

DOCTRINAL FORMULATION FOR A COMPREHENSIVE WORLDVIEW:  
AN INTEGRATION PAPER

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## Introduction

The challenge of Christian education is both daunting and exhilarating. The fact that God has called me to teach in an academic context is indeed a privilege, but one must always be aware that not everyone among us should become teachers as they will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1). As teachers in a Christian context who have submitted to this calling, we recognize the ultimate aim of our education is to glorify God as we equip students for lifelong leadership and service through an education marked by excellence, grounded in biblical truth. As such, we seek to love God well, and recognize that “from him, through him, and to him are all things,” including our educational endeavors (Rom. 11:36). We also aim to love our students well, equipping them with an education saturated with biblical-theological truth, which articulates and expresses a robust understanding of reality that can interpret all of life, namely, a Christian worldview.

### Definition of Christian Worldview and Biblical Integration

When considering the idea of “worldview,” one should think of this concept as the attempt by all persons to formulate a reasonably comprehensive interpretation of reality. Carson reiterates this point, claiming, “A ‘worldview,’ after all, is nothing other than a view of the ‘world’—that is, of all reality. A worldview is comprehensive only in the sense that it tries to view the whole.”<sup>1</sup> As such, a Christian worldview seeks to offer a comprehensive account of all reality from a theistic perspective. Carson adds that a Christian worldview addresses questions of God’s identity, origins, significance of life, the question of evil, and the resolution to this dilemma, all based on the storyline of Scripture, which accords and corresponds to true reality.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 95.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*

Thus, the challenge for teachers at a Christian institution, such as Cedarville University, is to demonstrate how a Christian worldview, rooted and grounded in Scripture, intersects with every facet of life. This is the essence of biblical integration, namely, to rightly interpret and apply biblical-theological truth to the various spheres of life and academic study. As a professor of theological studies, my aim is to demonstrate that “. . . God’s word demands unreserved allegiance to God and His truth in all our thought and scholarly endeavors.”<sup>3</sup> Foundationally, regardless of vocation or scholarly interest, those who claim Christ as Lord must affirm the following axiom: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).<sup>4</sup> Scripture is the means by which the triune God has revealed himself, as well as the wisdom necessary to live a life (“every good work”) that is glorifying to him, regardless of the field in which one chooses to work. As such, theology serves as a primary discipline for all in a Christian liberal arts institution in that it allows one to possess a proper biblical-theological interpretation of the conclusions seen in other fields (e.g., geology, mathematics, music, history, etc.).

As such, this paper will maintain that the discipline of theology is essential to the goal of biblical integration in a Christian university. This is so due to the fact that theology is disciplined reflection on God’s self-revelation to equip God’s people to know and love God, fulfill every good work, and to participate in his mission in the world.<sup>5</sup> The distinctive mandate for the

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<sup>3</sup> Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready* (Texarkana: Covenant Media, 1996), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout the paper, quotations from Scripture come from the *English Standard Version*.

<sup>5</sup> See Bruce Riley Ashford and Keith Whitfield, “Theological Method: An Introduction to the Task of Theology,” in *A Theology for the Church*, Rev. Ed., ed. Daniel A. Akin (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014), 3. Similarly, Horton refers to theology as including the components of drama, doctrine, doxology, and discipleship. See Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology For Pilgrims On the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 13-27.

discipline of theology in a liberal arts setting is to equip students with biblical-theological wisdom in order to bring every thought captive to Christ in service to others and for the sake of God's glory (2 Cor. 10:3-5). This paper will begin, therefore, with the epistemological framework that undergirds and outlines my Christian worldview, looking specifically at the doctrines of God, creation, revelation, and humanity. This will be followed by a section articulating my correlation between Scripture and the discipline of theology, and then how this leads to a commitment to Christian education as a realm for discipleship. The final two sections will then discuss the relationship between faith and practice as demonstrated in my teaching philosophy and lifestyle, and the means and methods I uphold for communicating these beliefs in the classroom.

### **1. Articulating a Christian Worldview**

The concept of worldview has a rich history,<sup>6</sup> and can be fundamentally understood as the interpretive lens through which we see all of life. A worldview, in other words, is that fundamental orientation of the mind and heart, that set of beliefs which are foundational and formative for human thinking and living, which answer the most fundamental of questions (e.g., Who am I? Why am I here? What is wrong with the World? What is the solution?).<sup>7</sup> The terms “foundational” and “formative” are key to this discussion. In understanding pedagogical goals, one must build a solid foundation of bedrock principles that form a certain character and produce a certain kind of teaching. As such, five foundational beliefs will be considered: epistemology, God, creation, revelation, and man.

