

David Naugle
Dallas Baptist University

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Part One

Introduction: Baseball in Heaven?

Two older guys met often for coffee at the local donut shop, and one morning they got into a heated discussion about whether or not there would be baseball in heaven. So one of them volunteered, “Let me do a little research and I’ll get back with an answer next time we meet.” So a couple of days went by and the two guys were having coffee again at the donut shop and the other one asked, “So, what did you find out? Is there going to be baseball in heaven?” And he answered and said, “Well, I have some good news and I have some bad news.” “The good news is that there will be baseball in heaven!” Wow, that’s fantastic.” “The bad news, however, is that you’re pitching day after tomorrow!”¹

Now in these two talks about the application, or as I am calling it here, the liturgical consummation of worldviews, well guess what? Yes, you guessed it: I have some good news and some bad news. I thought it might be best to cover the bad news tonight (that will give us something to sleep on), and save the good news for tomorrow morning. It will give us something to look forward to. I hope that sounds like a good plan.

The Mega Church Mistake

“We made a mistake.” In quoting and agreeing with these words of executive pastor Greg Hawkins of the Willow Creek Community Church, Bill Hybels, the well-known pastor of this well-known mega-church in South Barrington, Illinois, (a Chicago suburb) was humbly acknowledging what he referred to as “the wake up call” of his adult life. In an address at the 2007 Willow

¹ My thanks to Dr. Herb Pedersen for this opening story.

Creek Association's Leadership Summit, he referred to data obtained from an intensive, three year self-study of the members of the Willow Creek Community Church (WCCC) that called into question its spiritual effectiveness in making Christian disciples.

Their survey results — available online and in a book titled *Reveal: Where Are You?*² — showed that some 25% of more mature believers were either “stalled” in their Christian lives or felt “dissatisfied” with their church (p. 47), and that some 63% of this latter, “dissatisfied” group was thinking of leaving WCCC for greener pastures (p. 53).

On the basis of this internal evaluation, later expanded to include six additional churches, Hybels and his staff discovered, much to their amazement, that *attendance* at well-planned church activities and *participation* in well-developed ministry programs did not result in spiritual growth and increasing Christian devotion to God as expected (pp. 12-13, 14, 31). As the measuring stick, Christian devotion was defined in terms of an increasing love for God and love for other people based on the two greatest commandments: YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF (p. 29). Assuming traditional methods of church growth, Willow Creek asked: “Does increased attendance in ministry programs *automatically* equate to spiritual growth?” The shocking, survey-based answer they said was this: “To be brutally honest: it does not” (p. 13).

² See Willow Creek Community Church's “Reveal” website at: <http://www.revealnow.com/> (accessed June 10, 2008). The opening quote above was taken from Bill Hybel's Leadership Summit address, “The Wake Up Call of My Adult Life,” available at: <http://revealnow.com/story.asp?storyid=49> (accessed June 10, 2008). See also the companion book that presents the results of the WCCC self-study: Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal: Where Are You?* Foreword Bill Hybels, with contributions by Eric Arnson (Willow Creek Resources, 2007). Page numbers in parentheses in this paper are from this book. Indeed, when Hybels presented a new strategic plan to his congregation for renewed emphasis on spiritual growth and discipleship in April 2007, he himself did say, “We have been wrong. We need to rethink the coaching we give you as you pursue your spiritual growth” (p. 64).

For Hybels, these findings were “mind blowing,” “earth shaking,” “ground breaking,” and induced many a sleepless night. As he put it, the conclusions from the self-study “rocked” his world and they “rocked” the world of the Willow Creek church staff as well (p. 63).³ This, I submit, to you may be called “the mega-church mistake” — the erroneous assumption that church attendance and ministry involvement necessarily translate into growing Christian devotion.⁴

This troubling revelation called for nothing less than an entire paradigm shift in Willow Creek’s philosophy of ministry according to Greg Hawkins, the executive pastor mentioned earlier who actually generated the idea for this discipleship-efficiency study in the first place. “Our dream,” Hawkins states in a short video, “is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions. Replace it with new insights. Insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture. Our dream is really to discover what God is doing and how he’s asking us to transform this planet” (also see chapter four in *Reveal*).

Hybels himself has also called for alternative ways to “coach” people toward spiritual maturity. He has likewise proposed that each Willow Creek member, presumably old or new, be outfitted with a “customized spiritual growth

³ In his 2007 Leadership Summit speech, Bill Hybels made this public statement about what we should have done differently: “We made a mistake [again, quoting Hawkins]. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become “self feeders.” We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their Bibles . . . , how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own. Available online at: <http://revealnow.com/story.asp?storyid=49>, Accessed June 21, 2008.

⁴ Greg Hawkins describes what I am calling the “mega-church mistake” in the book *Reveal* in these words: “We went in [to the self-study] with some ‘blindness’ on, believing that church activities were the predominant drivers of spiritual growth, and we just assumed the church would show up as the central force in the spiritual walk of our most Christ-centered people. We were not prepared to discover that so many people are *stalled* in their spiritual lives, and certainly not prepared to find that some of our best disciples were among those most *dissatisfied* with the church. We were also surprised that personal spiritual practices played such a critical role — show up as the primary catalyst for growth in the most advanced spiritual segments” (p. 58, italics added).

plan,” not unlike personal plans for physical fitness that members get at local health clubs (pp. 65-66).⁵

To implement these revised ministerial goals, a June 2008 article in *Christianity Today* titled “Willow Creek’s ‘Huge Shift,’” reports that Willow Creek is redesigning the structure of its weekly services in at least two ways: first, it will now move its weekend services away from the seeker-sensitive model and focus

⁵ Overall, Willow Creek desires the churches in their Association, which has a global reach, do similar studies, as far as it is possible, to determine the quality of their discipleship ministries. Some Baptists churches are following Willow Creek’s example as well, calling for a

fresh look at the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches to discipleship programs. See the cover story titled “Fully Devoted Followers?” of the January 7, 2008, *Baptist Standard*.

