly spread before a stunned and unprepared populace, engulfing millions. People thought Adolf Hitler was a pompous fool early in his career. Who could have predicted he would actually amass enough power to slaughter millions? Similarly, who could have imagined that a radical writer named Karl Marx, a man deeply unpopular even with his friends, would be capable of unleashing an idea—communism—that would destroy more people than any other idea in history?

Is it possible to understand ideas and their consequences? More important, is it possible to identify bad ideas in time to stop them before they can lay waste to the lives, hopes, and dreams of people? Fortunately, the answer is yes. To grasp the world of ideas we don't need to know everything about everything. In the following pages, we'll take an in-depth look at the pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that makes up the Christian worldview. We'll suggest that understanding Christianity as a worldview will help make sense of the

that his new philosophy was, in fact, religious: “Here are all of the elements for a religious faith. . . . Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind.” John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (1934; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962), 87.

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

16. R. J. Rummel, “Democide: Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder,” *The University of Hawaii*, accessed March 25, 2014, <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NAZIS.CHAPI.HTM>.

world. Understanding other worldviews, other patterns, will confirm the essential truth of Christianity.

Here's a sports analogy: let's say you play against a team with sixty completely different plays. It would be hard to prepare for such a complex strategy. But if you know the team actually has six basic plays, each with ten variations, then by figuring out the six plays you can make better guesses about each variation and know how to counteract them.

In this book, we'll discover the six plays and the ten variations that worldview "teams" are running these days. Based on this, we'll form a mental model from which we can make more accurate guesses about how people all over the world see things. We will examine six dominant worldviews: Christianity, Secularism, Marxism, Islam, New Spirituality, and Post-modernism. Each of these six worldviews claims to present the truth. We'll examine each in ten key disciplines to see whether they are, in fact, true.

## 7. BUT FIRST, A WARNING

Before we analyze the six dominant worldviews, though, a warning is in order: proponents of many worldviews don't like it when you start poking their nests. This is especially true of academics. Questioning professors and authorities can anger them and make them want to attack. At Summit, we've been called every name in the book: "intolerant," "bigoted," "idiotic," "fanatical," "conspiracy-minded," and, our favorite, "bloviating motormouth."

Not all professors have chips on their shoulders. Still, if you embrace a Christian worldview, you should understand that you might be in someone's gun sights. For example, atheist philosopher Richard Rorty, one of the most famous professors of the twentieth century, once proclaimed:

The fundamentalist [by which he means Christian] parents of our fundamentalist students think that the entire "American liberal establishment" is engaged in a conspiracy. These parents have a point. When we American college teachers encounter religious fundamentalists, we do not consider the possibility of reformulating our own practices of justification so as to give more weight to the authority of the Christian scriptures. Instead, we do our best to convince these students of the benefits of secularization. Rather, I think these students are lucky to find themselves under the benevolent *Herrschaft* [teaching] of people like me, and to have escaped the grip of their frightening, vicious, dangerous parents.<sup>17</sup>

Rorty is not condemning abusive parents. He's condemning *Christian* parents who, by raising their kids according to a Christian worldview, are frightening, vicious, and dangerous.

Nowhere are the attacks more vicious than in the sciences. Several years ago Richard Sternberg, a Smithsonian scientist with two Ph.D.s in evolutionary biology, was fired as editor of a Smithsonian science journal for publishing an article written by Cambridge-educated scientist Stephen Meyer. The reason? Meyer's article defended "intelligent design," a scientific movement that suggests natural processes cannot in and of themselves explain the great complexity we encounter in the universe.

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17. Robert B. Brandom, ed., *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 21-22.

“They were saying I accepted money under the table, that I was a crypto-priest, that I was a sleeper cell operative for the creationists,” said Sternberg, who at the time was a Smithsonian research associate. “I was basically run out of there.”<sup>18</sup>

A *Washington Post* investigation revealed that Sternberg, who is *not* a creationist, was dismissed because of an orchestrated campaign by the National Center for Science Education (NCSE), a lobbying group fighting to keep criticism of naturalistic evolution out of public schools. In other words, the article Sternberg published was not attacked because of its arguments were poor, but because it had already been decided by these scientific elites that *no questioning of naturalistic evolution was to be allowed*.<sup>19</sup>

Apparently, refusing to believe that everything that exists evolved through random chance processes, as naturalistic evolutionists believe and teach in schools, is like refusing to wear clothes; it automatically disqualifies one from appearing in public. Sternberg’s firing led to a chilling, and even a freezing, of free speech among scientists. We have spoken with dozens of scientists who keep their reservations about evolution to themselves because speaking out might damage their careers.

If you live as we are suggesting in this book, you will probably come under attack as well.

**Apparently, refusing to believe that everything that exists evolved through random chance processes, as naturalistic evolutionists believe and teach in schools, is like refusing to wear clothes; it automatically disqualifies one from appearing in public.**

We’re going to prepare you to respond, not with returned name-calling or sarcasm, but with reasonable arguments. People who make their living mocking Christianity are actually barring access to a skeleton-full closet of disastrous ideas. But if you crack that closet door, they’re going to be ticked. Why? Because they have become so accustomed to the ideas they’ve picked up that they cannot imagine the world being any other way. Ideas persist in the thought stream as viruses enter the bloodstream. When we said earlier that people catch their ideas the way they catch colds, the research shows that this is not far from the truth.

