

Investigating the Prevailing Worldviews of American Public Education:

A Brief Analysis and History

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**Abstract**

This thesis investigates whether the philosophies and worldviews underlying U.S. public education contradict or purposefully undermine Biblical Christianity. It provides readers with an understanding of the Biblical Christian worldview to enable them to analyze and contrast prominent worldviews of public education. Pragmatism and Marxism run rampant in public education today. Both deeply deny fundamental tenets of the Biblical Christian worldview. To determine any purposeful anti-Christian agenda, the author examines the men behind the worldviews. Christianity maintains that ideas and practices in education originate from deeply-held, personal beliefs, which are passed on to students. Education is a means of discipleship to the ultimate end glorifying God, so parents must prudently discern the basic presuppositions of today's schools.

Keywords: Biblical Christian worldview, education, pragmatism, Marxism, constructivism, critical race theory, God, Marx, Dewey, Fabian

**Investigating the Prevailing Worldviews of American Public Education:****A Brief Analysis and History**

“Christians everywhere realize there is a great spiritual battle raging for the hearts and minds of men and women around the globe.”<sup>1</sup> The cosmic powers of the evil one are laboring ceaselessly to keep blinders on the eyes of all people, Christians and non-Christians alike.<sup>2</sup> There is an ongoing battle taking place in the power centers of the world. One such power center is the educational realm. Modern educators and lawmakers believe that the education system must be uniform and free of bias. Uniformity of goals and curriculum is stressed in the name of fairness. By a lack of bias, they mean public education must be secular in nature—as conveyed by Supreme Court rulings like *McCullum v. Board of Education* (1948) and *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp* (1963)—and religion, especially Christianity, must remain a part of the private sphere. Christians must see that all education is rooted in some form of a worldview regardless of the claims of secular neutrality.

These claims prompt serious questions. For example, what worldview(s) are children being exposed to during their formative years of life? Do they align with the beliefs of their parents? If not, whose beliefs are they? Are they consistent with Biblical Christian values? Interestingly, since the start of the late nineteenth century, there has been a major decline in Judeo-Christian values in the public sphere as well as biblical literacy across the culture. At the same time, higher education became increasingly commonplace and compulsory public-schooling proliferated. There may very well be a connection between the decrease of

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<sup>1</sup> David Dockery, “Introduction,” in *Shaping a Christian Worldview*, eds. David Dockery and Gregory Thornbury (TN: Broadville and Holmes Publishers, 2002), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 6:12, ESV.

Judeo-Christian values and the rise of the modern school system.<sup>3</sup> British social activist Sylvia Pankhurst wrote regarding public education reform, “Let us face the facts, comrades, the education of the masses is a large and strenuous task, but there can be no communism until the masses desire Communism and act Communism.”<sup>4</sup> Christians should not naively assume people of this ilk are not influencing public education in America today, aspiring to shape the next generation according to their worldviews and agendas. The nature of today’s education system as well as its roots deserve careful consideration.

A number of excellent Christian scholars have sought to equip fellow believers with Biblical worldview tools and principles to understand the world and ideas. Others have documented the philosophies and agendas that shaped U.S. public education over time. However, there are no written guides showing Christians how to associate the practices of the modern public education system with the worldview assumptions and theorists underlying them. Many parents have not closely scrutinized education because they have bought into the myth that education is value-free.

But God commands parents to rear their children well. Besides the parental relationship and the local church body, education possesses the next greatest influence in the raising of a child. Attentive parents will work to discover the worldviews promoted within public education before they enroll their children. This paper demonstrates that pragmatism and Marxism are two dominant forces of public education fundamentally opposing the Biblical Christian worldview and originating from men with troubling hearts and agendas.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Dabney, *Discussion Vol. 3: Philosophy* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1890), 242, 257-60.

<sup>4</sup> Sylvia Pankhurst, “Education of the Masses,” *Dreadnought Pamphlet*, no. 1 (1918).

### What is Worldview?

Before analyzing worldviews in any realm of life, one must first grasp worldview as a concept and become familiar with the core tenets of the worldview he or she professes. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) first used the term *weltanschauung* to communicate worldview in 1790, and it was later popularized by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) in the nineteenth-century.<sup>5</sup> The German word conveyed one's perception of the world. People have varying perceptions of the world around them, and they behave and order their lives accordingly. Scholars frequently illustrate worldview as the "lenses" or glasses that alter people's understanding of reality and the "road map" for how people live life.<sup>6</sup> Worldviews represent peoples' perceptions about reality, and shape the way they think and act.

### Defining Worldview

When defining worldview more precisely, one encounters countless opinions, each with unique nuances; some have a philosophical tone and others a more scriptural one. Most direct attention to a few core elements and questions concerning God, man, and the world. Among the many definitions examined in the process of this work, the following are quite helpful for building a comprehensive understanding of worldview. David Noebel, known for writing *Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews*, offers a concise definition in laymen's terms, stating, "Worldview is a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world."<sup>7</sup> Noebel uses

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<sup>5</sup> David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 58.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 23.

<sup>7</sup> David A. Noebel and Jeff Meyers, *Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews* (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press, 2016), 6.

“a pattern of ideas,” which communicates specifically ordered thoughts and knowledge. When one puts trust in them, they become a pattern of beliefs. Conviction implies a strong duty or commitment to the pattern of ideas, which is evidenced by habits, behaviors and lifestyles.

People comprehend God and the world (e.g., what reality is) and how they relate to God and the world (e.g., What is the meaning of it all? Who does that make us?) through their worldview.

Dr. Glenn Martin, long-time professor at Indiana Wesleyan University and worldwide lecturer, provides a more detailed and articulate definition, stating:

A worldview is a full-orbed, rationally considered, and articulated view of God, man, and the cosmos, which answers both the cosmological and the anthropological questions (addressing to that end the four subsidiary questions: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and teleology) and applies those answers to all of life generally and to every area of life specifically in terms of the institutional structure and procedure flowing from those answers.<sup>8</sup>

For Martin, “rationally considered, articulated view” limits worldview to logical and linguistic expression. The qualifier “full-orbed” denotes the worldview’s comprehensive nature and relationship to every dimension of life. Martin believes worldviews are coherent rational systems (e.g., secular humanism, Islam, Christianity, Marxism), and argues it must offer a view of God, man, and the cosmos. Where Martin diverges most from Noebel is the listing of specific questions a worldview must address and its application to all of life. He considers the cosmological and anthropological questions the basic, all-encompassing categories that form human perception and understanding. In principle, the answers to them order the totality of one’s life, such as how to think about and interact with the rest of humanity and how to undertake responsibilities like work, education, and child-rearing. Martin aims to communicate

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<sup>8</sup> Glenn R. Martin, *Prevailing Worldviews: Of Western Society Since 1500* (Marion, IN: Triangle Publishing, 2006), 30.