To be sure, Christians in the blogosphere and elsewhere have been humming with both criticisms and compliments ever since Hybels made these disclosures last year. Negatively, some have proclaimed that Willow Creek’s self-analysis has demonstrated once and for all that Hybel’s mega-church philosophy of ministry is seriously defective and must be discarded. Others have said that the Willow Creek survey was technically flawed and was seriously misinterpreted, concluding too much from too little. Positively, some have congratulated the Willow Creek staff for their courageous admission of their failures and are supporting them enthusiastically in their quest to find new ways of transforming believers into “sold out” followers of Jesus Christ. See “REVEAL Revisited: One sociologist says Willow Creek’s research may not be as revealing as we think,” at http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2008/01/reveal_revisite.html. Accessed January 19, 2008.

Os Guinness — known to some rather negatively as a “professional curmudgeon,” but to others as a Christian public intellectual and a shrewd and constructive cultural and ecclesiastical critic who prophetically speaks truth in love — has been concerned for sometime now about the dalliance of the church-growth movement with the assumptions of modernity and with its incessant quest for relevance. In 1993, Guinness published *Dining With the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts With Modernity* (Baker/Hour Glass Books) in which he wrote these “line-in-the-sand” words: “When all is said and done, the church-growth movement will stand or fall by one question. In implementing its vision of church growth, is the church of Christ primarily guided and shaped by its own character and calling — or by considerations and circumstances alien to itself? Or, to put the question differently, is the church of Christ a social reality truly shaped by a theological cause, namely the Word and Spirit of God? In sum, what — in practice — is the church’s decisive authority? ... If the church makes anything else the decisive principle of her existence, Christians risk living unauthorized lives of faith, exercising unauthorized ministries, and proclaiming an unauthorized gospel. Yet that is precisely the temptation modernity gives us.” (p. 35).

In 2003, Guinness also released a related volume titled *Prophetic Untimeliness: A Challenge to the Idol of Relevance* (Baker Books) which develops a thesis that stoutly challenges the church-growth movement: “By our uncritical pursuit of relevance we have actually courted irrelevance; by our breathless chase after relevance without faithfulness, we have become not only unfaithful but irrelevant; by our determined efforts to redefine ourselves in ways that are more compelling to the modern world than are faithful to Christ, we have lost not only our identity but our authority and our relevance. Our crying need is to be faithful as well as relevant” (p. 15).

on helping mature believers grow in their faith, and second, it will be replacing its mid-week services with more in-depth courses on the Bible and theology.⁶

The Worldview Mistake

Now as interesting as Willow Creek’s “mega-church mistake” may be, I am drawing our attention to it in order to raise some serious questions about the effectiveness, or the lack thereof, when it comes to the regular teaching, learning, and application of a Christian worldview. With Willow Creek as the foil, here is what I am getting at. In Romans 12: 1-2, Paul urges believers who have come to know and embrace the Christian Gospel in its biblical and theological fullness to commit their bodies, that is, themselves as whole persons, completely to God as an act of spiritual worship. They are not to be conformed to the sinful influences of the fallen age, but rather are to be transformed through renewed minds, resulting in obedience to the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

To employ the words of the title of this talk, after learning about a biblical worldview, Paul essentially says in Romans 12: 1-2 that it ought to be “consummated liturgically” in the unmitigated devotion and faithfulness of the people of God.⁷

Now I am *not* using the word “liturgy” or “liturgical” here as a technical reference to the historically prescribed services of the church at worship; rather I am employing the term in its literal sense as the “work of the people” (from the Greek words *leos*, people, and *ergon*, work, hence *leitourgia*). In speaking, then, of the liturgical consummation of worldview, and of a Christian worldview in

⁶ *Christianity Today*, 52, no. 6 (June 2008), p. 13. Hybels has said that the *CT* article is misleading, and has made it clear in a recent online video that any forthcoming changes in Willow Creek’s ministry strategy do not entail an abandonment of their seeker-sensitive mission — “to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ” — but are simply one of many ongoing “adjustments” in their church’s efforts to be “spiritually catalytic across the whole spectrum” [of believers and their needs]. Hybel’s response to the *CT* article is available at: <http://revealnow.com/story.asp?storyid=63>. Accessed June 10, 2008.

⁷ The title of this talk is adapted from Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology Series (Oxford, England and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998). Pickstock’s thesis is this: “the event of transubstantiation in the Eucharist is the condition of possibility for all human meaning” (p. xv). I am using this gloss on her title for the particular purposes of this address.

particular, I am talking about how there should be a vigorous response of dedication to Jesus Christ and submission to his will in all aspects of thought and life as a chief work of the people of God.

However, if the mega-church mistake consists in the naïveté that ecclesiastical engagement is necessarily life-changing, then would this mistake be in some sense xeroxed if we were to assume that our ordinary ways of proclaiming and promoting a biblical worldview will terminate in obedience to Romans 12: 1-2? What assurance do we have that that after learning a Christian worldview, it will, indeed, be liturgically consummated as specified? There is, in other words, the ever-present possibility of making what we might call “the worldview mistake”⁸ — the problem of an intellectually acknowledged but dormant Christian worldview.