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<sup>6</sup> For one helpful resource that describes the history of the idea of “worldview” see David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> See Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 13; James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, fifth edition (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 20.

## Epistemological Realities

The branch of learning known as epistemology deals with the study of knowledge and justified or warranted belief.<sup>8</sup> It is accepted by nearly everyone that it is possible to have true beliefs. In other words, people are capable of holding in their minds certain propositional statements that, in fact, correspond to the way things actually are.<sup>9</sup> While we cannot as finite human beings know all things exhaustively and omnisciently, we can, as image-bearers of God, know truth objectively, propositionally, and truly.

However, because people assume different fundamental truths based on their presuppositions and particular worldviews, varying belief systems result. Different worldviews can be categorized according to what they accept as their final authority, what they ultimately put their faith in. Worldviews influenced by the Enlightenment, such as deism and naturalism, acknowledge universal human reason and empirical data as the final authority for finding truth. Existential and postmodern worldviews opt for a more individualistic approach to truth, at least to the extent that an individual participates within a specific interpretive community. In this view, there is no universal truth, no overarching metanarrative that interprets all of life for people. Instead truth is “a matter of perspective only; it is something that individuals and communities construct primarily through language.”<sup>10</sup> An emphasis on the individual is perhaps

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<sup>8</sup> For further thoughts on epistemology, see John Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Philipsburg: P&R, 1987); J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003), 71-172; Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> The previous two sentences are derived from correspondence with my colleague, Dr. J. R. Gilhooly, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Theology, as well as interaction with his own integration paper.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Groothuis, “Truth Defined and Defended,” in Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor, eds., *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 60. See also D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 57-92, 141-91.

also compelling to approaches to life that emphasize personal freedom (existentialism) or personal pleasure (hedonism) as the greatest good, and therefore as the authority over one's life. Marxists submit themselves to the revolutionary struggle for the oppressed. Muslims submit themselves to the authority of Mohammad as the final prophet of Allah.

In contrast, the biblical worldview begins from a different foundation. The essence of the Christian life begins with faith in who the triune God is and what he has done, and that faith seeks understanding of all reality (Heb. 11:1-3, 6). By God's grace, through faith, by means of the revelation he provided, we come to know God and rightly construe his creation. No one will see anything in life clearly or with total accuracy without understanding it by faith and in relationship to the living God.

Once faith in God—specifically in the person and work of Jesus Christ—is present, doctrinal formulation (i.e., increasing knowledge of God) becomes a life-long pursuit. One then comes increasingly into the position where they can proclaim and defend Christian beliefs by demonstrating their ability to explain the observable data of reality, as well as their internal consistency and coherence.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, all attempts to explain reality begin with one's presuppositions.<sup>12</sup> In other words, our minds function holistically, making claims about the world from a particular worldview perspective that colors and affects the way we interpret and understand everything else. Our answers to the most fundamental questions of life (Why is there

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<sup>11</sup> This statement shows a commitment to the correspondence theory of truth as being foundational to truth claims. Specifically, the correspondence theory of truth asserts something is true if what it says about the world is actually so in the world. Truth is a relation between language and the world, and that relation is correspondence (rational and empirical). Coherence is also crucial in discerning truth, but must be grounded in correspondence. Groothius elaborates: "Coherence or logical consistency cannot be what makes a truth-claim true, although logical coherence is a necessary and negative test for truth. That is, if a worldview contains core beliefs that contradict each other, that worldview must be false." Groothius, "Truth Defined and Defended," 74. Thus, we must possess views that are non-contradictory in relation to one another, but these beliefs must also correspond with reality.

<sup>12</sup> A presupposition can be defined as "a belief that takes precedence over another and therefore serves as a criterion for another." Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 45. They are foundational to all that we think and do as basic commitments. Frame argues (and I would agree) that the ultimate presupposition for the Christian is that God is and that he has revealed himself to us. See *ibid*.

something rather than nothing? Who am I? Why am I here? What is wrong with the world? What is the solution? Where is history heading?) are rooted in these functionally basic and foundational beliefs. As Christians, our presuppositions are as credible as any other basically held belief, and thus unbelievers should not be allowed to hide behind intellectual objections that would seek to relegate Christian beliefs as anti-intellectual or only fitting for private use and not the public square. God has shown us truth, and we are called to make a defense for the hope that is in us based on the truth he has given to us (1 Peter 3:15-16).<sup>13</sup> At the same time, we recognize that no one can be argued into conversion, for it is a moral and spiritual, as well as a mental, decision, and the determining factor is the internal working of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 17:16-34).

