

Understanding the Times: A Causal/Comparative Study of the Effectiveness of a Christian
Worldview Curriculum in Helping Students Develop a Christian Worldview

by

Donald Kevin Barrows

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES: A CAUSAL/COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW CURRICULUM IN HELPING STUDENTS DEVELOP A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW.

Christian educators are concerned about the development of a Christian worldview in their students. They also desire that their students maintain that worldview after graduation. In this study, the author attempts to determine the effectiveness of the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview curriculum in helping students develop a Christian worldview. To do this, a causal/comparative research design was used as participants took a worldview test to determine the extent to which their worldviews compared with biblical teachings. The researcher sampled a random sample of Christian high school graduates who have taken the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course at various Christian high schools throughout the United States and a random sample of Christian high school graduates throughout the United States who have not taken the course.

The responses of participants to questions in various areas of a worldview such as naturalism, religious relativism, moral relativism, the infallibility of the Bible, and the divinity of Jesus Christ were analyzed. Respondents who had taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course while in high school were not revealed to be consistently more strongly committed to biblical teachings and doctrine in these specific areas than were those who had not taken the course.

Descriptors: Christian worldview, secular humanism, socialism, atheism, *Understanding the Times*

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List of Abbreviations

Understanding the Times (UTT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

The concept of the Christian worldview has gained popularity in recent years, largely as a response to what has been called by many historians and sociologists the age of fundamentalism. During this time, roughly the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Christians largely segregated themselves from the culture and from much scientific and philosophical learning (Pearcey, 2004). As a response to this separation and isolation, many Christians have come to see the importance of reuniting their faith with learning in all areas of life. This is especially important for Christians who work in academia, as they have seen their disciplines taken over by a secular philosophy and approach (Colson & Pearcey, 1999). Since what is learned in school can be foundational for all of life, the issue of how a person sees the world and his place in it can be vitally important. How this concept of worldview affects a student's learning and intellectual development is an important topic of study for all students of faith (Cargas, Rowland, Stavrakopoulou, & Wyatt, 2008). Indeed, it can affect students across virtually every area of academic study (Larocque & Mvududu, 2008). Recent studies in the integration of faith and learning have shown the foundational importance of faith and learning and have shown that how effectively the re-establishment of the two is done will be vital to developing in students a strong and lasting Christian worldview (Toth, 2009).

Although Catholic schools emerged in the 1800s in response to a perceived need to respond to isolation and outright attacks on their faith after the establishment of public schools, Protestant Christians did not seem to see such a need to establish their own schools or school systems (Lawrence, 2007). This situation, however, changed rather quickly after World War II,

as many Protestants began to sense a pervading secularism within the public schools and, as a result, began to establish private Christian-based schools of their own (Lawrence, 2007).

Much of the Protestant Christian school movement tended to focus on a separate-but-equal type of approach to the curriculum with Bible classes, chapels, and Scripture-based ideas or principles added to the lesson (Heie, 2008). After several decades of this kind of an approach to Christian education, however, there arose a need among many Christian educators to take a more serious look at how a biblical Christian faith applies to every area of the curriculum. In response to this perceived need, the Christian worldview movement began in earnest among Christian schools, particularly during the 1990s (Colson & Pearcey, 1999). Among the efforts to inculcate a biblical Christian worldview in students in Christian schools has been Summit Ministries, with its *Understanding the Times* curriculum that has been implemented in hundreds of schools across the United States and in many other countries.

Definitions

Christian worldview: The philosophy or belief that every area of life is under the domain of God and that the Bible is the foundational source that determines a person's approach to questions of practice and meaning in the various areas of his life (Colson & Pearcey, 1999).

Faith: The belief in a supreme deity that created and sustains the universe.

Christian schools: Private schools that profess belief in Jesus Christ as the means of salvation for mankind and that usually adhere to a belief in the inherency of Scripture.

Problem Statement

Christian worldview is a term that has come into common usage among Christian educators. It is believed by many that a Christian education should be more than Bible classes or chapel sessions added to an otherwise secular curriculum; rather, it should entail a fundamentally

different way of viewing every area of study within a student's learning. A Christian worldview entails a belief in God as the ultimate source of all truth and a commitment to pursuing truth from that perspective. The problem many students of such a commitment face is that they may question and ultimately come to reject their Christian worldview when they are exposed to other perspectives of truth in college or later in their lives. If this occurs, it would obviously call into question the effectiveness of the Christian worldview training the students had received.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to help Christian educators determine the effectiveness of the *Understanding the Times* curriculum in helping students to think from a Christian worldview. The effectiveness of the training will be measured by the extent to which participants in the study maintain beliefs consistent with a Christian worldview within five years of graduation from a Christian high school. Armed with this knowledge, Christian educators can better understand what makes for the effective development of a Christian worldview, one that will withstand exposure to and possible indoctrination in opposing worldviews. With this understanding, they will be better able to make necessary changes in the curriculum and instruction of the Christian worldview, changes that may result in a stronger and more resilient view of absolute truth in their students as they go off to college and beyond.

Significance of the Study

This study will add to the knowledge and understanding of educators, teachers, and administrators of the effectiveness of the preparation their students are receiving in the area of their worldviews. With the rise of Christian worldview education and the importance that Christian educators place upon it, this study takes on special importance. Christians are increasingly alarmed by statistics that show the majority of Christian students walking away

from their faith during their college years or later (Barna, 2009). It appears that most Christian college students are not receiving training and education in the faith that helps them to build an overall knowledge and understanding of the world that is strong enough to withstand a secular onslaught from professors and peers with whom they come in contact (Hirji, 2006).

This problem is of special concern to educators and others whose responsibility it is to help Christian youth grow and develop their faith in Christ and an understanding of how it is the foundation and key to every area of life. Leaders in both churches and Christian schools will find this study to be of importance as it will reveal vital information that will help them to understand what is working and what is not working in their attempts to instill a solid Christian view of truth, life, and every aspect within it.

The study will be of even more specific relevance to teachers and administrators of the schools involved in the study and to Summit Ministries, the creators of the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview curriculum that is the focus of outcomes of the study. The stakeholders in these organizations will benefit from the knowledge and understanding they will gain from the results and analysis of the study. This knowledge and understanding will help them to know what to keep in the curriculum and instruction of the program, what to exclude, and what to change in order to make it more effective for students in the future. The study could also contribute substantially to other schools and churches that use the Summit Ministries curriculum and even to those who do not use it at all. The knowledge and understanding gained from the study can also be beneficial to anyone who is seeking to understand how his Christian faith applies to every area of life and how there is no area of learning or of life outside of God's domain (Colson & Pearcey, 1999). In addition, it can help all Christians to learn to take every thought captive and make it obedient unto Christ, as commanded in 2 Corinthians 10:5.

Research Question

The research question this study attempts to answer is as follows:

Research Question: What effect does the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course have on the worldviews of Christian high school graduates who have taken the course as compared to Christian high school graduates who have not taken the course as measured by a biblical Christian worldview test?

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses within this study are as follows:

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of scientific naturalism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 1,9,15, and 34 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of moral relativism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 5, 13, 16, 21, 24, 26, and 29 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho3: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of religious relativism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 8, 11, 12, 20, 43, and 45 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho4: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of biblical infallibility on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 6, 14, 18, 30, 31, and 48 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho5: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of the divinity of Jesus Christ on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 10 and 19 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho6: There is no statistically significant difference between the overall scores on a biblical Christian worldview test of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Identification of Variables

It is important in a study like this, or for any study, to have a good understanding of exactly what is being studied and how it is being measured. For the purposes of this study, there are two independent variables and two dependent variables. One independent variable is the Christian high school graduates who have studied the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview curriculum at a Christian high school, typically during their senior years. The second independent variable is the Christian high school graduates who have not studied the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview curriculum. One dependent variable is the scores that the Christian high school graduates who have taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian

worldview course receive on the worldview test. Another identifiable dependent variable is the scores that Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* worldview course receive on the worldview test.

The term *Christian worldview* has been defined as the propensity to see every area of life as under the domain of God (Pearcey, 2004). This ability is the primary focus of this study.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

There are, as in any study, a number of assumptions the researcher makes about the study and certain aspects pertaining to it. One such assumption is in reference to the sampling frame. Participants in the study are selected based on either their participation or lack of participation in a yearlong course of study that uses the curriculum of Summit Ministries and on the fact that they are graduates of Christian high schools. While no direct correlation is implied to other students who have studied the curriculum in similar ways and under similar circumstances at other times and places, there is a general assumption present that the participants may be considered to be fairly representative of them. Also the researcher assumes that the participants of the study either have somewhat of a Christian view of the world or are interested in learning about such a view. The reason for this assumption is that the students were enrolled in a worldview course either by school requirement, by student or parental choice, or by the fact that they are graduates of a Christian high school.

Limitations

There are some weaknesses inherent within the study. The design of the study limits its effectiveness in that it is not a random study. Some of the participants were essentially required to take the course (those who took the Christian worldview course at the Christian schools

selected for the study), and the others may have wished that they had the opportunity to take the course. In either case, bias could be present within the participants and, therefore, their responses. As in any test or survey, the participants may be motivated positively or negatively, and this may affect their responses. In this case, they may want to show that they maintain a biblical view of the world or that they do not. Their motivations and experiences cannot be controlled in this study.

In addition, the personal experiences of the participants can vary greatly from person-to-person within the study. For instance, the background and experiences of each participant prior to taking the Christian worldview course cannot be controlled or accounted for, and this will affect his score on the test. In the same manner, the experiences of the participants in between the time they were in high school and the time they took the worldview test cannot be accounted for or controlled. Whether they went to college and, if so, whether it was a Christian college, the people they interacted with, and their general experiences will vary greatly and can be assumed to affect their responses on the worldview test. Also, the test itself is subject to limitations, as it cannot possibly accurately measure every aspect of the way a person sees the entire world. Additionally, the exact definition of what is a biblical view of each area tested is often subject to interpretation, as is much of the Bible itself. In areas where the Bible is ambiguous or less than clear, the creators of the various worldview tests have necessarily taken some liberties in their interpretations and declarations of what is a proper biblical view. These limitations must be considered threats to both the internal and external validity of the study and should be taken into consideration before drawing conclusions about its results. The reliability of the worldview test is also questionable as it has not been used before in its entirety, and the sources from which it is drawn have not been scientifically verified in terms of their reliability.

Research Plan

This study is quantitative in nature and will employ a causal/comparative research design. This is an appropriate design for the research because it will be non-experimental in nature and will attempt to determine possible cause-and-effect relationships among groups of participants in whom the independent variable is present and then comparing the dependent variables (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Participants in the study will take the worldview analysis test, and the scores of those who graduated from a Christian high school and took the *Understanding the Times* course as part of their curriculum will be compared to the scores of Christian high school graduates who did not take the course. The causal/comparative research design is appropriate for this study as it is an attempt to discover how effective a curriculum is in affecting the worldview of students and how lasting are its effects.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following section, the literature concerning the development and maintenance of a Christian worldview and how it relates to academic study will be explained and illustrated. The purpose of this study is to determine how effective a particular Christian worldview curriculum is in developing in students a lasting Christian worldview. Therefore, a causal/comparative research design will be used for the study. The research will attempt to determine the extent to which students who study under the Summit Ministries Christian worldview curriculum develop and maintain a Christian worldview.

In recent years, there has been much talk and concern among Christians that Christian students either don't have a comprehensive Christian worldview or that they tend to abandon it and adopt other worldviews, especially during the college years (Uecker, 2007). While it is often assumed that students abandon their Christian faith during these years due to the secular indoctrination they receive from their teachers and studies, Uecker (2007) speculates that this may not be the case.

The assumption that the religious involvement of young people diminishes when they attend college is, of course, true: Sixty-four percent of those currently enrolled in a traditional four-year institution have curbed their attendance habits. Yet, 76% of those who *never enrolled* in college report a decline in religious service attendance. (p. 2)

This raises questions about the common assumptions relating to the causes of waning religious belief among young people, but it does not call into question the role that the presence of a biblical Christian worldview, or the lack of one, might play in this phenomenon.

In addition to the issue of college students rejecting their Christian faith and how it relates to a commitment to a Christian worldview, there is the question of who holds a Christian

worldview and what a Christian worldview is in the first place. In a 2009 study, the Barna group examined changes in the worldviews of Christians over the previous 13 years. They categorized the worldviews of respondents in their survey as follows:

For the purposes of the survey, a “biblical worldview” was defined as believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn his way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today. In the research, anyone who held all of those beliefs was said to have a biblical worldview. (Barna, 2009, para. 3)

In an attempt to determine the prevalence of a biblical worldview among Americans, the Barna study revealed that only 9% of all American adults possessed a biblical worldview. Furthermore, the study revealed that only 19% of those who defined themselves as born-again Christians possessed a biblical worldview (Barna, 2009, para. 4). With even those who claim to be born-again Christians reporting such a lack of commitment to a biblical Christian worldview, it is becoming increasingly apparent that much more research needs to be done to try to determine how the situation can be addressed.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

Christian Worldview Theory

The concept of a worldview can be defined as simply how a person sees the world and his place in it. A Christian worldview is a specific way of seeing the world and the way mankind fits into it that is founded upon and consistent with the Christian faith (Newman, 1852). This necessarily affects the way a person sees the various academic disciplines and the meaning he

constructs from studying them (Larocque & Mvududu, 2008). The Christian worldview asserts that every area of life and learning springs from the truth of God.

The concept that a person's Christian faith can and should affect the way he views every area of life and the way he lives each area of his life is not a new concept. In fact, it could be argued that the idea of a Christian worldview has been around for as long as has the Christian faith itself. Historically, however, there have been many theologians who have espoused the concept and encouraged believers to apply their faith to both their learning and their lives. Among these are well-known Christian leaders like Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and John Wesley. Additionally, there are countless other lesser-known Christian theologians, philosophers, pastors, and teachers who have encouraged believers to develop a Christian way, in some form or another, of viewing the entire world and of living within it.

More recently, numerous Christian thinkers have established themselves as leaders within the Christian worldview movement. In the last few decades, Francis Shaeffer sparked new interest in the idea of comprehensive worldview development (Nazworth, 2008). Continuing the work that Shaeffer began, Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey have popularized the concept of a biblical Christian worldview and brought it into the new millennium with their follow-up work to Shaeffer, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Colson & Pearcey, 1999).

While each of these Christian leaders has sought to encourage believers in the Christian faith and to apply it to how they view and live every area of their lives, none of them focused specifically on education. Questions regarding how a comprehensive and distinctly Christian view of every area of human life might affect, and be affected by, the teaching and learning process are now, finally, being addressed. A prominent leader in this field has been David Noebel with his organization Summit Ministries (Human Events, 1995). Since 1962, Summit

Ministries has sought to educate Christian students in the various ways their faith informs, or should inform, their academic studies. Summit conducts academic seminars for high school and college students in subjects including economics, biology, law, and philosophy—with Christian intellectual underpinnings. In addition to these seminars, Summit Ministries offers a yearlong academic course of study that breaks down the study of the Christian worldview into 10 academic disciplines as it attempts to help students learn how their faith and the faith of others affects every area of life.

This literature review will focus on the various ways Christian educators have approached the idea of worldview development in their students and on the numerous studies that have been done in an attempt to determine in what ways and to what extent a Christian worldview approach to both teaching and learning affects both the teacher and the student. In so doing, the researcher has also addressed the primary opposing worldview of the American educational establishment, often referred to as secularism. The difference between these two opposing and often contradicting approaches to education will be explored, and the foundational ideas and the effects they have on both teachers and students will be examined.

Review of the Literature

Christian Worldview

Since the concept of the Christian worldview is a relatively recent development in Christian education, there is great deal of research that needs to be done in determining how it can be developed effectively.

There has been research of moral philosophy and how it affects students' views of how to approach their studies and future professions (Caswell & Gould, 2008). Many studies have also been done on long-term learning and how it might affect and be measured by results of students'

achievement tests (Kane-Johnson, Salinas, & Vasi-Miller, 2008). However, the impact of education and training in the development of the Christian worldview is greatly lacking.