“institutional structure and procedure” as the societal expression of a worldview’s answers to life’s big questions.

James Sire, a Christian author and apologist best known for his works on worldview, *The Universe Next Door* and *Naming the Elephant*, defines the term as:

A commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.<sup>9</sup>

Contrasting with Martin, Sire draws worldview away from abstract categories, directing us toward the heart. He believes, following the legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), that the heart plays the most monumental role in the origination of one’s worldview. At their core, worldviews are of a deeply personal nature, representing heart commitments.

Another strength of Sire’s definition is the specific inclusion of expression. He states that worldview expression occurs through a story (i.e., a grand scheme or narrative) or presuppositions. Presuppositions are akin to Noebel’s pattern of beliefs and the answers to Martin’s fundamental questions. For Sire, presuppositions are assumptions deeply embedded in every person’s mind, guiding their life.<sup>10</sup> Some people tend to cling to contrary presuppositions, or presuppositions which are logically inconsistent. Human beings are fallible, demonstrated by inconsistencies between their beliefs and behavior. With this, some people are vigilant in consciously evaluating their worldview, while others adopt them subconsciously, or by default.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2015), 141.

<sup>10</sup> James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 149-50.

The next component of Sire's definition includes a fundamental orientation to "the basic constitution of reality." A worldview affirms what is fundamental to all reality. This ultimate foundation established how "we live and move and have our being."<sup>12</sup> A worldview is all-encompassing, effecting every area of our lives and who we think we are.

In each of the three definitions, the authors provide helpful summations of what a worldview is. Noebel hits on the essence of a worldview while Sire and Dr. Martin more explicitly exhibit the vast and impactful nature of the concept. A worldview must include the following elements: an inward commitment, a position as to the foundation of all reality, societal expression, and application to life. An important note regarding expression is that it can occur comprehensively via presuppositions and metanarratives or in part via cultural symbols or society's institutions.<sup>13</sup> The latter often help provide the answers to the basic questions which then point back to the foundation of a particular worldview.

The basic questions cover all areas mentioned in Martin's definition: cosmology, anthropology, ontology, epistemology, axiology, and teleology. In *Naming the Elephant*, Sire effectively covers those areas as well as the question of heart orientation using the following specific questions:

1. What is prime reality—the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being? (i.e. what is their nature, task, purpose)
4. What happens to persons at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?

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<sup>12</sup> Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 141.

<sup>13</sup> N.T. Wright, "The New Testament and the People of God," *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). Quoted in Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 56.

8. What personal, life-orienting core commitments are consistent with this worldview?<sup>14</sup>

Learning to ask these questions is an invaluable tool for Christians to evaluate and compare worldviews that oppose the Biblical Christian worldview. Likewise, having explicit questions and categories in mind is very helpful for diagnosing and analyzing worldviews manifesting themselves in public education.

### **Why Worldview Matters**

Although it contains a personal element, worldview proves to be so much more than a private, personal viewpoint whether people admit it or not. It answers the major questions about the world and existence that pluck at all people's hearts some time or another. The answers, as held beliefs, all have consequences. Whether people accept it or not, clinging to a worldview could have eternal ramifications, so the study of worldview should not be neglected by anyone.

For Christians, worldview study can play an indispensable role in loving and glorifying God through mind and action. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul vehemently states, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ."<sup>15</sup> Like all mankind, Christians are originally born with a perverted view of God and reality, so following conversion they must be intentional in making every thought obedient to Christ; "everything is either in submission to God or in rebellion against Him...there is no neutrality anywhere."<sup>16</sup> It is from this truth, Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper conceived the idea of "sphere sovereignty," affirming "there is not a square inch in the whole of our human life of which Christ, Who is Sovereign of all does not cry

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<sup>14</sup> Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 20, 155.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Cor. 10:5, NIV.

<sup>16</sup> Doug Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning: An Approach to Distinctively Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers), 1991, 49.

Mine!”<sup>17</sup> Born again Christians must put on a new “lens,” the mind of Christ, and understand that the Biblical Christian worldview is a crucial “all-consuming way of life.”<sup>18</sup>

The biblical processes of sanctification, renewing the mind, and character formation relate directly to education. The Bible demonstrates children are “prone to sin” and need “moral and intellectual instruction” founded on God’s Word.<sup>19</sup> This provides “students with answers and orientations to life,” so education naturally possesses a religious character.<sup>20</sup> A secular education inculcates the soul with answers and orientations from a foundation other than God and his Word. University of Chicago Professor Allan Bloom notes that “every educational system has a moral goal to attain and that informs its curriculum...to produce a certain kind of human being.”<sup>21</sup> Education is clearly a religious shaping of students’ identity and self-perceived purpose. For Christian parents and educators, the objectives must be Christian character and knowledge of God and his commands. But non-bibliocentric education systems work purposefully to mold students into something other than a Christ-follower. Every agenda is born from a worldview, and all worldviews carry consequences for life.

Given the aforementioned, it is apparent that what is called secular, that is “neutral” or “value-free” education, is an utter myth. Some, like John Gatto, have devoted entire volumes to documenting ideologues, elites, and their educational agendas to create a “restratified social order” for their own purposes.<sup>22</sup> Due to their religious nature, education systems that are

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<sup>17</sup> Abraham Kuypers, “Sphere Sovereignty,” (a public address delivered at the inauguration of the Free University, October 20, 1880), trans. George Kamps.

<sup>18</sup> Dockery, *Shaping Christian Worldview*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 129.

<sup>20</sup> William F. Cox, *Tyranny Through Public Education: The Case Against Government Controlled School* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Maitlan, FL: Xulon Press, 2020), 371.

<sup>21</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1987), 26.

<sup>22</sup> John T. Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: A Schoolteacher’s Intimate Investigation into the Problem of Modern Schooling* (New York: Oxford Village Press, 2000), 105-106.

compulsory are a flagrant violation of freedom of conscience.<sup>23</sup> Without this freedom, parents lose control over the religious destiny of their children—the shaping of their worldview.

Biblically, parents are shepherds and stewards of their children, who ultimately belong to the Lord.<sup>24</sup> No parent ought to render unto Caesar (the state), that which bears God’s image.<sup>25</sup>

Parents have an obligation to raise their children in faith to transform their characters into God’s own character, as He commands in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 and 11:18-19.<sup>26</sup> When government-run public educational institutions are visibly dominated by worldviews and agendas opposing the Biblical Christian worldview, parents must decide whether enrollment in them is detrimental to their children’s spiritual formation or even an abdication of their role as educational authority.

