

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, WORLDVIEWS, AND POSTMODERNITY'S CHALLENGE

BRUCE A. LITTLE*

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer,
Things fall apart, the center cannot hold,
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned,
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity

—William Butler Yeats

Twentieth-century western culture has witnessed the effects of advanced stages of epistemological decay impoverishing the western mind. The decay itself links directly to the western mind disavowing universals and obsessing on particulars as the basis for giving meaning to life. Such meaning, however, proves individualistic, relativistic and transient, which turns out to be no real meaning at all. Surveying the historical development of the western mind, Richard Weaver concluded that

like Macbeth, Western man made an evil decision, which has become the efficient and final cause of other evil decisions. It occurred in the late fourteenth century, and what the witches said to the protagonist of this drama was that man could realize himself more fully if he would only abandon his belief in the existence of transcendentals. The powers of darkness were working subtly, as always, and they couched this proposition in the seemingly innocent form of an attack upon universals. The defeat of logical realism in the great medieval debate was the crucial event in the history of Western culture, from this flowed those acts which issue now in modern decadence.¹

This abandonment of the transcendental, and hence the universal(s), was further excited by scientific progress that encouraged man toward both disinterest and distrust in the metaphysical. Celebrated scientific achievements improved the quality of physical life but led to equating technological advantage with meaning and value, while ideas dealing with the why and how of being lost appeal. Consequently, having overshadowed being and

* Bruce Little is professor of Biblical studies at Piedmont Bible College, 716 Franklin Street, Winston Salem, NC 27101.

¹ R. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984) 2-3.

feeling replaced thinking Without an external integration point, the western mind shifted from epistemological objectivity to subjectivity and from absolutes to relativism

The postmodern mind scorns the notion of a coherent worldview or the possibility of a unified field of knowledge

There is an appreciation of the plasticity and constant change of reality and knowledge, a stress on the priority of concrete experience over fixed abstract principles, and a conviction that no single a priori thought system should govern belief or investigation It is recognized that human knowledge is subjectively determined by a multitude of factors, that objective essences, or things-in-themselves, are neither accessible or positable, and that the value of all truths and assumptions must be constantly subjected to direct testing The critical search for truth is constrained to be tolerant of ambiguity and pluralism, and its outcome will necessarily be knowledge that is relative and fallible rather than absolute or certain ²

The postmodern view of reality and the nature and source of knowledge stands in direct contradiction to the Judeo-Christian worldview and repudiates the very foundation of intellectual life in colonial America

Colonial colleges, such as Harvard, from the beginning designed curriculum to reflect and promote the conviction of a coherent worldview James Turner says, "It was not some palpable connection between individual courses that unified antebellum college curricula It was the conviction, felt and taught, of coherence ultimately stemming from the Creator"³ The idea of a unified field of knowledge flowed naturally from the conviction that men had an objective word from God, who as Creator served as the center and circumference of all of life

In time, however, college curricula broke away from the idea of a unified field of knowledge, paving the way for fragmentation in the academy In fact higher education provided a precursor to and impetus for the eventual way of the rest of culture the way of fragmentation Bruce Kuklick remarks "The professionalization of theology in the United States was thus an early and potent symbol of the fragmentation of knowledge and culture"⁴ Turner, speaking of the spreading influence of fragmentation, observes

The pace of fragmentation varied The emerging universities moved fastest Many smaller colleges kept their old curriculum, or at least its religious framework, well into the twentieth century Yet, by 1900, at the institutions recognized even then as leading the change, any claim to an integrated curriculum—much less unified knowledge—appeared dubious, if not downright fraudulent ⁵

Prior to the onset of fragmentation the college president taught a senior course entitled moral philosophy that aimed at synthesizing all areas of

² R Tarnas *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York Ballantine 1993) 395–396

³ In *The Secularization of the Academy* (ed G Marsden and B Longfield New York Oxford University 1992) 76

⁴ B Kuklick *Churchmen and Philosophers From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven Yale University 1985) 87

⁵ Turner *Secularization* 77

knowledge around a theological center. Originally the moral philosophy course gave large answers to large questions and demonstrated the unity of knowledge within a Christian worldview.