## 8. IDEAS SPREAD LIKE VIRUSES

In the 1950s a professor at Yale University named William McGuire developed a theory about how people come to embrace the ideas they find compelling. His insights can help us understand how we and others might come to adopt good ideas and oppose bad ones.

McGuire theorized that ideas are actually very much like viruses, spreading from person to person. In our fallen and increasingly indiscriminate culture, bad ideas lamentably take root more easily than good ones. Thus, an effective leader must play a dangerous game: he must engage not only in building up good ideas, but also in rooting out bad ones. How is

18. Michael Powell, “Editor Explains Reasons for ‘Intelligent Design’ Article,” *Washington Post*, August 19, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/18/AR2005081801680.html>.

19. Naturalistic evolution, as we will see in the Biology chapter of this volume, says nature is all there is and the complexity of all life evolved through random-chance processes starting from nothing. It is the view articulated by George Gaylord Simpson, a respected paleontologist: “Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned. He is a state of matter, a form of life, a sort of animal, and a species of the Order Primates, akin nearly or remotely to all of life and indeed to all that is material.” George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 345.

it possible to do this without being incurably infected by the very ideas he hopes to stand against?

Medical research in the mid-twentieth century demonstrated that a human body could develop immunity to a disease through the process of inoculation, introducing to the body a weakened form of a disease to give the body's natural defense mechanism time to develop immunity to it.

Professor McGuire wondered whether the same theory would hold true for resisting bad ideas.<sup>20</sup> To test his inoculation theory, McGuire exposed subjects to widely accepted claims such as “People should brush their teeth daily.” He then exposed them to counterclaims (e.g., “Brushing your teeth is bad for you”) after preparing test groups with varying levels of defense:

- **No preparation** (“Here’s an argument—see what you think.”)
- **Reinforcement of previous preparation** (“You know that brushing your teeth is good, right?”)
- **Warning of attack** (“You will be exposed to a persuasive argument that brushing your teeth is bad.”)
- **Inoculation** (“You will hear an argument stating that ‘brushing your teeth wipes away saliva, which is the tooth’s natural protective agent.’”)
- **Inoculation plus refutation** (“When you hear the argument that brushing your teeth is bad because it wipes away saliva, keep in mind that saliva cannot dislodge prepared foods from the teeth—only a brush can consistently do that.”)
- **Inoculation plus refutation plus preparation** (“You now know one argument you’ll hear to persuade you that brushing your teeth is bad, but you’ll be presented with several arguments and it will be up to you to think them through and refute them.”)<sup>21</sup>

In the end, the most effective strategy for resisting counter-persuasion, as you might guess, was the last one: inoculation plus refutation plus preparation. *The least* effective strategy was reinforcement of previous preparation. In fact, more people in this test condition believed the false argument than those in the “no preparation” condition.

That people who have been equipped with the truth could so easily fall for falsehoods is a stunning result. To the extent this research applies to social and political beliefs, we can conclude the following: for people to believe a claim, they must be prepared to defend it against its challengers. Merely repeating a message over and over again—even with increasing fervency, emotion, and clever staging—is actually *counter-productive*, worse than no preparation at all.

**The antidote to indoctrination is to tell the truth, expose people to the lies that would deceive them, show them how to refute those lies, and prepare them with the thinking skills necessary to continue resisting falsehoods.**

20. See, for example, William J. McGuire and Demetrios Papageorgis, “The Relative Efficacy of Various Types of Prior Belief-Defense in Producing Immunity against Persuasion,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26 (1961): 24–34.

21. Em Griffin, *The Mind Changers: The Art of Christian Persuasion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1982).

The antidote to indoctrination is to tell the truth, expose people to the lies that would deceive them, show them how to refute those lies, and prepare them with the thinking skills necessary to continue resisting falsehoods. This begins by understanding the worldviews—the patterns of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits—that rule the world today. There are six: Christianity, Islam, Cosmic Humanism, Secularism, Marxism, and Postmodernism. Let’s dig in.

## 9. THE SIX WORLDVIEWS

As we noted earlier, a “worldview” is a *pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world*. If you know a worldview’s assumptions you can more accurately guess what its adherents believe and why.

There may be hundreds of worldviews operating today. Even some well-known ones, such as Judaism, are quite small, with around 13 million followers worldwide. But many bizarre and even humorous worldviews have attracted followers. As the *London Telegraph* recently reported, 176,632 people in England and Wales consider themselves, in their religious affiliation, to be Jedi warriors.<sup>22</sup> Another 6,242 say they worship heavy metal music.<sup>23</sup> Obviously we can’t cover every worldview that has attracted followers, so we’re going to look at six worldviews that make up the vast majority of the world’s population and are evangelistic (inviting everyone else to join them).

**Christianity.** More than two billion people in the world claim to be Christians, nearly a third of the world’s population. What they mean by “Christian,” of course, varies widely—some people claim to be Christians because their parents were Christian or because they live in a predominantly Christian country. Still, no one doubts that Christianity is a dominant influence in the world. Christianity goes back to the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Messiah prophesied for centuries among the Israelites in the Old Testament. Christians believe that

**The Christian worldview offers a narrative of all history. This narrative starts with the special creation of human beings by God, delves into the consequences of their fall from grace, and promises redemption through the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross and his subsequent resurrection.**

God has revealed himself in the Bible as well as in nature, but especially in the person of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ was God incarnated as a human being, his life is the center of the human story.