### **The Biblical Christian Worldview**

This section creates a framework for the Biblical Christian worldview using Sire’s eight bedrock questions and Martin’s subsidiary categories. Scholars use several different labels for a God- or Christ-centered worldview. This discussion employs “Biblical Christian worldview” to draw a clear distinction from the terminology of nominal Christianity. The term is also adopted by Dr. Martin and Dr. Gai Ferdon.<sup>27</sup> It most winsomely communicates that worldview is centered on the existence of the Trinitarian God-head and rooted in the authority of Scripture (the Holy Bible).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cox, *Tyranny Through Public Education*, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Ps. 127:3-5, 128:3-4, ESV.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 22:21-22, ESV.

<sup>26</sup> “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut. 6:6-7, ESV). “You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut. 11:18-19, ESV).

<sup>27</sup> Dr. Gai Ferdon of Liberty University specializes in public policy, worldview studies, and constitutional history. Her experience has been gained during years of study and field experience in the U.S. and abroad.

<sup>28</sup> Noebel and Meyers, *Understanding the Times*, 28.

## **Biblical Christian Presuppositions**

### ***Ontology – Foundation of Foundations***

The ontological question is the most important question for Christians to answer. “What is prime reality?” One’s answer to this question dictates how all other worldview questions are answered. Biblically, the answer is God. In Genesis 1:1, “in the beginning God...,” the reality of God is clearly assumed. His reality cannot be proven by propositions because He simply *is*. Sire remarks that God is being in the truest sense of what it is to be.<sup>29</sup> In Exodus 3:14, God reveals Himself to Moses as the ultimate being, declaring, “I AM who I AM.” God is infinite, eternal, and unchanging and He is outside of creation, time and space. As the very essence of being, His nature and character dictate the nature and order of the universe and the nature and identity of mankind. Ontologically, the Biblical Christian worldview recognizes God as the great Creator.

The prime reality of God dictates that external reality, the created universe, is both good and orderly. Being good Himself, the Genesis 1 account portrays the original goodness of all that the Creator made.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, God gave order to the creation through the complementary relationships of what He made: Day-Night, Heaven-Earth, Man-Woman.<sup>31</sup> Creation has order because God made the universe by and through Himself and upholds it by “the word of his power.”<sup>32</sup> Also, despite groaning for a time under the curse of sin, the majesty of creation continues to reveal God’s glory to all.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 73.

<sup>30</sup> Gen. 1:3, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31, ESV.

<sup>31</sup> Gen. 1:3-5, 8-9, 27, ESV.

<sup>32</sup> Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:16, ESV.

<sup>33</sup> Ps. 19:1-2; Rom. 1:19-20, ESV.

As for humanity, people are God's special creatures because they share his image.<sup>34</sup> By stamping them with his divine nature and bestowing upon them a soul, God grants humans an infinite eternal worth not possessed by other created beings.<sup>35</sup> Originally, man and woman could choose to sin, or not, but once they sinned, they incurred the penalty of death to themselves and every generation thereafter. All people born of man are by nature slaves to sin and live in rebellion against God.<sup>36</sup> The nature of man is such that he naturally shares in the image of his Maker, maintaining eternal value, but he also inherits the depravity of heart from Adam.

### *Epistemology*

**God as Revealer.** The second presupposition of a Biblical Christian worldview addresses Sire's fifth question, "Why is it possible to know anything at all?" John 1 succinctly expresses how God revealed Himself. It states, "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God." The passage affirms the reality of God and the Word—the Logos—as the divine knowledge or revelation of God to man. There is a general revelation of God proclaimed by His creation, but it is through the Word that God bestows absolute truth. The Word was first proclaimed by the Prophets, then revealed in flesh through Jesus Christ, and is now inerrantly recorded in the Scriptures.<sup>37</sup> By exercising human reason, no one can comprehend the truth of God, but those whom God grants the Word can ascertain many absolute truths about God, reality, and mankind through the Scriptures.

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<sup>34</sup> Gen. 1:26, ESV.

<sup>35</sup> Gen. 2:7, ESV; Gai Ferdon, *Constitutional Government and Free Enterprise: A Biblical Worldview Approach and Emphasis* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2014), 42.

<sup>36</sup> Gen. 3, Rom. 1:18-32, 1 Cor. 15:20-22, Eph. 2:1-3, ESV.

<sup>37</sup> John 1:14; 2 Tim. 3:16, ESV.

**Scripture is Authoritative.** Crucial to Biblical epistemology is the presupposition of the authority of Scripture. Martin calls it the “verbal, propositional form” of God’s revelation to humanity.<sup>38</sup> The Bible is the source of all knowledge and truth God has disclosed to man without which man would “know nothing for certain.”<sup>39</sup> There is no inspired revelation to man today except through the Word. The Biblical Christian worldview asserts Jesus Christ is the Word that reveals all knowledge, of God or of the created order, and this Word is revealed in the Scriptures. Thus, Scripture serves as the guide to every aspect of life.

### ***Axiology***

According to Martin, the axiological question is “what, if anything, is of ultimate value?”<sup>40</sup> It also answers Sire’s question: How do we know what is right and wrong? Axiology seeks to answer what is good and what is beautiful, covering the spheres of ethics and aesthetics. Biblically, the ultimate value and worth is obvious—it is God. God is the ultimate standard for measuring good and evil and right and wrong.<sup>41</sup> In the same way, beauty must always be measured against Him.<sup>42</sup> Scripture definitively portrays God as “the norm of the beautiful” and his beauty is irresistible to those who have comprehended it.<sup>43</sup> God is most clearly revealed as the ultimate value of the universe in Christ our Redeemer and Treasure.

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<sup>38</sup> G. Martin, *Prevailing Worldviews*, 39.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>41</sup> Ps. 16:2, 34:8, 119:68, ESV.

<sup>42</sup> Ps. 27:4, 50:2, ESV.

<sup>43</sup> R.C. Sproul, “Our Beautiful God,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, December 4, 2014, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/our-beautiful-god/>; Ps. 73:24-26; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:6, ESV.