He [the lecturer] showed how solutions to problems in ethics, political theory, law, psychology, religion all flowed from the divine constitution of nature. All this fitted together in a grand schema derived loosely from Protestant theological doctrine, more tightly from Scottish philosophical teaching.⁶

This course, however, eventually went the way of all dinosaurs. It did not mean, however, that people were no longer concerned with meaning in life. But it did mean that without God in the equation their efforts proved fruitless. As Turner points out, "this search to replace the senior course in Moral Philosophy goes on in a secularized academy that cannot admit the God who made the Moral Philosophy course work."⁷ Christian theology, derived from God's word to man, had provided the foundation for a worldview accepting of a unified field of knowledge. But with God reduced to a religious convenience the epistemological foundation suffered an irreparable compromise.

This was, however, the very epistemological commitment that formed the foundation for the colonial college curriculum. Turner suggests "This curriculum cohered around nothing but tradition. But it did assume, almost subliminally, the unity of knowledge, that all truth flowed, it was supposed, from God."⁸ There was an overarching purpose to life rooted in the belief that God had created all things and that all true knowledge ultimately was his knowledge. Therefore all things properly understood related to God, and all things related to God were properly understood. The possibility of such a worldview found its source in the fact that man had a word from God, a source of truth beyond man that enabled the individual to escape the abyss of skepticism and find epistemological certainty in this life. Consequently, early American education focused on being a good citizen as much as it did on learning a reputable profession. Living meaningfully as an integral part of society was as important as being professionally successful. Theoretically separation between life and profession did not exist, and this notion informed the early educational institutions in colonial America. There was unity in life because there was a unity of knowledge.

Colonial education grew out of the assumption that a center did exist and that all of life rightly understood related to that center. Whereas the center was God, theology could not be divorced from what went on in education, in the government or in any other legitimate area of life in the republic.

As the sacred and the secular were not sharply differentiated in the hyper-Protestant society, the Puritans had no difficulty in maintaining the traditional dual purposes of Christendom's university, serving the temporal as well as the civil order.⁹

⁶ Ibid. 75.

⁷ Ibid. 78.

⁸ Ibid. 75.

⁹ G. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University* (New York: Oxford University, 1994) 41.

Even when the central influence of theology faded from much of education in America (through the process of professionalization) the Christian consensus prevailed, and students were taught that there was a relationship between all facets of the life of community. While it is true that the center changed somewhat in terms of influence, at least there was a center, and people lived as if it mattered to the rest of the community (local or national) how they lived.¹⁰ As the center (the universal) lost its influence, however, of necessity the particulars increased in epistemological value. The fragmentation of postmodernity began with epistemological fragmentation in the academy and later was energized by the notions of evolution that eliminated the transcendental (God). Eventually fragmentation spread to virtually every area of American culture. Ultimately, individual rights prevailed over the good of the union as another cultural manifestation of fragmentation.¹¹

While fragmentation prevails at every level of western culture, none is so foundational and hence important as that of epistemological fragmentation. Richard Tarnas (in a somewhat ambivalent but hopeful manner), speaking of the postmodern era, admits that

despite frequent congruence of purpose, there is little effective cohesion, no apparent means by which a shared cultural vision could emerge, no unifying perspective cogent or comprehensive enough to satisfy the burgeoning diversity of intellectual needs and aspirations.¹²

Epistemologically each piece of information now derives significance only from a random relationship to other pieces of information. No center exists to which all pieces are related, no external reference point by which differing beliefs can be adjudicated and no single point of integration through which all information must pass. Consequently there is no coherence of what is believed. Meaning and purpose are defined on an individual basis, not as things relate to any universal(s). There is nothing that binds together, for what is has been radically individualized and randomized.