Christians have labored to demonstrate throughout history that the Christian faith is not a blind faith; rather it is warranted or justifiable as a belief system. In Christian epistemology there is a fundamental presupposition that stands as the crucial starting point: God exists and has revealed himself to epistemologically competent—though marred by sin—human beings, who are illumined by the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> In other words, God is there and he is not silent. The fact that

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<sup>13</sup> The truth God has given to us can also be referred to as “revelation,” a topic that will receive further attention later in the paper. Some may see this argument as being circular in nature. However, circular argument of a kind is unavoidable when we argue for an ultimate standard of truth. One who believes that human reason is the ultimate standard can argue that view only by appealing to reason. One who believes that the Bible is the ultimate standard can argue only by appealing to the Bible. Since all positions partake equally of circularity at this level, it cannot be a point of criticism against any of them. *Narrowly* circular arguments, like “the Bible is God’s Word, because it is God’s Word” can hardly be persuasive. But more *broadly* circular arguments can be. An example of a more broadly circular argument might be “The Bible is God’s Word, because it makes the following claims..., makes the following predictions that have been fulfilled..., presents these credible accounts of miracles..., is supported by these archaeological discoveries..., etc.” Now this argument is as circular as the last if, in the final analysis, the criteria for evaluating its claims, its predictions, its accounts of miracles, and the data of archaeology are criteria based on a biblical worldview and epistemology. But it is a broader argument in the sense that it presents more data to the non-Christian and challenges him to consider it seriously. See John Frame, <http://frame-poythress.org/presuppositional-apologetics/>, accessed June 9, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> For an expansive explanation and defense of this presupposition see Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 6 vol. (Second Edition; Wheaton: Crossway, 1999). See also Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1972).

God has revealed the reality of who he is stands apart as the fundamental epistemological axiom of Christianity, and one must also consider the fact that this revelation came to man, who is made in God's image, yet marred by sin. As such, the doctrines of God, creation, revelation, and humanity merit further attention.<sup>15</sup>

### Doctrine of God

God is (Gen. 1:1). He is the triune (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Isa. 44:6-8; 48:16-17; Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 13:14), self-existent one (Exod. 3:14-15; John 5:26; Acts 17:25), all-powerful (Ps. 115:3; Eph. 1:11), all-knowing (Ps. 139:1-16; Rom. 11:33-36), sovereign (Ps. 135:5-7; Dan. 2:21; 4:35; Rom. 8:28-29), and majestic (Exod. 15:11; Ps. 8:1-9). Letham, commenting on the truth regarding creation proclaimed in Genesis 1:1, avers "It takes the rest of the Bible to disclose the meaning concealed in this sentence."<sup>16</sup> I affirm, with Scripture, that God is transcendent, "as existing in the fullness of his infinitely glorious tri-Person unity and apart from the finite spatio-temporal created reality he freely brought into existence." God is also immanent, "as he freely enters into the realm of the creaturely existence that he designed and made."<sup>17</sup> Espousing these two truths is crucial to theological formulation, as we recognize both God's uniqueness and otherness, as well as his covenant presence in relating with humanity.

Calvin maintained, "No man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards that God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is

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<sup>15</sup> I will begin with the doctrine of God but assert that what we know of God is predominantly contained in the Scriptures (i.e., special revelation).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2004), 17.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce Ware, *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 35.



nothing else than subsistence in God alone.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, we simply cannot know ourselves our world, or anything else apart from the right knowledge of the Lord. And God, in his grace, has chosen to reveal himself to humanity.

### Creation

The existence of our universe began when God, in his sovereignty, decreed by his word to create out of nothing (Gen. 1:1-3). God brought into being everything that is, it was good (Gen. 1:3-31), and creation displays his glory (Ps. 19:1-2). God is personal and differentiated from other beings, from nature, and from the rest of the universe. This stands in contrast to other worldviews, holding to the belief that God is part of the universe or is changing along with the universe (e.g., pantheism, panentheism, new age, process theism, etc.). Nor does God stand far off, refusing to engage with his creation (e.g., deism). Thus, Christianity is unique in the claim that God is both transcendent and immanent.