***Teleology***

**Question of destiny.** The fourth presupposition relates to teleology, asking the question of “Where are we going?”<sup>44</sup> Regarding this, Sire posits, “What is the meaning of human history?” The root assumption of biblical teleology is that God has an ultimate goal for created order. The Biblical Christian worldview “affirms...the world is moving in a certain direction, under the sovereign hand of a loving and just God, and that there is a larger story and purpose to life.”<sup>45</sup> Since God is the ultimate Source, He is likewise ultimate in dominion as Sovereign and Ruler.<sup>46</sup> God rules and guides all of history according to his purpose and will which is to glorify and take pleasure in Himself forever.<sup>47</sup> Thus, man’s chief end is to “glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”<sup>48</sup>

**History.** Because of God’s telos, there is incredible purpose and meaning to human history. Just as He asserts Himself as ultimate being in Exodus 3, in Revelation 1:8, God again says “I am,” referring to Himself as the “Alpha and Omega.” Here, God reveals Himself as the beginning and the end to human history. In his own good pleasure, God began the temporal world by the power of his Word and by his Word, He will judge it and put an end to it. But God, man, and other eternal beings will continue to endure forever. All who trust in Christ as Lord and Savior will reign eternally with Him, but during this temporal age, believers are commanded to make Christ’s glory known to all the earth by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples.

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<sup>44</sup> G. Martin, *Prevailing Worldviews*, 23.

<sup>45</sup> Brad Green, “Theological and Philosophical Foundations,” in *Shaping a Christian Worldview*, edited by David Dockery and George A. Thornbury, 88.

<sup>46</sup> Daniel 4:35; Ps. 135:6; 1 Tim. 6:15, ESV.

<sup>47</sup> Eph. 1:9; Isa. 48:9-11, ESV.

<sup>48</sup> Isa. 43:6-7, ESV; “Shorter Catechism: Text and Scripture Proofs,” The Westminster Standard, Last modified 2021, <https://thewestminsterstandard.org/westminster-shorter-catechism/>.

***Sire's Question of Heart Orientation***

The eighth, additional question Sire asks is not presuppositional but a critical and intriguing aspect of worldview. It is a uniquely biblical concept not considered in secular worldview study. Biblically, two orientations of the heart are described: one fundamentally directed toward God and the other toward sin. At the heart level lies the seat of the will and the seat of the affections.<sup>49</sup> The heart driven by sin turns to perverted forms of worship and religious systems (i.e., anti-biblical worldviews). Driven by Christ, the heart rightly worships God and begins establishing a Biblical Christian worldview. Sire concludes that worldview should not be confined to propositions alone because it is undoubtedly of spiritual origins.<sup>50</sup>

**Worldviews of Public Education**

Comprehending the core of the Biblical Christian worldview, it is possible to examine prominent ideas and practices in the public education system for basic worldview assumptions. It is the duty of Christians to perform this examination because, as previously mentioned, education is inherently religious in character. It is simply a matter of what worldview(s) children are educated in. While fragments of several worldviews may be found in the public education system, pragmatism and Marxism appear preeminent and foundational to the system.

**Pragmatism**

Expressions of pragmatism are bountiful within American public education thanks to a handful of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century theorists, the most notable of whom is John Dewey (1859-1952). Pragmatism is truly challenging to identify, as it gradually permeated all levels of education since Dewey's work, *Democracy and Education* (1916). The difficulty

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<sup>49</sup> Sire, *Naming the Elephant*, 143.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

intensifies because it has successfully moved from theory to a default way of education and life. Defined, pragmatism is “the belief that propositions do not mirror reality and should therefore be judged only by their practical consequences.”<sup>51</sup> This definition expresses a worldview that emphasizes epistemology (how we know) over ontology (the reality of what is). Prominent practices stemming from Dewey’s pragmatism are ‘child-centered’ or ‘whole child’ education and the continuous preaching of creativity, openness, change, and diversity.

### *Pragmatism in the Schools*

**Child-centered education.** “All children are born scientists, learners, doers, makers, and empathizers.”<sup>52</sup> This statement sounds like a mantra, but it is a common assumption among education experts, parents, and students today. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is a representative of the broader educational community and has been advocating pragmatic education since the mid-twentieth century, beginning the Whole Child Initiative in 2007. The ASCD asserts that too much weight is placed on academic achievement, to the neglect of education’s “broader social dimensions” and students’ “long-term development.”<sup>53</sup> Within this, lies some level of faith that it is possible to “tailor-make” education to each student’s “social background and psychology.”<sup>54</sup> Child-centered education contends that students should have considerable control over their educational experience. Teachers merely facilitate students’ experiences through presentation of varying challenges, which ensures they continually develop in behavior and values. Proponents of child-centered education argue the method produces

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<sup>51</sup> Noebel and Meyers, *Understanding the Times*, 164.

<sup>52</sup> Chanel Kit Fo Fung, “‘Active Child’ and ‘Active Teacher’: Complementary Roles in Sustaining Child-centered Curriculum,” *Childhood Education* 91, no. 6 2015.

<sup>53</sup> “About ASCD,” Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Sowell, *Inside American Education: The Decline, the Deception, and the Dogmas* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 93.

“high-quality learning” due to the student’s feeling of “agency over his or her learning.”<sup>55</sup> Given the teacher’s direction, the agency is only felt rather than apparent.

**No singular human nature.** There are specific ideas or facts which can be gleaned from child-centered education and reduced to basic assumptions of pragmatism. Emphasis is placed on student autonomy and exploration and “having new experiences.” It is thought that for curious children to develop according to the freedom of their impulses, learning must occur without a preexisting hermeneutic or any metaphysical frameworks. To accomplish this, Dewey maintained that students should approach school as unscholastically as possible.<sup>56</sup> The underlying assumption of this educational approach is that there is “no singular unique person possessing of a human nature.”<sup>57</sup> In his writing, Dewey never definitively lands on one. The reason being he believed all humans were “constituent elements” of their social group.<sup>58</sup> This pragmatic view of human nature is closely linked with the assumption of “development,” a chief objective of Dewey’s worldview. He presumed that all of life existed in a state of flux and that education could direct the flux of human social groups into a continuous stream of development, as in evolution. For this kind of development to occur, human nature had to be dynamic rather than static, and ever-changing according to the development of the social group.

**Destruction of personhood.** Dewey’s analysis can now be contrasted with the biblical framework laid out in previous sections. Child-centered education is a byproduct of pragmatism via the belief in the non-existence of an identifiable human nature, and the assumption of

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<sup>55</sup> Fung, “‘Active Child’ and ‘Active Teacher.’”

<sup>56</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, prod. David Reed and David Widger (Project Gutenberg, last updated August 1, 2015), chap. 12, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/852/852-h/852-h.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> Noebel and Meyers, *Understanding the Times*, 163.