Properly speaking, therefore, there is no "postmodern world view," nor the possibility of one. The postmodern paradigm is by its nature fundamentally sub-

¹⁰ This strong, influencing notion of community seems to have grown out of the early concept of covenant as modeled in the early New England colonies

¹¹ The Constitution of the United States as a public document reveals the colonial relationship between the universal(s) and the particulars. It balanced the notion of unity (one nation under God, indivisible) with the right of the individual (particularly in the Bill of Rights). Early on, education was to teach the importance of the individual (made in the image of God), but always within the context of government under God. God provided the ultimate universal for both the individual and the state. The fading influence of the idea of the transcendental, however, ripped the individual from relationship to God and to the community at large (the state). Accordingly society lost its unifying principle, and individual rights overpowered the notion of unity. This development is the work of secularization (where the transcendental becomes either rejected totally or at least considered irrelevant to public life and discourse). Philosophically secularization is the denial of the transcendental, leaving only the particulars from which meaning may be derived. While this subject matter goes beyond the scope of the present article, it does have an enormous bearing on the discussion as a whole. In fact it seems that unless the evangelical mind grasps the essence of this issue, hope of understanding what a truly Christian education is all about is greatly diminished.

¹² Tarnas, *Passion* 409

versive of all paradigms, for at its core is the awareness of reality as being at once multiple, local, and temporal, and without demonstrable foundation.¹³

The postmodern paradigm consigns all reality to an ontological fluidity.

The fragmentation of the postmodern mind owes its existence to the belief in the impossibility of both the existence of and need for a unified field of knowledge. Ontologically, beyond the individual lies nothing, and the individual has nothing beyond the gratification of the moment. For the postmodern mind there is no overarching meaning, no coherent worldview informing man on how to live according to an objective, universal principle higher than man himself. Each moment is free to be lived in the expediency of its own possibilities without the epistemological structure of a worldview relating the particulars to the universal(s). In this epistemological chaos, pragmatism provides the only grounds for choices. While the culture shares no basic worldview for a consensus of meaning, worldviews really become self views. Since a person's view of reality and corollary epistemological commitments determine how he/she will interpret and relate to life, Christians who are serious about speaking for God in a postmodern culture must grasp the essentials of a Christian worldview and understand how it answers the large questions of life.¹⁴

James Sire defines a worldview as "a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make up of our world."¹⁵ In other words a worldview is a system of belief (formal or informal) held by each person that enables him/her to live in this world and by which he/she attempts to make sense of the universe at a very personal and cosmic level. It is what shapes a person's values by informing him/her about what is important in life. A worldview includes one's beliefs about the world, God, man, life and death. It is what enables one to understand the relatedness within the diversity of creation and therefore make sense of and assign meaning to individual events and/or intelligible data.

But a worldview that denies the universal(s) must depend upon individual experience as the final court of appeal, eventually dragging all adherents into polite skepticism at best and radical relativism at worst.

The denial of universals carries with it the denial of everything transcending experience. The denial of everything transcending experience means inevitably—though ways are found to hedge on this—the denial of truth. With the denial of objective truth there is no escape from the relativism of "man the measure of all things."¹⁶

In the postmodern mind one piece of information may be interpreted as differently as those passing judgment, and in the end no possibility exists of concluding that only one interpretation is right for all but only for the individual. This celebrated epistemological fragmentation of postmodernity has

¹³ Ibid. 401.

¹⁴ Weaver, *Ideas* 3–4.

¹⁵ J. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988) 17.

¹⁶ Weaver, *Ideas* 5.

robbed the western mind of any hope of finding a unified field of knowledge, a reality foundational to colonial America's intellectual life

The deemphasis on universals focused man's attention on the particulars, disallowing any source of truth beyond finite man. According to Weaver, the early seeds of anti-universals were sown by William of Occam (c 1280–1349),

who propounded the fateful doctrine of nominalism, which denies that universals have a real existence. His triumph tended to leave universal terms mere names serving our convenience. The issue ultimately involved is whether there is a source of truth higher than, and independent of, man, and the answer to the question is decisive for one's view of nature and the destiny of mankind.¹⁷