There has been, however, a considerable amount of attention paid in recent years to the study of how a person's faith may affect his views and approaches to the study of particular academic areas. These studies, while not necessarily comprehensive or in-depth, reflect this recent interest in the interplay between the Christian worldview and academia. The breadth of the subjects that have been a focus of these studies reflects how far-reaching this interest has been. These studies have focused not only on areas such as philosophy and ethics, but also on science and mathematics.

The primary purpose of this literature review is to examine recent research in the area of the development and maintenance of the Christian worldview among those who describe themselves as Christians. In an attempt to understand the background of research that has been done in the integration of faith and learning in the classroom, the review of the literature will be subdivided into the following categories: theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, history, teaching, and a closing section on educators and the Christian worldview in general. This review of the literature utilizes these topics because they are the same ones used by the *Understanding the Times* curriculum.

Theology

The basis for the idea of a Christian view of the world is certainly found in the discipline of theology. One's view of how the universe came to be and man's place in it has a profound effect on every area of life, indeed it is foundational to them. A key principle within the Christian worldview is that a person's faith should not be viewed as separate from other areas of his life but that all of life is seen as one cohesive whole. This principle is the foundation of the maxim,

“All truth is God’s truth.” In accordance with this idea, theologians have attempted to bring the light of faith in God to bear in all areas of life, both recently and throughout history.

One of the most influential theologians in the early church was Saint Augustine. He, perhaps more clearly than any other, showed the vital and inseparable link between theology and philosophy by struggling with questions of the relationship between man and God, of faith and reason (Farred, 2010). A simple illustration of the profound interaction between God and man can be found in Augustine’s *Confessions* when he was moved to say, “In fact, I cannot grasp all that I am. Thus the mind is not large enough to contain itself” (p. 197). Augustine is also seen by some to be a precursor of modernity in that he was ahead of his time in helping people see their need for the deep truths of philosophy and theology (Farred, 2010).

Another important theologian who showed the interplay between philosophy and theology and who continues to have a large impact today is Descartes. One of his major contributions was in the area of the mind/body distinction, in which he illustrated that the two are separate aspects of the person and that it is essential that they be treated as such (Yaldir, 2009). This idea is foundational to Christian theology and life and has particular influence on the concepts of understanding, imagination, and creativity (Yaldir, 2009).

A new generation of scholars is currently engaged in studies of more recent theologians as well, as they attempt to bring new insights and interpretations to the thought of theologians like Karl Rahner (Masson, 2010). Current students of theology often attempt to study theologians of the past, but what may be more important are the various ways in which theological ideas are being applied to many different areas of life and to the development of the Christian worldview in particular. One such way is the interesting study of emergence.

According to McCall (2010), “Emergence is the view that novel and unpredictable occurrences are naturally produced in nature and that said novel structures, organs, and organisms are not reducible to their component parts” (p. 150). This idea suggests a way in which theists are able to give divine agency a part in the creation and development of matter while remaining consistent with the scientific study of natural history (McCall, 2010). Emergence represents an exciting new opportunity to give explanatory power to a creative and sustaining God when naturalism itself clearly fails.

Another way in which the study of theology is working its way into worldview development is through the recent emphasis placed on service learning in schools. Both high school and college students are often asked to complete “community service” requirements of some sort in addition to academic studies in order to graduate. The Christian worldview, with its emphasis on serving others in imitation of Christ, is ideally situated to step in and meet these requirements. One such program that combines meaningful service with readings in theology and philosophy is the SERVE program at Ignatius University (Gillmor, Rabinowicz, & Seider, 2011). The program, which requires participating students to take four courses in philosophy and theology and to complete community service outside of the university, appears to be an effective way of bringing together the study of Christian theology and active application of that study in the real world (Gillmor, 2011).

It can also be argued that it is becoming increasingly clear that education can never really be completely separated from religious faith. As the above examples of emergence and community service illustrate, morals and values do sometimes work their way in to even supposedly secular educational programs. For instance, Stambach (2009) stated, “For if education is a matter of learning to embody a certain kind of knowledge and social morality, then

surely contests over religion and education are not about *whether* but *how* religion and education are connected” (p. 155). The idea of the unity of truth is evident in this suggestion that no area of study or life itself can be truly separated from one’s theological beliefs and assumptions. After generations have attempted to sever religious faith from “other” areas of life, it seems that many are beginning to realize the futility and bankruptcy of this project. It is even possible that the attempt itself has led to new possibilities and opportunities for God’s truth to be restored to its rightful place as the foundation of every area of life.

Secular humanism attempts to answer questions about human life and how it should be lived without reference to God or theology. However, any attempt to do so necessarily involves answers that are themselves ultimately theological. One religion, such as Christianity or Islam, is simply replaced by another, which could be called secular humanism. At some point the futility of this attempt to answer what are ultimately theological questions without reference to theology becomes obvious. The seemingly endless critiques of religion that have advertised themselves as new ways of thinking to finally banish religion from human history may have actually led people, in the long run, to embrace religion (Walker, 2008). Particularly after so many philosophers and philosophical movements have proclaimed the death of God for so long, many people may realize that religious faith lives on and naturally conclude that these movements are nothing more than another in a string of failed movements to remove God from human consciousness. The moral, intellectual, and spiritual vacuum that results from such projects itself may promote a desire for and openness to the things of God. As Walker (2008) explained, “To be sure, in light of the (possible) death of God, might a sensitivity reappear for transcendence, for difference, for the sacred, for a generation who has run out of holy spirit and speaks with mechanical tongues?” (p. 212)

Philosophy

Closely related to the field of theology is that of philosophy. Indeed it is often difficult to distinguish between the two or to determine where one leaves off and the other begins.

Philosophy is an extremely broad field that can be deemed to encompass virtually every area of life, which is what makes it so integral to the development of a Christian worldview. Despite its breadth and depth, philosophy affects one's worldview in practical and profound ways.

In respect to the Christian worldview in particular, philosophy has at times been deemed both a friend and an enemy. This can be seen as far back in the early church as the first century when Paul spoke at the Areopagus. Jepp (2012) stated, "Interpretations of Paul's Areopagus discourse in Acts 17:16-34 are often radically incongruous. They range from seeing it as a placid pantheistic sermon on natural theology all the way to seeing it as a scathing demonization of Gentile religion" (p. 567). It seems that the interplay between philosophy and the Christian faith has been both ongoing and filled with controversy throughout the history of the church. This is reflected in a cursory look at the recent literature concerning the topic.

Again, the debate about the proper role that philosophical study and ideas should play in the Christian worldview seems to have started with the apostle Paul. As a former Pharisee, Paul is commonly recognized as having been well-trained and very knowledgeable in the Hebrew scriptures and to have taken that training and knowledge directly to the philosophers and teachers within Greek culture. While many scholars have suggested that this confrontation was meant to illustrate the incompatibility of Christianity with secular philosophy, some have suggested that it should actually be viewed as an attempt to show how Christianity meshes with Greek philosophy and surpasses it in its ability to answer the questions that were then being posed (Urbano, 2008). Such an approach would suggest the larger ideal of incorporating modern culture into the

development of a Christian worldview. This would have the double effect of bringing all aspects of society and life under the domain of God in the life of the individual Christian and of reaching out to the broader society with the truth of Christianity.

Such an approach has had an impact on many Christian intellectuals, including Saint Augustine (Urbano, 2008). The impact of the study of philosophy was also profound on the lives of other leaders of the church such as Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas Aquinas (LaNave, 2008). The approaches of these two men to philosophy or natural theology can be contrasted and serve as an example to modern Christians. Aquinas is well-known for his intense study of nature and theology and his belief that man, in his natural state, is fully capable of comprehending many aspects of God. Bonaventure, on the other hand, distinguished more clearly between natural and supernatural knowledge and believed that natural philosophers were limited in the extent to which they could gain access to knowledge and understanding. As LaNave (2008) explained, “In fact, to Bonaventure’s mind the Christian philosopher has a distinct advantage over the pagan philosopher, who is satisfied with the natural knowledge of things, and by that very fact falls short of true wisdom” (p. 823). It could be suggested that Christian philosophers and Christians in general have the possibility of gaining a broader and deeper knowledge of the world than non-believers. If this is in fact the case, Christians would seem to be duty-bound to press this possibility to its full extent in order to gain a better understanding of total truth and to share that understanding with the world.

A further example of the vital role that philosophy has played in Christianity can be found in the writings of Soren Kierkegaard. In his attempts to bring the Lutheran church in his native Denmark out of its theological slumber, Kierkegaard showed that the same limitations that Saint Bonaventure applied to secular philosophers also applied to many Christians of his day. He

saw the church and Christians in general as slaves to natural approaches to their faith and a commitment to doctrine alone. He believed this robbed Christians and society of the supernatural and life-changing power of the gospel. This resulted in a disconnect that was explained by another Danish theologian of the early 19th century, Carl Ullmann. Noel Adams (2010) stated:

Ullmann maintains that Christ's significance consists in that he not merely taught the truth by his words but exhibited it in his acts; that every deed of his was a doctrine, and every doctrine a God-like deed; that his whole life was one great, connected, divine act, in which world-redeeming love was always identical with world-redeeming truth. (p. 883)

Ethics

The next logical area in which one might expect to see the effects of a worldview would be that of ethics. After having addressed the foundational areas of theology and philosophy in the development of the Christian worldview, ethics represents a natural outworking of the faith of Christian believers. Clearly the practical working out of one's religious faith in everyday life is an important part of that faith. Even people who claim that they are not religious adhere to some theory or philosophy that guides their actions. It is interesting to note that people who claim not to be religious are sometimes very concerned about the ethical behavior of human beings.

Christian ethics arise out of what is commonly referred to as the Judeo/Christian Ethic. The United States and western Europe are often categorized as having Judeo/Christian values or ethical systems. Christian ethics were largely derived from the Jewish ethical system, which is hardly surprising since the Christian faith itself arose out of the Jewish faith. As Polish ethicist Wojciech Majka (2010) states,

Let us recapitulate that the Christian moral code differs from the ethics of Judaism. The difference is that whilst the ethics of the Jews was connected more with the collective being of man (in this case the Israelites), the Christian moral outlook focuses more on the individual. At the same time, we come to see that sensationalism plays an important role in both of the religious systems, which makes the respective religions quite materialistic. This feature sets both religions apart from the more abstract worldview that dominated in Greece where Platonism severely limited the importance of sensation and instead stressed the role of reason. (p. 398)

So Christianity, from its outset, placed a strong emphasis on the working out of its beliefs in the physical world.

One of the most obvious areas that Christian ethics affects is sexuality. While sexual norms and practices have always been an important part of the cultures of the various civilizations, the impact of traditional Christian morality on American society has been especially pronounced. This may be so in part due to the strong contrast of Christian sexual beliefs and practices with that of the general culture. This may be the case even more in recent years with strengthening of the gay rights movement. The issue of homosexuality has divided not only the larger American culture, but also the church itself. Various denominations and individuals have proposed differing viewpoints about the proper response for Christians when dealing with homosexuality and homosexuals. For example, the Anglican church has experienced a worldwide controversy over this issue as many church members and leaders have begun advocating for homosexuality to be treated as the same as heterosexuality and even for the ordination of gay ministers. For example, Ellen Wondra (2011) said, "I want to suggest that the moral qualities of a relationship are more primary for evaluating any relationship than is the

sexual orientation of the persons involved. Intimate same-sex relationships may have these same sex qualities” (p. 29).

There is even discussion among Christian ethicists of what exactly lies at the foundation of Christian ethics. While most would probably agree that love is (or should be) the root of actions and interactions of Christians with those around them, there is currently a debate going on over how love should be defined. Is it primarily an emotion or a commitment? A common teaching in conservative, Bible-believing churches is that love is at its heart a decision or an act of the will and not essentially an emotion or feeling (Elliott, 2012). However, there are others who believe that this teaching is in direct contradiction with the Bible. As Matthew Elliott (2012) of Oasis International states:

From research in theology, the original texts of Scripture, psychology, neurology, and Philosophy—from both science and biblical studies, I am thoroughly convinced that *feeling* is exactly what Jesus had in mind when he spoke about loving God and neighbor. (p. 107)

Clearly with so much disagreement in the church over the foundation of ethics it is to be expected that there would be much discussion and debate about what constitutes a proper Christian view of ethical behavior.

If love is seen to be the source or inspiration of Christian behavior, the issue arises how one comes to be inspired so as to act in accordance with it. That is, how can a Christian come to truly know and love what God loves? Great Christian thinkers such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Barth, and John Henry Newman all suggested that the key lies in the biblical idea of beauty (Garrett, 2011). God created human beings in His image, and a key part of that image seems to be the capacity for imagination. God has put the ideal image of love in our hearts and has

provided the perfect image of love for us in the flesh in the person of His son Jesus Christ. It is essential that humans dwell upon and ultimately act upon this perfect image of love. As stated by Garrett (2012), “Human imagining can lead to human flourishing as human beings employ their imaginations to envision the numerous possibilities for cultivating the common good of a society, which should ultimately lead to action” (p. 154). The contemplation of the beautiful allows us to see and be inspired to live toward the ideal of ultimate goodness and beauty. “More importantly, it forms our imaginations to envision how to live fittingly in an unjust world, giving us purpose along the way” (Garrett, 2011, p. 155).

The study of ethics has also, perhaps inevitably, found its way into the field of education. As postmodernism has infiltrated the schools and all of society, many in the Christian community have lamented this development. However as compared to modernism’s previous attempt to remove God from schools altogether, postmodernism may actually offer Christian ideas of morals and ethics an opportunity. As Li & Yu (2010) stated, “By analyzing and criticizing the modernity, the constructive postmodernism rebuilds a postmodern worldview consistent with human beings’ spiritual needs and value pursuit, promotes human beings’ subjective spirits, and realized human beings’ subjective value” (p. 49). So while postmodernism may be incompatible with many elements of the Christian worldview, some elements of it may be preferable to the secular modernism that prevailed for so long in American schools.

Psychology

In the sciences it is, perhaps, not surprising that the question of how a worldview informs study would be examined in the field of psychology. How one thinks and therefore behaves clearly has theological implications. Questions pertaining to the proper place of one’s religious

faith when attempting to study human behavior may bring much controversy, especially when secular thinking has dominated the field. For Christians the role of the Bible as an authority in describing human thought and behavior poses a particular concern especially when secular dogma conflicts, or appears to conflict, with Scripture (Entwistle & Preston, 2010). While it has been argued that Scripture must take priority whenever there is a conflict with secular psychological explanations, sometimes there may be no actual conflict but only an error in interpretation. Furthermore, some Christian psychologists have argued that theology should not necessarily be given the upper hand over secular disciplines, but rather should help to form a basis and a general perspective from which to study the discipline (Entwistle & Preston, 2010).

Many practical issues also arise when Christian teachers and students of psychology attempt to integrate their faith with the study and practice of their profession. Particularly when an institution is faced with the challenge of training its students for practice within this field, many difficult but specific decisions must be made in deciding and implementing a curriculum. Wheaton College has struggled with many of these issues as it set up and continues to operate its doctoral program in psychology (Flanagan, Gregory, & Kahn, 2011). Additionally, the field of psychology creates many temptations for Christian clinicians to “over-spiritualize” their analyses and conclusions. David Entwistle (2010) stated:

For those clinicians who choose to make use of religiously based interventions, it is imperative that they ensure that these interventions are consonant with established psychological techniques, grounded in sound theology, and applied ethically and with great attention to their potential misuse and for harmful consequences. (p. 147)

Karen Van der Merwe explains that there have traditionally been three psychological theories that have attempted to explain why people are religious. Although they are general categories,

psychologists usually place their explanatory theories into one of the following: wish-fulfillment theories, intellectualist theories, and social functionalist theories (Van der Merwe, 2010). While these psychological explanations are generally attempts by secular psychologists to analyze why people are religious and tend to focus on religiosity as just another part of life, there is still much to be learned from them by serious Christian psychologists who tend to see a person's faith as foundational and as an integral part of his life. There need not be an inherent conflict with secular theories and research into human thought and behavior and those stemming from a biblical Christian worldview. In fact, when they are sound, they should shed additional light on a biblical analysis of the nature of the crown of God's creation and help to bring understanding to the purpose for which human beings exist.