Christianity has had a profound influence on the world. French philosopher Luc Ferry, a nonbeliever, claims that Christianity alone established the idea that, because we are made in the image of the creator, all human persons have rights.<sup>24</sup> Famed British atheist Bertrand Russell said something similar: “What the world needs is Christian love or compassion.”<sup>25</sup> Whether or not Russell acknowledged it, such love and compassion result directly from following in the footsteps of Christ himself, the epitome of love and compassion.

22. Henry Taylor, “‘Jedi’ Religion Most Popular Alternative Faith,” *The Telegraph*, December 11, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9737886/Jedi-religion-most-popular-alternative-faith.html>.

23. Ibid.

24. Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 60.

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



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**Islam.** Islam began September 24, 622 AD, when seventy muhajirun pledged loyalty to an Arabian trader from Mecca who had fled to Medina and began receiving special revelations from Allah. The trader's name: Muhammad. His submission to God gave his religion its name; *Islam* means "submission." Those who submit to Allah and his prophet Muhammad are called Muslims. Islam is based on a creed prayed aloud five times a day: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet."

The Muslim holy book, the Quran, is believed by Muslims to be God's full and final revelation. The Quran specifies five things a person must do to become a Muslim:

1. Repeat "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet,"
2. Pray the salat (ritual prayer)<sup>26</sup> five times a day
3. Fast during the month of Ramadan
4. Give 1/40th of one's income to the needy
5. If able, make a pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>27</sup>

According to Serge Trifkovic, "Islam is not a 'mere' religion; it is a complete way of life, an all-embracing social, political, and legal system that breeds a worldview peculiar to itself."<sup>28</sup> Islam has grown rapidly in the last few decades; 1.6 billion people in the world now claim to be adherents.

**New Spirituality.** What we term New Spirituality is perhaps the most difficult worldview to precisely define. You don't have to sign, recite, or proclaim anything in particular to join, nor must you attend a church. Yet while unofficial in its dogma, the "new age" culture contains an extensive set of beliefs that, once understood, predict what people with those beliefs will value and how they will act.

New Spirituality is a free-flowing combination of Eastern religions, paganism, and pseudo-science that pops up in odd places. Some of the best-selling books of all time—by authors such as Deepak Chopra, Rhonda Byrne, Marilyn Ferguson, and Shakti Gawain—describe a world spiritual in nature but not governed by a personal, all-powerful God. Rather, the spirituality in the world is "consciousness," an energy in

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26. The call to prayer, the *shahada*, is an integral part of the *salat*: "Allahu Akbar; Ashadu anna la ilaha illa Allah; Ashadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah; Haiya 'ala al-salat; Haiya 'ala al-falah; Al-salat khayrun min al-nawm; Allahu Akbar; La ilaha illa Allah." The English translation is "God is most great; I bear witness there is no God but God; I bear witness Muhammad is the prophet of God; Come to prayer; Come to wellbeing; Prayer is better than sleep; God is most great; There is no God but God." See more at "Salat: Ritual Prayer," *Religion Facts*, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/practices/salat-prayer.htm#sthash.U8xtC709.dpuf>.

27. Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 368–69.

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

which we all participate and can even learn to control. Talk show host Oprah Winfrey has admitted to holding many of these beliefs.

We will study New Spiritual belief not because it is deeply philosophical or consistent, but because some of its associated beliefs—karma, Gaia, being “one” with the environment, reincarnation, meditation, holistic health, and so forth are a daily part of life for millions of Americans and have influenced academic areas such as psychology and medicine.

**Secularism.** Secularism comes from the Latin word *saecularis*, roughly meaning “of men,” “of this world,” or “of this time.” Secularists believe humans are the center of reality. They disdain the influence of those who believe in ideas of gods, an after-life, or anything beyond what we can sense. The primary identifying characteristic of Secularism is its *non-belief* in other worldviews. Ironically, though, Secularists do generally have an agreed-upon set of beliefs about the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe. So even though they view their beliefs as the *opposite* of religion, they are actually quite religious.

Interestingly, in the twentieth century several fairly well-known philosophers such as John Dewey and Julian Huxley, and later Paul Kurtz and Corliss Lamont, combined the term secular (“we are for the world”) and the term humanism (“we are for humans”) and developed a philosophy of Secular Humanism. Their manifesto, published in 1933 and updated in 1973 and 2000, led thousands of like-minded individuals to form a club called the American Humanist Association (AHA), whose motto is “Good without a god.” With no apparent sense of irony, the AHA operates as a tax-exempt organization based on the IRS section 501(c)3 *religious* non-profit exemption. Though its founders have passed away, the AHA still recruits members. Their dues support a publishing company and a monthly publication.

We’ll discuss Secularism and the Secular Humanist movement more in coming chapters, but it is sufficient for now to recognize Secularism as an umbrella term for a set of beliefs unquestioningly accepted by the vast majority of academics today. We use the term “Secularism” as a prediction, not a label: if someone accepts a Secularist viewpoint on disciplines like theology, philosophy, and ethics, we can predict fairly accurately what they believe about biology, psychology, and so forth.