Under the influence of Immanuel Kant (c 1724–1804) the epistemological chasm between universals and particulars widened, ultimately severing truth from its universal moorings. As David Wells notes,

this trend began with Kant, who altered the whole direction of thought in the West. Kant established the modern rules for discussing how it is that someone knows the external world, and in doing so he initiated the breakdown in the old distinction between subject and object. When this breakdown crossed over into theology, it resulted in an overemphasis on God's immanence and a diminished emphasis on his transcendence. This change had profound implications for meaning of Christian faith.¹⁸

Knowledge became relative and fallible rather than absolute or certain with the removal of the center that had for centuries anchored the western mind. No longer could the western mind accept the Christian Scriptures speaking either authoritatively or absolutely, which led to a widespread cultural downgrading of Scripture from a word from God to a human book of morality and ethics.

The recent western experiment in epistemology not only devalued revelation but also denied man the basis for any overarching meaning to all of life.

The yet more corrosive post-modern environment has eaten away every transcendent reference point and fatally weakened every attempt to find overarching meaning. Thus thwarted in their efforts to find meaning outside themselves, moderns have sought to relocate all reality internally, detached from any fixed moral norms. The self is altogether inadequate to bear the entire burden of creating this moral and spiritual meaning, however.¹⁹

Eventually, in the words of Yeats, "the falcon cannot hear the falconer, things fall apart."

Amid this epistemological anarchy the Church, as the "pillar and ground of the truth," must be salt and light as a corrective to epistemological decay and as a reordering agent overcoming cultural fragmentation. Only those who acknowledge a source of objective truth higher than and independent of man have a sure word for the postmodern mind. The Christian worldview does exactly that by affirming revelation as an epistemological reality from

¹⁷ Ibid 3

¹⁸ D Wells *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 104

¹⁹ Ibid 94

an ontological Reality (God) who provides objective knowledge relevant to the large questions of this life and beyond.

But in order for the Christian worldview to have an influence on the postmodern mind two things must be true. (1) Christians must resist the influence of postmodernity on their own minds. (2) They need to purpose in their hearts to think, act and minister within the framework of a Christian worldview perspective, recapturing the high ground in the current epistemological and ontological chaos. To do this, Christian education at every level must assume the responsibility of preparing Christians to address the challenge of postmodernity both offensively and defensively. This includes training Christians in general to think and live in terms of a Christian world and ministers in particular to commence worldview preaching in America's pulpits, thus multiplying the efforts of formal Christian education.

This task, however, will require the Christian academic community to develop a response to at least five vital aspects of a truly Christian education that would produce Christians capable of meeting the challenge of the postmodern mind. (1) There must be an understanding that every Christian to some degree is a product of his/her culture and therefore very apt to think and act in a fragmented way unless there is a conscious effort to do otherwise. Therefore there must be an effort to overcome the spirit of the age and an unflinching commitment to apply theological realities integratively and coherently to all data. (2) Attention must be focused on the importance of understanding the epistemological relevance and importance of revelation in constructing a worldview. Christian revelation must be viewed as an epistemological reality and not just as a source of religious truth. (3) There must be a familiarization with the weightier questions of life, understanding their importance by thinking from a worldview perspective of theology. (4) Christians must regain an appreciation for the importance of assumptions informing one's worldview and their role in public discourse and personal life. (5) The epistemological and ontological implications and logical extensions of the foundational doctrines of Christianity that form the very framework of the Christian worldview must be understood.