By way of a sharp contrast, a powerful scene from the film *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* that pivots on the concept of worldview may illustrate what I am talking about. This 2005 award-winning, independent, German film, directed by Marc Rothemund and written by Fred Breinersdorfer, is about the last days in the life of Sophie Scholl, a twenty-one year old member of the non-violent, anti-Nazi resistance group called the White Rose. Actress Julia Jentsch stars as Sophie Scholl, the young coed-turned-fearless activist who resolutely opposed the Nazi government along with her brother Hans and a band of committed friends, inspired by mentors Carl Muth and Professor Kurt Huber. The film focuses on Scholl’s last six heroic days, from her arrest and interrogation to her trial, sentence, and execution. On February 22, 1943, the so-called People’s Court

⁸ There could also be a “Christian Education Mistake as well. If it seems rather naïve of the Willow Creek staff to think that their members’ attendance at and participation in church activities and ministerial programs routinely translated into in-depth Christian discipleship, then could Christian faculty, staff and administrators be equally naïve in assuming that enrollment at one of their schools, colleges or universities translates necessarily into an intellectually formative, character-shaping, calling-generating, and culture-changing educational experience for students? In other words, how might Willow Creek’s “mega-church mistake” be a kind of cautionary tale, complete with flashing yellow lights, for Christian educators and Christian education that strive to actualize a transformative vision in which biblical faith shapes education shapes vocation shapes culture?

found Scholl guilty of high treason and was left with no appeal. She was promptly beheaded on the same day as her sentence.

At the heart of the film are several harsh interrogations conducted by Investigator Mohr whose Nazi conscience seems to be troubling him greatly. Mohr gives Scholl the opportunity to admit her guilt and be spared. On the basis of her conscience, however, Scholl refuses the offer and accepts the consequences of her Christian worldview-based convictions and actions. The dialog peaks in this exchange:

Mohr: For the record, I ask you: "Following our talks, have you come to the conclusion that your action together with your brother can be seen as a crime against society and in particular against our hard fighting troops and that it must be harshly condemned?"

Scholl: No, not from my point of view.

Mohr: By admitting your mistake, you wouldn't betray your brother.

Scholl: But I would betray the idea. I'd do the same again. *You have the wrong worldview, not me* (emphasis added). I still believe that I acted in the best interests of my people. I don't regret it. And I'll accept the consequences. ...

Scholl (speaking to her cell mate): Mohr offered me a way out if I abandoned our idea. ... I didn't accept it.⁹

In this heated conversation, Sophie Scholl made no worldview mistake. Her view of knowledge entailed personal responsibility; she understood her faith holistically and she acted on its holistic implications. There was no failure on her part to connect belief and behavior; there was no breakdown between her theory and practice, no gap between her knowing and doing. What we see in Scholl is unwavering commitment and faithfulness. Her worldview was seamlessly integrated with her way of life, devoid of compromise. She was offering her body, literally, as a living sacrifice. She resisted the machinations of her culture. She

⁹ *Sophie Scholl ~ The Final Days*, © 2005 Goldkind Film/Broth Film. DVD package and menu design ©2006 Zeitgeist Films, Ltd. See the film's website: <http://www.sophieschollmovie.com/>. Accessed June 17, 2008.

was doing the good will of God, despite the cost.¹⁰ Thus, we might say, to draw on the title of this talk, that Sophie Scholl's Christian worldview was liturgically consummated, that is, she applied it, even in these most challenging of circumstances.

Why, however, aren't there more Sophie Scholl's among us in today's church, not only as persons like Scholl who play significant roles at the hinge points of history, but also, like most of us, who are trying to be simply and faithfully Christian in the ordinary routines of every day life? Why are there a fair number of believers who have taken all the right worldview classes, read all the right worldview books, heard all the right worldview speakers, been to all the right worldview conferences — in short, have been exposed to some of the best worldview teachings and teachers the evangelical church has to offer — and yet falter or fail when it comes to the cultivation of lifetime of Christian devotion and faithfulness?

Furthermore, why aren't there more Sophie Scholl types among professing Christian academicians whose biblical worldview often remains professionally unconsummated in their scholarship, teaching and research, not to mention in their personal lives? To play with one of the questions that this conference is to address: "Why is a Christian worldview so often unapplied in the larger world?" and we might also ask, "Why is a Christian worldview also left unapplied in the Ivory Tower itself?"

The mistake of a liturgically *unconsummated* Christian worldview in the lives of Christians and in the lives of Christian scholars, in both the church and the academy, is widespread, especially if we believe recent reports about the scandal and unformed conscience of large numbers of professing evangelical Christians.¹¹ One reason why a biblical or Christian worldview remains

¹⁰ According to Steven Garber in, *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior*, expanded edition (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996, 2007), pp. 176, 182, members of the White Rose came to this profound realization: "We are Christians, and we are Germans; therefore we are responsible for Germany!"

“unconsummated” may simply be because many gospel Christians have had little, if any, exposure to the notion of a Christian or biblical worldview. According to updated research from The Barna Group, only about 5% of American adults have something that resembles a Christian or biblical worldview.¹² A dearth of teaching about a Christian worldview is certainly a problem, not as much in parachurch, as in church contexts, sad to say. Of equal or even greater concern is the question of why those who have had considerable exposure to the alleged transformative content and power of a Christian worldview are to one degree or another unaffected by it. Why does the teaching and preaching of a biblical worldview so often fail to change lives in mind, heart, and hand, whether of parishioners or professors, much less the societies and cultures of which they are a part?