**Some say it’s pointless to include Marxism as a dominant worldview in this volume, but we disagree. Despite the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), which dominated what is now called Russia, around 20 percent of the world’s population still lives under the rule of communists.**

**Marxism.** Some religious worldviews develop over hundreds or thousands of years, but others are made up whole cloth in a very short period of time. Such is the case with Marxism and its offshoots, Leninism, Maoism, Trotskyism, Fabian socialism, and the various socialist organizations that operate in the U.S. and around the world. Marxism was invented by Karl Marx, a scholar determined to demonstrate that ownership of private property, the basis for capitalism, is the root of the world’s evils.

To Marx, history could be defined as a struggle between the haves (the owners) and the have-nots (the workers). If only the workers would rise up to overthrow the owners, they could form a worker’s paradise in which all wrongs are righted, all possessions shared, and all injustices brought to an end. The utopian state at the end of this

long and bloody struggle is called communism. People who strive to bring about this state are called communists, and their Bible is *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx's most famous and enduring work. Other such manifestos are still in print today, including the teachings of Chinese communist leader Mao Tse Tung and a book series published by Harvard University Press called *Empire*.

Some say it's pointless to include Marxism as a dominant worldview in this volume, but we disagree. Despite the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), which dominated what is now called Russia, around 20 percent of the world's population still lives under the rule of communists. The largest communist country in the world today is China. In spite of its growing industry, China's communist rulers are still very much in control. And when we also consider countries operating on principles taught by Marx but not using the label "communist," we are talking about a *majority* of the world's population living every day with the consequences of Marx's philosophies. As we will see, despite its clearly atheistic philosophy, Marxism has also made many inroads into the church. Some evangelicals involved in the so-called Christian Left are known to embrace key tenets of Marxism.

**Postmodernism.**<sup>29</sup> People talk about postmodern art, postmodern architecture, and even postmodern ways of doing church without realizing that Postmodernism is a well-thought-out and deep philosophical worldview. The father of Postmodernism, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, had many disciples, including Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, Jean François Lyotard, and Richard Rorty. All are now dead, but their teachings strongly influence higher education to this day.

We will learn more about the complexities of Postmodernism throughout this volume. In short, though, we can say Postmodernism began as a reaction against modernism, the idea that science and human reason could solve humankind's most pressing problems. While science can be used for great good, Postmodernists understand it to be hopelessly corrupted by the quest for power. It was scientific "progress," for example, that enabled the creation of weapons of mass destruction.

According to Postmodernists, the modern story of science and technology was one of many attempts to formulate what's called a "metanarrative," or grand story of reality that claims universally valid, "God's-eye" view, pristine knowledge of the world. Postmodernists say metanarratives become so compelling that people stop questioning them, and it's precisely then that they become destructive and oppressive. Postmodernists are generally suspicious of all modern metanarratives because they are so often used as tools of oppression. Many Postmodernists engage in a process of examining exactly what causes people to fall under the spell of various metanarratives. This is called *deconstruction*. Deconstruction works on metanarratives similarly to someone revealing how a magic trick is done: in so revealing, people stop being deceived. Postmodernists believe "deconstructing" dominant metanarratives causes them to lose their stranglehold on people's minds.

We'll see, though, that Postmodernists have been carried away by their own ideas, calling everything into question—even the idea that we can even know reality itself!

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29. Since we will be speaking of "Postmodernism" as an identifiable pattern of ideas, we will capitalize all references to the term when in reference to it as a worldview.

So there you have it. **Christianity, Islam, New Spirituality, Secularism, Marxism, and Postmodernism.** By understanding these six worldviews we'll see how people come to grips with the rules of the world and form patterns they hope answer life's ultimate questions.

## 10. TEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD

"What do you want to major in?" is probably the first question asked of any student on his or her way to college. For some, this strikes fear into the heart: "Am I supposed to know that already?" For others, it doesn't matter—they just want a diploma so they can more easily qualify for a job. One thing most people never consider is this: the various academic departments aren't just places where professors stash what they know. They're actually different ways of thinking about the ultimate questions of life.

In an ideal world, each academic department—philosophy, psychology, law, and so forth—would combine their insights to form a "uni" (meaning "whole") "versity" (meaning "body") in which the parts come together to closely resemble the truth. In reality, though, various academic departments usually keep to themselves, using introductory and general education courses to persuade potential "majors" to study with their faculty for the remainder of their academic career.

Some academic departments—the "applied sciences"—focus on what you can do with the knowledge developed by the "pure sciences." Applied sciences include engineering, medicine, business, and education. Many people say the applied sciences are most important because they're most needed in society, and hence most likely to lead to a paying job. Certainly we want young adults to be gainfully employed and to work hard toward the greater good. But it is unwise to rush into a career without first trying to understand the various ways of knowing; before you learn how to do, it's wise to learn how to know! Otherwise you might be stuck making a living without any sense of how to make a life.

In this study we will focus on ten basic disciplines, the seeds from which most things in academia grow: theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, economics, law, politics, and history. Here's a brief overview of each:

**Theology.** An "-ology" means "study of." "Theos" means "God." Theology is the study of God. Theology seeks to answer the question, "How did I and everything else *get* here?" When people see something beautiful and are asked, "How do you *know* it is beautiful?" they might point out a few details, but often they will say, "I don't know. It just is." How is it that they really know? The theologian says knowing about God's nature and character is the key to figuring out what is most important in life.