Educators must consciously resist the spirit of the age while intentionally thinking integratively and coherently. The colonial curricula centered in the commitment that a unified field of knowledge existed that formed a coherent system for understanding and interpreting life. The course in moral philosophy summarized the then rather universally accepted idea of a unified field of knowledge that flowed from the belief that a rational God created this world. Today, however, many students come for a Christian education confessing God as Creator but thinking in the fragmented way of culture that denies God as Creator. Most evidence a total cluelessness regarding the notion of a unified field of knowledge. Therefore they approach each subject in isolation, unaware of studying under the concept of a Christian worldview. For example, when the student comes to the literature class he/she is only thinking about the one piece being studied and only as it relates to that class. To overcome this, the instructor must demonstrate Christian worldview thinking and teach integratively by relating each piece of information from all legitimate categories of study to theological beliefs. Literature,

history, philosophy, sociology, and other disciplines must be taught within a theological interpretative matrix. Too often each discipline understands itself almost entirely from within its own circle, creating a fragmented approach to education. This only reinforces the fragmentation the student brings with him/her to the academy.

Furthermore theology must not be taught in isolation either. It should be related to the larger questions of life by which the pieces of theology are placed within a larger worldview context. Theology should be taught within the context of life as it was developed and transmitted. Unless it is seen in this light, it only speaks to itself. Christians must not think of theology as just so many propositional truth-statements (though it is that) but as the very interpretative foundation and framework for thinking about reality.

Thinking integratively and coherently requires a conscious and strenuous effort even on the part of the instructor. Students need to be challenged with the importance of worldview thinking while denying them the luxury of simply maintaining their uncritical, fragmented thinking. Instead the student must be engaged by thought-provoking exercises where interpretative consistency is expected and logical extensions of beliefs unpacked. Courses should be Christian worldview oriented, encouraging students to view each piece of information in light of the whole. Information should be not only memorized but also intellectually related to the known to determine how or if it fits with a Christian worldview. Since God is both the center and circumference of life and all that is, everything only has true meaning as it relates to him, the absolute universal. Christian education must be more than a lining up of a few propositional truth-statements in a systematic fashion so one can answer a set of prescribed questions. It should teach students to think integratively and coherently. To think Christianly and not just harvest and store Biblical information requires a conscious effort because the spirit of postmodernity subtly threatens every mind.

Likewise there must be an appreciation of the importance of revelation as more than religious truth. A worldview embedded with certainty requires an objective epistemological starting point, a word from beyond man. The word from God is this starting point. Therefore Scripture must not first be seen as a moral or theological guide but as an epistemological reality and therefore a legitimate moral guide. Christians must feel the full weight epistemologically when they claim to have a word from God. While Scripture makes claims regarding religious behavior, it also makes powerful truth-claims that bear directly on the great questions of life. This changes everything. It means more than sermon material for Sundays. It means that an objective epistemological point of beginning exists because God, the ontological Reality, is its source. Scripture's claims are truth-claims, not merely religious claims. Therefore they provide answers to all of life, not simply religious life.

The bifurcation between religious knowledge and all other scientific knowledge has raised havoc with Christians thinking from a worldview perspective.

The world revealed by modern science has been a world devoid of spiritual purpose, opaque, ruled by chance and necessity, with intrinsic meaning. The human soul has not felt at home in the modern cosmos: the soul can hold dear

its poetry and its music, its private metaphysics and religion, but these find no certain foundation in the empirical universe²⁰

Regrettably, many Christians uncritically accept this false notion as fact and consequently hold Christian truth in private or as only a word about religious affairs. To accept Tarnas' conclusion, however, in the end destroys the very basis for the distinctively Christian worldview. Christian revelation provides the answer to the epistemological fragmentation of the postmodern mind. Antebellum curricula acknowledged the existence of a unified field of knowledge that logically flowed from the assertion that God existed and had spoken to man both in the Bible and in nature. Likewise, today those interested in building a coherent Christian worldview must begin with a primary epistemological commitment—namely, that revelation is a word from God. This provides humankind with a source of truth independent of man that is both knowable and reliable.

