

“Cultural Clash:
The Illuminating Role of ‘Worldview’”

Introduction: A New Screwtape Letter

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”
C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, preface

Just before I left Dallas to come to Phoenix, a secret agent on the side of the good handed me, under the cover of darkness, an unauthorized copy of a new “Screwtape Letter” that addresses the devilish intentions regarding the summer 2006 Blackstone Legal Fellowship. It also has in its crosshairs one of its unidentified participants. I was told in certain terms that I should share it with you publicly. It just may apply to you. It reads as follows.

My Dear Wormwood:

I have just returned from our weekly meeting of the “Infernal Lowerarchy*” where before my peers I was utterly humiliated to have to report that that ‘patient’ of yours has signed up to be a part of, and I quote a “nine-week summer leadership development program in law and servant ministry.” In this program, I had to tell them, he will be, and I quote again “equipped with a distinctly Christian worldview in every area of life, particularly in the areas of law and public policy.” For hell’s sake, how could you let that happen? After an unbelievably rigorous first year in law school, he was supposed to take break, have some fun, and relax. You are on the verge of letting that future “ambulance chaser” slip through your scaly fingers.

At that gathering, they plan on exposing things that we devils have been working assiduously to establish in their churches, in the contemporary social order, and in American legal culture for centuries. Your colleagues and I have labored night and day to promote various “Endarkenment” — excuse me, I mean “Enlightenment” — assumptions about religion, philosophy, science, morality and

law that have, together, created the current cultural morass in which they are now drowning. Even worse, at this meeting they plan on discussing the notion of natural law and the content of a Christian worldview as the basis, not only for personal transformation, but as the foundation upon which to engage the world of jurisprudence in a transformative way. My dear Wormwood, this simply cannot happen!

As you might imagine, our “Father below*” is not pleased with these developments. He fears that the fragmented, compartmentalized, pietistic version of Christianity, and the pragmatic, efficiency and career-based view of life that we have successfully imparted to these young law students through multiple avenues, including their own hoodwinked law schools and well-deceived churches, may be undermined. He is concerned that this may happen, not only in your patient, but also in the others who attend this gathering. Consequently, he has told me to take immediate action, else the consequences will be unusually severe for both you and me.

You know very well that from the time of our cosmic takeover, our fiendish Father has inspired us with a shrewd vision of disintegration and corruption. The Enemy, who has a slight advantage over us as the Creator of the universe, has stamped His own triune nature on the world He has made. All things reflect the unity and diversity of His own miserable character, and He wants those loathsome little replicas of Himself* to apprehend His creation as a “uni-verse” with its proper distinctions, overarching integrity, and comprehensive moral order. Yes, of course, all this has legal implications, but we don’t want them to know it. Instead, we have sought to undermine this coherent vision of reality, pitchfork and tail. We have aspired in all things everywhere to put asunder that which the Enemy has joined together. We have sought to exacerbate the diversity and destroy the unity, or to exacerbate the unity and destroy the diversity, whatever messes them up. We seek to reduce, to enlarge, to distort, to compartmentalize, to relativize, and to idolize everything *their* Creator has made.

Various unconscious human recruits have served us admirably in promoting our lies. Slubgob* is famous throughout our kingdom for prompting

both Plato's forms/world distinction and the dualism of the Gnostics and Manicheans, not to mention his success in adequately infecting the thought of that sexually repressed, neurotic bishop of Hippo, the so-called "Saint Augustine" with a residual neo-Platonism. Triptweeze* caused these wonderful misunderstandings to endure throughout the middle ages, with only a slight scare when that Dumb Ox Dominican named Thomas synthesized Aristotle's philosophy with theology and attempted to reintegrate nature and grace. Fortunately William of Ockham's nominalism restored the faith/reason and nature/grace split which we have successfully used to "bedevil" the Church's thought and life ever since. Descartes and Kant contributed unwittingly to our covert cause to divide and conquer through their respective mind/matter and noumena/phenomena distinctions.

The rise of idolized science — how we love to twist the Adversary's gifts! — especially in its undirected evolutionary form (Zozezas' work on Darwin should be noted here), has undermined the notion of creation itself. Next to redemption, of course, there is no more important doctrine for us devils to destroy. This has made it certain that facts and values are forever severed and that any transcendent moral vision, along with its legal implications, are forever nullified. Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, who by then required very little coaxing from us, took things the rest of the way home. How excited we were when Nietzsche, the latter of this triumvirate — our favorite infidel — announced to the world that God was dead! After all, our overall goal has been the liquidation of the Judeo-Christian worldview and its influence, including in the law courts, from the face of the earth.

But our crowning achievement has been in the churches and in the way Christians think and live overall. Under the well-intended but mistaken influence of their leaders, many Christians, including these believing law students, are deliciously confused about the truth! The silly little things have identified the very good creation with sin itself, and many of them can hardly wait to evacuate the planet and head off to heaven where they think they really belong! How joyfully they sing, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." As a result,

they promote heaven over earth, the spiritual over the physical, grace over nature, the soul over the body, the eternal over the temporal, faith over reason and so on. They see everything as essentially sacred or secular. They think that Christianity is its own distinct realm of life rather than a way of life for every realm. How proud they are of their resulting super-spirituality, nicely ensconced in their cozy, pietistic Christian ghettos! Their faith is privately engaging but publicly irrelevant. As a result, they will always keep their faith in one pocket and their life, and law practice, we might add, in another. We have been able to enthrone a set of good, solid resounding lies at the center of their lives!*

To be sure, my dear Wormwood, we must continue to spread these fallacies everywhere we can, and we must especially do our best right now to undermine the influence of Christianity as a total worldview on those who have been accepted to be a part of the “Blackstone Legal Fellowship.” This organization wants to influence these Christian law students profoundly so that they will take their training and knowledge into positions of influence in order to change America’s legal system for the better. They want, as they say, to “Learn, Lead, Defend.”