**Philosophy.** "Philo" means "love"—love having to do with the nature of companionship. It is the root word for the name of the city of Philadelphia, which is nicknamed "the city of brotherly love." "Sophia" is the Greek word for wisdom, so when you put "philo" and "sophia" together you get "love of wisdom." The philosopher seeks to be wisdom's companion by answering questions like "What is real?" "How do I *know* anything?" To the philosopher, the good life consists of figuring out what the nature of reality is, how we know what we know, and how to accurately know about reality and knowledge.

**Ethics.** "Ethos" is the Greek word for "goodness." Ethicists are not merely in search of a life that *feels* good, but in search of "the good life"—a life that actually *is* good. So ethics is the

study that seeks to answer questions like, “How should I live?,” “What does it mean to live a good life?,” and, “If *everyone* lived the way I’m living, would it be good for us all?” Ethicists seek to understand the various ways that people act based on what they believe, and then how those actions enable them to pursue the good life.

**Biology.** “Bios” means life. Biology is the study of life. Biology seeks to answer the question, “What does it *mean* to be alive?” When we see something alive, we know it is alive. But *how* do we know? Ask a group of children sometime, “If you had a robot, what would you have to change to bring it to life?” They might say, “It would have to have a heart.” “Why?” “To pump blood.” “But there are lots of creatures that are alive that don’t have hearts.” Pressing the issue further with children would probably be cruel, but you get the point. Biologists study living things to assist us in understanding and making predictions about the natural world. If we see our predictions coming true, we can claim to know true things about the world. Biology is at the heart of the sciences because if we can figure out what makes something alive, then we can perhaps better understand our own aliveness.

**Psychology.** “Psyche” is the Greek word for “soul.” Psychology seeks to answer the question, “What makes me *human*?” Most people see human beings as different from other creatures, but what makes us unique? From observation we know most creatures are unreflective—they don’t contemplate or communicate about their plans for the future, nor do they appear to feel regret or shame over their past actions. Human beings do all these things and more. Is it possible to understand why people do what they do? Psychologists study the way animals and humans act in order to see if they can figure out something about human nature to help people who are struggling find a path to a better life.

**Sociology.** “Socios” is the Greek word from which we get our word “society.” Whereas the psychologist studies the individual self and its relationship to other selves, the sociologist suspects life will be better if we can answer the question, “How do we live in community with one another?” The differences between people, after all, are vast. To really understand how we can live together in community, we ought to have some insight into our various cultures, languages, religious beliefs, and historical challenges. These differences are complex and go back generations, sometimes even millennia. At the end of the day, sociologists hope that by understanding how societies develop and grow and relate to one another, we might learn to live in greater harmony.

**Law.** The word “law” comes from an Old English word “lagu,” the rules or ordinances by which we are governed.<sup>30</sup> It’s the same word from which we get our words “legislate” and “legislature.” The study of law revolves around the question, “What constitutes *just* and *orderly* governance?” In order to live together in an orderly way, we need laws we all agree to follow. If even a few people were to decide not to stop at red lights, it would create uncertainty and chaos for everyone. To keep society from breaking down, then, we must have rules and a means of making people obey them. A society’s philosophy of law determines its level of thriving. Lawmakers and legal scholars must consider whether the law is punishing evildoing

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30. The online etymology website, <http://www.etymonline.com>, says this about the word law: Law (n.), Old English lagu (plural laga, comb. form lah-) “law, ordinance, rule, regulation; district governed by the same laws,” from Old Norse \*lagu “law,” collective plural of lag “layer, measure, stroke,” literally “something laid down or fixed,” from Proto-Germanic \*lagan “put, lay” (see lay [v.]). Replaced Old English æ and gesetnes, which had the same sense development as law. Cf. also statute, from Latin statuere; German Gesetz “law,” from Old High German gisatzida; Lithuanian istatymas, from istatyti “set up, establish.” In physics, from 1660s. Law and order have been coupled since 1796.



sufficiently while not harming the freedoms of the just and hardworking; and how, they must ask, does the law ensure fairness without being unfair to one group or another? Figure out the answers to these questions, legal scholars say, and we'll all be better off.

**Politics.** “Polis” means “city.” Politics means the rule of a city. When people think of politics they often call to mind political commercials or people with big, fake smiles wearing suits and kissing babies, and they dismiss politics as being silly or pompous. But the study of politics really does matter. Politics answers the question, “What is the best way to *organize*

“But what is liberty without wisdom and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint.”

— Edmund Burke

community?” Everyone in the world lives in multiple political jurisdictions: neighborhoods, cities, counties, states, nations. By living where you live, you agree to abide by the rules governing those jurisdictions. But who makes these rules? Who gets to pick the rule makers? Properly conceived, politics offers a platform from which to encourage virtue, and virtue is at the heart of good government. To those who think it is *only* about liberty, the great British statesman Edmund Burke said: “But what is liberty without wisdom and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint.”<sup>31</sup>

**Economics.** In Latin, the word for economics means “the art of running a household.” Economics answers the question, “How can individuals and the community be optimally *productive*?” Let’s say you have a lawnmower, some gas, and a willingness to mow other people’s lawns. One of your customers might say, “If you mow my lawn, I’ll give you some fresh eggs from my chickens.” That’s fine, but what if you don’t *want* eggs? To make it possible for your customer to get what she wants while giving you what you want, we use a means of exchange called money, based on people’s agreement about the relative value of things compared to other things. Economics becomes infinitely more complex, though, when people want to *borrow* money to acquire very expensive things, or to capitalize a large enterprise. How are these loans made? What rules govern complex transactions such as these? What, if anything, should the various levels of government have to say about all this? Economists try to make sense of this complexity so people can get what they want, which will help them live better lives.