It takes more than simply claiming to have a word from God, however, to make a difference in the sense of building a coherent worldview. One must understand that the Christian Scriptures inform not only on religious matters but on the most difficult philosophical matters as well. Scripture forms both the foundation for and assurance of a unified field of knowledge that flows from God to form a coherent worldview. Without this foundation and assurance Christian epistemology has the same problem as naturalistic epistemology. Christianity does not just speak religiously. It speaks in terms of a distinctive worldview. While it speaks directly to the Christian about religious matters it does so on the basis of a much larger truth, all within the context of a coherent Christian worldview. The truth of creation, the fall, the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, and the coming kingdom forms the larger context. Without these fundamental worldview doctrines other knowledge loses a necessary framework because they speak about the way the world is and its purpose. Consequently a complete view of Scripture as an epistemological reality is essential to a truly Christian worldview.

Also Christians must become familiar with the weighty issues that inform one's worldview. Sire lists seven basic questions that make up a worldview:

- (1) What is prime reality? (2) What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us? (3) What is a human being? (4) What happens to a person at death? (5) Why is it possible to know anything at all? (6) How do we know what is right and wrong? (7) What is the meaning of history?²¹

While these form the right questions, only a Christian worldview answers them consistently with one another. Unless Christians understand the organizing questions of humanity, worldview thinking loses definition. Each of the questions begs for a theological response that demonstrates both an acquaintance with the weight of the question and an understanding of the theological relevance of the answer.

Furthermore Christians must identify and evaluate underlying assumptions that give shape to the more obvious beliefs of men. Today both in the

²⁰ Tarnas *Passion* 418

²¹ Sire *Universe* 18

world and in the Church many primary assumptions that shape one's view of the world and culture pass muster without any serious critical analysis. Whereas assumptions both inform and flow from one's worldview, they must not be ignored. A person's assumptions inform him/her on what position he/she will take on certain cultural issues. For example, anyone making a claim that one thing is morally wrong is working from the assumption that there is a moral absolute. The postmodern mind, however, assumes absolutes do not exist. Consequently the culture wars that rage across America today are sparked as well as fueled by very different philosophical starting points or assumptions. Understanding how underlying assumptions drive public policy and debate requires a renewed commitment to identifying and challenging those assumptions. As long as there is no assumption consensus there will be no agreement on particular issues.

That it does not matter what a man believes is a statement heard on every side today. The statement carries a fearful implication. If a man is a philosopher in the sense with which we started, what he believes tells him what the world is for. How can men who disagree about what the world is for agree about any of the minutiae of daily conduct?²²

Recognizing faulty worldviews and building a coherent worldview requires an understanding of the importance of assumptions and the ability to identify the same. Ignoring the importance of assumptions permits false assumptions to go unchallenged, often leaving controversial discussions to focus only on conclusions that end in verbal gridlock. Teaching one how to identify and challenge assumptions is basic to communicating truth to postmodern minds, foundational to a Christian education, and paramount to thinking within the framework of a Christian world.

Finally, each Christian must comprehend the epistemological and ontological implications and logical extensions of the foundational doctrines of Christianity that form the very framework of a Christian worldview. This means thinking through how the fundamental doctrines bear upon every moment of life in light of their ontological and epistemological realities. Such requires a conscious effort to bring each new piece of data to the larger framework first before submitting it to the particulars of the Bible. Some of the foundational doctrines are creation, fall, incarnation, cross, resurrection, and coming kingdom. All of these demand a more in-depth treatment than space permits here, but a brief treatment of each will help us understand their ontological significance in meeting the challenge of the postmodern mind.

The Christian worldview begins with the assertion that God created everything. Genesis 1 declares that the nature of this world consists of both the metaphysical and the physical with both having significance. The Christian view of ontology maintains a proper relationship between the two, thus avoiding the extremes of making the physical world everything or nothing. Furthermore, when Gen 1:31 records that God reported all of creation to be

²² Weaver, *Ideas* 23.