One of the main areas within psychology is the practice of counseling. Counseling presents a particular concern for both Christian practitioners and patients since each must determine what it is that makes a counselor or practice a Christian one. Clearly more should be required than simply adding Bible verses or prayer to the counseling session. While this might be considered a good, or even a necessary thing, it is hardly sufficient to make a session Christian. Rather a biblical Christian counselor must approach his subject from a holistic biblical view of mankind and his place in the world. Shannon Wolf (2011) said it well: "It is a well-articulated and insightful understanding of central Christian beliefs that makes a counselor Christian. A firm Christian foundation built on spiritual disciplines and philosophical discussions is necessary for the development of distinctly Christian counselor" (p. 330).

Psychology has also come to occupy an important part of the responsibilities of pastors and priests. During modern times, the field of psychology has tended to isolate religion from being a legitimate topic in the field and sometimes even to view it as an illness or weakness of

mind to be overcome (Pavesi, 2010). However, the postmodern mindset of today has actually opened up an opportunity for spiritual exploration in the field. It is vital that pastors take advantage of both the knowledge and the opportunity that present studies in psychology afford them to better lead and equip their parishioners and to bring the light of biblical truth to an often very dark field of study and practice. But in the act of doing so they must be very careful to differentiate between the truth and the falsehood that are both found in current secular psychological thought and approaches (Pavesi, 2010).

Biology

Bioethics is another field within the sciences in which the impact of a Christian worldview might be expected to be both relevant and questioned. Since ethics are closely related to religious ideas and values, it is no surprise that Christians who work and study in the medical field and make decisions of health, life, and death would be concerned with how their faith should inform the practice of their profession. Christian values and Scripture itself have much to contribute to the field of bioethics, but Christians who work in this field should be equipped with a thorough understanding of how the foundational ideas and beliefs of Christianity inform their profession, not just with a list of do's and don'ts (Greggo, 2010).

One example of how the concept of worldview affects the study of bioethics is how society views acts of aggression. When one person acts aggressively or violently toward another, how should his actions be interpreted and in what situations and to what extent should he be held accountable? Answers to questions like these are often affected by one's worldview. If the biblical Christian worldview is the basis for one's interpretation, the view that man is inherently sinful will likely affect his answers. So, too, would the concept of free will and man's responsibility for his actions. It is important for the Christian bioethicist to consider the findings

and analyses of both science and Scripture and bring them both to bear on the many questions within this field. Recent research suggests that innate factors such as genes, brain circuits, or neurochemical factors and acquired factors such as learning, cultural norms, or worldviews all interact from the outset to shape a development process that mutually defines beliefs or behavior (Diaz, 2011). As always, Christians must consider all truth that is relevant in a particular field.

Similarly, when treatment for patients with any psychological or social disorder is considered, moral issues often arise. One's theological understanding of matters regarding things like human nature, destiny, and autonomy are influential when conducting a clinical mental health assessment and targeting outcomes (Greggo, 2010). As healthcare has recently become a more prominent issue in political campaigns in the United States and elsewhere, questions about quality of care, availability, and cost seem likely to be in the forefront of social concerns. It is imperative that Christians think deeply about how they can best apply their worldview to such essential issues.

Even a field as specific as genetics contains important elements of worldview within it. How people see and interpret biological features like genes and DNA has sparked much debate within the scientific community. Kathleen Jenkins has analyzed this debate and suggested that there are basically three methods that Christian molecular biologists have taken to engage the secular community in their field (Jenkins, 2007). What she calls *symbolic engagement* entails seeing genes and DNA as sacred icons. *Disputatious engagements* involve debating genetic essentialism and scientific naturalism, and *performative engagement* refers to the fortifying of theism through scientific performance (Jenkins, 2007).

Although the connections between religion and the study and practice of sciences such as psychology and bioethics are apparent, other more technical sciences have also been the focus of

Christian worldview proponents in their fields. One such field is neuroscience. The Christian concept of the mind and how it relates to the brain is in many ways directly opposed to secular views on the subject. Many believe because the field of neuroscience is a relatively new area of study and practice that it is not tinged with as much secularism as other sciences, but in reality there are many dangers to Christian ideas and values in both the theories underlying the field and the practices within it (Joubert, 2010).

Secular scientists routinely interpret all metaphysical ideas as impulses that occur commonly in the brains of humans. They commonly refer to evolution as being responsible for these impulses to help humans cope and survive as a species. However this interpretation is unacceptable to many Christian neuroscientists. Leonid Perlovsky has proposed a new idea that is called knowledge instinct—that humans possess a drive to create realistic models of the world (Levine & Perlovsky, 2008). This idea is controversial because it seems very different from instincts like eating, sex, and aggression that humans share with other animals. Also the concept of knowledge instinct runs counter to the long-established biological principle of effort minimization (Levine & Perlovsky, 2008).

Grean Raia has written on the role of faith and neuroscience specifically as it relates to Oliver Lodge and his views on the physics of immortality. Raia (2007) examines how a proven scientific experimenter came to believe in the miraculous. He considers Lodge's intellectual and methodological processes and concludes that Lodge developed a kind of "ether theology" to help explain observations that could not be explained in his normal naturalistic way (Raia, 2007).

Belief in the paranormal among young people has also been studied and analyzed. In England and Wales, researchers studied 33,982 pupils between the ages of 13-15 (Francis & Williams, 2009). This study revealed that roughly one-third of youth believe that they could

contact spirits of the dead and that the pupils' worldviews were not arbitrary nor disconnected to other key aspects of their worldviews (Francis & Williams, 2009).

Another surprising area of science that has recently come under the scrutiny of Christian worldview advocates is that of engineering. It may be generally presumed that the more mathematical a field of study or area of practice is the less open to religious ideas and implications it is, but that may not be the case in reality. While engineering is certainly a mathematically based field, both the study and practice of engineering need to be scrutinized by Christian engineers in order to make certain that they are whole and fully effective. As Gayle E. Ermer (2008) says:

Christian engineers and scholars should be encouraged to continue to explore the connections between faith and action, between personal morality and professional ethical responsibility, and between ethical theories and technological practice. Engineering students and practicing engineers need to carefully consider a holistic approach to ethics and their work in order to direct technological development along a path that truly serves the kingdom of God. (p. 34)

It is often assumed that students in technology-related fields may not be as interested in religion or that religious people may not be as interested in technology-related fields as less religious people. However, this does not appear to be the case. In one study of Chilean university students, Christian students not only showed no decreased interest in science and technology, they actually showed a slightly higher interest in these fields (Parker, 2008). This finding suggests that Christian students do not adhere to a traditional pre-modern attitude when it comes to the study of nature and the advancement of technology. Additionally, the study showed an increased realization of the need for ethical concerns brought about by new technology and advancements

in the field and the effects that they might have on human beings (Parker, 2008). Thus it could be concluded that Christian students may actually be better prepared as a result of their worldview to consider how scientific and technological issues might best be advanced within the context of human development.

How the Christian worldview can be effectively implemented into a highly mathematical science like engineering is a difficult but important question. Professor Gayle Ermer (2008) has suggested some ways in which this might be done. She insists that, contrary to Stephen J. Gould, science and religion are not only compatible but are actually “overlapping magisterial.” She suggests that engineering should be seen by Christians as a vocation, that engineering curriculum should incorporate a holistic set of design norms, and that ethics-related topics should be integrated into the curriculum rather than simply requiring students to take a separate ethics course (Ermer, 2008). However it is done, it is clear that engineering and other highly technical fields are not immune to the Christian worldview; on the contrary, these fields present special opportunities for Christians within them to bring the light of God’s truth to a fascinating and vital aspect of God’s creation. Indeed, the hand of God can be seen in them in ways that perhaps no other fields of study can replicate.

The mathematical concept of chance offers another example of how theology and science interact with each other. While their interaction may be considered one of conflict by some and one of harmony by others, the fact of their interaction has become increasingly clear in recent years. Particularly with the recent upheaval of the traditional, predetermined view of the universe of Newtonian physics in light of new discoveries of the existence of chance at the micro or infinitesimal level, those who espouse a Christian view of science have had to adjust their thinking as well. Specifically, many Christian scientists have now come to see the Biblical

concepts of free will and God's love as revealed within a somewhat undetermined, creative universe (Wisniewski, 2009). This is a prime example of both how theology informs science and of how science informs theology. Indeed, all truth is God's truth.

When it comes to the universe, recent developments in the study of the universe and the theory of evolution suggest that various aspects of the universe and its development may in fact be compatible with the idea of human free will as ordained by God. The personal and practical spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales has been put forward as a possible example of how the interplay between science and the Christian faith can take place.

Within current discussions about science and religion, de Sales might recommend to us that this interrelatedness described in the human-divine relationship may be a standard by which we see God's relation to all of creation. Humanity's co-creative participation and God's subtle persuasiveness, as expressed in the saint's works, are reflective of the reality of chance in the "universe." Our view of divine action in a world of chance is enhanced by Salesian spirituality. Likewise, contemporary theologies of chance provide a framework for a fresh understanding of his teachings. (Wisniewski, 2009, p. 597)

The theory of evolution and the concept of chance and their compatibility are given further consideration in the ideas Robert John Russell. He suggests that the ideas of Alasdair MacIntyre on rationality offer a good way forward for incorporating science into the Christian worldview and that Arthur Peacocke's understanding of the relations between the disciplines be used for this purpose as well (Russell, 2010). Russell also explores the concept of evil and suffering in the world and its compatibility with both a loving and powerful God and evolution (Russell, 2010). While man will surely not come to understand such complex and possibly irresolvable problems completely, it is just as certainly good for informed and thoughtful scientists and theologians to

wrestle with them. There have even been recent attempts by Muslim mathematicians to address the issues of the compatibility of the concept of a creator God with the development of the universe. Muslim mathematicians are now considering how they can embody Islamic values in and through their work and thereby bring them into the sciences through the power of mathematical rigor and objectivity (Setia, 2008).

Economics

Other areas of life and of academic study also have found meaning under the concept of a Christian worldview. This should not be surprising since the concept simply means seeing all of life as under God's authority; there is literally no area of life that is not under God's domain. With this in mind, business schools have begun to take a different approach to educating and training their students. Instead of simply viewing economics as a way to make money, there is an increasing focus on the ethical and moral dimensions of the marketplace and the exchanges that take place there. Rather than looking at the purpose of these exchanges as being simply to make money, many Christians in the business world and in academia are coming to see their purpose as also a way to serve God through serving customers by providing them goods and services they desire at a price they are willing to pay. They also see business as a means to provide sustainable wages and benefits to employees and even as a means to provide to the overall community by contributing to the common good (Karns, 2009).

Perhaps this increased emphasis on ethics in the world of business is not surprising when one considers the moral depravity inherent in much of the underpinnings of the recent financial meltdown. It appears as though even professionals in the secular realm of business are beginning to see that the natural moral laws of God cannot be ignored with immunity.

While exchanging goods in the marketplace is not evil, neither is it a morally neutral endeavor. Exchange and marketing are core aspects of an interdependent human community and, at their best, provide avenues for contributing positively to the flourishing of humankind. Effective and efficient marketing practices can be acts of good stewardship and service, providing products of substantive value. (Karns, 2009, p. 11)

The marketplace is in fact a perfect example of how the Christian worldview might be applied to human life in a practical way. As each person has needs that cannot be met solely himself, he must then seek to cooperate with others in getting his needs met. This generally requires him to, in exchange, offer a way for those with whom he is cooperating to get their needs met by him. This view of the marketplace as a means to bring all of life under the redemption of Christ is has been explored by many in recent years, including Chris Wright, who offers practical insights and suggestions for doing so. He is prescient when he speculates what the world would be like if all the millions of Christians who earn their living in the marketplace were to take seriously what Jesus meant by being salt and light and what the impact would be evangelistically (Wright, 2007).

More generally, graduate programs of all kinds are beginning to place an increasing emphasis on preparing their students not only professionally, but also ethically and morally (Moore, 2008). Christian colleges that are expanding their programs into university offerings are in a situation that provides a tremendous opportunity to do this. Unlike secular institutions that are limited to focusing on ethical actions such as dealing honestly, treating people with fairness, and serving others, Christian programs can delve deeply into why these things are right. Rather than simply stating that certain things should or should not be done in a profession, they can actually explore why they should or should not be done. They can investigate the nature and

purpose of their profession and of life itself and thereby provide their students with not only knowledge, but also understanding. As such, surely they would be better prepared to actually live out what they have learned in their professions and in the rest of their lives. Edwards, Grauf-Grounds, MacDonald, Mui-Teng, & Sellers (2009) made this clear when they stated, “Training programs within Christian institutions will benefit from intentionally developing a curriculum that attends to a broadly Christian worldview as well as to the content of a particular academic profession” (p. 14). While Christian institutions are in an especially good position to do this, secular schools are also attempting to figure out how to link their curriculum and programs with the natural laws of morality. It seems that secular approaches to education are beginning to realize the deficiencies inherent within their approach, and many schools and programs are attempting to address them. While these efforts should be applauded by Christians, those who have the advantage of teaching in specifically Christian institutions should take increased devotion to their commitment to absolute truth and, in the process, lead the way in showing the world the substance of a true education and the means of attaining it.

Sociology

Along with ethics, sociology is another area of life in which worldview is both important and obvious. Sociology can be seen as encompassing virtually any area of human interaction, and this broad and vague composition allows for almost limitless opportunities for a person to implement his worldview. Once the underlying ideas and values of a Christian worldview have been established through theology, philosophy, and ethics, many aspects of a Christian’s view of the world may be worked out in his relations with other people.

It is here that Christianity has recently come in to conflict with what Wheaton College Philosophy professor Bruce Ellis Benson calls “radical democracy.” With America’s current

political and cultural climate claiming a commitment to tolerance and relativism, the absolute religious and moral claims of Christianity don't always find a welcome place at the table. Indeed, it sometimes seems that Christian truth claims cannot be tolerated in the name of tolerance itself. Is there a way that Christians can be faithful to both their theological commitments and to American democracy? Benson thinks there is and suggests that American Christians employ both what he calls *radical Christianity* and *radical democracy* (Benson, 2009). The radical aspect of Christian teachings to which he refers is basically the working out of love in society by giving to the poor, helping those in need, and loving one's enemies and seeking to serve them. If a major complaint about Christians is that they are sometimes triumphant in their approach to society, it is difficult to imagine how the implementation of Christian teachings in the ways mentioned above could be seen as anything but humble (Benson, 2009). In effect, this approach would have the dual benefit of practically working out the Christian faith and of being accepted by and even admired by society in general.

It has been argued that Christianity has had a large effect, even a transformational one, on western society historically. This effect can be seen primarily in the way that the individual relates to society. While western society and others have advocated for individual rights in general, Christianity is unique in the radical and practical way in which it promoted the equality of all people, and this equality can be seen as a direct result of Christian doctrine.

Implicit in Christianity was that a revolution in our understanding of the relationship of the individual and society. "The profoundest . . . minds of ancient Greece and Rome," as Toqueville pointed out, "never managed to grasp the . . . very simple conception of the likeness of men and their equal right to liberty. . . . Jesus Christ had to come down to

earth to make all members of the human race understand that they were naturally similar and equal.” (as cited in Grasso, 2009, p. 47)

Closely related to the idea of the equality of all people within a society is the treatment of people with disabilities. Those with disabilities, whether they are physical or mental, offer a perfect opportunity for Christians to live out their theology of love and equality. As each person is considered to be created in the image of God and one for whom Christ died, it is an essential aspect of Christian belief and practice to actively work for policies and actions that will benefit those with special needs, especially since they may not be able to do so themselves (Volpe, 2009). This focusing on others in need can again likely be seen as an attractive and unifying aspect of Christianity, which may also be an effective means of advancing the kingdom.

One of the fundamental aspects of society and of Christian social theory is the family. It is viewed traditionally by the church as a sacred institution that is the best environment for sex and the raising of children. With recent emphases on new views about sex and the definition of family in western society, these traditional views are being reconsidered. In response to these new attitudes, Stanley Hauerwas has written extensively in an attempt to suggest a properly Christian vision of the marriage bond and the place of children within it. Within his writings, he has explained ideas such as marriage as a vocation, the role of parents, and the place of the family within the church (Meilander, 2012).