I say: “Barf on all that.” We must devise effective *long-term* strategies to trip them up. Place before them irresistible sexual temptations. Create as much discord in their relationships, marriages, and families as you possibly can (undermining marriage and family life has been one of our greatest successes!). Attack them with weapons of mass distraction, especially through frivolous TV programs and the internet, and in the pursuits of more sex, more money and more power! Reinsert them into churches and Christian communities that just don’t get what it is they are trying to do. Cause them to confuse the mere possession of knowledge with real obedience and action. Pound feelings of intense guilt into their brains over their shortcomings and sins. That is always effective! Humiliate them and cause them to think: “How could I do that? I’m just not Blackstone Fellowship material!”

Make sure the opposition to their efforts at cultural change is always met with stiff resistance, giving them a sense of cynicism and despair. Convince them

how hard it is to be faithful to their stinking God in the world of law and public policy. Above all, then, discourage them, discourage them, and discourage them again by whatever means are available to you. If we can keep them depressed and in the doldrums, if they see few results from their great investments of time, effort, and money, and education, and especially if they fear that their fellow law students back home will be richer and more successful than they will be, then we can keep the influence of this stupid little program contained. Otherwise, our hard-fought victories in thwarting the development of a Christian worldview and its legal implications among the Enemies' own barristers may be short-lived.

That's our long-term strategy. The pressing question now is: What are you going to do during these nine weeks to make sure this program is as ineffective as possible? We must seek to suppress its malevolent influence as best we can. So, regarding your patient, I suggest that you sidetrack him with anxieties about matters back home. Or remind him about where he stands or doesn't stand in his class rankings. Or perhaps you can lure him into a new love interest, or add a dash of corruption with a bit of pornography or a short stint of immorality. Of course, you can always employ our old standby tricks, distracting him with silly things like shoes that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes, or funny hair, the strange pitch of another's voice,* or now with annoying cell phone and blackberry habits. That should keep him from profiting from this meeting, the one thing we can't allow. In any case, report back to me when the awful program ends, and I expect to hear of significant success. Or else.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

*Indicates words or phrases original with Lewis

Questions on the "Screwtape Letter" —

1. What do you think are some of the most formidable human or demonic strategies in legal culture, including law school, that thwart Christian faithfulness and effectiveness?
2. What do you think might be the greatest obstacles to getting the most out of these nine weeks at the Blackstone Legal Fellowship?

The Overture

This newly disclosed “Screwtape Letter” serves as an overture to my talk today, as we will be dealing with the topic of “Culture Clash: The Illuminating Role of Worldview.” Nestled within this fictional piece of demonic correspondence, which actually may be more fact than fiction, are several themes that I want to consider with you this morning.

First, I would like to offer some reflections on the concept of worldview itself — German, *Weltanschauung* — which stands at the heart of the clashes of culture and civilization that surround us at both local, national, and global levels, affecting, certainly, the conditions and dynamics of legal culture.

Second, I would like to discuss naturalism and its implications as the reigning worldview underlying the domains of law school and the practice of law.

Third, I would like to contrast naturalism with Christian theism and its implications both theoretically and practically in this same legal realm of life and service.

And **fourth**, finally and probably most importantly, I want to consider the character of the Christian spirituality that is necessary to be obedient to and a transformative agent of Christian theism, or more specifically, of Jesus Christ and His kingdom, in the midst of a legal world dominated in very unfriendly ways by its thoroughgoing naturalism.

So, first we will look at the concept of worldview, then discuss naturalism and its implications (especially its bifurcations), followed by the challenge of Christian theism holistically conceived and radically comprehensive, and lastly, the spiritual dynamics of Christian obedience and faithfulness in the challenging world of American jurisprudence.

Reflections on the Concept of Worldview and its Role in the Clash of Cultures and Civilizations

“Let me repeat once more that a man’s vision is the great fact about him.”
- William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*

In the introductory remarks to his book *Heretics*, G. K. Chesterton writes these crucial words about the importance of worldview:

But there are some people, nevertheless — and I am one of them — who think that the most practical and important thing about a man is still his view of the universe. We think that for a landlady considering a lodger, it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy. We think that for a general about to fight an enemy, it is important to know the enemy's numbers, but still more important to know the enemy's philosophy. We think the question is not whether the theory of the cosmos affects matters, but whether, in the long run, anything else affects them.”¹

I was struck by this quote when I first read it, and I am still struck by it today. After all, what could be more important or powerful than the way individuals conceptualize reality?

Is any thing more fundamental than a culture's presuppositions and assumptions about the basic make up of the universe? What is more significant than a civilization's foundational systems of belief?

Is there anything more profound or influential than the way we as human beings answer the deeper questions of life that the very presence of the universe poses to us all?

In agreement, then, with Gilbert Keith Chesterton, I submit that the most practical and important thing about a human being is his or her view of the universe, is his or her theory of the cosmos — that is, the content and implications of one's worldview.

Fortunately, more and more people are recognizing just how important the notion of worldview is in understanding the thought and behavior, not only of individuals, but also of entire civilizations and the diversity of cultures within these civilizations.

For example, the noted Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington in his much-debated article and book on “The Clash of Civilizations” argued that world politics had entered a new phase after the end of the Cold War, and that

¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, in *The Complete Works of G. K. Chesterton*, ed. David Dooley, vol. 1, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 41.

tensions and warfare between civilizations as the highest groupings of people — especially the West, the Islamic world, and the Confucian East — would dominate the global scene.²

That there is more than a grain of truth in Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” proposal seems self-evident today.

As I read recently in an article in the *Dallas Morning News* about the death of Abu Musah al-Zarqawi, “to his supporters, ... [he] was a holy warrior, the ‘slaughtering sheik’ who defended Islam against American crusaders and Shiite infidels. For the Americans, he was the evil terrorist behind the Iraqi insurgency.”³ Truly, this difference in perspectives on al-Zarqawi are rooted in different views of life and the world.