**History.** The study of history seeks to answer, “How did people in the past think and act on theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, politics, law, and economics? What happened in the past could help us understand what we should do now. How can we repeat the good decisions and avoid repeating the bad ones? What *counts* as a good or bad decision? But the historian’s task actually goes beyond these questions, because there are too many facts to write about and someone must decide which facts are important and which ones aren’t, which facts are included in the account and which facts are left out. People who think America’s founders were bad people who mistreated others will tend to choose confirming facts—such as some founders’ owning of slaves—in order to persuade others that America ought to abandon its founders’ principles. Should our agendas drive our study of history? Is

31. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1955), 288.

it possible to select and interpret facts objectively? These are important questions, because if history is told inaccurately it might lead people to make bad decisions—which in turn could hinder human flourishing.

As you can see, each discipline approaches knowledge differently, but with the same goal: to understand how to live meaningful lives, both individually and together. Many more academic disciplines exist, of course, but we believe these ten to be properly basic; by understanding something of these ten, we'll be able to figure out what to do with the rest.

Before we go any further, though, we need to make an admission, without which the rest of this book will not make any sense: we are biased.

## 11. OUR BIAS: THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW EXPLAINS THINGS BEST

In this book we hope to show a multitude of ways the Christian worldview best explains the existence of the universe and all things related to it. In a systematic analysis of how each worldview approaches the ten disciplines above, Christianity claims that an acknowledgment of God's nature and character, and the life and work of Christ, will reveal capital "T" Truth (as opposed to isolated cultural or personal "truths"). As we will see, a robust Christian perspective of each of the disciplines is clear and compelling.

**Theology.** The evidence compels us to believe in the existence of a personal and holy God, a designed universe, and an earth prepared for human life. This evidence together outweighs any argument for atheism (belief in no god), polytheism (belief in many gods), or pantheism (belief in god *as* the universe). Theology begins with verse one of the Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). According to John 1, God's creation was through the person of Jesus Christ, referred to by the Apostle Paul as "the fullness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9).

**Philosophy.** We will present the evidence that the notion of mind (*logos*) preceding matter is superior to the atheistic stance of matter preceding mind. From the very first book of the Bible we understand that God has created not only the world, but the entire universe. Further, he made it possible for us to observe something of his revelation and to know that our observations are meaningful. Other creatures know things in a manner of speaking, but humans *know that we know*. We have a capacity to contemplate what is shown to us by our Knowing Revealer. Christianity says we can know things because they have been ordered such that our senses can perceive them, and this is because of Jesus Christ, who is the "Logos [revealed knowledge] of God" (John 1:1).

**Ethics.** The concept that right and wrong can be objectively known based on the nature and character of a personal, loving God is, we believe, superior both theoretically and practically to any concept of moral relativism or pragmatism. The Gospel of John says that Jesus Christ is "the true Light" (John 1:9; 3:19–20). That is, he is the source of what is truly good. In his light we can see what spiritual darkness previously hid from our view.

**Biology.** We argue that the concept of a living God creating life fits the evidence better than spontaneous generation and macroevolution. We see the scientific side of God in the beginning when he organizes each creature "according to its kind" (Gen. 1:21). Interestingly, Jesus Christ is described throughout the New Testament of the Bible as "the life" (John 1:4;

11:25; Col. 1:16).<sup>32</sup> When it comes to understanding life—physical as well as spiritual—we believe the Christian worldview offers superior insight.

**Psychology.** Understanding human beings as possessing both bodies and souls, even though we are sinful, imperfect, and in need of a Savior, far outweighs expecting humans, as much of contemporary psychologists argue, to be guilt free and in control of their behavior. Human life is different from other forms of life (Gen. 2:7).<sup>33</sup> We intuitively understand that something is wrong with us. What will make it right? A savior. And who, according to Christianity, is that savior? Jesus Christ (Luke 1:46–47; Titus 2:13).<sup>34</sup>

**Sociology.** The evidence demonstrates that society functions best when the institutions of family, church, and state exercise their proper authority within their God-ordained spheres. At its most basic level, society flourishes when it is built upon strong families composed of a father, mother, and children. Sociology is hinted at in Genesis 1: God says to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” (Gen. 1:28)<sup>35</sup> and in Genesis 2, when the man and woman become “one flesh.” Of all of the ways God could have revealed himself to the world, he chose to do it through the one means all human beings could understand: he sent his Son, Jesus Christ (Luke 1:30–31; Isa. 9:6).<sup>36</sup>