There also has been a long history within the church of addressing the issue of war and what a proper biblical response is to it. On the one hand, Christian teaching clearly emphasizes love and peace, but on the other hand war and violence are often viewed as necessary and even as God’s will. One long-standing view of the church toward the morality of war is known as *just war theory*. This teaching of the church was popularized by Saint Augustine and much later

advanced by Martin Luther; however, Baylor political science professor David Corey has recently explained that there are some fundamental differences between the ways each of them handles just war doctrine (Corey, 2011).

The role of religion in warfare has been a controversial issue for a long time, especially in reference to the Crusades. Just what exactly should be the stance of church in general and of Christians in particular when it comes to war? The responses have ranged from pacifism to a strong support for war and the military. In recent years especially, some conservative Christians have come to view patriotism and support for the United States military as almost an article of their faith. Perhaps especially since the events of September 11, 2001, it almost seems as if some consider any questioning of military actions or support as an attack on their religious faith. Although many people had thought for years that modern nation-states had largely limited the role of religion in the instigation and prolonging of war, the world has seen a rise of religiously inspired wars and violent acts in recent years (Horowitz, 2009). With the rise of technology and globalization it may be expected for such things to continue in the near future. If that is the case, it will be increasingly important for Christians to have a specific and well-articulated response in order to help bring peace and stability to the world.

Law

An outgrowth of ethics is the discipline of law. Whatever a society sees as being ethical may find itself being written into that society's laws. Although some people argue against ethics or morals being enshrined into laws, it could be argued that laws are primarily the implementation of morality into social codes or norms. While it may not be possible to legislate moral behavior, it certainly is possible to discourage or encourage particular behaviors through the establishment of laws. In fact, because laws regulate behavior it is difficult to imagine any

law that would not have a moral or ethical component to it. So it might be said that the question is not whether to consider morality in the making of laws, but rather what morality will be considered when doing so. In the United States, with its commitment to a certain level of separation between the church and the state, it can be especially difficult to determine exactly what ethical principles should be written into law. Christians should be conscientious when considering the impact that their faith should have on society through the instrument of the law.

The church has a long history of ideology when it comes to the interplay of Christianity with law. Perhaps the best-known tradition in this area is that of *natural law theory*. Saint Thomas Aquinas is generally credited with creating and implementing on a large scale this idea that man is capable of discovering basic principles of right human behavior through the application of reason and logic (Gondreau, 2010). It is through this appeal to reason and logic and not to religion in particular that many Christians believe they can best get a hearing for their ethical and moral views and possibly get them enshrined in law. The avoidance of direct religious doctrine allows avoidance of complications resulting from church/state issues. If an ethical belief can be proven to be reasonable and logical, it may be considered constitutional even though it flows out of Christian teaching.

Although natural law thinking is often associated specifically with Catholic thought and teaching, Protestants have also contributed much in this area. “The early Calvinist jurist, Johannes Althusius effectively merged the hierarchies of law developed by fellow jurists and theologians of his day, both Catholic and Protestant” (Witte, 2009, p. 252).

The application of Christian ideas to society’s laws was apparent in a number of issues in America’s past. American culture from around the 1880s to the 1950s was largely affected by fundamentalist views on many areas of life including gambling, alcohol, and sexual morals

(Reid, 2010). Some of these issues even saw regulation and restrictions enacted upon them. Such instances from history can serve as examples, both good and bad, from which modern Christians can learn when considering ways to implement their faith-based convictions into society.

One area of in which many Christians feel compelled to fight for the legal protection of or promotion of their values is abortion. Christians often see the abortion issue as a fight to protect the right to life of the unborn. However, some people disagree and view “pro-life” advocacy as an attack on the reproductive rights of women (Castle, 2011). This issue represents a clear example of the idea that the question is not whether moral values will be clarified through law, but which moral values. As such, Christians must realize that their views cannot be dismissed by vague claims that they violate the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. They certainly do not violate the constitution any more than do “pro-choice” views. Both claims, the right to life and the right to make a choice concerning reproduction, make truth claims whether they are labeled as religious or not. A person’s truth claims cannot be ruled as out of bounds legally simply because they may be rooted in religious belief. Such an approach would amount to an hostility to religion and a clear violation of that person’s constitutional rights to freedom of religion.

The issue of gay rights and homosexual marriage is another example of a teaching of the church conflicting with the desires of many in modern society. It also shows the effectiveness of the *natural approach* with its appeal to reason and avoidance of church/state restrictions. With many in society advocating for equal rights for same-sex marriage, a biblical case supporting only heterosexual marriage can be made without direct reference to Scripture. Simply put, since laws are initiated in order to preserve and promote the good of a society, it only need be

demonstrated that homosexual unions do not tend toward this end. As Paul Gondreau (2012) of Providence College states:

Since they are not by nature ordained to procreation, nor to unitive love (with no bodily complementarity, there can be no real bodily union), same-sex unions lack the requisite nature, and thus the intrinsic authority, needed to enjoy the juridical status of marriage. They are opposed to the true human good and can never contribute to genuine human flourishing. Only heterosexual marriage can. (p. 592)

The gay rights agenda and same-sex marriage debate can be seen as part of a larger debate within both society and the church about gender roles and issues. As society has seen many changes in the social roles of women over the past century or so, it seems that the church has taken an opposing stance to many of these changes. This makes it easy for non-Christians to lump together numerous gender and “sexual rights” issues and depict Christians as being anti-woman, anti-gay, etc. (Case, 2010). In order to effectively combat such false but effective criticisms, it is necessary for Christians to articulate a comprehensive vision of the equality and rights of human beings. However in doing so they must make a clear distinction between a self-centered moral relativism and a legal approach that takes into consideration what is best for the members of a society.

Politics

An area where worldview has a huge impact is politics. While many secularists claim that a person’s religious beliefs and values should be kept separate from his political views, it is ultimately impossible to do this. As explained earlier, a person’s worldview is based upon his ideas and beliefs about what are ultimately religious things. What one believes about the origin, meaning, and purpose of human life affects every area of human life and interaction. Certainly

politics is not exempt from this effect; in fact, it could be considered the very way that people work out their worldviews in everyday living. As in other disciplines, there is no such thing as religious neutrality when it comes to politics. Specific beliefs about God will be reflected in politics, the only question is which or whose views will prevail.

The proper place of religion in a democratic society is an old yet robust debate, particularly in the United States. Religion had a major part in the founding of the country, and it continues to be an important but contentious area of political life today. One of the most well-known of political commentators on political life in the history of the United States was Alexis de Toqueville. Writing in the 1830s, he observed that the democratic revolution that was then sweeping the world seemed to have its ultimate origin in views of human self-understanding that had been brought about by Christianity (as cited in Grasso, 2012). This suggests that ideas such as the equality and dignity of all human beings that are foundational for modern democracy are largely the result of Christian ideas put into action in the political realm.

Shifting forward about 100 years, one can see that religious belief continued to have a large effect on political belief. Tom Greggs has suggested that Christians in America today could learn a lot from the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Although Bonhoeffer was a German theologian writing during the midst of the Nazi crisis, his views on the interaction between Christianity and politics can be instructive to Americans today. There is a tendency of conservative Christians to conflate their religious views with certain specific political views that might not necessarily be biblical, and Bonhoeffer suggested a potentially helpful antidote that may preserve both a more faithful Christianity and politics. He stated:

God lets Himself be pushed out of the world and onto the cross. He is weak and powerless to the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which He is with

us and helps us. Matthew 8:17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of His omnipotence, but by virtue of His weakness and suffering. (as cited in Gregg, 2009, p. 304)

This would seem to suggest that Christians may want to consider taking a less aggressive and less offensive approach on certain political issues on which there may be some legitimate disagreement and focus more on how they can play out the love and suffering of Christ in the world.

The important debate between the church and society and within the church itself over the proper role of faith within political life can be seen in the present day in the teachings of Stanley Hauerwas. As one of the foremost religious-political thinkers today, Hauerwas has criticized what he believes is an overly patriotic view among many American Christians, while maintaining that truly biblical teachings would suggest a more modest and humble approach in the area of politics, especially those relating to militarism and imperialism (Northcott, 2012).

Among modern religious leaders who have had a large impact on religion and politics, perhaps none has been more important than Pope John Paul II. In contrast with much of Stanley Hauerwas' views, the former pope gave clear and specific warnings about separating political views from religious views. He maintained that any philosophy of politics that separated "human dignity, equality, and freedom" from Christianity resulted in an "exaggerated rationalism" that must result in skepticism and ultimately a nihilism that denies the very humanity that serves as the foundation of human dignity (Grasso, 2012).

There is no shortage of current political issues that clearly reflect the inseparability of politics and religion. A recent report from the National Catholic Bioethics Center highlights both the Democratic and Republican stances on issues concerning stem cell research, birth control,

abortion, and the new health care law (Saunders, 2012). Each of these issues represents the inevitable clash of secular views and biblical views toward the human body and human reproduction. While Christians may be limited in their ability to appeal directly to their religious faith to justify the legality of their stance on these issues, they cannot be prevented from bringing their faith to bear on them either. Policies and practices in these areas stem from ethical values that arise out of religious beliefs regardless of which side of the political spectrum they may fall. The first amendment guarantees each person the right to freedom in matters of conscience such as these.

Much has been written about the political liberalization of young people in the United States. While it may not be a new development that younger people tend to be more liberal in their political views than older people, many in the church have noted a more liberal bent among younger believers in recent years, particularly among those who have a college education (Hastie, 2007). This may in fact be the case, but recent research has also questioned the validity of such generalizations. A study by Baylor University suggested that young evangelicals, with the exception of environmental issues, have strikingly similar views as traditional conservatives on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, drug use, stem cell research, and the war in Iraq (Johnson & Smith, 2010). This may reflect the views of some that many young adults are increasingly embracing a more orthodox form of Christianity, which may, in turn, suggest that believers who are less committed to orthodoxy may be more likely to embrace secularism and retreat from religion altogether (Johnson & Smith, 2010). Whatever the case, it is far from settled that even young Christians are decidedly more politically liberal than older believers on most issues.

History

History is another discipline or area in which a person's view of the world has a great impact. It may seem less important than the other disciplines that have been mentioned, but it may in fact be more so, or at least more foundational than any other. The reason for this lies in the fact that one's worldview perspective on history is less obviously practical in its implementation than it is for areas like ethics, law, and politics. However, this does not mean that it is any less important; in fact, its effects may be more profound. This is because how one views the nature and course of history is founded upon whether he believes in God and, if so, what role he believes God plays in the unfolding of history. If a person believes that there is no God or that God does not intervene in history, he must ultimately believe that the course of events is guided by a random and ultimately purposeless and directionless course. On the other hand, if he believes in God and that God intervenes in the world, he will believe that there is ultimately a purpose in history and that God is ultimately directing events toward a specific end. The difference between these two views is profound; they each maintain their own views of the meaning of existence. This, in turn, becomes foundational to all of the other disciplines and areas of life.

A Christian view of history is founded on the idea that there is a personal God who intervenes in the affairs of men. It professes a linear view of history rather than a circular view. This means that there was a beginning to history and there will be an end. This stands in opposition to the view that history is circular with no particular beginning and moving toward no particular end. The Christian view believes simply that God is the author of history, that He is moving it toward a specific end, and that the main purpose of human beings is to discover God's purposes and to cooperate with Him in them.

Pope Benedict has been among the most important recent advocates of the Christian worldview of history. According to Boersma (2012), “On Pope Benedict’s understanding, history and faith ought not to be separated. As a result, he wants to keep together historical exegesis and spiritual understanding” (p. 985). In an effort to do this, he focused specifically on the foundational role that Jesus Christ played in human history. He believes that the study of Christ and His life must be done from an historical viewpoint and with the same standards of research that apply when studying any other person or event from history and also that this historical approach must not be separated from the theological view of the nature and purpose of Christ himself (Boersma, 2012). This approach, exemplified by Pope Benedict, is a good example of the Christian view of the inseparability of the Christian faith with the whole of human history.

As Christians attempt to apply their faith to their interpretations of history, one of the most fundamental and profound difficulties they face is the problem of evil and suffering in the world. They are faced with the difficulty of reconciling why an all-powerful and loving God would allow so much pain and injustice, especially to those who love and worship Him. The doctrine of God’s providence may more easily be explained when considering man’s injustice to man by the parallel doctrine of free will; men chose to do evil to other men. However, when it comes to things like babies being born with fatal diseases and entire communities being wiped out through pestilence or war, the difficulties are greater. This great theological question has been the focus of Christian thinkers from Saint Augustine to the present day and poses what contemporary theologian Marilyn McCord Adams has called “the deepest of all religious problems” (Oldridge, 2012, p. 397). It also represents a very practical way that Christians have struggled to apply their understanding of theology to help them make sense of history.

Another issue that Christians must deal with that pertains to their view of the nature and purpose of history is one that has gained special relevance over the last several years: terrorism. Particularly since the events of September 11, 2001, people all over the world have been increasingly concerned with religious terrorists bent on causing the suffering and death of those with whom they disagree. While Christians have had to come to grips with some of their own evils in the past, the focus is now clearly on Muslim extremists who perform such unthinkable deeds. The issue then becomes how Christians should respond to these perpetrators of evil. How can they show love, respect, and forgiveness in the face of such hatred and still combat the evil? The Christian faith requires a response that will show elements of kindness and understanding but will simultaneously help to prevent future injustice (Weidler, 2013). Whatever the case, it is another example of how Christians must attempt to apply their faith to the events of history, even as they participate in it themselves.

Teaching

The idea of teaching itself is also coming under increasing scrutiny by advocates of the Christian worldview. Questions regarding the exact effect that a teacher's Christian faith should have on the way he teaches his students are being asked. Issues regarding both the content of the curriculum and the methods employed in its implementation, as well as the relationship of the two to Christian faith, have come to the forefront of some Christian educational institutions and leaders. This, in turn, creates new issues for Christian teachers serving in public institutions due to current interpretations of the meaning of the principle of separation of church and state. Since teachers in these secular institutions are limited in how they can allow their worldview to affect their teaching, while realizing that education can hardly if ever be worldview-neutral, they must figure out the best way to pursue truth in their teaching. Trevor Cooling has suggested what he

calls a “third way” of doing this that would avoid the two extremes of a purely secular approach to teaching and a more overtly Christian approach that would probably fail current tests of constitutionality (Cooling, 2010). Whether a teacher is serving in a Christian or a secular institution, the duty, if not the means of performing it, of a Christian teacher remains the same: Lead students toward the light of truth.

While the concept of worldview and how Christian teachers should incorporate it into their profession is nothing new, there has been recent criticism among some for the way in which Christian educators have commonly approached this dilemma. The idea of the integration of the biblical worldview into curriculum and instruction is an oft-repeated mantra that may have reached the level of dogma within Christian education. However, the term *integration* itself contains the implication of a false dichotomy between faith and learning. Specifically, it suggests that one’s Christian faith is separate from academic subjects and that the educator must find ways to put the two together. However, if all truth is God’s truth, or even, if God is truth itself, surely He cannot be separated from Himself. Perhaps the term *emanation* would better convey the holistic, inseparable nature of the relationship of God with every aspect of His creation. *Integration* implies that the truths of the Christian faith must be put into academic subjects. *Emanation* implies that the truths of the Christian faith are already present within them and that they must be brought out.

While some may argue that this difference in terms is a distinction without a difference or merely clever wordplay, it should not be dismissed lightly. It has been argued that the integration model and approach to education is itself the product of secular thought. This paradox can be explained by the acceptance, perhaps unknowingly, among Christian educators of the post-Enlightenment philosophies of rationalism and empiricism (Iselin & Meteyard, 2010). Could it

be that Christian educators are attempting to solve problems of faith and learning by using the very philosophical approaches that caused them in the first place?