I am not sure I know the answer to this question; I am not sure anyone really does. But I would like to hazard a guess and suggest that the reasons may lie in some shortcomings in the areas of our orthodoxy, our orthopathy, and our orthopraxy. In other words, we are afflicted with some significant deficiencies when it comes to imparting and inculcating a Christian worldview at the

¹¹ Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why are Christians Living Just Like the Rest of the World?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005); J. Daryl Charles, *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism: Recovering the Church's Moral Vision* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

¹² See the Barna Group's article, "Most Adults Feel Accepted by God, But Lack a Biblical Worldview," at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=194>. Accessed July 7, 2008. Their findings about a biblical worldview are summarized in these words: For several years, The Barna Group has been tracking how many people possess a "biblical worldview." The organization defines such a life perspective on the basis of several questions about religious beliefs. The definition requires someone to believe that absolute moral truth exists; that the source of moral truth is the Bible; that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches; that eternal spiritual salvation cannot be earned; that Jesus lived a sinless life on earth; that every person has a responsibility to share their religious beliefs with others; that Satan is a living force, not just a symbol of evil; and that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful maker of the universe who still rules that creation today. Using that framework, Barna discovered that the percentage of adults holding a biblical worldview has remained minimal and unchanged over the past three years [from 2002-2005], despite the widespread public debate about moral issues and the efforts of thousands of churches to enhance people's moral convictions. Currently, only 5% of adults have a biblical worldview. The percentage varies among faith groups. About half of all evangelicals have such a perspective. Overall, 8% of Protestants possess that view, compared to less than one-half of one percent of Catholics.

intellectual, affective and volitional levels. I think we need to rethink the definition and use of the concept of worldview itself and the overall content of a biblical worldview as well; we need to reconsider the strategic role of the heart's deepest affections and desires and what should be the proper order of the loves (*ordo amoris*); and we must acknowledge the contemporary cultural captivity of the church that impedes the application of a Christian view of the world in the world.

Unless we address, expose, critique and propose alternatives to these inadequacies in our orthodoxy (thinking), our orthopathy (loving), and our orthopraxy (doing), then and only then might we hope for the liturgical consummation of a Christian worldview that Romans 12:1-2 envisions in the lives of the people of God. In this address, then, we will attend to the culprits that thwart this purpose and undermine the power of the Christian vision to renovate our lives and the cultures to which we belong.

The Worldview Mistake 1: Orthodoxy

I've noticed an interesting trend among some twenty-something evangelicals, a tendency to [snicker] ... whenever worldview is mentioned.¹³

~ J. Mark Bertrand, *(Re)Thinking Worldview: How to Think, Live, and Speak in This World*, p. 14

Definition of worldview. While for some, too much familiarity or overexposure to the idea of worldview has occasionally bred contempt, others have expressed frustration over definitions of the concept that frequently limit it to the cognitive sphere. This common complaint about the reduction of "worldview" to a more-or-less disembodied, abstract "brain thing" is not unjustified, as a survey of some of the standard definitions of the term demonstrates.

- ❖ "The whole manner of conceiving of the world and humanity's place in it, the widest possible view which the mind can take of things." — James Orr
- ❖ A "conception of the universe" or "theory of the cosmos" — G. K. Chesterton
- ❖ A "life-system," rooted in a fundamental principle from which was derived a whole complex of ruling ideas and conceptions about reality. — Abraham Kuyper

¹³ Bertrand uses the word "snigger" rather than "snicker" in the actual quote.

- ❖ A “perspective on life, a whole system of thought that answers the questions presented by the reality of existence.” — Francis Schaeffer
- ❖ “A comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things.” — Albert Wolters
- ❖ “A worldview is a framework of fundamental concepts or beliefs about the world.” — Michael Wittmer

Indeed, perhaps because of the influence of modern rationalism, the notion of worldview has been defined in a rather restricted manner as a belief or meaning system, as a coherent set of ideas about reality that tends to privilege the intellect and neglects the affective, volitional and embodied features of human nature. Some have also argued that the term “worldview” itself is at fault because it allegedly emphasizes the eyes as the faculty of sight. Worldview, therefore, is best understood in a metaphorical sense as the “lenses” through which people “view” the world.

Additionally, a highly stylized presentation of Christian truth can potentially distort its true nature and purpose. The Bible is, indeed, revelation about reality. But it is not, writes Peter Leithart “an ideological tract and does not teach and ideology. ... it is a radical distortion to think of Scripture’s teaching as [merely] an ‘ism.’”¹⁴

Are cognitively focused definitions of worldview the best way to define it? Might a lingering Cartesianism affect our understanding of the worldview concept? Furthermore, could an approach to a Christian worldview that only touches us at the rational level as an explicable and defensible system of ideas be one of the reasons why it lacks existential traction in our lives and remains a virtually unconsummated intellectual construct? Perhaps we need to rethink the definition of worldview.

Content of Worldview. The church, rooted in God’s revealed word, is supposed to be a counterculture, telling her own story and speaking her

¹⁴ Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), pp. 14, 15.

particular language. The problem, however, is that we don't know our own narrative or vocabulary very well any more. The church has lost her story and the ability to name and explain the world in light of the words given to her in Scripture. If we hear or proclaim the biblical story at all, we do so in the form of fragmented plotlessness in a religiously compartmentalized context with a primary concern for what is practical rather than what is true. Today, what we know and communicate are merely bits and pieces of truth from an amputated Bible in which the Old Testament has been severed from the New, and this within a sacred/secular dualistic framework in which measurable spiritual results are the chief desideratum.

This loss of narrative proficiency is matched by an equally pernicious linguistic destitution among Bible-believing Christians who should know better. As Robert Wilken points out in a *First Things* article titled "The Church's Way of Speaking," Christianity is not just a set of doctrines, creeds, or moral codes, but is rather "a world of discourse that comes to us in language of a particular sort."¹⁵ Anthropologists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf in their hypothesis have discovered that language is deeply bound up with a worldview and way of life. Wilken would agree and continues by saying, "... language ... is not simply an instrument for ideas, beliefs, and sentiments. Language defines who we are; it molds how a people think, how they see the world, how they respond to persons and events, even how they feel."¹⁶

Lately, however, this linguistic enrichment at the heart of a biblical worldview seems to have fallen on hard times. Not only do we Christians find it difficult to *walk the talk*, but we also struggle to *talk the walk* in terms of our Christian lexicon and patterns of speech.¹⁷ For various reasons, we are guilty of

¹⁵ Robert Louis Wilken, "The Church's Way of Speaking," *First Things* 155 (Aug-Sept, 2005), pp. 27-31. Also available at: <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0508/articles/wilken.html>. Accessed June 28, 2008.