Current conflicts, or “collisions of consciousness” as Peter Berger calls them, are, of course, not relegated to the global scale by any stretch of the imagination.

In fact, Huntington’s own former student James Kurth responded critically to his teacher’s thesis with an article titled “The Real Clash” in the journal *The National Interest*.⁴

In this essay, he argued that the clash that is coming, or that is in fact already present, is not so much *extramural* among the world’s great civilizations as it *intramural* within the civilization of the West, particularly between the adherents of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the advocates of diversified secular outlooks.

Books with titles like *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* by James Davison Hunter, *Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political*

² Huntington is the Albert J. Weatherhead III University Professor at Harvard University where he is also the director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies and the chairman of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies. He was the director of security planning for the National Security Council in the Carter administration, the founder and co-editor of the journal *Foreign Policy*, and the president of the American Political Science Association.

³ *The Dallas Morning News*, “Slaughtering sheik rose from poverty to brutality,” Friday, June 9, 2006, p. 13A.

⁴ James Kurth, “The Real Clash,” *The National Interest* 3 (Fall 1994), pp. 3-15.

Stuggles by Thomas Sowell, and *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion and Morality in Crisis* by Robert P. George, and more recently *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, also by Samuel Huntington, all seem to confirm Kurth's hypothesis.⁵

An internal cultural conflict of monumental significance is perhaps the defining trait of the West at this crucial moment in history — whether over drug laws, tax policies, corporate practices, military operations and spending, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, heterosexual relations, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, family life, divorce, church/state relations, pornography, stem cell research, human cloning and so on.

Each of these areas are obviously central legal issues today, and views of each are largely determined by the dynamics of competing worldviews!

A real cultural clash, then, within the West? Indeed! A clash of civilizations on a global scale? Most certainly, as September 11 and other radical Islamic terrorist attacks around the world indicate clearly.

The choice of perspectives is not either Huntington with his “clash of civilizations” thesis, or Kurth with his “real clash” in the West proposal. Rather both are real — indeed, very real.

But what is their ultimate source? Why the continuous conflict between civilizations, cultures, nations, cities, communities, families, and individuals?

Since human beings cannot function without a governing frame of reference, as I said, more and more people are beginning to realize that the conflicts we are experiencing today at every level — individual, local, national, and global — are actually conflicts between underlying worldviews.

Worldviews, in other words, are the silent yet powerful, motive forces that shape the dynamics of human life and history.

⁵ James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Thomas Sowell, *Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Robert P. George, *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion, and Morality in Crisis* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2001).

And certainly this battle among worldviews is prevalent, perhaps preeminently so, in the realm of jurisprudence, in the schools of law, and in its practice, from the classroom to the small claims courts all the way to the Supreme Court.

Thus, I propose that an understanding of the notion of worldview, and a grasp of the content of a Christian worldview and its primary competitors will certainly help elucidate the character of these global and local clashes of civilizations and cultures that define our moment in history.

And certainly for our purposes today, a knowledge about worldview, and worldviews, Christian and otherwise, is an indispensable pre-requisite for budding young Christian lawyers.

Understanding worldview is central to grasping the influences at play in law school, as well as for the intelligent and effective practice of law today for people like you who are committed to the biblical concepts of truth and justice and who desire to be representatives of the salt and light of the kingdom of God in the realm of jurisprudence.

As Os Guinness once wrote in endorsing this concept, “To think intelligently today is to think worldviewishly, to come to grips with the mosaic of meaning systems that make up modern thinking.”

Let’s begin, therefore, by taking a look at several definitions of the term worldview.

- James Orr, for example, defined a worldview as the whole manner of conceiving of the world and humanity’s place in it, the widest possible view which the mind can take of things.
- Abraham Kuyper referred to a worldview as a life-system, rooted in a fundamental principle from which was derived a whole complex of ruling ideas and conceptions about reality.
- Brian Walsh and N. T. Wright believe that a worldview is a perception of reality, the world and life that is rooted in a grounding narrative, that answers life’s deepest questions, that is expressed in

signs and symbols, and shows up practically in how people actually think and live.

In my own book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, I have argued that a worldview is a vision of God, the universe, our world, and ourselves rooted in and expressed through the embodied human heart.

Given the biblical teaching about the heart as the core of the person and the seat of the intellect, affections, will, and spirituality, it seems to me that life proceeds “kardiologically,” out of a vision of the heart.

The heart of the matter of worldview, I suggest, is that worldview is a matter of the human heart with its deeply embedded ideas, sensibilities, choices, and objects of worship.⁶

Our worldviews define us, making us who we are and determining what we do. So, the overwhelming personal and public power of a reasonably well-organized *Weltanschauung* is hard to exaggerate.

For indeed a worldview consists of the presuppositional basis of life — the premises from which arguments are made, the source from which talk flows, the foundation upon which action is based.

From a worldview rooted in the embodied heart emerge the issues of life, to borrow a line from the book of Proverbs. As a conceptual universe terminating in a practical way of living in the world, a worldview, as is often said, makes a world of difference.

Reflections on Naturalism and its Implications

“What if the hokey pokey is what it’s really all about?”
- Sign seen in an antique store in Wimberley, Texas

The worldview of thorough-going metaphysical naturalism certainly makes a world of difference, especially in the domain of law. Also known as philosophical materialism or physicalism, and in a religious or anti-religious way,

⁶ All of these definitions of worldview can be found in David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), passim.

as atheism, metaphysical naturalism rose to prominence in the nineteenth century.

It succeeded the relatively short-lived deism of the 18th century and even overtook the longevity of Christian theism that had endured as a worldview monopoly for over a millennium and a half before that.

Naturalism's pedigree is actually ancient. But it received fresh impetus in the Renaissance, and from the rise of the scientific, industrial and economic revolutions, all capped off with the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859.