A better approach, one that does not accept the separation of the head and heart in learning, may be found in what has been called an incarnational approach to faith and learning. As Jesus was the Word Incarnate, so should all learning, indeed every area of life, be approached as inseparable from its Author. Iselin & Meteyard (2010) stated:

An incarnational approach to faith and learning posits a framework whereby relationship, embodiment, identification, and connectedness are the focal point for all scholarly analysis and research. An incarnational approach to worldview seeks to celebrate (rather than merely cere-brate) the dynamic dance of faith and learning in an authentic, contextualized, and holistic manner. (p. 37)

The ways in which a teacher's beliefs can affect his curriculum and his instruction are numerous. Perhaps the most profound way in which a teacher's worldview can affect these areas is in what he chooses to teach. His choice of curriculum serves as the basis of what will potentially be learned by his students. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how anything could more profoundly determine learning outcomes of students than the topics and ideas that they will be studying and the means by which they will be studying them. Even the methods of instruction that the teacher will use often are determined by the curriculum itself.

John Miller has explained that worldviews help to determine educational orientations and that when these are applied by educators to their curriculum and instruction they can make for a holistic approach to education. He divides the orientation of educators into three general categories. He calls the first approach the *transition* position. This approach basically sees the student as a passive receiver of information and separates the affective domain from learning.

Students sit in rows, study from textbooks or work on worksheets, and take tests that focus on rote memory and low levels of knowledge (Miller, 2011). Elements of the transition approach to education can be seen in “back to basics” approaches to schooling and in the recent heavy emphasis on standardized test scores.

The second approach he calls the *transaction* position. The scientific method is the basis for this approach to teaching and learning. The transaction that takes place is that between the student and the object or topic that is being studied. This approach stresses that true learning takes places though detached observation and analysis. It can be seen as a result of the rationalism and emphasis on the scientific method prevalent in the Enlightenment period. Despite its strengths, it also has shortcomings, some of which are foundational to a holistic and authentic learning experience. “The transaction position views the learner as rational and capable of intelligent behavior. The student is seen as a problem solver. What are missing in the transaction position are imagination, intuition, and most importantly a sense of the sacred” (Miller, 2011, p. 61).

The third approach is called the *transformation* position. This approach suggests that the universe is essentially one interconnected system and that teaching and learning should flow out of this same wholeness (Miller, 2011). There should be no separation of the cognitive and affective domains. Learning should attempt to discover the unity of the physical and metaphysical in both the universe and the body and soul of the individual student. This approach is consistent with the Christian worldview in that God Himself is the unifying force of the student’s body and soul, of the universe, and of all existence itself. This should clearly have a profound effect on both the curriculum and instruction of the Christian educator.

While the failure of Christian educators to effectively apply their worldview to the classroom has received much attention of late, most of the research in this area has been of a qualitative nature. Very little quantitative research has been done to determine how worldview affects learning. However, Sabra Brock recently performed a study of 256 undergraduate business school students that attempted to show how what he calls transformative learning took place in his subjects (Brock, 2010). His study focused on the 10 precursor steps that learners undergo in changing their worldviews that have been outlined by Jack Mezirow.

These 10 steps are a) a disorienting dilemma; b) self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame; c) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change; d) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; e) a critical assessment of assumptions; f) provisional trying of new roles; g) planning of a course of action; h) acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; i) building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and j) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (p. 123)

The results of this study at one business school at a prominent university in the Midwest indicate that Mezirow's 10 steps to transformative learning do indeed play a role in helping students to change their worldviews and that critical reflection is a key to the process (Brock, 2010). Christian educators should seriously consider these findings and reflect on how they can use them to help students understand their own worldviews and how they can be adjusted to reflect the truth about the universe and their place in it.

When considering what good teaching should entail and the impact that worldview has on the practice of teaching, any Christian should consider the teaching of the Master Teacher,

Jesus Christ Himself. Ted Newell has done this and claims that Jesus was a teacher who challenged the hegemony of the day and that modern day Christian teachers are faced with the same challenge (Newell, 2009). His main idea is that teaching should aim at far more than the accumulation of knowledge; it should seek to encompass a type of whole-person learning that will have a much deeper and more lasting impact on students than most forms of learning do in schools today. Jesus strove for the transformation of the individual, not just to bring him knowledge. His goal was to impact every area of His listeners (students) by bringing to them in a transformational way the all-encompassing truth of God. While no human can expect to duplicate the effectiveness of Christ in His teaching, he can and must seek to learn from the Master and attempt to emulate Him in his teaching as in every area of his life.

Teachers of specific academic subject areas must resist the temptation to see worldview teaching as something that only religion or social science teachers do. Just as Jesus sought to address the entire lives of His hearers, Christian educators must see every area of the academic curriculum as under the dominion of Christ. They must even go beyond the academic curriculum and understand that every area of instruction and activity, even extra-curricular ones, are under the lordship of Christ and must emanate His truth. Newell (2009) states:

Of course, education is larger than schooling. Jesus in worldview perspective is not merely the teacher of a better doctrinal system but the incarnation of a God-person. As the true human being, in effect He warns us not to reduce religious education to a definable department of a larger educational program. For the aim to be achieved, no faculty member can be exempt as subject specialists from the larger task of the school. Far from being the religious department's purview, modeling falls to every teacher. Jesus

as worldview educator shows us that teachers of all specialties function as religious educators. (p. 151)

Each of the preceding ideas about Christian worldview teaching seems to suggest that something is missing in the way Christian educators have traditionally approached the concept and practice of the integration of faith and learning. However, it should be noted that it is possible to go too far in the rejection of this traditional approach to Christian education. Postmodernism has brought with it much criticism of the past in general and education, including Christian education, has certainly not been exempt from its attacks. While there may be much opportunity for Christian educators to bring the light of truth to teaching and learning within the culture and approach of postmodernism, they need to be careful not to adopt the relativism that is inherent within postmodernism itself. That is, while the traditional model of the integration of faith and learning that largely was a result of Reformed thinkers over the past 150 years or so may have problems that need to be addressed and improved upon, it should not be entirely abandoned in favor of a postmodern approach to education that is ultimately not compatible with biblical Christianity (Thiessen, 2007).

Surely there are problems with the Reformed approach to worldview integration, but it is too easy to label people or ideas that have come out of this approach as dichotomous, narrow, crusading, and arrogant. The attempt to generalize, label, and dismiss an entire approach to Christian worldview development that has served Christians so well for so long because it has some limitations or deficiencies is a temptation that must be avoided. Perhaps even worse yet, it is possible that many well-meaning Christian educators want to displace the old approach to worldview thinking simply because it is old and out of style. The postmodern approach to education and life in general tends to emphasize new and bold ways of thinking and doing

things, and Christians should never succumb to the temptation to reject something simply because it is old and replace it with something simply because it is new (Thiessen, 2007). Surely such a simplistic and arrogant attitude and approach would not be consistent with a biblical worldview. Christian educators must be extremely mindful to follow the truth wherever it leads, but not to where it does not lead.

Educators and Christian Worldview

There are a number of individuals who have popularized the study and practice of the Christian worldview and how it relates to education. One such person is Harold Heie of Gordon College. He has been a leader in the area of bringing Christian ideas and values into the academy, especially within higher education. His focus has been in two primary areas. The first area is arguing that religious ideas and values should have a place within secular institutions and discussions within the academy. The second area is exploring ways in which Christian teachers can integrate faith and learning in the classroom. His arguments are that, in a diverse culture and educational climate, religious ideas must be considered in order for education to be complete and that teachers in Christian institutions must be more authentic and more creative than they have generally been in their attempts to integrate faith and learning in their classrooms (Heie, 2008).

Another person who has had a tremendous impact on Christian thought, and therefore on Christian education, is Dallas Willard. Willard was a psychology professor on the faculty at the University of Southern California. He was a modern pioneer in the area of spiritual formation and morals or, more specifically, of explaining the intimate connection that Christian spirituality enjoys with the formation of moral ideas and behavior within human beings (Preston, 2010). While his specific area of expertise is psychology, his ideas have spread throughout the Christian community, both within and outside of the academy. As stated, many Christians consider him to

be a leader in the area of spiritual formation within the church, but his ideas resonate greatly within the field of education as well. Perhaps this is due to the rise of psychology as a major field of study and its focus on human thought and behavior. He is an excellent example of a scholar who has endeavored to bring the light of Christ into the secular academy. With the reputation of psychology as being one of the most secular fields of study within secular higher education, his notoriety in the field of psychology is especially impressive. The impact he has had on this field has been primarily in the area of ethics and moral development. Whether within the church or the academy, Dallas Willard has transformed the way people look at human development, and his thoughts have major implications for Christian educators who seek to help their students fully develop into the human beings God intends for them to be (Moon, 2010).

A researcher who has done extensive work in the area of the relationship between students' religious beliefs and practices and the impact that the college years have on them is Jeremy Uecker. Uecker is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research areas of interest include family, religion, and transition to adulthood. One specific area of his research has been the impact that higher education has on the religious ideas and values of young adults who have been raised in observant Christian families (Damon, Uecker, & Mayrl, 2011). Uecker has also investigated the connection between attendance at Christian schools and religious commitment in young adulthood (Uecker, 2009). His research allows for much insight into the long-term impact that Christian education may have on student thought and behavior in their later lives.

The concept of the connection between a person's Christian faith, his worldview, and his learning is central to the task of the Christian educator. While the concept of the Christian worldview is not new, the attempt to incorporate it into the curriculum and pedagogy of schools

is a fairly recent phenomenon. Unfortunately this attempt has not always resulted in reaching the goals of those Christian educators who have set out to implement it. Harold Heie has been outspoken in his criticism of the way most Christian teachers have attempted to integrate their faith into their teaching. He criticizes the now traditional approach of simply tying together a biblical idea or principle onto the subject matter as “pseudo-integration” (Heie, 2008).

When reflecting on their personal epistemology, or individual ways of knowing God and his truth, many Christians today distinguish between so-called head knowledge and heart-knowledge. As Payne (1989) points out, such a distinction actually betrays a fundamental dualism within the lived faith of many contemporary Western believers—a “schism” between more rational, objective, and more intuitive embodied ways of knowing truth. (as cited in Iselin & Meteyard, 2010, p. 33)

It is imperative that Christian educators find new more authentic ways to discover and implement the intimate connection between the truth of their faith and the truth of their academic subjects. They are inseparable; indeed they are one and the same.

In addition to individual scholars who are seeking to incorporate the truth of Christianity with the truth of academic subjects, there are some organizations that are attempting to do the same thing. One such organization is Focus on the Family. While Focus on the Family has been a well-known resource for bringing Christian ideas and principles to the idea and approach to family for decades, recently it has pursued a focus on academic study and the effect it has on life. This focus is called *The Truth Project*, and it is intended to bring students to a clearer overall understanding of how the truth of Christianity applies to every area of life. In an attempt to do this, *The Truth Project* compares biblical views with secular views. However, it has been

criticized in *Christian Scholar's Review* for not fully and accurately presenting opposing viewpoints.

The first thing we need in the midst of a perceived culture war is sober self-criticism to ensure that we truly are people living out the truth (1 John 1:6). In addition, we need to recognize that the battle is the Lord's, so that we do not capitulate to the tempting pragmatism that seeks victory at the expense of truth. Only then will evangelicals reach intellectual maturity in which they stand for the truth in all its complexity. (Rauser, 2009, p. 89)

The Truth Project may be guilty of what has been termed binary thinking. Binary thinking refers to the idea that there are certain ideas or ways of thinking that are right and certain ones that are wrong. While this may be true in a general sense, there is great danger in over simplifying ideas and issues in this manner. Specifically, binary thinking can distort complex issues, encourage the distortion and dismissal of opposing opinions, and undermine critical analysis of one's own views and confirmation bias (Rauser, 2009).

Unfortunately the tendency toward binary or dualistic thinking has been prevalent within Christian education as it has attempted to combat ideas that are deemed by many to be contrary to the Christian worldview. The temptation to succumb to such thinking is easy to understand; it is easier to dismiss ideas that are only viewed negatively than to honestly and seriously engage them. If one only considers the falsity of an idea and refuses to consider any truth that may be found within it, he can defeat that idea in his own mind or in his chosen forum. A person is unlikely to find truth in any idea, situation, or person in which he refuses to look for it. He is equally unlikely to find falsity in any idea, situation, or person in which he refuses to look for it. The problem with such an approach is that it is not conducive to a genuine search for truth.

While it may make a person feel good about his ideas and about himself, it may often actually lead him away from the truth. The problem is that a truth that is not fully considered may not be truth at all. A “half-truth” or a truth taken out of context can actually lead to a false understanding of reality. The same could be said for a “half-falsehood”. Even though something may be generally false, it may have a grain or grains of truth within it, and to simply dismiss it as entirely false is also inconsistent with reality. Surely a truly Christian worldview demands an honest and thorough search for truth (and for falsehood) wherever it lies, not just in the places where the truth-seeker wishes to find it.

This tendency to seek out only facts that support one’s views and that refute opposing views actually confirms the biblical view of the sinfulness of man. The desire to be right and to win an argument, and for those on the opposing side to be wrong and to lose, could be said to be evident in the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. It was the desire for absolute knowledge and control over life that originally led man to sin against God. Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to say that it is this same desire that leads man to refuse to critically analyze his own ideas and opinions or of those with which he disagrees. It is indeed a shame if Christians, in their search for truth, succumb to the same form of temptation that led to their separation from truth in the first place. As they pursue truth, Christians must constantly be aware of their natural tendency to pursue victory over truth and consciously recognize and exercise their absolute humility before their omniscient Creator.

If Christians are aware of both their limitations and of the tendencies that flow inevitably from their sinful natures, they may be able to avoid or at least limit some of the tendencies of binary thinking to which Christian education has often succumbed. Randal Rauser has stated that binary thinking tends to result in confirmation bias which has profound and limiting effects on

the ability to understand truth in all its various forms and complexity. He quotes Raymond Nickerson in describing confirmation bias as a process in which, “one selectively gathers, or gives undue weight to, evidence that supports one’s position while neglecting to gather, or discounting, evidence that would tell against it” (as cited in Rauser, 2009). As Nickerson warns, “If one is constantly urged to present reasons for opinions that one holds and is not encouraged also to articulate reasons that could be given against them, one is being trained to exercise a confirmation bias” (as cited in Rauser, 2009). The extent to which *The Truth Project* and Christian education as a whole has given in to the temptations of binary thinking and confirmation bias are debatable, but it can be certain that they are natural inevitabilities and ones that must be consciously and constantly acknowledged and avoided by Christians who are serious about the pursuit of God’s truth in all areas and issues of life.

The worldviews of students are, of course, the product of more than just what they learn while at school. Worldviews are the products of many different parts of a person’s life, and they are often developed with little or no awareness, they are simply absorbed by people from the context within which their lives take place. Certainly an important part of the formation of any person’s worldview is his family. The environment in which a person grows up and lives impacts his experiences and beliefs in foundational, if undetected, ways. In one study done on the effects of family on the worldviews of children in China, children were found to be impacted by their families in what were described as personal pathways, interpersonal pathways, and direct pathways (Chen, Wong, & Wu, 2010). Students’ self-esteem was found to be largely affected by the level and amount of emotional support they received at home. Their ability to develop and sustain quality interpersonal relationships was positively correlated to a stable and loving home.

In addition, the communication patterns and behavioral regulations of family members shape children's beliefs about the self, other people, and events in the environment (Chen, et.al. 2010).

A study of the spiritual development of Australian children in Catholic schools revealed that children not only draw from Christian ideals in creating and expressing their spirituality, but from an eclectic range of concepts and ideas emanating from society, religion, and the like (Hyde, 2008). This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for educators in religious schools. If children develop their worldviews from factors outside the school and curriculum such as family and society, then it is necessary for Christian educators to acknowledge these outside influences and tap into them as possible sources to help students develop a worldview that is in congruence with biblical truth. Hyde (2008) states:

That is, religious education needs to partner children in entering the space between the authoritative wisdom of the faith tradition and the individually created meanings that offer personal significance for the children themselves. It is in this space that it must engage with children, exploring a range of frameworks of meaning including the Christian story. Herein exists a great tension and challenge for religious education. However, if this tension can be creatively addressed, religious education may contribute to children's spiritual development and creation of meaning. (p. 243)

Another study of secondary Protestant Christian schools in the Netherlands suggested that the families in which students grow up and live has a large impact on the ways in which they view the world (Bertram-Troost, de Roos, & Miedema, 2007). The finding of this study suggests that parents, along with school and church, all work together to build a cohesive worldview in secondary Dutch students. Again, educators must understand the way a number of factors work

together and influence each other in developing the worldviews of students if they are to be successful in helping their students build a biblical Christian worldview.

