

## **WORLDVIEW INTRODUCTION (2): What are the characteristics of a Christian worldview?**

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The following five characteristics of the Christian worldview are then unpacked below:

**(1) Humans are not cosmic accidents but are individually Created by God to love and serve Him.**

**(2) Christ's death on the Cross for every person is the ultimate expression of Christianity's high view of the person.**

**(3) But the Fall has left human character spoilt by sin and in need of training.**

**(4) Christianity is relational.**

**(5) There is no neutral worldview - the absence of a Christian worldview is always replaced by a deficient or malign analysis of humanity.**

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**(1) Humans are not cosmic accidents but are individually Created by God to love and serve Him.**

In *How Now Shall We Live?* Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey sketch out a number of arguments for believing that we are not cosmic accidents but that there is an intelligent designer behind the universe and our existence. This is a vital battle for Christians to win. Because if God did not create the world, then the whole body of biblical testimony is a lie. Colson examines the extraordinary improbability that our planet - of just the right size and distance from the sun in order for life to be supportable - should exist. He points to the high, logical information content, patterns and design discovered in DNA by the Human Genome Project. And he exposes some of the flaws of evolutionary theory. Phillip Johnson's *Darwin on Trial* and William Dembski's *Intelligent Design* explore these issues in much greater depth.

Once this first truth of our Creation has been established we need to ask for what purpose have we been created? For Christians the answer is to know and serve God. Many other worldviews proffer alternative answers. Nazism suggested racial purity. Socialism and communism promise equality. The New Age commends moral autonomy. Materialism points to satisfaction in possessions. Each of these and other ideologies can be exposed as false and destructive.

**(2) Christ's death on the Cross for every person is the ultimate expression of Christianity's high view of the person.**

Christ's death for you and for me on the Cross is the ultimate evidence of God's love for us. A high view of the person leads to a defence of human dignity and a passionate opposition to tyranny. C S Lewis (from *The Abolition of Man*): "*If individuals live only seventy years, then a state, or a nation, or a civilization, which may last for a thousand years, is more important than an individual. But if Christianity is true, then the individual is not only more important but incomparably more important, for he is everlasting and the life of a state or a civilization, compared with his, is only a moment.*"

**(3) But the Fall has left human character spoilt by sin and in need of training.**

The doctrine of original sin - or the phenomenology of evil - has perhaps been tragically and bloodily validated by human history more than any other belief. The doctrine has important

implications for how we civilise our children and how we must avoid concentrations of power.

In raising our children C S Lewis reminds us of Aristotle's view that education must help children like and dislike what they ought so that they develop 'ordinate affections' and 'just sentiments'. Lewis (again from *The Abolition of Man*): *"Plato before him had said the same. The little human animal will not at first have the right responses. It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting, and hateful"*. Plato goes on to talk about encouraging the 'spirited element' within children. Lewis explains: *"It still remains true that no justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous. Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism. I had sooner play cards against a man who was quite skeptical about ethics, but bred to believe that a gentleman does not cheat, than against an irreproachable moral philosopher who had been brought up among sharpers. In battle it is not syllogisms that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of bombardment. The crudest sentimentalist about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use"*. C S Lewis - writing half a century ago - laughed at the fact that the then culture was demanding such qualities as self-sacrifice, creativity and drive after having sealed the springs from which those very virtues flow: *"We remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful"*.

We should not be surprised at the start of the twenty-first century that our young people are adventuring into earlier sexual experiences, drugs and anti-social behaviour after those behaviours have been glorified by the media and destigmatised by welfare and educational systems. And why should we ask where God is in the current world situation when He has been unceremoniously pushed out of so much of national life? Responding to a TV interviewer who asked how God could allow the terrorist acts of 11th September to happen, Ann Graham Lotz (Billy Graham's daughter), responded: *"I believe that God is deeply saddened by this, just as we are, but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman that He is, I believe that He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand that He leave us alone?"*.