<sup>58</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, chap. 1.

progressive human development. The former falls into the ontological category since human nature biblically always reflects prime reality. Pragmatism holds that there is no perceivable prime reality, ruling out the possibility of a settled, identifiable human nature. This should sound the alarms of the Biblical Christian mind. By removing the prime reality of a personal God and replacing Him with nothing, pragmatism obliterates the possibility of personhood and human individuality. In an early response to Dewey, one author called Christians to stand against pragmatism because it asserted “human personality had no transcendent origin” or “destiny.”<sup>59</sup> Pragmatism sadly reduces mankind to a high-functioning animal, and life to a brief grasp for happiness before “passing into the dark night of nothingness.”<sup>60</sup>

**No sin nature.** Biblical Christianity’s contrast with pragmatism is also evidenced in their approaches to a child’s impulses. The idea that the “child needs little discipline” because he will naturally conquer his environment opposes Scripture’s teaching.<sup>61</sup> God commands that parents discipline their children just as He disciplines his own.<sup>62</sup> From birth, children need correction and character instruction due to the sinful heart inherited from Adam. Children are persons in need of biblical guidance, not automatons to be left to their own passions and inclinations.

**Purposeless development.** Pragmatism’s assumption of development effectively answers the question: Where are we going? According to Dewey, “life is a self-renewing process through action upon the environment.”<sup>63</sup> As such, humanity advances onward in endless renewal (i.e., evolution) via the vessel of the social group. There is no meaningful, lasting goal in mind except

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<sup>59</sup> Waldemar O. Doescher, “Dewey’s Educational Philosophy and Its Implication for Christian Education.” *Christian Education* 22, no. 5 (June 1939): 379-80.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>61</sup> Henry T. Edmondson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education: How the Patron Saint of Schools has Corrupted Teaching and Learning* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1955), 22.

<sup>62</sup> Prov. 13:4; Heb. 12:7-11, ESV.

<sup>63</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, chap. 1.

in association with a social group at a given time. Everything stays relative to the group. The pragmatic worldview claims that life and history are anti-teleological, without purpose. But to assert meaninglessness is to assert meaning. The worldview assumes history endlessly flows from higher to lower; savagery to civilization as Darwin called it. Biblically, God is the beginning and the end of human history, upon which He purposely imparted meaning, namely to bring glory to Himself. Further, the Biblical Christian views human history not as hopeless, but hopeful, because God promises to one day restore the world from its confused, fallen state. In His mercy and creativity, God has offered hope to man in this age as well—Creation is still good despite its fallenness.

### *The Cardinal Virtues*

**Creativity, openness, diversity.** Another manifestation of pragmatism is the incessant advocacy for creativity, openness, and diversity as part of an educational methodology. The magazine *Education Week* revealed creativity tops the list of ‘skills’ valued by parents and teachers, being “perhaps the most revered” in the realms of education and business.<sup>64</sup>

Historically, creativity was a term of distinction, inextricably linked to the standard of ‘what is art’ or ‘the beautiful.’ Pragmatists assert every child possesses it from birth. In education, creativity is not art, but the essence of experimentation and ‘the emergent.’ Similarly, American education has long hailed openness as a great moral virtue. Bloom explains that openness once meant the discovery of the truth through reason, but now, it means to be “accepting of everything and to deny reason.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Sarah Sparks, “Creativity Conundrum: Can Schools Teach Students to Innovate?” *Education Week*, February 4, 2020, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/a-creativity-conundrum-can-schools-teach-students-to-innovate/2020/02>.

<sup>65</sup> Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 39.

**Constructing one's own truth.** Why have these new values been instilled in students and disagreement with them treated as immoral? Proponents view any opposition as hostile to “the emergent, the new, the manifestations of progress.”<sup>66</sup> The ideas behind the push for creativity, openness, and diversity are Dewey's conceptions of constructivism and social reconstruction. Dewey asserted that only fools “associate creativity with the fanciful” and that it was more authentic to put everyday things to use through “intellectual constructiveness—creativity.”<sup>67</sup> Students can overcome challenges by exercising creativity and openness and building off knowledge from past experiences. Plainly stated, the process of constructivism asserts that students must deconstruct “old realities” in order to devise “new realities” that better suit the problems they face; pragmatism declares that truth is “what works” at any moment.<sup>68</sup>

The new value of diversity motivates people to adopt cultural relativism and social reconstructionism. Cultural relativism asserts that the belief that knowledge is a construct that exists only in the context of the present values or aims of a social group or culture. Social reconstructionism claims that through the process of constructivism, and the acceptance of all cultures or social groups as equal, the world will reach utopianism. Education now becomes a problematic enterprise because teachers peddle these new values for the sake of “world-changing” crusades.<sup>69</sup>

**Relativism.** The basic presupposition within knowledge constructivism and cultural relativism is relativism. An epistemology of relativity asserts that no truth can be known and no

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<sup>66</sup> Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, chap. 12.

<sup>68</sup> Edmondson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education*, 29.

<sup>69</sup> “About ASCD,” Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

absolute truth exists, reducing knowledge to what is useful for the moment. Relativity is detrimental to education, as an absolute basis for study and scholarship no longer exists.

**Man-made reality.** The transition from belief in and absolute truth to relativity transforms knowledge from something to be discovered through orderly search to becoming a building block for constructing one's own reality. Education moves from creativity and discovery, to a process of individual social formation. Schools are primarily social machines that perpetuate desired social "evolutions." One goal of education is then to "teach students how to construct knowledge," to build their own reality one brick at a time.<sup>70</sup> Pragmatism's rejection of absolute truth denies God as the great Revealer who leads people into truth and knowledge. Education from a Biblical Christian worldview drives students to seek and discover knowledge through the infinite wisdom and mind of God as revealed through the Scriptures. By failing to understand knowledge according to the revelation of Prime Reality, the pragmatist takes the place of God, constructing his own reality according to his will or the will of the social group.

### *John Dewey's Influences and Religious Disillusion*

**Influences.** Pragmatism contradicts the Biblical Christian worldview in serious ways. To discover how pragmatism entered public education with the intent to undermine Christianity, one must examine the influences, life, and agenda of its main pioneer, John Dewey. Dewey was primarily influenced by the German idealists, namely George Hegel (1770-1831), as well as Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and fellow pragmatist William James (1842-1910). Hegel proposed that all people embody Spirit, an essence of deity, and through the dialectical process of history humanity reaches various levels of transcendence as the Spirit seeks perfect freedom. Dewey

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<sup>70</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 241.

also aspired toward perfect freedom, believing that a democracy provided the most freedom and a democratic education was the ideal vessel of progress. William James, known as the Father of American Psychology, was the first to conceptualize the “stream of consciousness.” James’ functionalist theory of the mind helped Dewey develop his pragmatic beliefs.<sup>71</sup> The role of Charles Darwin is significant because he revolutionized naturalist philosophy with his theories of evolution and natural selection. It was a perfect basis for Dewey who strongly desired a substitute for prominent supernatural theories.