¹⁶ Wilken, "The Church's Way of Speaking," pp. 27-31.

logocide, that is, of first to third degree murder of the Christian story and its enriching terms. As B. B. Warfield once lamented, “It is sad to witness the death of any worthy thing, — even of a worthy word. And worthy words do die, like any other worthy thing — if we do not take good care of them. ... The religious terrain is full of the graves of good words which have died from lack of care....”¹⁸ This is, indeed, a matter of grave concern, for as the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz once wrote, “What is pronounced strengthens itself,” and “What is not pronounced tends to non-existence.”¹⁹

Could it be, then, that another reason for an unconsummated Christian worldview lies in our narrative and linguistic impoverishment? Putting a Christian worldview into practice is virtually impossible if we are its ignorant and inarticulate spokespersons. Since there are a multitude of master stories and diverse vocabularies currently contradicting and competing with the gospel, there is a tremendous need to revisit the essential contours of the biblical story and to recover its life-giving, world defining terms. As Robert Webber asserted shortly before his death, the pressing question today is this: “who gets to narrate the world?”²⁰

Worldview Mistake 2: Orthopathy

To see a Christian worldview consummated liturgically in the spirit of Romans 12:1-2 requires that we redefine the notion of worldview itself and are more than conversant with the narrative content of Scripture and its enriching vocabulary. But right thinking about these matters is not enough. We have to attend to matters of the heart as well, for our worldview mistakes will not be rectified unless we consider the proper ordering of our loves and the role that a

¹⁷ Marva Dawn, *Talking the Walk: Letting Christian Language Live Again* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005). Robert Louis Wilken, “The Church’s Way of Speaking.”

¹⁸ B. B. Warfield, “Redeemer and Redemption,” in *The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Samuel Craig (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), p. 345.

¹⁹ Quoted in Wilken, “The Church’s Way of Speaking.”

²⁰ From the appendix “A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future” in Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative*, foreword John Witvliet (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), p. 180.

Christian worldview might play orthopathically. Both right thinking and right loving are essential to the fruitful application of a Christian vision of the world whether in personal life, the church, the academy, or culture at large.

Disordered love. If we read or re-read the story of creation in Genesis 1-2 carefully, we will discover that our original "state [was] made perfect by the aggregation [combination] of all good things"²¹ — spiritually, vocationally, socially, nutritionally, sabbatically, and habitationally. It seems obvious that God intended us to live fully in the overflow of indescribable blessing mediated through the many aspects of God's marvelous world in what could be well described, not as a *hedonistic*, but as an *edenistic* happiness that roots the fulfillment of human life in God and his creation. This delightful plan and purpose of God for us as His privileged people and for our privileged planet couldn't be better encapsulated than in the beautiful Hebrew word *shalom*.

Then the unthinkable happened. We sinned and threw it all away. Life and the world are no longer the way they are supposed to be. *Shalom* has been vandalized. The peace has been drastically disturbed.²²

Though modern assumptions lead us to brush this early Genesis narrative aside as an inconsequential myth, we must take its message seriously. As Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft of Boston College states, "What happened in Eden may be hard to understand, but it makes everything else understandable."²³ What this story helps us to understand is our devastating brokenness, including our desperate unhappiness, and why we now are trying so very hard to get it back. As St. Augustine rightly points out, by sinning we lost

²¹ Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* 4.2, quoted in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, rev. Daniel J. Sullivan, *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, vol. 19 (Chicago: William Benton, Publisher, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), p. 150 (§1.1.Q26).

²² Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), chapter 1.

²³ Peter J. Kreeft, "C. S. Lewis's Argument from Desire," in *G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis: The Riddle of Joy*, ed. Michael H. Macdonald and Andrew A. Tadie, foreword Janet Blumberg Knedlik (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 260.

happiness, but we did not lose our love or our longing for happiness.²⁴ Now we deeply brokenhearted ones resolve, even more intensely, to find enduring delights and consolations that make our lives bearable, if not enjoyable, once again. As one bumper sticker puts it, we are all *In Search of the Eternal Buzz*.

This is exactly where our disordered loves come in. In our ignorance and deception fostered by our own sin and the false messages of our culture, we attach our loves, affections and desires to people, places or things hoping that through them we will finally find the happiness and fulfillment we have been searching for all our lives.

Think here of Gollum in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Though he was actually a Hobbit, his inordinate love for the one ring and the power it afforded changed him from an enviable Hobbithood into the ugly, despicable, miserable creature he became. "Precious, precious, precious!" Gollum cried. "My Precious! O my Precious!"²⁵

Indeed, Gollum's 'R' us! How easy it is for a person, place or thing simply to become too "precious" to us, especially when we leave God out of the picture. Independently of him, we fail to grasp the *nature* of the objects we love and what they can do for us; we fail to recognize the inordinate *manner* in which we love the things we love; we miscalculate what we should *expect* regarding the outcomes of our love and the things we love. Consequently, we love things *unintelligently, excessively, and unrealistically*, that is, in the manner of disordered love.

Disordered Lives. It's no wonder, then, that we ourselves and our lives are in such a mess! For as we love in our hearts, so are we! We reap what we love, especially in our pursuit of happiness. As Augustine put it, "Such is each one as is his love."²⁶ In other words, since love is the motive force in life, disordered love breeds disordered lives in an unmistakable cause/effect relationship.

²⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*, 22. 30.

²⁵ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), p. 925.

Precisely how does disordered love disorder our lives? It's pretty clear that idolatry, the seven deadly sins, habits and addictions, and even crime, violence, and warfare are the chief culprits.