In *The Abolition of Man*, C S Lewis warns of the consequences of debunking all that is good - the natural God-given laws of how we should live. When the debunking is complete all that is left is our instincts to do what we want and scientists, capitalists and politicians are engaged in a headlong rush to indulge those instincts. But in allowing them to do so we are giving them the ultimate power over us. C S Lewis points to innovations such as air travel, broadcasting and contraception as tools that have helped us to overcome previously understood limits. But he warns: *"Any or all of the three things I have mentioned can be withheld from some men by other men - by those who sell, or those who allow the sale, or those who own the sources of production, or those who make the goods. What we call Man's power is, in reality, a power possessed by some men which they may, or may not, allow other men to profit by... And as regards contraceptives, there is a paradoxical, negative sense in which all possible future generations are the patients or subjects of a power wielded by those already alive."* Michael Medved - in *Hollywood versus America* - has powerfully demonstrated how a worldview dominates the main film studios and propagates anti-family, anti-religious output and, crucially for this analysis, often against economic logic. Organisations like the BBC are not even disciplined by the profit motive but can sell their own view of the world at the licence fee payer's expense. Lewis continues: *"For the wise old men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men."* Science offers no fundamental answers to life's big questions. More technology simply gives us more potential to be either good or bad.

Lewis describes a God-given set of moral beliefs that are found in most cultures throughout the world and include respect for property; care of children; respect for the wisdom of the elderly; truth-telling; friendship; justice; mercy; generosity especially to the weak and vulnerable; and patience. Lewis describes the sum of these beliefs as 'The Tao'. Chuck Colson

summarises the line of argument: *"Just as we have to learn to live in accordance with the law of gravity, so, too, we must learn to live in accord with God's norms for society."*

#### **(4) Christianity is relational.**

Ultimately the relational dimension of Christianity is expressed in the Trinity and in the offer to every person of an eternal relationship with God, through the one Jesus Christ. In the Bible, poverty is often expressed in relational terms: we are urged to offer special care to the orphan, the widow and the migrant (James 1:27). Only in relationships with our families, with each other and with God do we really achieve full accountability and the opportunity to be the best we can be.

Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, diagnoses the problem of our culture with these words: *"We have focused on institutions which reinforce behaviour rather than change it: government which reflects votes, politics which follow opinion polls, therapies that tell us that we are OK as we are, markets that mirror our choices. Where in our culture will we find something that gives us the power to change?"* The power to change and meet the challenges of father absence, loneliness, violent crime and racial tension that cripple so many neighbourhoods. Dr Sacks proposes the covenantal institutions of the family, community and places of worship as the solution - the very institutions, of course, that the Bible extols.

#### **(5) There is no neutral worldview - the absence of a Christian worldview is always replaced by a deficient or malign analysis of humanity.**

Alexis de Tocqueville in writing of the French revolutionary philosophers catalogues how the absence of God was replaced by a belief in the perfectibility of man: *"They had a fanatical faith in their vocation - that of transforming the social system, root and branch, and regenerating the whole human race"*. They adored the human intellect, Gertrude Himmelfarb contends, and its power to perfect human conditions. But they hated all people who resisted this utopianism. Those who resisted - as was true of communism two centuries later - were 'eliminated'.

Perhaps more relevant to our own times is de Tocqueville's analysis of a soft despotism that debilitates its citizens by indulging them rather than coercing them. The Great Society programmes of the USA and our own welfare state have provided many people with economic security but they have also caused great damage to many vulnerable people insofar as self-destructive behaviours have been excused and necessary relationship-building with (even dependence on) family and neighbours has been undermined.

We need to be realistic about the passionate commitment of others to their worldviews. In *How Now Shall We Live?* Colson explores the unwillingness of the pro-choice movement to concede on any grounds; rejecting even some of the most gruesome abortion techniques such as the partial-birth method. Colson asks: *"Why do pro-choicers oppose even modest limits?"* And answers: *"Because they understand that abortion represents a worldview conflict: God and the sanctity of life versus the individual's moral autonomy. They can give no quarter."* And neither must we.