“very good,” man is informed that there is a moral quality to the created order. Consequently man (a moral being) lives in a morally structured universe and is not free to act in any way he pleases. When the Christian makes a claim for creation and all that is involved he is answering some very fundamental and knotty ontological questions. He affirms the reality of both universals and particulars, unity and diversity. Notice how this differs from, say, pantheism. Pantheism as a worldview answers the question of unity by seeing ultimate reality as one. Unity swallows up diversity in the ultimate state. The end is undifferentiated oneness. In contrast, naturalism as a worldview places significance on the particulars to the degree that the universal is whited out. Naturalism protects diversity but has no room for unity. The end is fragmentation. Consider Christianity’s answer. It affirms both unity and diversity without sacrificing either. The ontological Trinity of three in one demonstrates this most clearly: three separate persons (diversity), one in essence (unity). The Church provides another example: one body (unity) but many members (diversity), so that the final reality of God’s kingdom diversity is not swallowed up in unity and unity is not destroyed by diversity. The matter of unity and diversity—universals and particulars—goes beyond a religious notion and deals with the very nature of reality itself. Clearly something very ugly happens when people jettison the notion of the transcendent, for more is lost than the transcendent. What is lost is a true understanding of the nature of reality and any hope of finding a unified field of knowledge.

The incarnation teaches that no final conflict exists between the physical and the metaphysical world. In fact it affirms an ontological harmonious relationship between the metaphysical and the physical in that God was manifested (declared) to man through true humanity without distortion. “We beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). God could manifest deity through humanity because he had made man in his own image. These are not merely theological affirmations; they are profound philosophical affirmations. Such provide serious answers to the haunting questions and anxieties of the postmodern mind that thought jettisoning God had only religious implications. Unfortunately the consequences have proven that was not true. In fact everything begins to “fall apart.” Therefore Christians must realize that when they speak of such doctrines they are not only speaking theologically but are also expressing ontological realities and epistemological certainties that form the very essence of a worldview.

The doctrines of the cross and resurrection provide real answers to the problem of evil as a philosophical question as well as being theologically central to the gospel. Furthermore these two doctrines present the true answer to man’s brokenness by affirming that brokenness is a spiritual/moral problem requiring a spiritual/moral solution—not an educational, technological or political solution. Also the truth of the kingdom of God provides a balance to the doctrine of the *imago Dei* by informing mankind that while they have dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28) their power is limited. It will take the kingdom of God, not the technology of man, to bring in a utopian

condition to the world. Theologically these doctrines address matters pertaining to one's relationship to God, but they also answer the great questions of life as they work together to form a cohesive Christian worldview.

Postmodernity's challenge presents the Christian community in general and Christian education in particular with the task of teaching others how to develop a Christian worldview and then interpreting all of life from that worldview perspective. For Christian educators this will necessitate developing and teaching curricula that challenge the Christian mind to (1) think integratively and coherently with all pieces of information, (2) think in terms of the larger and weighty questions of life in light of theology, (3) understand the epistemological uniqueness and importance of revelation, (4) be assumption sensitive, and (5) think through the ontological and epistemological implications and philosophical extensions of one's foundational theological commitments.

Two caveats are in order, however. (1) Christian educators/pastors must avoid allowing Enlightenment's grandchild, postmodernity, to influence education as the Enlightenment affected colonial education. As history reveals, accommodating the Enlightenment was partly responsible for the secularization of the early American academy. (2) Christian educators/pastors must realize they cannot serve the needs of the culture and the needs of the Church in the same way. Christian education directly informs and trains Christians who in turn can challenge the postmodern mind in and out of the public square with a Christian worldview.²³ Christian education cannot serve two masters. God is the source and end of the Christian educator's task, not a culturally-oriented moral consensus. The Church exists primarily as a voice for God's truth, not as a moral/religious glue for society—that is, Christian education owes its allegiance to God, not culture. Failure to recognize this distinction will confuse the mission of Christian education and eventually weaken the curriculum, thus corrupting the distinctiveness of the Christian worldview. Whereas only a truly Christian worldview can meet the challenge of the postmodern mind, Christians must submit every aspect of life to a Christian worldview, beginning with Christian education.²⁴

²³ I believe Marsden, *Soul*, makes a good case from history regarding the danger these two factors pose to Christian education. What was not learned in history should be learned from history.

²⁴ I wish to thank my colleagues at Piedmont Bible College, and especially Dan Wishnietsky, for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.



Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.