In idolatry, we love, worship, and serve some aspect of the creation independently of the creator, since we human beings cannot *not* worship! As the French thinker Pascal put it, "He [God] only is our true good, and since we have forsaken him, ... there is nothing in nature [creation] which has not be serviceable in taking His place...."²⁷ In terms of the seven deadly sins, pride, envy, and anger all manifest a disordered love for ourselves; sloth is rooted in a deficient love for God; avarice or greed, gluttony and lust are respective expressions of disordered love for money, food and sex. If these are the things we are pursuing and they fail to satisfy us (and they will fail), then we will continue at them harder and harder, full-throttle, often to the point of excessive, unhealthy dependence. Hence, arise our bad habits and deadly addictions, as we seek to extract from them the fulfillment we are seeking but which they are incapable of providing. We will resort to crime and violence, and even warfare if we can wage it, if this is what we think it takes to get what we want. Disordered love, then, explains the disorder in our lives as well as the tragic nature of human history, all motivated by the need to satisfy the cavernous hungers of our hearts.

Could it be, then, that another reason for an unconsummated Christian worldview is because our ordinary ways of teaching and preaching a biblical worldview fails to address adequately the matter of the heart and the order of our loves? Putting a Christian worldview into practice is virtually impossible if our loves remain disordered and we fail to learn how to love and care as we should! Since there are so many delectable things, siren songs, if you will, contending for the attention and affections of our hearts, there is a huge need to remember that

²⁶ St. Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, trans. H. Browne, revised and edited Joseph H. Myers, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), p. 475 (Homily 2).

²⁷ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. W. F. Trotter, *Great Books of the Western World*, ed., Robert Maynard Hutchins, vol. 33 (Chicago: William Benton, Publisher, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1952), p. 244 (#425).

the goal of Christian instruction and of instruction in a Christian worldview, is love! (1 Timothy 1: 5). Technically speaking, the goal of worldview teaching should be the reordering of our loves and our lives in accordance with two greatest commandments of the Christian vision itself, its very summation. For what we love and care about (and why and how) determines who we are and what we do; our deepest desires delineate the essential differences between people and their respective courses in life.

As Milan Kundera states in his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, “Insofar as it is possible to divide people into categories, the surest criterion is the deep-seated desires that orient them to one or another lifelong activity.”²⁸ Or in St. Augustine’s perceptive terms, “For when there is a question as to whether a man is good, one does not ask what he believes, or what he hopes, but what he loves.”²⁹

The Worldview Mistake 3: Orthopraxy

To see a Christian worldview consummated liturgically in the spirit of Romans 12:1-2 requires that we not only give fresh attention to the definition of worldview and the content of the Christian story, but also we must address matters of the heart and the order of our loves. Both right thinking and right loving are essential to the fruitful application of a Christian vision of the world.

However, orthodoxy and orthopathy are still not enough. We must also attend to orthopraxy, especially by recognizing and critiquing the atomic power of contemporary culture in shaping human behavior practically. Our worldview mistakes will not be corrected unless we carefully consider the threat of the cultural captivity of the church — its potential or actual “babylonization” — on the faithful embodiment of a Christian worldview.

²⁸ Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1991), p. 193; quoted in Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, p. 25.

²⁹ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. J. B. Shaw, intro. Thomas Hibbs (1996), appraisal Adolph von Harnack (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1961), p. 135 (§117).

The rather addlebrained life of the protagonist in Tom Wolfe's 2004 novel *I Am Charlotte Simmons* illustrates with extraordinary realism how people, students in particular, can be captivated worldviewishly and capsized morally by the nefarious influences of the surrounding culture.³⁰

In Wolfe's narrative, Charlotte is a young woman of some Christian persuasion and the extremely bright valedictorian of her high school class. She is accepted to "Dupont University" — one of the most prestigious in the country (Duke University, I am told, was the model). Hailing from the bucolic town of Sparta in the western hills of North Carolina, Charlotte is as naïve, proud, countrified, and virginal as she is brilliant. At Dupont, however, Charlotte is thoroughly corrupted intellectually and sexually within the first two or three months of her collegiate experience through the astounding paganism of the university's culture which Tom Wolfe describes with amazing skill and insight. One of the major change's Charlotte undergoes is in the area of her worldview and in her subsequent way of life.

Mesmerized as she is by Nobel prize-winning neuroscience Professor Victor Starling, her essential perception of things is changed profoundly during a class lecture in which Prof. Starling explains the nature of the human mind in thoroughly materialistic terms. Over-against the relatively thin versions of materialism in Marxism and Freudianism, Starling states, "Neuroscience says to us, 'You want materialism? We'll show you the real thing, [in] the material of your own brains and central nervous systems, [in] the autonomous circuits that operate outside of what you conceive of as 'consciousness,' [in] the behavioral responses you couldn't change even if you trained for a lifetime....'" In hearing these words, Charlotte underwent a metaphysical metamorphosis at the heart and core of her being. Here is how Wolfe describes her essential conversion:

— Charlotte was transported. ...

In that moment, in the theatrical darkness [of the lecture hall], as the sublime figure [of the professor] down on stage moved in an

³⁰ Tom Wolfe, *I Am Charlotte Simmons* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2004).

electrifying succession of planes of chiaroscuro whose light, plus the light of the screen radiant with the image of the man who revolutionized the way the human animal sees herself, cast a glow upon the very crest of the heads of all the students ... Charlotte experienced a *kairos*, an ecstatic revelation of something too vast, too all-enveloping, too profound to be contained by mere words, and the rest of the world ... fell away.³¹

These words describe the profound nature of the shift in Charlotte's perspective on life. As the novel continues, readers can't help but imagine how this change in her fundamental outlook was largely responsible for Charlotte's later moral, and, in particular, sexual collapse.