The role that family and church plays in the development of a Christian worldview in students can also flow out of the act of worship itself. That is, how a student worships God in church services can affect the way he sees creation, the attitudes he has, and the actions he takes while living in the world. James K.A. Smith (2010) makes clear the connection between worship and worldview when he claims that there is no dichotomous tension between worship and worldview.

Rather, the claim is that the Christian worldview—as, roughly speaking, a set of propositions—is an explicit articulation of an ‘understanding’ that is first implicit in the practice of Christian worship. Christian worship inculcates us into a primary “know-how” that is then later articulated as “know-that”. (p. 56)

However, the most well-known and advanced curriculum for the development of a biblical Christian worldview within students may be that belonging to Summit Ministries. Summit offers comprehensive curriculum for elementary, middle school, and high school students in Christian schools, as well as seminars and a variety of other products and services all focused on Christian worldview development. While Summit has recently done a major self-study of its own effectiveness, it is the intent of this researcher to explore the effectiveness of its high school curriculum in helping students to develop a strong and lasting Christian worldview.

As many Christian parents are alarmed at the rate at which students who go off to college reject their faith, it has become vitally important to train up Christian students who have not only a strong Christian worldview, but also one that is strong enough to withstand the onslaught of secular humanist ideas and philosophies that they are likely to receive in college or elsewhere.

Skepticism has become the dominant philosophy of the academy, and it is certainly not devoid of a religious foundation and implications (Keller, 2008). If the purpose of education is to pursue truth, any education worthy of the name must by definition address foundational aspects and issues pertaining to the origin, meaning, and purpose of life. This can simply not be done without mention, direct or indirect, of God. Therefore, all true education must flow from either an ultimately secular or religious source, and the two are absolutely incompatible. The effectiveness of Christian worldview development in students' needs to be examined much more thoroughly, therefore the researcher proposes an investigation of one of the leading Christian worldview curricula for high school students, *Understanding the Times*.

Summary

In response to the tide of secularism that has swept western education, it is essential that Christians develop an effective means of developing a strong Christian worldview within their children (Toth, 2009). If this worldview is to be effective and lasting, the foundation of such an approach must rest ultimately on Scripture. Scripture must be seen as relevant and applicable to all areas of life, at all times, and for all people (Wall, 2007). It is for these reasons that a study on the effectiveness and longevity of training in the Christian worldview is so essential. Perhaps largely due to the fact that the concept of Christian worldview in education is a relatively recent phenomenon, there has been little research done on the effectiveness in Christian worldview training in schools. Summit Ministries has recently conducted a self-study of the effectiveness of their two-week seminar program in which students study many of the concepts in the *Understanding the Times* curriculum, but no study has been done of students who have taken the entire yearlong high school course. The president of Summit Ministries, Dr. Jeff Myers, has given his consent to the researcher both for the need and for support in the proposed research

into the effectiveness of the Summit curriculum and training. Christians, and especially Christian educators, must come to a better understanding of what works and what doesn't work in the development of a Christian worldview in high school students if they are to train up a generation of Christians who will hold fast to the faith and impact the world for Christ. The stakes couldn't be higher.

CHAPER THREE: METHODS

This study is intended to increase the understanding of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of training in the Christian worldview. For purposes of this study the term *Christian worldview* means a view of all areas of life that reflects ideas that are consistent with the Bible. Students who had graduated from a Christian school within the last five years voluntarily took an online biblical Christian worldview test. Their responses were then divided into those who had taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* course and those who had not. This study may yield information that can lead to improvement in the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction in the area of the Christian worldview.

In this section, the design and implementation of the study will be explained in detail. The research question and hypothesis will be stated and the instrument used to analyze the worldviews of the participants will be described. This section will also include a discussion of the participants, procedures, and setting of the study as well as an explanation of how the data for the study was analyzed.

Research Design

This study is a non-experimental, quantitative study that utilizes a causal/comparative research design. This design was selected for the study because the study represents an attempt to determine the presence of a relationship or the extent of a relationship between an independent and a dependent variable (Jurs & Wiersma, 2005). Since a truly random sample is not feasible for this study, a convenience sample was utilized by the researcher by selecting homogenous groups as potential participants to take the tests. This helped to ensure the internal validity of the study. Since the tests were administered online at the convenience of the participant and were completely voluntary, there was no element of coercion involved in taking the test. Neither was

there any benefit to the participants other than their own personal interest in the research. These facts also contributed to the internal validity of the study by increasing the likelihood of the accuracy of the responses to the survey. A causal/comparative design allows for the researcher to make analyses regarding the degree of causation of education and training in the Christian worldview and the persistence of fidelity to that worldview over time (Lawrence, 2007).

The treatment group had participated in a full academic year study of the Christian worldview using the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview curriculum produced by Summit Ministries. The control group had not taken the *Understanding the Times* course. Both groups of participants in the study had graduated from an evangelical Christian high school within the past five years.

Research Question and Hypotheses

In this study the independent variable is the *Understanding the Times* course (or the lack of it) and the dependent variable is the score that the participant obtained on the worldview test.

RQ1: What effect does the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course have on the worldviews of Christian high school graduates who have taken the course as compared to Christian high school graduates who have not taken the course as measured by a biblical Christian worldview test?

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of scientific naturalism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 1, 9, 15, and 34 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of moral relativism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 5, 13, 16, 21, 24, 26, and 29 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho3: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of religious relativism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 8, 11, 12, 20, 43, and 45 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho4: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of biblical infallibility on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 6, 14, 18, 30, 31, and 48 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho5: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of the divinity of Jesus Christ on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 10 and 19 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho6: There is no statistically significant difference between the overall scores on a biblical Christian worldview test of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-

long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

The study analyzed respondents' scores on five different areas within a Christian worldview in addition to their overall scores on a biblical Christian worldview test.

Participants

Due to the large number of students who could be considered to have a Christian worldview, this study focused on two specific groups of students. One group consisted of Christian high school graduates who have completed the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview curriculum. The other group consisted of Christian high school graduates who have not participated in that course of study of the Christian worldview. A convenience sample was utilized for the study, by focusing on Christian high school graduates across the United States who have participated in the course of study and a similar group who have not. The threat to internal validity that arises from using non-equivalent groups that contain a diversity of backgrounds and experiences will be limited by selecting for participation only students who have had similar courses of study (in the case of the those who have taken the course) and students who graduated from a Christian high school (in the case of those who have not taken the course). Initially 127 people responded, but the researcher analyzed only the responses of participants who had graduated from high school within the past five years of the time the research was conducted (2013). This was done to help ensure the reliability of the study by limiting the possible other influences that the respondents may have had after taking *Understanding the Times*. This narrowed the participants in the study to 28. Participants were recruited by obtained verbal and written permission from the schools in the study and from the organization involved. The researcher had no personal contact with the individual participants as

the survey was sent out to them by the Christian high schools from which they graduated, not from the researcher. The only contact that the researcher had with the individuals who participated in the study was when they contacted him voluntarily with questions or comments regarding the study. Additionally, participating schools may wish to contact their graduates on a voluntary basis after the study in order to provide follow-up information and for the possibly for future research in this area.

Setting

The setting in which the study was conducted was an online worldview test. The test was taken voluntarily by graduates of Christian schools at their convenience and in a setting of their choice (anywhere they have access to the internet). The participants were contacted by the high schools from which they graduated with a request to participate in the study. This request included information from the researcher regarding the nature and purpose of the study, as well as an informed consent document, and a link to the online survey. The purpose of the study was to compare the results of participants who have studied using the *Understanding the Times* curriculum by Summit Ministries with those who have not. Summit Ministries is known as a leading producer of Christian worldview curriculum, programs, and seminars in the United States and has been in existence for more than 50 years. The people who participated in the study did so voluntarily, and although they reside in various parts of the United States, they all can be assumed to have a similar interest in the development of their Christian worldviews. These participating institutions were chosen because the researcher has personal connections with them and/or because they are considered to be leading institutional proponents and practitioners of training in Christian education.

Variables

This study analyzed five different areas within the Christian worldview, in addition to an overall analysis. Those areas were scientific naturalism, moral relativism, religious relativism, biblical infallibility, and the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Scientific naturalism refers to the belief that everything in existence can be explained in natural terms and that there is no need for any supernatural explanation for the existence of the universe and everything in it. This theory implies that there is no God and clearly contradicts biblical teaching. The scores of participants in the study reflected the level of their adherence to this theory due to the fact that questions 1, 9, 15, and 34 asked participants how strongly they believed statements that directly supported the concept of scientific naturalism.

Moral relativism refers to the belief that there are no moral absolutes and that all moral values are subject to the circumstances in which an individual may find himself. This theory implies that there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong and clearly contradicts biblical teaching. The scores of participants in the study reflected the level of their adherence to this theory due to the fact that questions 5, 13, 16, 21, 24, 26, and 29 asked participants how strongly they believed statements that directly supported the concept of moral relativism.

Religious relativism refers to the belief that all religions lead to God and that no one religion contains all truth. Adherence to this theory rejects the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation. The scores of participants in the study reflected the level of their adherence to this theory due to the fact that questions 8, 11, 12, 20, 43, and 45 asked participants how strongly they supported the concept of religious relativism.

Biblical infallibility refers to the belief that the Bible is the Word of God and is true in all of its statements and teachings. Adherence to this theory implies that human ideas and traditions

cannot be accepted as correct if they contradict biblical teaching. The scores of participants in the study reflected the level of their adherence to this theory due to the fact that questions 6, 14, 18, 30, 31, and 48 asked participants how strongly they believed that the bible was not infallible.

The divinity of Jesus Christ refers to the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This belief is foundational to biblical teaching. Adherence to this belief was reflected in the scores of participants in the study due to the fact that questions 10 and 19 asked participants how strongly they believed that Jesus was not the Son of God.

The overall scores of the participants on the biblical Christian worldview test reflected their adherence to an overall Christian worldview because all of the questions pertain to teachings found directly in the Bible. Participants responded to how strongly they supported ideas that contradict biblical teaching.

Instrumentation

The consistency of participants' worldviews with that of a Christian worldview was measured by a worldview analysis test. The test was designed by the researcher by combining questions from four previously existing tests. The questions were taken from Worldview Weekend.com's worldview test, the Christian Filmmaker's Academy worldview test, and two Summit Ministries' worldview questionnaires. It consisted of 58 questions using a five-point Likert scale, the responses to which were then analyzed and compared for consistency with a biblical Christian worldview. This was done by attributing the following values to the corresponding responses: strongly agree = 1 point, agree = 2 points, not sure = 3 points, disagree = 4 points, strongly disagree = 5 points. This formula was applied because each question contained a statement that was in contradiction with a biblical Christian worldview. Each domain reflects scores based on the number of questions the test contained for that domain.

Therefore the more questions there were in each domain, the higher the potential score for that domain. This also means that the overall score would be the highest score since it includes all five of the domains in addition to many other questions that were not analyzed individually. Fourteen of the questions were demographic questions intended to help the researcher and the participating schools analyze and interpret the responses so that they can draw conclusions and make decisions they deem necessary to improve the Christian worldview development of their students.

The test was compiled from tests from two highly respected Christian worldview organizations, Worldview Weekend and Summit Ministries, and from a Christian cultural organization, the Christian Filmmaker's Academy. The fact that the questions on the survey were designed by professional Christian worldview organizations helps to ensure the instrument's content validity. "Validity refers to the appropriateness of the interpretation of the results of a test or inventory, and it is specific to the intended use" (Jurs & Wiersma, 2005, p. 326). The fact that the questions on the test were interpreted only for their direct relation to biblical ideas and concepts and not to indirect ideas that may be more open to interpretation contributed to the internal validity of the results as well by avoiding potential bias on the part of the researcher. The survey was also examined by professional colleagues of the researcher and by former students of his in order to ensure the clarity, accuracy, and overall quality of the instrument. This also helped to ensure the validity and reliability of the survey instrument. "Reliability is the consistency of the instrument in measuring whatever it measures" (Jurs & Wiersma, 2005, p. 324). Again, the fact that the survey was designed by highly respected professional Christian worldview organizations contributes to the reliability of the instrument. The research design of the study is appropriate for the desired goals, the sample can be assumed to be representative of a

larger population of graduates of Christian high schools, biases of the researcher and research participants have been controlled for or eliminated, and the proper statistical procedures are being used. Appropriate means of data collection were used, and the instrument is assumed to measure what it is supposed to measure.

Procedures

The researcher submitted a packet to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board in keeping with Liberty's requirements to guarantee ethical conduct for research involving human beings. The researcher did no research on this project until gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board at Liberty. After gaining approval for the study from the IRB, the researcher began the research project.

The researcher then sought to obtain permission for participation in the testing from the participating school principals or administrators and from the individual Christian high school graduates. A recruitment letter was sent via email to Christian high schools across the United States who were deemed to be good potential candidates for the research. This included schools that have been functioning for decades and that have good reputations known to the researcher for a commitment to biblical Christian worldview development among their students. An introductory letter was also included with this initial email that explained in detail the research project and what would be needed from the schools if they agreed to participate. The schools that agreed to participate in the study were then sent another letter containing a live link to the survey for their perusal. Finally, they were sent an email with an informed consent document and an informational letter to be sent to their graduates that contained directions for participating in the study and a link to the survey itself.

The survey was conducted using fluidsurveys.com. This service was chosen because it offered a functional and easy-to-use survey with many excellent analysis and report tools. A key feature was the ability for survey takers to view their results immediately. In general, an online service was considered by the researcher to be essential for the practicality and effectiveness of the study. The response time is greatly reduced over surveys conducted through the mail, the cost is less due there being no charges for postage, and data can be transferred immediately into a database for analysis (Jurs & Wiersma, 2005).

After they completed the test, the respondents received their results immediately after submitting their answers. Once the results were obtained from both groups in the study (those who have taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those who have not), the scores of each group were compared in order to help determine the impact that the course had on the Christian worldview thinking of those who had taken it.

After the results had been tabulated, the scores of each participating group were compared for consistency and/or variability in their faithfulness to a Christian worldview. This was done through the use of a standard t-test.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to test the effects that the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course has on the thinking of students in various areas of the Christian worldview. Among, but not limited to, these areas were the following: naturalism, religious relativism, moral relativism, biblical infallibility, and the divinity of Jesus Christ. These areas were chosen because they can be considered to be essential aspects of a Christian worldview.

The yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course is a curriculum produced by Summit Ministries, a leader in the area of Christian worldview courses, seminars,

and products. *Understanding the Times* breaks the concept of a worldview into 10 areas or disciplines: theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, and history. Students study each discipline for approximately three weeks and examine how the biblical Christian faith might affect each of these areas of life. The worldview test that served as the instrument of measurement in this study is made up of questions that are taken from these disciplines or areas of life. Two of the four sources from which the test was comprised were published by Summit Ministries which helped to ensure that the test is an accurate measurement of a Christian worldview as defined and approached by the *Understanding the Times* course.

After the data was collected and the results were received by the researcher, he then compared the scores of the two groups (those who had taken the *Understanding the Times* course and those who had not) to determine the extent of deviation between the scores of the two groups. In order to do this, a standard *t*-test was performed.

A *t*-test helps to determine whether the observed difference between the mean scores of two groups on a variable is statistically significant. It helps the researcher determine if the difference between the scores of two groups are more than would normally be expected in similar circumstances and, therefore, whether to reject the null hypothesis (Jurs & Wiersma, 2005). In this study the *t*-test was used to compare the mean scores of the study participants who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not and to determine whether the difference was statistically significant.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this causal-comparative research study was to help determine the extent to which, if any, a student's experience with Summit Ministries' year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course impacts his or her adherence to a Christian worldview when measured after graduation from a Christian high school. The effects were quantitatively assessed by examining the difference between graduates of Christian schools who had taken the yearlong course while in high school and those who had not. This analysis was done by comparing the scores that both groups received on a Christian worldview test. Additionally, the responses of the participants of each group were broken down into five specific areas and then compared. The areas were naturalism, moral relativism, religious relativism, the infallibility of the Bible, and the divinity of Jesus Christ. This chapter describes the results of that study.