Darwin's notions of natural selection and the survival of the fittest provided a scientifically reputable explanation for the origin of life and of diverse life forms, rendering naturalism a complete worldview. Darwin's ideas, according to contemporary biologist Richard Dawkins, is what made it possible to "an intellectually fulfilled atheist."⁷

Today, naturalism and its offshoots dominate the realms of education, science and law, just to mention three prominent areas. And of course it's the latter one that we are most concerned about.

If codified, as an underlying set of working assumptions, naturalism would consist of these essentials:

- (1) That the physical cosmos is all there is, ever was and ever will be; nature is the "whole show" (C. S. Lewis). God does not exist.
- (2) That the universe operates uniformly according to scientific law in a closed system of cause and effect that cannot be altered. Hence, naturalism entails determinism.
- (3) That human beings have evolved from the lower primates and that the soul, mind and personality are functions of the biological organism.
- (4) Religion is a fictional projection of the mind and the human personality onto the physical universe, as a false source of comfort and support.
- (5) That death is the absolute extinction of the human person.

⁷ Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: Norton, 1986), p. 6.

- (6) That science is the only way to know the facts, and that ethics, values and laws are established exclusively by autonomous human beings and are relative and always changeable.
- (7) That history is a linear, but purposeless process beginning with the cosmic accident of the big bang and progressing to an uncertain and probably destructive future.
- (8) That any hope of the survival of the human race is rooted in an ever increasing power over nature through technology, and a robust global economy that makes the benefits of technology available to all.

If there was a Richter scale to measure philosophic earthquakes in culture, then the advent of naturalism would rate at the very top as a ten.

C. S. Lewis, in his Cambridge inaugural lecture, asserted that the rise of naturalism in the context of modernity amounted to the “un-christening of Europe,” and led to the loss of the “Old European” or “Old Western culture” and to the advent of a “post-Christian” age.⁸

If, indeed, the universe itself is a cosmic accident, and life itself arose by undirected evolutionary means, then transcendent truth about the most important things in life, is fictional and entirely relative

Postmodernists certainly recognize this. In their estimation, all claims to universal truth, and even all laws, are socially and linguistically constructed, have no final authority. They are meant for no other purpose than to insure the political or economic dominance of those who assert the truth claims or made the laws in the first place.

Hence the need for deconstruction that we might be disabused of our reifications. That is, we need to be shown that all of our truths, beliefs, laws, and values are of our own making, constructed for our own advantage, and even used violently against other people.

Whereas the Judeo-Christian tradition, and to some extent even deism, as worldviews had provided a unified, coherent way of understanding the whole

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *De Descriptione Temporum*, in *Selected Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1969), pp. 4-5, 12.

of reality intelligibly, naturalism destroyed the intellectual unity of the west, and its tremors created a huge chasm between the physical and spiritual aspects of life, between what is supposedly objective and subjective, between reason and faith, between science and religion.

This colossal split is best known as the FACT/VALUE dichotomy. It's hard to exaggerate the impact that this fact/value dichotomy has had in Western culture, including its impact in the realm of law.

Objective, rational, physical, scientific facts are objective, rational, physical scientific facts, but subjective, faith-based personal, religious, and ethical values are subjective, faith-based personal, religious, and ethical values. And never the twain shall meet.

As sociologist Peter Berger observes, "the dichotomy is between the huge and immensely powerful institutions of the public sphere [including law]...and the private sphere." As he continues, in this scenario, "the individual is left to his own devices in a wide range of activities that are crucial to the formation of a meaningful identity, from expressing his religious preferences to settling on a sexual lifestyle."⁹

Francis Schaeffer famously referred to this as the division between the *lower story* and *the upper story*. The lower story is the story of nature, science and reason, and the *upper story* is the story of grace, religion and faith. As modern thought progressed, Schaeffer said, the lower story overcame the upper story, and nature ate up grace.

And we might add that science consumed religion, and reason devoured faith. As a worldview, naturalism was and is omnivorous, chewing up, swallowing, and digesting everything in its path, including the realms of education, science, and law.

And when naturalism arrived on the scene, it became impossible to be an intellectual fulfilled Platonist or Aristotelian or Augustinian or Thomist or Humanist

⁹ Quoted in Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, foreword Phillip E. Johnson (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), p. 20.

or Romanticist or theist for that matter, or anyone who happened to believe in anything that was transcendent.

The reason was/is (allegedly) that there was no basis in naturalistic science for any kind of philosophic, religious or moral values and beliefs that go beyond this world. While the lower story might be scientifically and factually true, there was no way to verify the content of the upper story of spirituality, morality, and values.

So what are the consequences of naturalism and the fact/value dichotomy it has generated? I will mention five things briefly.

1. Christianity is NOT knowledge.

And for that matter, no transcendent philosophy or religion is knowledge or truth at all. They are all mythical, legendary, apocryphal. All transcendent beliefs or meaning and value systems that involve the spiritual or supernatural are merely a matter of private opinion and mystical in character, an “emotional overlay on nature” (Nancy Pearcey), but certainly are not truth or knowledge.

What does this mean in law school and in the practice of law? That Christian truth claims, especially those rooted in the Bible, have no epistemological status. If they have no scientific, rational or logical legitimacy, then they are, in fact, non-scientific, irrational and illogical.

Biblically-based beliefs are simply unacceptable as truths, and will be thrown out of court as inconsequential. For this reason, it is also considered “bad taste” to introduce one’s religious beliefs into the legal process.

As a revealed religion with any significant legal mean, therefore, Christianity is considered bogus and irrelevant to the discussion.

This, of course, is the reason why an appeal to natural law rather than Scripture (unless Scripture is presented in disguise) has become such an important strategy in the Christian legal community.

Natural law is a way of grounding moral truth claims in a religiously non-specific way, and yet something that all intuitively recognize and can’t not know (as J. Budziszewski would say).