**Agenda.** As for Dewey’s personal beliefs, he rejected early in life “orthodox faith” and religion as absurd, convinced such supernatural positions represented the failure of some men to grapple with life’s problems.<sup>72</sup> According to Edmondson, Dewey was disillusioned with the supernatural, Christianity in particular, calling it a delusion and desiring people be liberated from the “prejudice and ignorance” such religions as Christianity generate.<sup>73</sup> Despite his disdain for the supernatural and the metaphysical, he wrote *A Common Faith* (1934), expressing how the democratic ideal could function as a religious center, leading mankind toward freedom. As a result, Dewey thought a proper education system should (1) “foster a democratic form of society” and (2) that “society alone can resolve the perennial tensions between freedom and authority.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, schools should shape each successive generation of students.

**Baseless ideology.** Dewey’s ideals and goals relative to democracy seem harmless and even desirable. However, the very worldview that Dewey promoted and defended offers no

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<sup>71</sup> Michael Buxton, “The Influence of William James on John Dewey’s Early Work,” *Journal of the History Ideas* 45, no. 3 (July 1984).

<sup>72</sup> Edmondson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education*, 21; Robert E. Fitch, “John Dewey and Christian Education,” *Christian Education* 28, no. 1 (September 1944): 23.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>74</sup> Doescher, “Dewey’s Educational Philosophy,” 383.

grounds for the high view of humanity which democracy and Biblical Christianity presuppose. In a quest for progress and unlimited freedom, Dewey's pragmatism destroys personhood and human individuality which Christianity lays the axiological foundation for.

### ***Concluding Thoughts***

Dewey's pragmatic worldview has seeped its way into public education for at least hundred years. Biblical Christians must exercise vigilance as they consider how something as commonplace as Dewey's approach to a child-centered education or curriculum is in fact founded on a false view of God, humanity, and the meaning of human existence. While no evidence suggests Dewey sought purposefully to undermine Christianity through his educational philosophy, he was hostile to the idea of a Christian God. The irony of Dewey is that the pragmatic ideals and experience-oriented way of life he advocated were far more abstract than the biblical and modernist traditions he rejected. His beliefs require a leap of faith. Gatto called Dewey and early twentieth-century education pioneers "true believers"—ideologues in pursuit of self-made religions to replace the one they had lost faith in.<sup>75</sup> For Christians, Dewey's legacy is an optimistic yet baseless hope, hoping with no certainty of knowledge, purpose or reality.

### **Marxism**

While pragmatism has put its stamp on public education, Marxism is the most immanent threat to a student's worldview. Marxism is dangerous in part, because of its grand claims about hope and the meaning of human history. Frederick Engels (1820-1895), co-author of *The Communist Manifesto* described Marxism's core proposition,

That in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon

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<sup>75</sup> Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education*, 185.

which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind...has been a history of class struggles...<sup>76</sup>

Engel's statement implicitly and explicitly conveys Marx's core tenets: atheism, materialism, economic determinism, progressive history, and class conflicts. The Marxist worldview was far-reaching in U.S. institutions by World War II and beyond. Marxism's infiltration into education was and continues to be a part of a calculated plan, which is disconcerting for Christians.

### *Marxism in the Schools*

**Rewriting History.** Public schools have strenuously propagated cultural relativism since the U.S. Civil Rights Movement (1954-68) but that is now being taken to another level. In recent years, claims have been made that the current institutions, methodologies, and content of public education are inherently racist against BIPOC groups—black, indigenous, and people of color—and designed to oppress them.<sup>77</sup> The hailed solution of the liberal intellectual community is to inoculate all students, teachers, and administrators with special training in “mindfulness of cultural assumptions and bias,” and to alter the representation of other races in curricula and texts.<sup>78</sup> Special attention must be given to adopting “culturally responsive teaching” and “historically accurate U.S. history curriculum.”<sup>79</sup> This is what the American public is presently hearing and the terms are often vague and veiled. The charge is being led by Black Lives Matter and Pulitzer prize award-winning, *The 1619 Project* and its supporters. The 1619 Project's main objective is to exchange the dominant narrative of American history for one that centers on the

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<sup>76</sup> Frederick Engels, “Preface,” in Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1888).

<sup>77</sup> David E. DeMatthews and Terri. N. Watson, “No, Critical Race Theory Isn't ‘Anti-American,’” *Education Week*, October 5, 2020.

<sup>78</sup> Britney L. Jones, “Reducing Racism in Schools: The Promise of Anti-Racist Policies,” UCONN Center for Education Policy Analysis, September 22, 2020.

<sup>79</sup> DeMatthews and Watson, “No, Critical Race Theory Isn't ‘Anti-American.’”

“black experience”; public education needs reforming to remove its inherent racism, which is also the essence of critical race theory. The largest teachers unions, like the National Education Association, are also actively promoting radical, Black Lives Matter curricula founded on critical race theory.<sup>80</sup> According to critical race theory, U.S. institutions and white citizens are inherently racist because the U.S. was founded on slavery, and purely for economic and political gain.<sup>81</sup>

**Critical race theory.** The relationship between critical race theory and Marxism is revealed by their parallels. Critical race theory repackages the Marxist idea that “the whole history of mankind has been a history of class struggles” by overlaying racial categories on the proletariat and bourgeoisie classes; a white oppressor class versus the oppressed people-of-color class. All people labor under the worldview and institutions of the white oppressor class by default, but oppressed people-of-color alone possess the prescience to see injustice and initiate revolution.<sup>82</sup> In comparison, Marxism asserts that society was gradually forming into two polarized “camps”: bourgeoisie and proletariat.<sup>83</sup> The bourgeoisie is composed of inherently greedy, exploitative capitalists represented by constructs such as private property, free trade, universal truth, and orthodox religion (namely Christianity); the same constructs critical theorists claim represent the “white” social class, the determinative element being the color of one’s skin.

**The Marxist analysis of history.** Beneath the proletariat-bourgeoisie, oppressor-oppressed frameworks of class struggle lie the assumption of a Marxist analysis of

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<sup>80</sup> Jonathan Butcher and Mike Gonzalez, “Critical Race Theory, the New Intolerance, and Its Grip on America,” *The Heritage Foundation*, December 7, 2020, 16.

<sup>81</sup> Christine E. Sleeter, “Critical Race Theory and Education,” in *Encyclopedia of Diversity of Education*. ed. James A. Banks (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc., 2012), 491.

<sup>82</sup> Roderick Watts, Matthew Diemer, Adam Voight, “Critical Consciousness: Current Status and Future Directions,” in *Youth Civic Development: Work at the Cutting Edge: New Directions for Adolescent Development*, no. 134, eds. C. A. Flanagan and B. D. Christens (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 43-57.