**Law.** God hates the perversion of justice. This truth provides a firmer foundation than legal theories that prey on the innocent and let the guilty go free. In Genesis, God lays down rules to form the optimal conditions for human flourishing. When God rescued a culture of slaves even before he provided a permanent home for them, he gave them a law (the laws of Moses, the Torah). This fledgling nation came to be with *law*, not with *land*. Throughout Scripture, the Messiah, whom Christians believe is Jesus Christ, is characterized as a “law-giver” (Gen. 49:10; Isa. 9:7).<sup>37</sup>

**Politics.** Christians believe the idea that rights are a gift from God secured by government is more logically persuasive, morally appealing, and politically sound than any atheistic theory that maintains human rights are derived from the state. We see the beginning of political authority several places in Genesis, notably in Genesis 9:6,<sup>38</sup> when cities are formed around

32. John 1:4: “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”; John 11:25: “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live’”; Colossians 1:16: “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”

33. Genesis 2:7: “Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”

34. Luke 1:46–47: “And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior’”; Titus 2:13: “Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

35. Genesis 1:28: “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

36. Luke 1:30–31: “And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus’”; Isaiah 9:6: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

37. Genesis 49:10: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples”; Isaiah 9:7: “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

38. Genesis 9:6: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”

the principle of preventing human bloodshed. Interestingly, among the names given to Jesus Christ throughout the Bible is a political title, King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16; 1 Tim. 6:15; Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:33).<sup>39</sup>

**Economics.** We will show that the concept of private property and using resources responsibly to glorify God is nobler than coercive government policies that destroy individual responsibility and incentives to work. God put Adam in the garden to work it and keep it. That's economics. Throughout all of Scripture, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, is described as the owner of all things (Ps. 24:1; 50:10–12; 1 Cor. 10:26),<sup>40</sup> which says something about the principles of stewardship that undergird economic reality.

**History.** The Bible's promise of a future kingdom ushered in by Jesus Christ is far more hopeful than utopian schemes dreamed up by sinful, mortal humans. Genesis 3:15<sup>41</sup> describes an ongoing battle between good and evil, a battle won when the offspring of the woman (often thought of as the coming Messiah) crushes the work of the evil one. Correspondingly, Jesus is described as the “the Alpha and the Omega,” the beginning and the end of history (Rev. 1:8). History has a direction and a goal.

Christians view these ten categories as sacred, not secular. They are imprinted in the created order. All ten disciplines are addressed in just the first few chapters of the Bible; they manifest and accent certain aspects of the created order. Further, God shows himself in the person of Jesus Christ in such a way as to underline the significance of each discipline. The integration of these various categories into society has come to be known as Western Civilization.<sup>42</sup>

In every discipline, we think the Christian worldview shines brighter. It better explains our place in the universe and is more realistic, more scientific, more intellectually satisfying, and more defensible. Best of all, it is faithful to the one person with the greatest influence in heaven and on earth—Jesus Christ. But can we actually know Christianity to be true?

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39. Revelation 19:16: “On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords”; 1 Timothy 6:15: “Which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords”; Isaiah 9:6: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”; Luke 1:33: “And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

40. Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein”; Psalm 50:10–12: “For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine”; 1 Corinthians 10:26: “For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.”

41. Genesis 3:15: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

42. Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

## 12. HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND WHAT IS ACTUALLY TRUE?

We think the Christian worldview is true, but to make this claim we must have some concept of truth. Truth has two parts: understanding what is true with our *minds* (Rom. 12:2)<sup>43</sup> as well as with our *hearts* (Heb. 4:12).<sup>44</sup> The authors of *Making Sense of Your World* suggest four tests for evaluating whether or not a worldview is true at a mind and heart level:

1. Test of reason: Is it reasonable? Can it be logically stated and defended?
2. Test of the outer world: Is there some external, corroborating evidence to support it?
3. Test of the inner world: Does it adequately address the “victories, disappointments, blessings, crises, and relationships of our everyday world”?
4. Test of the real world: Are its consequences good or bad when applied in any given cultural context?<sup>45</sup>

To say the Christian worldview is true is to say that it best describes the contours of the world *as it actually exists*. We’re not asking you to take our word for it: follow *God*, not *us*. If at any point you are confused, prayerfully seek God’s Word under the guidance of wise counselors with a determination to understand and obey every good thing you need to do God’s will.

Understanding the truth, though, is only the first part. We must also learn to communicate truth, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you . . . with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15). Critics say Christianity is irrational, unhistorical, and unscientific. Christianity is more than equal to these criticisms, but we must be trained to articulate how and why.

## 13. CAN’T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

In questioning the truth or falsehood of various worldviews, we risk a great deal. Whether we accept Christianity, Islam, Secularism, Marxism, New Spirituality, or Postmodernism, we accept a worldview that describes the others as hopelessly distorted. They cannot all depict things as they really are; their competing claims cannot all be true.

Some people in history have tried to get around the differences between worldviews by telling a parable. Perhaps you’ve heard it: Six blind men come into contact with an elephant. One handles the tail and exclaims that an elephant is like a rope. Another grasps a leg and describes the elephant as a tree trunk. A third feels the tusk and says the animal is similar to a spear, and so on. Since each feels only a small portion of the whole elephant, all six men give correspondingly different descriptions of their experience.

So no one is really right or wrong, you see—we’re all correct in our own way, with our limited knowledge—or so it seems at first glance. But *how do we know the blind men are all touching the same elephant?* The parable assumes that (1) each man can discern only part

43. Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

44. Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

45. W. Gary Phillips, William E. Brown, and John Stonestreet, *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2008), chap. 3.



of the truth about the nature of the elephant, and (2) *we* know something the blind men don't—there is a real elephant everyone is touching.