2. A second consequence of naturalism and the fact/value dichotomy it has generated that ***there is NO ultimate or transcendent basis for morality, law, or justice.***

This point is really just an extension of the first consequence. No ethical, legal, and political principle is metaphysically or divinely sanctioned. Rather, all such notions are rooted in human thought and desire, are autonomous and situational, relative and preeminently changeable.

For example, in his book, *Achieving Our Country*, postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty describes American pragmatism as “our refusal to believe in the existence of Truth,” in the sense of “something which has authority over human beings.”

For Rorty and for many others, “moral truths” are best understood as “tools for achieving human happiness” rather than as “representations of the intrinsic nature of reality.” Indeed, Rorty celebrates the ideal of America as “the first nation-state with nobody but itself to please – not even God.”

What does this mean in the practice of law? If there are no real rules, then all legal concepts and procedures, public policies and legislation are functions of power (like a dream team of lawyers), money, class, race, gender and other pragmatic considerations. A single episode of Boston Legal is enough to convince us of this.

If there are no true things, this also means we can no longer engage in meaningful debate over significant issues of truth, goodness, and justice, all of which seem like antiquated notions just by mentioning them.

And if we have lost any transcendent basis for ethical, legal, and political principles and all these things are, indeed, mutable human rules and regulations, then it is easy to see how this could put us on the cusp of social, moral, and legal chaos. Without recognizing it, it could also place us on the road political tyranny and despotism that would be necessary to curb the chaos.

3. A third consequence of naturalism and the fact/value dichotomy is that it means ***the LOSS of a genuine human nature and human freedom and dignity.***

Reducing people to biology and physics alone transforms them/us into nothing but thinking protoplasm in which the mind as our thinking part is no more than a data processing machine or computational device (“a three pound computer made of meat” — Marvin Minsky).

The words “soul,” “mind,” “spirit,” or “self,” all formerly the sources of the sanctity of life, must now be put in quotation marks since there really aren’t such things. Scientific naturalism or naturalistic scientism has no room for such non-physical entities.

In fact, this redefines people in deterministic, animalic terms ruled entirely and yet blindly to the inexorable law of cause and effect. It destroys any kind of true human essence, makes human nature infinitely malleable (we can with ourselves whatever we want), and it eliminates any genuine responsibility for our behavior.

Our genes and our environment, both nature and nurture, determine what are and do. A notion of genuine human freedom and responsibility is ultimately farcical.

What does this perspective on people mean in the practice of law? It has remarkable implications on views on abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia and what we do feel free to do with the fetus, the baby and the elderly.

It supplies a foundation to terminate life, especially at its beginning stages and its end, for various reasons, including those of convenience or inconvenience, as the Terri Schivo case illustrated.

It fosters unprecedented progressive attitudes towards human sexuality and what we can do with our bodies, the nature of human sexual relationships, and the very definition of marriage and family life, as seen in issues regarding pornography, homosexuality, and same sex marriage.

Reducing people to protoplasm also means we will have a tendency to treat each other as objects to be used and manipulated, rather than as subjects to be loved and served.

4. A fourth consequence of naturalism and the fact/value dichotomy is that ***it means the forfeiture of restraint on human behavior.***

In naturalism, there is no basis for things spiritual and moral, meaningful and purposeful, at least not transcendentally or eternally so. You must make an ungrounded leap of non-cognitive faith into the upper story, or “escape from reason” into the realm of the irrational if, indeed, reason is on the side of total naturalism, to get to any kind of values.

And even if you do leap or escape to get there, once you get there, you discover that what you have is neither real nor rational, and therefore, ultimately, futile. All you’re left with is what contemporary cognitive scientist Stephen Pinker refers to derisively as “mysticism.”¹⁰

When people realize this, that there are no absolutes of any kind, any where, no trustworthy foundation for spirituality, morality, meaning and purpose, any rationale for good behavior evaporates like a mist in the Phoenix sun!

Why be good without God? Why be good if nature is the whole show? Why be good if we are just thinking protoplasm? Why be good to other people if other people are just thinking protoplasm? The answer is: there are no good reasons to be good if these things, if naturalism, is true.

But if people believe that naturalism is true, it leaves little room to wonder why we have the kind of corrupt and corrupting, disintegrated and devastating culture that we have today! It also leaves little room to wonder why so many people have made colossal train wrecks out of their lives personally and relationally.

What the implications of this in the practice of law? I want to answer this question with my fifth point.

5. A fifth consequence of naturalism and the fact/value dichotomy is that ***it means that life is a function of power, politics, pragmatism, and profitability***. If the hokey pokey is really what it’s all about, that is, if it’s really all about nothing, then the only thing left is survival of the fittest: asserting yourself categorically, controlling others, using whatever means necessary to achieve your chosen ends, and making money, money, money, and more money.

¹⁰ Stephen Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, pp. 55-56.

In law school and in the practice of law, whether in the classroom or the courtroom, this could and should be called “legal Darwinianism.” Only the strong survive. Only the calculating achieve; only the scheming succeed. Only the pragmatists prevail; only the realists rule. Only the rich are rich, and only the rich are renown.

At the end of the day, however, such survival, achievement, success, dominance, wealth and fame culminate in idolatry, vanity, and futility.

Such idolatry, vanity, and futility are the five natural consequences of naturalism and the fact/value dichotomy:

- ❖ Christianity is not knowledge;
- ❖ there is no final basis for morality, law, or justice;
- ❖ there is no such thing as human nature, dignity, or freedom;
- ❖ spirituality, morality, meaning and purpose require a leap of faith or an escape from reason, resulting ultimately in personal and cultural breakdowns; and
- ❖ life is reduced to power, politics, pragmatism, and profitability.