Though Tom Wolfe's *I am Charlotte Simmons* is fiction, kind of, this story illustrates that the enormous capacity of a surrounding culture to conform us to its image, Christians included. As the old saying goes, however, believers are supposed to be *in* the world, but not *of* it; instead these days, many are actually *of* it, but not really *in* it! Insofar, then, as the profane socio-cultural order that surrounds us is able to squeeze us into its own mold, a Christian worldview, especially if already hamstrung by serious orthodoxic and orthopathic maladies, is sure to be short-circuited in its behavioral influence and will remain unconsummated liturgically. Other worldviews and ways of life have gotten the upper hand.

Currently, a few of the most prevalent worldviews with personal, social and cultural traction (at least in North America) include various expressions of contemporary neo-paganism, moralistic therapeutic deism, a resurging militant atheism or naturalism, and, in general, to use Charles Taylor's terms, the social and cosmic imaginary of our secular age.³² The thought and life-shaping power

³¹ Wolfe, *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, p. 393-94.

³² Former Westminster Seminary professor Peter Jones is calling our attention to contemporary neo-paganism and its worship of sex, the earth, science, technology, money, the body, animals, spirits, etc., through his organization Christian Witness to a Pagan Planet and by means of his many books on this relevant topic. Information is available at: <http://www.cwipp.org/>. Accessed June 28, 2008.

Contemporary neo-paganism is a form of new age spirituality that involves polytheism, divinization, magic, witchcraft, astrology, and animism in its *occultic* expression; the advocacy

of these competing outlooks present no small obstacles to Christian worldview embodiment.

Additionally, perennial and contemporary forms of worldliness — best understood as woefully disordered, idolatrous love for essentially good things — just add fuel to the fire. Perennially, *sensual obsessions* for sex, food and fashion, or the lust of the flesh, *materialistic obsessions* for money, wealth and possessions, or the lust of the eyes, and *egoistic obsessions* for achievement, prestige and power, or the boastful pride of life, are the ephemeral objects of self-

and experiences associated with the sexual, gender and marital revolutions in its *erotic* form; a concern for deep ecology and the embrace of the divinity/sanctity of mother earth, animal rights, nature/seasons and their cycles in its *ecologic* version; obsession with the development and experiences associated with electronic devices, computers, artificial intelligence and video games in its *technological* aspects; a robust commitment to reshaping human nature and other living things through genetic manipulation in its *biologic* expression; and finally, a combination of some or all of the above in its *eclectic* version.

Christian Smith and Melinda Denton have called attention to “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” as the prominent outlook among American teenagers in their book, *Soul-Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford, 2005). See also the accompanying DVD based on the book, *Soul-Searching: A Movie About Teenagers and God*, Revelation Studios, featuring music by Switchfoot and Third Day, 2007.

In Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, a God exists who created the world, and watches over it from a distance; God isn't involved in one's life except when an emergency arises, as if he were a cosmic butler (Deism); God wants people to be good, nice, fair as taught in the Bible and most world religions; Good people go to heaven when they die (Moralistic); Life's goal is to be happy, feel good about oneself, enjoying the pleasurable aspects of life and to flee from pain and inconvenience (Therapeutic).

On the recent resurgence of militant atheism and naturalism, see Victor J. Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007; reprint 2008); Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Viking/Penguin, 2006); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2006); Christopher Hitchens, *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve Books, Hachette Book Group, 2007); Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Random House, 2006). This recent revival of aggressive atheism and naturalism respectively asserts there is no god, goddess, angels, demons or spirits of any-kind, anywhere, and that nothing exists except a physical cosmos. The failure of the secularization thesis (that as secularism rises, religion declines) has perhaps spawned this recent movement with its core assertions that science has proven that God does not exist, that religion, like everything else, is a purely natural phenomenon and its superstitious beliefs are a social nemesis and personal poison.

On the history and nature of the current secular age, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). As Taylor points out, in a secular age, public spaces have been emptied of the divine and there has been an overall decrease in religious belief and practice. The result is that “the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual and religious experience and search takes place” has moved from a setting “where belief in God is unchallenged ... to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace” (p. 3).

satisfaction and self-exaltation that thwart communion with God and undermine his purposes for Christian people. “You adulteresses,” reads James 4: 4, “do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (cf. 1 John 2: 16).

In addition to these perpetual powers that stain our lives, some current social attitudes constitute additional obstacles to the successful inculcation of a Christian worldview. Among others, these include consumerist attitudes for more, more, more; narcissistic preoccupations with me, me, me; therapeutic desires for help, help, help; nationalistic concerns about us, us, us; and individualistic aspirations for autonomy, autonomy, and more autonomy.

These working assumptions are already *in us* and are the mindsets we bring *with us* to the sanctuary or classroom or any other context in which we are challenged to learn about and apply a Christian view of life. We arrive at these ecclesiastical and/or instructional settings pretty much fully formed, not in the image of Jesus, but in the image of our surrounding culture. As Debra Dean Murphy states, “Yet we always bring with us into worship [or to school] fluency in other tongues, familiarity with the languages of other powers and discourses that would name and claim us.”³³ By default, we all undergo, as Murphy observes, a broader cultural socialization that is so deep that we almost always take it for granted, and rarely if ever reflect on it or much less criticize it.

Michel Foucault’s concepts of governmentality and government may help us to understand how such socialization takes place in mostly surreptitious ways.³⁴ In using these words, Foucault is focusing on the guidance and direction

³³ Debra Dean Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 119.