The first assumption says no one possesses complete knowledge; the second assumption says *we know* no one possesses complete knowledge because *we* know what the elephant (or reality) is *really* like. But there's a contradiction here. On the one hand, the story claims that *we*—the blind men—have only limited knowledge. But if everyone is blind, no one can know the ultimate shape of the elephant. We need someone who is not blind, someone who knows all truth and communicates it accurately to us.

We will not claim in this book that non-Christian worldviews are completely false. We can find grains of truth in each. Secularism, for example, does not deny the existence of the physical universe and our ability to know it. Marxism accepts the significance and relevance of science. Postmodernism acknowledges the importance of texts and words. Islam acknowledges a created universe. New Spiritualists teach there is more to reality than matter. And all five non-Christian worldviews, to one extent or another, understand the importance of “saving” the human race.

However, a major dividing line separates non-Christian worldviews from Christianity: what do you do with Jesus Christ? Christianity views Jesus Christ as the true and living Way.<sup>46</sup> He is the key to reality itself.<sup>47</sup> Early Christians were known as members of The Way.<sup>48</sup> All other major worldviews reject Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and King. Some deny that he ever existed.

This is too big of a difference to overlook. Who is Jesus? Did Jesus Christ live on this earth two thousand years ago? Was he God in flesh? Did he come to earth to reveal God's will for us and to save the human race from sin? These are important questions. As Paul points out, Christianity lives or dies on the answers: “And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14).

**A major dividing line separates non-Christian worldviews from Christianity: what do you do with Jesus Christ?**

## 14. IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES

If Postmodernists, for example, are correct in their belief that no metanarrative can describe reality, then Christianity is doomed; Christianity depends on understanding real universal truths, such as all people having sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23);<sup>49</sup>

46. John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

47. Colossians 1:16: “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”; Hebrews 1:1-3: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”; John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

48. Acts 9:2: “And asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”

49. Romans 3:23: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

**According to George Barna, 63 percent of the teenagers surveyed agree that “Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god.”**

God loving the whole human race (John 3:16);<sup>50</sup> and Christ dying for our sins (1 John 2:2).<sup>51</sup> If these universal claims are false, then Christianity is implausible.

If the assumptions of Secularism and Marxism are correct, anyone proclaiming the existence of the supernatural is potentially dangerous. Secularists and Marxists understand this quite clearly. For instance, Marx viewed all religion as a drug that deluded its adherents—an “opiate of the masses.” Some Secularists even portray Christians as mentally imbalanced. James J. D. Luce, the assistant executive director of Fundamentalists

Anonymous, says, “The fundamentalist experience can be a serious mental health hazard to perhaps millions of people.”<sup>52</sup> His organization works to “heal” Christians of their “mental disorder”—their Christian worldview. Harvard’s Edward O. Wilson takes this a step further, contrasting liberal theology with aggressive “fundamentalist religion,” which he describes as “one of the unmitigated evils of the world.”<sup>53</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, New Spiritualists reject the personal God of the Bible as a dangerous myth separating people into religious factions. They seek instead a “higher consciousness.” Best-selling New Spiritualist author Neale Donald Walsch claims that God revealed to him personally that “no path to God is more direct than any other path. No religion is the ‘one true religion.’”<sup>54</sup> In an interview with Bill Moyers, filmmaker George Lucas said, “The conclusion I’ve come to is that all the religions are true.”<sup>55</sup> Lucas and Walsch’s conviction is shared in the wider population, even among many Christians. According to George Barna, 63 percent of the teenagers surveyed agree that “Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god.”<sup>56</sup> So, the claim continues, if we don’t have peace on earth yet, it is only because some wrongly persist in their exclusionist beliefs.

Either Christians correctly describe reality when they speak of a loving, wise, just, personal, creative God, or they are talking nonsense. The basic tenets of the Bible cannot blend well with the non-Christian claim that we are good enough to save ourselves. We say only one view fits the facts: Christianity. God, Creator of the universe, saw its importance, loved it, loved *us*, so that he sent his son to redeem it—and *us*.

Clearly, adherents of other worldviews strongly disagree with our conclusion that only Christianity fits the facts. Some of them are prepared to attempt to dismantle our arguments. So the battle for truth is on. What case can each worldview make for itself? That’s what we’ll discover next.

50. John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

51. 1 John 2:2: “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

52. James J. D. Luce, “The Fundamentalists Anonymous Movement,” *The Humanist* 11 (1986).

53. Edward O. Wilson, “The Relation of Science to Theology,” *Zygon* 15, no. 4 (1980), 433.

54. Neale Donald Walsch, *The New Revelations: A Conversation with God* (New York: Artia Books, 2002), 97.

55. Bill Moyers, “Of Myth and Men: A Conversation between Bill Moyers and George Lucas on the Meaning of the Force and the True Theology of *Star Wars*,” *Time*, April 26, 1999, 92.

56. George Barna, *Third Millennium Teens* (Ventura, CA: The Barna Research Group, 1999), 48. It should be noted that of the teenagers surveyed, 70 percent were active in a church youth group and 82 percent identified themselves as Christians.