Questions on Naturalism as a Worldview —

1. What are your questions about the beliefs of naturalism as a worldview?
2. Do you believe that naturalism as a worldview is prevalent and influential in the realm of law? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. What do you believe is the one of the most pernicious implications of naturalism in the realm of law?
4. What do you think are good ways to respond to naturalism as a Christian theist?

But what if naturalism is wrong. What if naturalism requires the real leap of faith? What if naturalism is the real escape from reason?

Instead, what if the triune God exists — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? What if the Bible is God’s revealed Word? What if this world and the whole

universe are his creation? What if human beings are his image and likeness? What if there is an objective moral order in the universe?

What if there was a real spiritual purpose to life? What if Christianity and a biblical worldview are true? If so, everything changes. Hence, we need to reflect on the substance of a Christian worldview and its implications as well.

Christian Theism and its Implications

“I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
The implications of this fact are total.”

— David Naugle

A Christian or biblical worldview is derived from the total canon of Scripture, that is, it is comprised of the whole story of the Bible from cover to cover. While dense in places, the outline of this story and the contents of a biblical worldview are clear: it consists of the essential themes of creation, fall, and redemption.

The story of creation found in Genesis 1-2 tells us where we are, who we are and why we are here. Our location, identity and purpose are all spelled out in these opening chapters of Scripture.

The story of the fall in Genesis chapter 3 tells us what has gone wrong and offers an explanation for the problem of evil in all of its many manifestations. That explanation is found in human quest for independence from God and in our sin.

The rest of the Bible from Genesis 3 to Revelation 22 tells the story of redemption, indeed, the love story and justice story of redemption. It informs us of the remedy to what has gone wrong.

The Old Testament, in a nutshell, sets forth the promise of a coming redeemer and redemption to all the world through the nation or people of Israel, and the New Testament tells us how that promise of a coming redeemer and redemption has been fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

He established the kingdom of God, gathered a people to himself under his rule in the church, ordered her life by word and sacrament, and summons his people into various and specific callings of service in the world.

The NT also clues us in to the fact that when Christ returns, He will complete His redemptive work in judgment and resurrection, and eventually usher in the new heavens and new earth.

Unfortunately, many of us have never grasped the notion of a biblical worldview in big picture terms like these.

Instead, we hear it in the form of fragmented plotlessness, in a religiously compartmentalized context with a primary concern for what is practical rather than what is true. For most of us, unfortunately, a biblical worldview is a vanished vision.

But this vision, if it's recovered, ties the bits and pieces of the faith into a coherent whole, unifies the Old and New Testaments into one ongoing, continuous narrative of creation, fall and redemption, subordinates every aspect of life under the sovereignty of God and Lordship of Christ, and focuses our attention on what is ultimately real, true, and good and beautiful.

A Christian worldview means there is one reality and only one reality, and it is a coherent and unified reality, and it is God's.

Classic, historic, biblicist Christianity always repudiates the virus of Gnosticism, with its heretical views that the cosmos is a colossal error, that a secret knowledge of saves us, and that escapism from the world and its life is the strategy of redemption.¹¹

Instead, Classic, historic, biblicist Christianity asserts confidently that there is one God who is the creator of both the natural world and the supernatural world, and the two are intimately conjoined, even sacramentally, making them essentially one.

There are not only physical facts, but there are also spiritual values, and the spiritual values are factual and the facts are spiritually valuable, and both facts and values are rooted in God and in his works in history of creation, judgment and redemption.

¹¹ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 61-63.

Christian theism never presents itself as a mere myth or as mere mysticism, but as testable, knowable truth.

It focuses particularly upon the historical facts of Christ's incarnation, life, teachings, miracles, death for sin, and bodily resurrection, which itself is supported by an empty tomb, multiple post-resurrection appearances, the courage of the twelve disciples, the efforts at a cover-up, and the birth of the church.

The consequences of Christian theism and its coherent view of truth and reality are diametrically opposite to those of naturalism.

(1.) Christianity is genuine knowledge and truth.

As Proverbs 1: 7 and 9: 9 state together, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, wisdom and understanding."

That Christianity is knowledge is specifically asserted in the famous NT claim of Jesus Christ who said: "I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." And you shall know this truth, Christ continued, and this truth shall set you free.

The light and truth of life in Christ, we must hasten to say, pertains to all things factual and all things valuable. To all facts and all values.

Christ is, indeed, the light of the whole world. He is the truth about all things. In Him, as Colossians 3:2 says, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

(2.) There is a transcendent basis for morality, law and justice rooted in God and His character.

Whether known via Scripture or naturally, this transcendent moral order to the universe holds the human race accountable for the conduct of its affairs, prescribes virtues, rejects vices, and profoundly affects the conduct of politics and law.

As C. S. Lewis has demonstrated in his book, *The Abolition of Man*, this notion of a transcendent moral law has been shared by leading thinkers and has been at the heart of the world's civilizations perennially.

Moses, Plato and Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine and Aquinas all shared respectively their own Jewish, Greek, Roman and Christian versions of this belief in an ultimate truth that governs human character and conduct.

That there is a higher law to which all human laws are subordinate was the assumption of the *Magna Carta*, the foundation of the English Common Law, and the explicit teaching of great legal theorists like Sir William Blackstone and Samuel Rutherford.

Such a notion of a natural or eternal law to which all human laws must bow was embraced by the founding fathers like John Witherspoon, and was conveyed in Thomas Jefferson's notion of "unalienable rights" in the Declaration of Independence.

It also served as the basis for Abraham Lincoln's opposition to slavery and the entire abolitionist movement and was the platform upon which Martin Luther King, Jr., worked so diligently and sacrificially for civil rights for African Americans. Sir William Blackstone's words get to the heart of the matter:

The law of nature dictated by God Himself...is binding in all countries and at all times. No human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force and all their authority mediately or immediately, from this original.¹²

That there is a higher law, a law above the law, a transcendent natural law that establishes the basis for fixed, robust moral, legal, and political judgments is at the heart of a Christian worldview, and indeed, is at the heart of the best that has been said and done in the Western and other global intellectual traditions.