<sup>83</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1888).

history. Before explaining this view, it is important to describe the colored lens or “theoretical essence” of Marxism: dialectical materialism.<sup>84</sup> It is “the belief that only the material world exists and that class struggles are the mechanism behind economic and social progress.”<sup>85</sup> In this view, class struggles occur dialectically, which means a dominant class exists, spawned by the dominant means of production, which in turn generates an opposite class. Over time, the two classes reach a point of major tension and conflict, resulting in a synthesis and the birth of a new “social organization.” According to Marx, the clash between the bourgeoisie and proletariat results in socialism, which “contains the seeds of perfection,”—the communist world order.<sup>86</sup>

**Inevitable destiny.** The Marxist analysis of history points primarily to a teleological perspective which assumes the inevitable progress. Martin affirms Marxism’s two great “articles of faith” as “all change is progressive” and “the dialectical process will terminate when socialism is internationalized.” The Marxist worldview claims that history is headed toward the ultimate and “inevitable” end: perfect, collective, communist world order, though impersonal and without ultimate, eternal meaning for humanity.<sup>87</sup> The attraction of such a teleology is the promise of a perfect and painless world. Ferdon declares that historicism—absolutizing of the temporal—“asserts a *messianic* and *salvific* role of history inherent in the process itself.”<sup>88</sup>

**God’s unbreakable promises.** The Marxist analysis of history and the Marxist worldview is contradictory to the Biblical Christian worldview. Marxism denies that the sovereign and providential hand of a good and personal God resides over the course of human

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<sup>84</sup> G. Martin, *Prevailing Worldviews*, 156.

<sup>85</sup> Noebel and Meyers, *Understanding the Times*, 205.

<sup>86</sup> G. Martin, *Prevailing Worldviews*, 171.

<sup>87</sup> Noebel and Meyers, *Understanding the Times*, 105.

<sup>88</sup> Ferdon, *Constitutional Government*, 115.

history, robbing it of meaning, beauty, and its exaltation of the glory of God. Marxism also denies history is providentially directed according to the purposes and promises of God. Sproul says this hope in the promise of God—the promise that the future of his children is certain, secure, laid up for them in heaven, is the essence of the hope described in Hebrews Chapter 6.<sup>89</sup> This hope is the “anchor” of the Christian soul during this life.<sup>90</sup> Christians should fervently reject any other promise of hope than that which rests on the foundation of Christ. Christ is the cornerstone. “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven among men by which we must be saved.”<sup>91</sup> As Ferdon states, Marxism contains a salvific element, and should “more properly [be called] a religious vision.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, Christians must be wary of Marxism not only in education but all spheres of life, remembering any foundation but Christ is sinking sand.

### *Sinister Hearts and Troubling Plots*

While delving into the background of the pioneers of Marxism to determine any attempt to undermine Christianity and the Biblical Christian worldview, no explicit agenda was uncovered but there an obvious animosity was toward Christinity as well as a startling agenda involving the U.S. education system.

**Marx the man.** Paul Kengor claims that Marxism as an ideology, or any ideology for that matter, cannot be separated from the “private life” of the man.<sup>93</sup> Karl Marx (1818-1883) was born to a family of Jewish heritage who likely converted to Christianity for the social

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<sup>89</sup> R.C. Sproul, “God is the Lord of History,” Ligonier Ministries (blog), May 4, 2016, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/god-lord-history/>.

<sup>90</sup> Heb. 6:13-20, ESV.

<sup>91</sup> Acts 4:12, ESV.

<sup>92</sup> Ferdon *Constitutional Government*, 123.

<sup>93</sup> Paul Kengor, *The Devil and Karl Marx: Communism's Long March of Death, Deception, and Infiltration* (Gastonia, NC: TAN Books, 2020), 36.

benefits.<sup>94</sup> He constantly wrote about freedom from pain and oppression, yet Marx's personal life has a long record of laziness, prejudice toward minorities, and a dishonoring attitude toward his parents, his wife, and his children.<sup>95</sup> Compared to the high-minded ideals he preached, Marx appeared to be the greatest of hypocrites. Former Communist prisoner, Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, documents the forgotten, early writings of Marx. The first, Marx titled, *The Union of the Faithful with Christ* (1835), expressing the beauty and love of the heart bound to Christ.<sup>96</sup> But in a sudden, dramatic shift as young man, Wurmbrand and Kengor reveal the dark, tortuous poetry of Marx, referencing war against God, becoming "like a god," being "chosen for hell," and the "Prince of Darkness."<sup>97</sup> Without going further, Marx, so it seems, was not an ordinary atheist. Rather than disbelief in a God, he possessed a strange and pointed enmity toward Him.

**Influences.** Philosophically, Marx was the third in a chain of disciples beginning with Hegel. Hegel's idealism and dialecticism were inspired by the failures of the Enlightenment and French Revolution which marked the first widespread rejection of long-held beliefs in the supernatural and the biblical God. After Hegel, there was his disciple Feuerbach who was a staunch materialist and rejected belief in God as a weakness in the mind of man. In *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), Feuerbach describes Christianity as the ultimate bliss of man, a self-absorption with his own salvation leading him to project his own traits onto transcendent deity.<sup>98</sup> Inspired by them, Marx intertwined Hegel and Feuerbach's theories into a complete ideology

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<sup>94</sup> Casey Chalk, "Karl Marx's Shameful Life Repudiates His Evil Ideology," *The Federalist*, November 30, 2020.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Wurmbrand, *Marx & Satan*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986), 11.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 12-13, 15; Kengor, *The Devil and Karl Marx*, 39-40.

<sup>98</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Dover Publications, 2012), 68, 263.

referred to as dialectical materialism. For Marx and his followers, it became a new religion, one better than the “broken promises of modernity” and worthy of replacing Christianity.<sup>99</sup>

**The Fabians.** Searching for the trail of Marx’s disciples and how the Marxist worldview permeated U.S. public education, one need look no further than “communism’s helpmate, Fabian socialism.”<sup>100</sup> Originating in the late nineteenth century, the Fabians are a “revolutionary secret society,” who after establishing power in Britain came to the United States as professors and intellectuals.<sup>101</sup> They chose Harvard University as their original institution for “incubating revolution” on their ideology to various and numerous others.<sup>102</sup> The Fabians expose their methodology and strategy to achieve world Communism through their namesake, Fabius Maximus (280BC – 203BC), the Roman consul. Just as Fabius was nicknamed “the delayer,” the Fabians strategically delay, delay, and then “strike hard” like Fabius against Hannibal<sup>103</sup>, and then repeat the process until their goals are achieved.<sup>104</sup> Their primary distinction from other Marxists is their rejection of violent revolution. They desire to see ideological revolution occur almost unnoticed. Successful in their approach, the Fabians dominated the educational, economic, and political power centers of the U.S. by the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, it was the Fabians who first aimed to institute “universal standards and guidelines” for public education and to gain total control over media, which they have effectively achieved.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Dominic Erdozain, *The Soul of Doubt: The Religious Roots of Unbelief from Luther to Marx* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 223.