³⁴ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” *Ideology and Consciousness* 6 (Fall 1979), pp. 5-22. See also “Governmentality,” trans. Rosi Braidotti, revised Colin Gordon, in Graham Burchell,

Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, eds. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 87-104.

of human conduct on the basis of an intellectual ideal. He established his theories on the etymological meaning of the word “govern” which comes from Latin and Greek roots that originally meant “to steer.”³⁵ In coining these terms, Foucault was concerned, not with “the” government, politically speaking, but with the *government* (i.e., steering) of human action, behaviorally speaking, and with the *governmentality*, intellectually speaking, that determines it. In short, we are governed, in the conduct of our conduct, by reigning governmentalities.

Of course, Foucault’s notions of governmentality and government are closely related to his idea that “power is knowledge.” If in today’s world, those who’ve got the gold, make the rules, then in Foucault’s Marxist and Nietzschean mind, those who’ve got the power, make the knowledge, as his book *Discipline and Punish* attempts to demonstrate.³⁶ So-called “knowledge” as actual reifications (to conflate or confuse humanly created concepts for concrete reality) masks actual power for the sake of the powerful who are able to establish a disciplinary society through the imposition of various regimes of practices or prescribed rituals of behavior by which we regularly live in the everyday world, especially in institutional contexts.³⁷ A disciplinary society, in other words, seeks to teach and train us to think and live as it dictates. Thus, according to Foucault, we are all in prison, metaphorically speaking, subjected to massive technologies of subjugation and control ... yet without our knowing it, thanks to our gullibility and general thoughtlessness. Some justified suspicion may just be in order!

³⁵ Govern comes from L. *gubernare* "to direct, rule, guide," originally "to steer," from Gk. *kybernan* "to steer or pilot a ship, direct." <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=govern&searchmode=none>. Accessed January 29, 2008.

³⁶ Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (French original, 1975, reprint, New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1977).

³⁷ Mitchell Dean defines the Foucauldian notion of “Regimes of Practices” as “the more or less organized ways, at any given time and place, we think about, reform and practice such things as caring, administering, counseling, curing, punishing, educating, and so on. See his *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Dehli: Sage Publications, 1999, reprint 2006), p. 21.

This moral cultural control of our lives is exacerbated exponentially when we consider the particular role that *popular* culture plays in shaping the thoughts, loves and lifestyles of countless millions of people. Since culture catechizes and conditions as its essential purpose, I have likened contemporary popular culture to an educational institution comprised of a faculty of celebrities who impart a corrupting curriculum to a student population which is graded by a system of peer assessment of social acceptance or rejection, all fueled by the bottom line of advertising! In my humble opinion, the so-called academy or university of popular culture just may be more influential than home, church or school combined in shaping our lives with the galvanizing stories it tells, the deep loves it imparts, and the ingrained ways of life it fosters.

Eighteenth century British poet William Cowper wrote in his poem *Tirocinium*, "*Pedantry is all that schools impart, but taverns teach the knowledge of the heart*. To rephrase his couplet just a bit, in our day and age, perhaps we should say, "*Pedantry is still all that the schools impart, but contemporary popular culture teaches the knowledge of the heart*."³⁸

Could it be, then, that the ungodly assumptions of our surrounding culture that we have consciously, subconsciously, or unconsciously imbibed are responsible for an unconsummated Christian worldview in the spirit of Romans 12:1-2? Because their influence is largely invisible to us, being in the air we breath, with a deaf ear and blind eye we tend overlook the matter of the cultural captivity of the church, including us! Putting a Christian worldview into practice is seriously jeopardized if we fail to name and comment on the overt and covert ways by which our societies control our minds and our behaviors. Our conduct is conducted by the governmentalities that govern ("steer") us. We live in disciplinary societies with regimes of practices and rituals of formation that have shaped the habits of our minds, hearts and bodies.

³⁸ William Cowper, *Tirocinium: or A Review of Schools*, in *Cowper: Poetical Works*, ed. H. S. Milford, 4th ed., corrections and additions Norma Russell (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 247 (lines 212-13).

Since there are so many anti-Christian forces that play upon us, sometimes with our permission, often without our awareness, there is a colossal need to recognize clearly the cost of conformity, the need for resistance, the conflict that's raging, and the stakes of the battle. As Jon Foreman and the band Switchfoot sing in their song "Dare You To Move,

Welcome to the fallout,
Welcome to resistance,
The tension is here,
The tension is here,
Between who you are and who you could be,
Between how it is and how it should be....³⁹

Until we are a little more proficient at doing some effective cultural criticism — *of helping Christians move from the thoughtless consumption of contemporary culture to a vantage point of thoughtful engagement* in order to offset the power of the spirit of our times in shaping who we are and how we live, the likelihood of successfully implementing a Christian worldview in daily life will be significantly diminished.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The good news is there will be baseball in heaven! But the bad news is you're pitching day after tomorrow! Well, when it comes to mega-churches, there's some bad news as well, the mega-church mistake. When it comes to worldview, there's also some bad news, the worldview mistake, especially in the realms of our orthodoxy, our orthopathy and our orthopraxy. Intellectually, we come up short in the way we define worldview and are limited in our grasp of the narrative content of a Christian worldview. Affectively, we fail to give adequate attention to the crucial issue of our deepest affections and desires and the order of our loves (*ordo amoris*). Volitionally, we also underestimate the wonder-

³⁹ Jon Foreman and Switchfoot, "Dare You To Move," from the CD *A Beautiful Letdown*, Columbia/Sony 2003.

⁴⁰ The phrase in italics is essentially the mission statement of Mars Hill Audio. <http://www.marshillaudio.org/about/aboutmha.asp>. Accessed July 9, 2008.

working power of the governmentalities and the government of the surrounding culture in their impact on our assumptions and actions.

All these things impede the application of a Christian view of the world in our lives, in our scholarship, in the academy, and in the world. Perhaps we need to wipe the slate clean, rethink all our assumptions, and enact a paradigm shift? Certainly we need some good news, and that I will try to deliver on Saturday morning, Lord willing. Thank you.