(3.) There is a God-created, God-preserved, and God-redeemed human nature of dignity and freedom.

This, of course, is grounded in our identity as the image and likeness of God. As Psalm 8, based on Genesis 1, states, What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him just a little lower than God, and have crowned him with glory and majesty,

¹² Quoted in Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998), p. 401.

and make him to rule over the works of Your hands and have put all things under his feet.”

This would mean that life in all its stages would have to be respected and that the divine order for human relationships and institutions must be honored and we are not free to change them.

(4.) The realm of spirituality, morality, meaning and purpose is accessed by a confident faith and is preeminently rational, resulting in personal and cultural transformation.

You must neither make a blind leap of false faith or escape from true human reason to get there. In Christian theism, that is, in God, there is a solid basis for values that, once known and believed, changes lives and societies.

(5.) Life and people as intrinsically sacred must be approached selflessly and sacrificially out of love with humility and service for the good of all.

Life is not really all about running roughshod over others, manipulating and using them, acting shrewdly for personal advantage, and making a big buck. As a matter of fact, the biblical warning is this:

“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will a man be profited if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16: 25-26).

Wouldn't these principles, if acted upon, create a revolution in the legal community?

- ❖ That Christianity is knowledge;
- ❖ that there is a transcendent basis for morality, law and justice rooted in God and His character;
- ❖ that human beings possess divinely constituted natures of dignity and freedom;
- ❖ that Christianity embodies true faith and reason and results in life change;

❖ that life itself and people possess intrinsic value and ought to be treated accordingly?

Yes, these principles would create a revolution. They are deeply countercultural. They would be transformative, if applied.

But how incredibly hard it is to live out these principles in a culture of law that resists them at every point! How challenging it is to be faithful to Jesus Christ as a lawyer when the whole system is arrayed against you! How difficult it is to be an agent of change when change seems virtually impossible to make?

Because this is your hard, challenging and difficult calling, indeed, because it is every Christian's calling in every area of public endeavor to be faithful to him in a world that opposes you relentlessly, and seeks to accommodate you to itself in every way, we need to ground our reflections about worldviews in a form of Christian spirituality and commitment that fosters both short and long term faithfulness.

Without this kind of spirituality and faithfulness, there is no hope for the vision and purposes of the Blackstone Legal Fellowship to ever be fulfilled. Hence, we must consider the character of the spirituality that is necessary to be obedient to and a transformative agent of Christian theism, or more specifically, of Jesus Christ and His kingdom, in the midst of a legal world dominated in very unfriendly ways by its thoroughgoing naturalism.

A Spirituality and Faithfulness in the Realm of Law

“Knowing and doing, hearing and obeying are integrally connected for people whose convictions are truly and deeply Christian.”
Steven Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness*

Knowing about all of the things we have talked about is not enough. Or I should say, simple mental awareness and intellectual assent to the to these things we have been discussing are not enough.

For if we know something, we ought to do it, at least in the biblical meaning of the term “knowing” and “knowledge.” But, as Screwtape mentioned in his recently disclosed letter to Wormwood, one devilish strategy designed to trip us up is to identify mere cognition with obedience, that is, to make us think we

have done our duty if we grasp concepts with the mind, even though we may never put them into practice.

This confusion of the awareness of theory *with practice* can also be dangerous because it can foster pride, for so-called knowledge by itself “puffs up,” as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8: 1, whereas “love,” that is, knowledge faithfully applied, “edifies.”

It seems that the nature of human nature, from ancient up to modern times, is to think that something known is something done. This is certainly true in the context of modern epistemology.

While I don’t have time to develop this in depth, let me briefly contrast biblical and contemporary approaches to knowing and knowledge in three basic ways.

First, whereas modern knowledge is construed as data, facts, information obtained in a detached, objective and scientific manner, in the Bible, knowledge involves the knower with the object known in a relationship of care, concern, engagement and responsibility.

Second, whereas modern knowledge is cognitive in character, a brain thing, a matter of the mind alone, in a Christian sense, knowing is a function of the whole person as the image of God — mentally, emotionally, volitionally, physically and spiritually.

Third, whereas modern knowledge incurs little if any sense of responsibility or accountability to put into practice or to apply what one knows, in Scripture, knowledge is covenantal in that it calls for obedience to God and demands thorough-going application of the truth that is understood.

As Jesus says in John 13: 17, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” Or as the Apostle James writes famously in the twenty-second verse of the first chapter of his letter, “ But prove yourselves to be doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

But the key question arises: how can I do what I have heard so as to avoid delusion of non- or disobedience? How can I enter the state of blessedness by doing what I know?

The key, it seems to me, resides in the quality of our faith, in the condition of our walk with God in Christ through His Spirit, in our fundamental moral and spiritual condition before the face of triune God, *coram Deo*.

As Eugene Peterson says in his new book, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, “Living, living fully and well, is at the heart of all serious spirituality.”¹³

Here, then, are several questions to consider regarding serious spirituality and faithfulness when it comes to putting into practice what we know. This is crucial, if you are to fulfill the vision of the BLF of taking your training and knowledge into positions of influence in order to change America’s legal system for the better.

First, do you believe Christianity is really real and truly true?

If you earnestly believe that Christianity is really real and truly true, then faithfulness should follow. But if you don’t really think it is, then the vision of the BLF doesn’t fit and isn’t for you. As a top priority, then, you must wrestle with the metaphysical and epistemological character of the biblical, Christian faith.

Second, if you do believe in the truthfulness of the faith, does it have practical authority and real traction in your day to day life?

Do you “fear the Lord” more than the powers that be in the legal community so as to be obedient to Him?

It is possible to be a theoretical Christian theist, but to live hypocritically as a methodological naturalist, especially in the world of legal work.