<sup>100</sup> Rose Martin, *Fabian Freeway: High Road to Socialism in the U.S.A.* (Boston: Western Islands Publishers, 1966), vii.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, ix.

<sup>102</sup> Zygmund Dobbs, “American Fabianism,” in *Keynes at Harvard: Economic Deception as a Political Credo* (New York: Veritas Foundation), 1960.

<sup>103</sup> Carthaginian general who fought against Rome during the Second Punic War.

<sup>104</sup> R. Martin, *Fabian Freeway*, 14; Ferdon, *Constitutional Government*, 124.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 446.

**Subversion via education.** Crucial to the discussion of the Socialist-Communist plots against the U.S. is the agenda of Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), who first declared it “the last great bastion of capitalism.” As such, he called for “external encirclement” and “internal demoralization.”<sup>106</sup> All Marxists believed Lenin’s words, certain that world Socialism, with an emerging Communist utopia, would dominate the U.S. The implementation of this plan accounts for the constant ideological onslaught faced by the U.S. during the period spanning the death of Marx in 1883 to the present day. Marx himself recommended the “subversion” of existing institutions, but the Fabians executed such a plan tactfully, and surreptitiously given America’s aversion to socialism.<sup>107</sup> They worked at internal demoralization gradually, under the more palatable guise of democracy, establishing “power centers” via universities, unions, and activist groups.<sup>108</sup> Democracy for the Fabians meant wrapping radical Socialist policy and social norms in a seemingly harmless package. Then, the Marxist analysis of history, under the guise of “democratic education,” could trickle down from power centers to public schools and reeducate Americans with a new set of values.<sup>109</sup> The Fabians viewed public education and media as the perfect vessels for reeducation as a decisive shift in worldview would enable the transformation of the United States into a socialist system.

### **Christian Concern**

For Marxists, the moral sentiments espoused in the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution must be eliminated since they contend for equality with the values of the bourgeoisie class. It is important for Christians to remember that the Founding Fathers, Christian

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<sup>106</sup> G. Martin, *Prevailing Worldviews*, 183.

<sup>107</sup> R. Martin, *Fabian Freeway*, 120.

<sup>108</sup> G. Martin, *Prevailing Worldviews*, 191; Ferdon, *Constitutional Government*, 125.

<sup>109</sup> R. Martin, *Fabian Freeway*, 245

and non-Christian alike, were steeped in biblical classicism.<sup>110</sup> The Founders promoted biblical views of life, liberty, property, and justice. The founding of America affirms the biblical principle of the intrinsic worth of every individual, which Marxism denies, and it promotes and protects ordered liberty and self-governance and affirms that no man can steal or abuse the private property of another.<sup>111</sup> For Marxism, private property is the greatest evil of capitalism that must be destroyed. The founding also affirms equality before God and equality under the law. Marxism aims to replace biblical justice (i.e., to show “no partiality”) with distributive justice that favors certain groups over others.<sup>112</sup> Christians must recognize that Marxists are zealous in their ploys to undermine the biblical foundations of the U.S.

A second area of major concern for Christians should be the institutional consequences of pragmatism and Marxism relative to education. Relativity and the absence of a static human nature result in constructivism, consequently turning education into social engineering.<sup>113</sup> Pragmatism, as envisioned by Dewey, requires the state control education to promote unlimited freedom via democracy. Since knowledge and reality are relative to the time and social group, education becomes social engineering to conform individuals to one’s social group and perpetuate that group’s evolution.

Similarly, the Marxist worldview assumes class or race are relative to the economic means of production. Education is then a perfect instrument for molding people’s nature to aggravate class conflict and indoctrinate an affinity for socialism to attain world Communism.

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<sup>110</sup> Daniel L. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 49.

<sup>111</sup> Ex. 20:15, ESV.

<sup>112</sup> Deut. 16:19, ESV.

<sup>113</sup> Ferdon, *Constitutional Government*, 126.

Since rising to prominence, the Fabian-controlled power centers have purposefully employed education as a tool to socially engineer society and reach its goals. Marxism promises salvation via reeducation and the transformation of the dominant means of production.

### **An Intriguing Observation**

The final observation worthy of mention relates to that spiritual condition which Sire describes as even more fundamental than presuppositions: heart orientation. It is evident that both pragmatism and Marxism starkly contrast with Biblical Christianity, but an interesting commonality of the two is the heart orientation of their main protagonists. In Dewey's writing and life, there is documented hostility toward the idea of the supernatural and disdain for people who believe in a God. In the case of Marx, his writings display a clear and unsettling animosity toward the biblical God whom he once put his faith in. With both men, their unredeemed, sinful hearts evidently drove them towards "worshipping the creature rather than Creator."<sup>114</sup> From their hearts and minds, totalizing ways of life sprang, perpetuated among children and students through the public education system. In this way, the cosmic battle for the souls of mankind endures.

### **Conclusion**

Equipped with a Biblical Christian worldview, the surface manifestations of these opposing worldviews can always be traced to their presuppositions. As it is, public education is molding students to the presuppositions of Marx and Dewey which seek to rationalize life without God. There is no honor or glory to God in knowingly subjecting children to education grounded in Dewey or Marx's beliefs. Cosmic battles are truly taking place all around, working

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<sup>114</sup> Rom. 1:25, ESV.

to snare people's hearts and minds in rebellion against God. Christian parents must take the educating of their children seriously and protect and equip them well while they are vulnerable to impression. Their responsibility is to raise their children in the Lord, providing them with Christ-centered discipleship and education. Pragmatism and Marxism reduce education to an impersonal process of human manipulation and control. Biblically, education should train children and students in the applicability of the Scriptures to all of life.<sup>115</sup> Students must be taught to conform their character according to God Himself and trained to extract truths about Him from the Bible for themselves. Biblical education guides children toward a personal relationship with the God of the universe and prepares them for a life of faith in, and service to Him. As such, biblical education aids in establishing a true and life-giving purpose, a godly identity, and hope in Christ, whereas social engineering of pragmatic and Marxist education is destructive, conforming children to baseless hopes.

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<sup>115</sup> G. Martin, *Prevailing Worldviews*, 56; Ferdon, *Constitutional Government*, 59.

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