Data was collected through the use of a convenience sample obtained from graduates of four Christian high schools who agreed to participate in the study. The schools were located in four different regions of the United States: the Mid-South, the Northeast, the Southeast, and the Northwest. A total of 15 Christian schools were originally contacted asking for permission from them to participate in the study, and four schools agreed to participate. A letter of approval was obtained from the proper authorities at each school who received a link containing the survey. Officials from each participating school sent the link containing the live survey to their graduates who completed the survey online at their convenience.

Research Question

RQ1: What effect does the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course have on the worldviews of Christian high school graduates who have taken the course as compared to

Christian high school graduates who have not taken the course as measured by a biblical Christian worldview test?

Null Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of scientific naturalism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 1, 9, 15, and 34 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of moral relativism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 5, 13, 16, 21, 24, 26, and 29 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho3: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of religious relativism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 8, 11, 12, 20, 43, and 45 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho4: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of biblical infallibility on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 6, 14, 18, 30, 31, and 48 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho5: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of the divinity of Jesus Christ on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 10 and 19 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho6: There is no statistically significant difference between the overall scores on a biblical Christian worldview test of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Descriptive Data

There were 28 respondents to the survey, which consisted of 58 worldview analysis questions. The study included only respondents who had graduated from high school within the past five years from the time that the study was conducted (2013). Although there were 127 respondents originally, the study was limited to those who had graduated from high school within the past five years in order to help limit the potential influence of factors other than the *Understanding the Times* curriculum on the worldviews of respondents. This left 28 respondents whose answers were analyzed for the study. Of the 28 respondents, 19 reported that they had taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course while in high school, and 9 reported that they had not taken the course.

Results

An independent samples *t*-test was performed in order to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between both the overall and the five domain scores on a biblical Christian worldview test of Christian high school graduates who have taken the

Understanding the Times Christian worldview course (n=19) and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course (n=9).

The scores on the biblical Christian worldview test served as the dependent variable, and the number of test takers in each group was the independent variable. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics used to conduct the *t*-test.

Table 1						
<i>Biblical Christian Worldview Test Descriptive Statistics</i>						
	<u>Took Understanding The Times</u>			<u>Did Not Take Understanding The Times</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Deviation</u>
Overall	19	232.11	40..82	9	222.78	48.44
Naturalism	19	15.79	3.58	9	14.67	4.33
Moral Relativism	19	28.26	6.35	9	26.78	7.45
Religious Relativism	19	25.42	4.35	9	25.11	4.23
Scripture	19	24.57	5.89	9	26.89	3.48
Divinity of Christ	19	8.74	1.73	9	9.78	.44

Normality is not assumed for the distributions of the scores used for this study. The distribution of the scores for both the groups that participated in the study-those who had taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those who had not- reveal that the scores cannot be assumed to be normally distributed. This was true for both the overall scores and for those of all of the five domains.

The *t*-test indicated no statistically significant difference between the scores of the respondents who had taken *Understanding the Times* while in high school and those who had not. This was true for both the overall scores and for the scores in each of the five domains.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the *t*- test conducted on the scores of the respondents on the biblical Christian worldview test.

Table 2							
<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>							
	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Significance</u>	<u>Mean</u> <u>Difference</u>	<u>Std. Error</u> <u>Difference</u>	<u>95% Confidence</u> <u>Interval of the</u> <u>Difference</u>	
						<u>Lower</u>	<u>Upper</u>
Overall	.54	8	.60	9.33	18.67	-33.71	52.37
Naturalism	.73	8	.48	-.75	2.83	-7.28	5.79
Moral Relativism	.55	8	.59	-1.15	5.42	-13.64	11.35
Religious Relativism	.18	8	.86	.12	7.61	-17.43	17.67
Scripture	1.09	8	.29	2.41	7.23	-14.42	19.24
Divinity of Christ	1.80	8	.09	1.29	3.14	-5.95	8.52

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores in the area of naturalism of those who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not. There was not a significant difference in the scores of those who had taken the course (M=15.79, SD=3.58) and those who had not (M=14.67, SD=4.33); $t(8) = .73$, $p = .48$. These results suggest that *Understanding the Times* does not have a significant effect on the worldviews of students in the area of naturalism when compared to students who had not taken the course.

There are numerous factors that may have contributed to the small difference in the scores of the two groups in this area. It is likely that both groups of participants had somewhat similar backgrounds. Since all participants graduated from Christian high schools it can be assumed that most came from families that valued the Christian faith and that could be expected to increase their understanding of the Christian worldview. Additionally, both groups of participants graduated from Christian schools that emphasized the role of the Christian faith even though they used different methods of instruction. Also a belief in naturalism suggests that God played no role in the formation of the world which is obviously directly contradicts the Christian worldview.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores in the area of moral relativism of those who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not. There was not a significant difference in the scores of those who had taken the course ($M=28.26$, $SD=6.35$) and those who had not ($M=26.78$, $SD=7.45$); $t(8) = .55$, $p = .59$. These results suggest that *Understanding the Times* does not have a significant effect on the worldviews of students in the area of moral relativism when compared to students who had not taken the course.

There are numerous factors that may have contributed to the small difference in the scores of the two groups in this area. It is likely that both groups of participants had somewhat similar backgrounds. Since all participants graduated from Christian high schools it can be assumed that most came from families that valued the Christian faith and that could be expected to increase their understanding of the Christian worldview. Additionally, both groups of participants graduated from Christian schools that emphasized the role of the Christian faith even though they used different methods of instruction. Also moral relativism suggests that there are no moral absolutes and that idea contradicts biblical teaching.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores in the area of religious relativism of those who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not. There was not a significant difference in the scores of those who had taken the course ($M=25.42$, $SD=4.35$) and those who had not ($M=25.11$, $SD=4.23$); $t(8) = .18$, $p = .86$. These results suggest that *Understanding the Times* does not have a significant effect on the worldviews of students in the area of religious relativism when compared to students who had not taken the course.

There are numerous factors that may have contributed to the small difference in the scores of the two groups in this area. It is likely that both groups of participants had somewhat similar backgrounds. Since all participants graduated from Christian high schools it can be assumed that

most came from families that valued the Christian faith and that could be expected to increase their understanding of the Christian worldview. Additionally, both groups of participants graduated from Christian schools that emphasized the role of the Christian faith even though they used different methods of instruction. Also, the idea that all religions equally lead to God clearly contradicts Jesus' teaching.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores in the area of the infallibility of Scripture for those who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not. There was not a significant difference in the scores of those who had taken the course ($M=24.57$, $SD=5.89$) and those who had not ($M=26.89$, $SD=3.48$); $t(8) = 1.09$, $p = .29$. These results suggest that *Understanding the Times* does not have a significant effect on the worldviews of students in the area of the infallibility of Scripture when compared to students who had not taken the course.

There are numerous factors that may have contributed to the small difference in the scores of the two groups in this area. It is likely that both groups of participants had somewhat similar backgrounds. Since all participants graduated from Christian high schools it can be assumed that most came from families that valued the Christian faith and that could be expected to increase their understanding of the Christian worldview. Additionally, both groups of participants graduated from Christian schools that emphasized the role of the Christian faith even though they used different methods of instruction. Also, the idea that the Bible is the infallible Word of God is a common belief among evangelical Christians.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores in the area of the divinity of Christ for those who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not. There was not a significant difference in the scores of those who had taken the course ($M=8.74$,

SD=1.73) and those who had not (M=9.78, SD=.44); $t(8) = 1.80, p = .09$. These results suggest that *Understanding the Times* does not have a significant effect on the worldviews of students in the area of the divinity of Christ when compared to students who had not taken the course.

There are numerous factors that may have contributed to the small difference in the scores of the two groups in this area. It is likely that both groups of participants had somewhat similar backgrounds. Since all participants graduated from Christian high schools it can be assumed that most came from families that valued the Christian faith and that could be expected to increase their understanding of the Christian worldview. Additionally, both groups of participants graduated from Christian schools that emphasized the role of the Christian faith even though they used different methods of instruction. Although the difference in this area was not statistically significant, the results for participants who graduated from non-*Understanding the Times* schools were relatively more biblical than in the other domains. This may be due at least partially to a lack of emphasis on this particular topic in the *Understanding the Times* curriculum.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the overall scores of those who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not. There was not a significant difference in the scores of those who had taken the course (M=232.11, SD=40.82) and those who had not (M=222.78, SD=48.44); $t(8) = .54, p = .60$. These results suggest that *Understanding the Times* does not have a significant effect on the overall worldviews of students when compared to students who had not taken the course.

There are numerous factors that may have contributed to the small difference in the scores of the two groups. It is likely that both groups of participants had somewhat similar backgrounds. Since all participants graduated from Christian high schools it can be assumed that

most came from families that valued the Christian faith and that could be expected to increase their understanding of the Christian worldview. Additionally, both groups of participants graduated from Christian schools that emphasized the role of the Christian faith even though they used different methods of instruction.

Based on the analysis of the *t*-test there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. There is no statistically significant difference between the biblical Christian worldview test scores of Christian high school graduates who had taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who had not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Summary

This research study utilized a non-experimental, causal-comparative (ex post facto) design comparing the taking of the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course with their scores on a biblical Christian worldview test. Data was collected after respondents from graduates of four Christian high schools in four different regions of the United States took the online test at their convenience. After the data was collected the research question was analyzed using a *t*-test.

The research question compared the biblical Christian worldview test scores of respondents who graduated from a Christian high school and had taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those who graduated from a Christian high school and had not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course. The results that were analyzed for the study were limited to the responses of those who had graduated from high school within the past five years of the time the study was conducted (2013). The results of a *t*-test indicated no statistically significant difference between the scores of the two groups on the

biblical Christian worldview test. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected; there is no statistically significant difference between the scores of graduates of Christian high schools who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those of graduates of Christian high schools who had not taken *Understanding the Times*.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Summary of the Findings

The Christian worldview approach to learning contrasts with other approaches to Christian education in that it attempts to “bring back together” that which should have never been separated in the first place—faith and everyday life. Rather than seeing the purpose of Christian schooling to be separation from secular schooling with Bible classes and chapel services thrown in, the Christian worldview approach attempts to help students realize and understand how every area of the world and life within it is under God’s domain. It seeks to illustrate that there is no nature versus grace split, no secular/sacred divide, no separation of God from any area of reality (Pearcey, 2004). It seeks nothing less than to inculcate in students the knowledge and understanding that all truth is God’s truth; indeed that God is truth itself.

Summit Ministries has been perhaps the most influential organization in promoting the development of a biblical Christian worldview in students. Founded in 1962, for many decades it has operated two-week seminars for students offering an intensive overview of various aspects of a biblical Christian worldview. These seminars are designed specifically for college students or those who have graduated from high school. Beginning in 1991, Summit has offered a yearlong curriculum designed for high school students (usually seniors) to take at Christian high schools in order to help them develop a comprehensive Christian view of the world focusing on 10 areas or disciplines of life: theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, economics, law, politics, and history. It has since added other age-specific curriculum products for middle school students, elementary students, and even a curriculum for Sunday school students. Summit has recently (2013) completed and released the results of a study on the effectiveness of its two-week long seminar program on its graduates. However, to the date of this research project, no

study has ever been done on the effectiveness of Summit's yearlong curriculum in helping students to develop a comprehensive biblical Christian worldview.

Quantitative research methodology was used to help gain insight into the effectiveness of the curriculum among graduates of Christian high schools who had taken the yearlong worldview course. This study was conducted during the late fall of 2013.

The researcher received permission from four Christian high schools to request that their graduates participate in the study. The schools represented four different regions of the United States: New England, Southeast, South-Central, and Pacific Northwest. Each school sent an electronic link containing the survey to its graduates, and 127 total people participated in the study. However, the study only included those participants who had graduated from high school within the past five years from the time the study was conducted (2013). This limited the study to 28 respondents. The survey consisted of 58 questions relating directly to a biblical Christian view of various areas of life and human existence and 14 questions containing demographic information on the respondent. The completed surveys provided the researcher with an array of variables with which to cross tabulate specific information. This yielded a great deal of specific insight into the participants' responses and the nature of their worldviews and the extent to which they are consistent with a biblical worldview.

The following research question was specifically examined in this study: What effect does the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course have on the worldviews of Christian high school graduates who have taken the course as compared to Christian high school graduates who have not taken the course as measured by a biblical Christian worldview test?

In order to answer this question participant's overall scores on the worldview survey were analyzed. Additionally, participant's responses were also analyzed in five different areas or

domains within the worldview survey. Those domains included naturalism, moral relativism, religious relativism, the infallibility of the Bible, and the divinity of Jesus Christ. The following null hypotheses were used when analyzing the responses in the study:

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of scientific naturalism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 1, 9, 15, and 34 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of moral relativism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 5, 13, 16, 21, 24, 26, and 29 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho3: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of religious relativism on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 8, 11, 12, 20, 43, and 45 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho4: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of biblical infallibility on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 6, 14, 18, 30, 31, and 48 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho5: There is no statistically significant difference between scores in the area of the divinity of Jesus Christ on a biblical Christian worldview test as measured by responses to questions 10 and 19 of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Ho6: There is no statistically significant difference between the overall scores on a biblical Christian worldview test of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and those of Christian high school graduates who have not taken the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

A *t*-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and Christian high school graduates who have not taken the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview test. This was done for both the overall scores and for the scores on each of the five domains within the test.

The high associated *p* values for each of the five *t*-tests (table 3) indicated that no statistically significant difference existed between the scores of Christian high school graduates who had taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course and the scores of Christian high school graduates who had not taken the yearlong *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course. Therefore the null hypothesis for the research question was not rejected. This suggests that Christian high school graduates who have taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course do not score higher on the biblical Christian worldview test than graduates of Christian high schools who have not taken the year-long *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course.

Findings from this study will contribute to knowledge about the effectiveness of the *Understanding the Times* curriculum in helping students to develop a biblical Christian worldview. Since this curriculum has been used by many Christian schools in the United States the findings of this research study can be used to understand and strengthen Christian worldview education. This may be true not only for those schools that use the curriculum, but also for those Christian schools that do not. This is possible because administrators and teachers in all Christian schools that are interested in Christian worldview development in their students can observe the findings to determine strengths and weaknesses within not only the *Understanding the Times* curriculum, but also within their own curriculum and approach. That is, all schools who wish may use the information and analysis from the study to analyze and evaluate their own curriculum by comparing, contrasting, and discussing the relevance that the findings may have to their own schools.

The findings of this study primarily provide information regarding the extent to which students who graduated from a participating Christian high school are committed to a Christian worldview in certain, specific areas of belief and practice. However, in order to draw accurate conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the *Understanding the Times* curriculum, the data must be used in a comparative way. Specifically, the responses of students who used the curriculum in high school must be compared with those who did not. Used in this manner, helpful conclusions might be drawn to help determine the extent of the impact that the specific curriculum had on students who used it. For this reason the following findings will be divided, as stated in the research question, by those who took the *Understanding the Times* course while in high school and those who did not. This will be followed by a presentation of a comparison of the findings of the two specific groups.

This chapter includes a restatement of the problem analyzed in the research, a discussion of the implications of the study, an explanation of the assumptions and limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research. The chapter will conclude with a brief review of the methods and findings of the study.

Restatement of the Problem

Data for this study was collected through various Christian high schools throughout the United States that agreed to participate in the research. An electronic link to the online biblical Christian worldview test was sent to their graduates who then took the test at their convenience.

The research question which guided this study was as follows: What effect does the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course have on the worldviews of Christian high school graduates who have taken the course as compared to Christian high school graduates who have not taken the course as measured by a biblical Christian worldview test?

The research question sought to determine if there was a difference between Christian high school graduates who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not on a biblical Christian worldview test. A *t*-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the two groups.

An analysis of the results of the *t*-test indicated that no statistically significant difference existed between graduates who had taken *Understanding the Times* while in high school and those who had not. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This suggests that Christian high school graduates who have taken *Understanding the Times* do not score higher on a biblical Christian worldview test than Christian high school graduates who have not taken the course.