Figuring out what or who it is we really listen to and follow is an indispensable prerequisite, and it must be God and His Word, rather than the voices around us, that shape our character and determine what we do and how we live.

Third, what and who do you really and truly love?

People don’t always do what they say they will do, or what they believe in, or what they even think and know to be true. But people will do what they want to do, what they care about, what they are inclined toward, what they desire, what they love.

¹³ Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, p.29.

Wherever we do, wherever we go, it is our loves that guide us and take us there. Your influence in legal culture will be a function of your loves, whether or not you love God or an idol/s with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and whether or not you love your neighbor as yourself or just yourself.

Love of idols and self will insure acceptance, but guaranteed Christian ineffectiveness in the legal community.

Fourth, are your present studies in law school and will your forthcoming legal work be animated by a sense of calling from God?

Os Guinness has defined calling as “the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.”¹⁴

If your life in law is not calling-based, then you might be in the wrong role, and if you are in the wrong role, the likelihood of you being kingdom salt and light will be minimal. If it is, it will be. How important it is to confirm your sense of calling the Caller that your education and vocation in the domain of jurisprudence is of Him.

This sense of calling is the approach of one lawyer name Sealy Yates who writes these words about pursuing law under the banner of a divine calling: “People typically come to lawyers when they are in a crisis. It’s a phenomenal opportunity to help them do what is right.”

Indeed, as Nancy Pearcey follows up with this elaboration on Yate’s vision. “Lawyers can minister to troubled spouses seeking a divorce, counsel misguided teens in trouble with the law, advise ethically conflicted businessmen to do what’s right, confront Christian ministries that are compromising biblical principles.”

The law,” Pearcey states, “is not merely a set of procedures or an argumentative technique. It is God’s means of confronting wrong, establishing

¹⁴ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Word, 1998), p. 29.

justice, defending the weak, and promoting the public good.”¹⁵ Approaching the practice of law this way, however, is premised on a sure sense of divine calling and accountability to the Caller.

Fifth, are you praying for and diligently seeking the wisdom, prudence and shrewdness you will need to know how to lawyer Christianly?

It’s not easy to be a truly Christian lawyer. It’s not a simple, 1-2-3 process. No one can tell you what to do in every situation. We must reject all cheesiness; we must forsake all glib answers; we must abandon superficiality. But campiness abounds when wisdom, prudence, and shrewdness are lacking. But with prayer and skillfulness, you will know what to do and how to do things in due course, if you have sought the face of God in truth. As Proverbs 10: 23 states, paraphrased, “Doing wisdom is like a sport to a person of understanding.”

Sixth, are you immersed deeply in the life and liturgies of Word and Sacrament in your local church, and profiting from the insights and encouragement of other believers in the faith?

It’s dangerous to live “unsabbathed” lives! As Garrison Keillor of Lake Wobegon fame states, “Sunday feels odd without church in the morning. It’s the time in the week when we take our bearings, and if we miss it, we’re just following our noses.”¹⁶

Imaging Christ in culture, including legal culture, requires the resources of regular worship, biblical and theological instruction, and rich and sustaining fellowship if we are to be ambassadors for His counter-cultural kingdom in the in a world that is hostile to faith and downright mean-spirited.

We can’t make it alone. We need each other. We especially need the guidance and direction of mentors in faith, and we especially need the guidance and direction of faith-based mentors in our professions. So, after the summer 2006 sessions of BLF are complete, make the community of your church a top

¹⁵ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, p. 64.

¹⁶ Unsabbathed is Peterson’s term (p. 117), and the Keillor quote is also from Peterson’s book, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, p.112.

priority and pray that God will send you a faith-based mentor in your field, all of which will be necessary for you to weave together a fabric of faithfulness in law.

Seventh and finally, are you willing to serve, suffer, to sacrifice, to pay the cost and yet persevere in your calling in law for God's glory and the good of others?

Will you seek to serve God and others, to be a servant of God and others, in your field of law? Are you prepared for and willing to endure the heartaches and pain, losses and forfeitures, and prices and costs that will undoubtedly come with territory of your legal calling and work?

To do so, I believe, is the discipleship mandate for all believers in all walks of life, regardless. As we read these words of Jesus in Matthew 16: 24, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."

So, seven diagnostic questions that challenge us spiritually to do what we know:

- ❖ First, do you believe Christianity is really real and truly true?
- ❖ Second, does Christianity have practical authority and real traction in your day to day life?
- ❖ Third, what and who do you really and truly love?
- ❖ Fourth, are your present studies in law school and will your forthcoming legal work be animated by a sense of calling from God?
- ❖ Fifth, are you praying for and diligently seeking the wisdom, prudence and shrewdness you will need to know how to "lawyer" Christianly?
- ❖ Sixth, are you immersed deeply in the life and liturgies of Word and Sacrament in your local church, and profiting from the insights and encouragement of other believers in the faith?
- ❖ Seventh and finally, are you will to serve, to suffer, to sacrifice, to pay the cost and yet persevere in your calling in law for God's glory and the good of others?

Of course, these questions and this exhortation to biblical spirituality do not imply the requirement of perfection. God does not require perfect people to

do His work. Far from it. Indeed, as one medieval saying puts it, “God draws straight lines with crooked sticks.”

And it even infuriates Screwtape and Wormwood both when our gracious, forgiving God uses us despite ourselves!

Questions On Christian Theism and Spirituality —

1. What are your questions about the beliefs of Christian theism as a worldview?
2. Do you agree or disagree that Christianity as a total worldview is a “vanished vision” in many churches and in the lives of many believers? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. What strikes you as one of the more profound implications of Christian theism in the realm of law? Explain.
4. From your experience so far, how do you estimate the challenge of being an obedient, faithful Christian in the context of a calling in law?
5. How would you honestly answer any one of the seven diagnostic questions regarding Christian spirituality as a pre-requisite for faithfulness as a Christian lawyer?