The results of the study can be of interest to Christian educators, parents, or anyone interested in developing a biblical Christian worldview in young people. With the great increase

in attention that has been given to this topic, as demonstrated by the countless articles and research referenced in this manuscript, it is obvious that developing a biblical worldview is important to many Christians. As stated earlier, Summit Ministries is a leading developer of curriculum and programs to help students develop a biblical Christian worldview. *Understanding the Times* is its yearlong curriculum designed for high school students in order to help them do this. With this in mind, the results of this study may be of great interest and importance in this field.

Implications

The term Christian worldview has become very popular over previous decades as the Christian community has seen a revitalization of the necessity of seeing all areas of human life as under the dominion of God (Colson & Pearcey, 1999). Christian educators have become especially concerned about this since it is their specific responsibility to lay a foundation in their students for a proper understanding of the universe and their place in it. This responsibility necessarily affects curriculum and instruction in the specific academic areas within Christian schools. Summit Ministries is the producer of a major Christian worldview curriculum used by many Christian high schools, and *Understanding the Times* is a yearlong curriculum for high school students designed to help students develop an overall Christian view of the world. The null hypotheses stated that there would be no difference in the worldview development of students at Christian schools who had taken the course and those that had not taken the course and that there would be no significant difference between the scores of the two groups on a biblical Christian worldview test. This study indicated that there was no significant difference on a biblical Christian worldview test between the two groups of Christian high school graduates,

and it suggested that there was no correlation between taking *Understanding the Times* and the presence of a stronger Christian view of the world.

There are a number of possibilities that may have contributed to this lack of significant difference between the two groups. Perhaps the primary reason may be that the two groups are likely very similar in many ways. Even though the respondents in the survey represented four distinctly different geographic regions of the United States, it is likely that they had many similarities.

For instance, all of the respondents had graduated from Christian high schools within the past five years. This suggests that they all received at least somewhat similar education and training within the conceptual framework of a Christian worldview. This possibility may be considered even more likely due to the fact that each of the participating schools are known by the researcher to be strongly committed to the development of a Christian worldview within their students. This was, in fact, a primary consideration in the researcher selecting them to be candidates for the study.

This may also be a reason that the scores of the respondents were not normally distributed. Both of the groups of respondents, those who have taken *Understanding the Times* and those who have not taken *Understanding the Times*, can be assumed to hold worldviews that are quite strongly correlated with a biblical Christian worldview. This would be expected since all respondents graduated from evangelical Christian high schools that seek to instill a Christian worldview in their students. It is also likely that their parents were supportive of a Christian worldview as well, since they decided to send their children to such a school. This could be expected to heavily skew the scores of the respondents toward a Christian worldview.

The implications of these findings can be important for anyone interested in helping children to come to understand the Christian faith affects every area of life, that it is in fact the very foundation of life itself. This study did not attempt to compare the differences in the worldviews of respondents who graduated from Christian high schools and those who graduated from secular high schools. Since this study only analyzed the worldviews of people who had graduated from Christian high schools, it should be noted that the scores of both groups of respondents were quite strongly correlated with the presence of a biblical Christian worldview. This can serve as evidence that Christian schools are effective in helping their students develop a Christian view of the world.

Also, the lack of a significant difference in the scores of the two groups of students should not be interpreted to imply that the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course is in any way deficient in its purpose of helping students to develop a Christian worldview. It only seems to imply that there are a number of approaches that Christian schools may use to help students develop a Christian worldview. Various schools use different methods to accomplish this purpose and they may all be quite effective in doing so. Along with the previously stated implications of the importance of families in helping children develop a Christian view of the world, the variety of approaches that schools use actually may serve to show how expansive and all-encompassing a truly Christian view of the world is.

Again, the results of this study can be of importance to educators, pastors, parents, or anyone concerned with helping young people to develop a biblical understanding of truth as it applies to every area of human life. Although this study suggests that the *Understanding the Times* curriculum is not significantly more effective in helping students develop a biblical view of life than other approaches that may have been used, it does not suggest that it is any less

effective either. Perhaps the results of this study imply that there are many methods which Christian schools can use to effectively help inculcate a Christian view of the world in their students. They may even serve to encourage a variety of approaches to continue to be sought to help people to see the truth that every area of life is under the domain of God. New resources and approaches to Christian worldview development in students may be inspired, and current curriculum could be revised and strengthened. In any event, the results of this study shed new light on Christian worldview development in students. It is the hope of the researcher that they will serve to inspire Christian school leaders to increase their commitment to this vital area, by both encouraging them to continue existing approaches that have been effective and to seek new ones that may be equally or more effective. Christian worldview development is foundational to individuals and to society as a whole, and this study contributes to a better understanding of how it is being done and how it can inspire more commitment to it in the future.

Finally, the results of this study suggest that there are numerous ways that educators can help students develop a Christian worldview. The *Understanding the Times* course can be interpreted to be an effective curriculum but should not be viewed as the only, or necessarily the best approach for Christian schools to take. For teachers that do not have a strong understanding of the Christian worldview themselves the course may be an excellent option. However, for those with strongly developed Christian worldviews, other approaches may be preferred.

Assumptions and Limitations

Although this study provides valuable information and insight into the effectiveness of educational efforts in the area of Christian worldview development among students, it does have a number of limitations inherent within it. One limitation is the relatively small number of respondents (28) and schools (four) that participated in the study. These numbers are obviously

small when compared to the overall number of students and schools that are engaged in the process of Christian education in the United States and other countries. The sample used in the study may not necessarily be representative of Christian students and schools in the entire United States and certainly not of those in other countries.

Another limitation of this study is that, even among the four schools that participated in it, the representation of students from each school was not equal. This was true due to various items beyond the control of the researcher such as the varying sizes of the schools and the number of graduates that each had. Another major contributing factor to this limitation was the effectiveness of each participating school regarding their ability to contact past graduates. Since the survey was sent out by each school, the completeness and accuracy of the email address list of graduates that each school had greatly impacted the number of people who responded from each school.

Finally, there are always limitations involved with any type of self-reporting survey. Respondents may be motivated, consciously or unconsciously, to answer questions in certain ways. For instance, they may want to answer what they think is the “right” answer that the researcher is looking for, or they may be motivated by some animosity to answer in the contrary way in order to prove a point. Again this bias may be conscious or unconscious on the part of the respondent but is a limitation inherent in this type of study.

Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher believes that the development of a Christian worldview in its students is an essential aspect of any Christian school. With the prevalence of the Christian worldview movement over the past 20 years or so and the increasing dominance of opposing worldviews in academia and in society in general, it is imperative that Christian educators find ways to develop

strong biblical worldviews in their students. With this in mind, the researcher suggests that additional research be done in the following areas in the future.

First, since Christian education is almost exclusively approached on an individual school basis in the United States, it is suggested that future research be done in the area of Christian worldview development at the individual school level. Each school differs markedly in its curriculum and instruction in the area of Christian worldview development, so it is necessary for each school to determine its own effectiveness in this area.

Second, it is recommended that future research be done “in process” rather than waiting until students graduate to conduct research into the effectiveness of their curriculum and instruction in the area of Christian worldview development. Any number of tools and methods could be used by schools to help them understand their own development in this vital area while their students are attending their schools. This could be done systematically, periodically, and very effectively in helping individual schools and even individual teachers improve their effectiveness.

Finally, the researcher suggests that a study of this type be expanded greatly in order to shed light on the effectiveness of Christian worldview development among students in Christian schools nationwide or even worldwide. The technology is readily available for a study similar to this one to be done with hundreds of schools and thousands of students participating. This could be done through the use of an online survey as was done in this study or through the use of more comprehensive resources like a website or other electronic media. More specific knowledge and understanding could be gained through these approaches as the topics being researched could be narrowed and more in-depth analysis could be performed. As stated earlier, such research could be done by schools independently or as part of national or international studies.

Whatever form future research in the development of the Christian worldview might take, the technology to expand it is readily available. If this is done it could help to begin a serious national or international discussion on this topic that would have the potential to greatly strengthen the Christian worldviews of countless people. That, in turn, could greatly help to bring the light of Christ to the world.

Conclusion

The study of the development of a Christian worldview is a large and multi-faceted topic. It is difficult to make generalizations about it because it is difficult to determine exactly what has impacted individuals to believe what they do about the important topics discussed in this study. Despite the difficult, if not impossible, nature of drawing accurate conclusions about causes of beliefs, the researcher believes that this study has yielded some important information and insight into the process of Christian worldview development. Below is summary of those findings.

Data for this study was collected through various Christian high schools throughout the United States that agreed to participate in the research. They sent an electronic link to the online biblical Christian worldview test to their graduates who then took the test at their convenience. The research question sought to determine if there was a difference between Christian high school graduates who had taken *Understanding the Times* and those who had not on a biblical Christian worldview test. A *t*-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the two groups.

An analysis of the results of the *t*-test indicated that no statistically significant difference existed between graduates who had taken *Understanding the Times* while in high school and those who had not. However, this study should not be interpreted to mean that the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview course is not effective in helping students develop a Christian

view of the world. Rather it should be viewed as evidence that Christian education in general is effective in this area. The results of the study suggest that the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview curriculum is more effective with students in some areas than in others. The results of this study also suggest that there is not one curriculum or approach that can be effective in helping students develop a biblical worldview, but that a variety of methods can be beneficial in this area. They illustrate how big God Himself is, and Christian educators should not expect that developing any conceptual framework that seeks to apply Him to all of life would be a small and easy task. May this study serve to motivate Christian leaders in every area and walk of life to seek to cooperate together in this most important task for the glory and honor of God.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Permission Letter from Participating Schools

Appendix B. Consent Form for Participants

Appendix C. List of Worldview Questions Used in Study

Appendix D. Letter of IRB Approval from Liberty University

Appendix A. Permission Letter from Participating Schools

Date: July 26

Name of School Official

Dear:

As a graduate student in the Education Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. The title of my research project is *Understanding the Times: A Causal/Comparative Study of the Effectiveness of a Christian Worldview Curriculum in Helping Students Develop a Christian Worldview* and the purpose of my research is to compare graduates of Christian schools who have used the *Understanding the Times* curriculum and those who have not in terms of their adherence to a biblical Christian worldview.

I am writing to request your permission to utilize an email list of your graduates to recruit participants for my research. The email would be sent from you to your graduates, therefore I would have no direct contact with your graduates, nor will they be asked for any of their personal contact information.

Participants will be asked to go to a webpage, click on the link provided and complete the attached survey. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

The benefit to your school is that you will be able to see the results of your graduates on the worldview survey and you will be sent a final report of the entire study. The only information that will be included in the final study will be a comparison of the scores of graduates who used the *Understanding the Times* curriculum and those who did not; no identifying features of participating individual schools will be reported.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to dkbarrows@liberty.edu and send a signed letter on official school letterhead indicating your willingness to participate to the address below:

Kevin Barrows

2806 Lakehill Court

High Point, NC 27265

Or scan and email to: dkbarrows@liberty.edu

Or fax to: 336-884-8232

Sincerely,

Kevin Barrows
Social Studies and Christian Worldview Teacher, Wesleyan Christian Academy

Appendix B. Consent Form for Participants

CONSENT FORM

Understanding the Times: A Causal/Comparative Study of the Effectiveness of a Christian Worldview Curriculum in Helping Students Develop a Christian Worldview

Kevin Barrows
Liberty University
Department of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the worldviews of graduates of Christian high schools. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a graduate of a school that has agreed to participate in the study. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Kevin Barrows and the Department of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to help determine the effectiveness of the *Understanding the Times* Christian worldview curriculum in helping students develop a biblical Christian worldview. Some participants in the study will be graduates of schools that used the *Understanding the Times* curriculum and some will not. The researcher will then compare the results of the two groups of Christian school graduates in order to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following:

Complete an online survey designed to determine the extent to which your opinions on various topics and issues coincide with a biblical Christian worldview. The survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete. Your personal results would then be immediately available for viewing.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks of participating in this study are no more than the participant would experience in everyday life. The survey is anonymous and at no time will individual results be published.

The benefits to participation are that the participants will receive feedback about their own personal adherence to a biblical Christian worldview. The institutions from which the participants graduated will receive information regarding their graduates' worldviews and how they compare to that of other participating institutions. Christian educators in general will benefit as well from the knowledge gained from this study.

Compensation:

People who agree to participate in this study will receive no compensation.

Confidentiality:

The individual results of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. The limits to confidentiality are that the results of the overall study may be available for comparison purposes of the students who have used the *Understanding the Times* curriculum and those who have not.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the high school from which you graduated. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Kevin Barrows. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 336-653-0653 or dkbarrows@liberty.edu. My research advisor is Dr. Lew Weider. He can be contacted at 434-582-2000 or laweider@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

IRB Code Numbers: 1644.101413

IRB Expiration Date: 10/14/14

Appendix C. List of Worldview Questions Used in Survey

1. God is the creator of all life.
2. Every person who has ever lived on earth, except Adam and Eve and Jesus Christ, was born with a sin nature.
3. The author of mankind's natural rights is God, not the state.
4. Under some circumstances Christians are called to disobey the laws of government.
5. There must be absolutes if there is to be moral and legal order.
6. Adam and Eve were fictional characters who never really lived.
7. Both Secular Humanism and Marxism are religious worldviews.
8. All religions are equally true.
9. Biological evolution (life from non-life to human beings) runs contrary to reason, science, and history.
10. Jesus was crucified on the cross but was not physically raised from the dead.
11. Individuals must ultimately face the consequences of their actions before a Holy God.
12. If people live good lives they will be admitted into heaven.
13. All lifestyles should be accepted as morally and legally equal.
14. The Holy Spirit does not really exist.
15. The more one discovers about the universe, the more one discovers design.
16. Attempts to legislate morality violate the principle of the separation of church and state.
17. Science, history, literature and other advanced educational skills can be taught without a religious or philosophical foundation.
18. The Bible is a consistent revelation from beginning to end.
19. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life.
20. There is more than one way to God.
21. If it "works" for you then it must be true.
22. Biblically-minded Christians should see the world as divided into one of two categories: the secular and the sacred.
23. The Bible generally supports the idea of private property and personal responsibility.
24. Truth is either non-existent or unknowable.
25. Homosexual marriages should be legal.
26. Truth is discovered by man, not created by man.
27. Making money is more important than a good reputation.
28. Since it is her body a woman should be free to end her pregnancy with an abortion.
29. If God does not exist, all things are permissible.
30. God had no beginning and has no end.
31. Satan is real.
32. Premarital sex is morally permissible if two people love each other.
33. Religious ideas are personal and should be kept out of public discourse.
34. Science will always continue to make life better and better.

35. The government has a responsibility to attempt to solve all of society's problems.
36. Traditional marriage is an outdated institution and the family should be redefined to match societal realities.
37. Because the church exists in the age of grace, Christians have no obligation to Old Testament law.
38. Legislators should have freedom to write or create any law they believe will benefit their nations.
39. Judges should be able to interpret the law according to the changing attitudes in any society.
40. People are basically good and can be generally relied on to do what is right.
41. Christians should stay out of politics.
42. The primary responsibility for educating children belongs to the state.
43. All truth can be discovered if people look within themselves.
44. Reason and faith are opposites.
45. The best way to determine truth is by judging by personal experience.
46. Men and women are created in the image of God.
47. Something must have been eternally existent prior to the universe in order for it to have come into existence.
48. Absolute truth exists.
49. All truth is God's truth.
50. A person's motivations do not matter, only his/her actions matter.
51. Suffering has meaning and may actually be for the best.
52. Guilt is an illusion and should be avoided for mental and emotional health.
53. Civilizations matter more than individuals, so individuals may be expendable at times.
54. No matter what form of government a society has, it will never have a perfect society.
55. Citizens must act morally in order to maintain liberty.
56. Drunkenness is morally acceptable as long as the drunk person avoids driving while intoxicated.
57. Profanity is morally acceptable.
58. Exposure to pornography is morally acceptable if it is voluntary.

Appendix D. Letter of IRB Approval from Liberty University

October 14, 2013

Donald Kevin Barrows

IRB Exemption 1644.101413: Understanding the Times: A Causal/Comparative Study of the Effectiveness of a Christian Worldview Curriculum in Helping Students Develop a Christian Worldview

Dear Donald,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu. Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D. *Professor, IRB Chair* **Counseling (434) 592-4054** *Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971*