In terms of what Scripture says regarding God as Creator, there are several claims that should be noted. In Genesis we see the actual act of creation wherein God made all things in six literal days (Gen. 1-2). Isaiah points to God as Creator to demonstrate the folly of idolatry (Isa. 40:28; 42:5; 43:1-7, 15; 44:24; 45:18-20; 46:4; 57:13). Psalms connects creation to God’s providence, in both preservation and governance (Ps. 74; 89). Job recounts God’s creation power and demonstrates how that power relates to our dealing with the issue of suffering in our lives (Job 38-41). The NT speaks specifically of Jesus as Creator (John 1:1-5; Col. 1:15-17), speaking to his eternity and divinity. In Acts, prayer is based on the doctrine of creation, and it also

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<sup>18</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.1.1.

drives Paul's preaching (Acts 4:23-30; 14:15; 17:24). Finally, Revelation describes the coming of a new creation and says God is worthy as Creator of all things (Rev. 4:11; 21).

Not only is God transcendent Creator of all, he is also the immanent Sustainer of everything that exists. God demonstrates oversight of creation in the sense of providing for the needs of animals, humans, and even the land itself (Ps. 36:6-9, 65:9-13; cf. Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). His preservation of the cosmos takes very natural forms, such as providing the rain (Matt. 5:45), the growing of crops (Acts 14:17), even the establishment of civil authority (Rom. 13:1-7). It can also manifest in what we regard as miraculous intervention (e.g., sparing Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace, Dan. 3:17, 28-29).<sup>19</sup> In these ways, God displays his character and power in creating and sustaining all things.

#### General Revelation

God has revealed himself to us through his creation. His power, divine attributes, and ordering of the universe can be seen in all that he has made. Creation speaks of the provision, transcendence, and freedom of the Creator (Job 38-41), with the heavens declaring his glory and creativity (Ps. 19:1-6). Proverbs cites the way of wisdom—skill in understanding the patterns and principles God has built into creation and applying that knowledge appropriately in all of life—and there is a clear call to live by wisdom. Moore points out, “For the Proverbs this means a ‘way of wisdom’ is embedded in the creation order to which human beings are called to conform (Prov. 4:11).”<sup>20</sup> In the NT we see that God has revealed himself to all people through provision of rain

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<sup>19</sup> Sustaining creation does not mean of course that people do not die, or even that God's people are not afflicted. We do suffer and we often find that God's greatest provision to us in those times of trial is His own presence (Rom. 8:35-39, Ps. 23:4). God's providential sustenance of this world means that the creation never becomes independent of its Creator. On a more positive note, it means that God never leaves or abandons us (Col. 1:17; book of Esther).

<sup>20</sup> Russell Moore, “Natural Revelation,” in *A Theology for the Church*, 73. This is true, but one must not forget the reality of presuppositions and worldview commitments. One interprets all of life through a particular grid

and crops (Acts 14:8-18) and that all of us are ultimately dependent on him (Acts 17:16-34).

Finally, in Romans one can see that all people have a knowledge of God's existence as well as his attributes (Rom. 1:18-20) and share universally a moral consciousness of the content of God's law (i.e., conscience; Rom. 2:12-16).

With these truths in mind, there are some basic implications as it relates to general revelation. First, there is a common point of contact between the believer and unbeliever, because we all have a knowledge of God and his status as Creator and Sustainer. The difference is that, for the unbeliever this knowledge is suppressed (Rom. 1:18-23), though one can still point out truths that are known at some level. Therefore, second, God is just in condemning those who do not believe in him (which also increases the motive for missions to unreached peoples). Finally, if there is genuine knowledge and morality in the world, it is owing not to human enterprise and intelligence, but to God, who has structured the entire universe in a certain way.

While God has revealed himself in a general sense to humanity through creation and conscience, his attributes, power, and morality seen in this sense are suppressed and only have the power to condemn those who will not believe in the saving message of the gospel (Rom. 1:18-32). In worldview terms, one can see in an overall sense from this text that God has created all things, and, though we should be living with holy fear, worshipping this Creator God, his wrath is bent toward us due to our suppression of the truth and our sinful rebellion (cf. John 3:36; Eph. 2:1-3). Carl F. H. Henry is helpful in delineating this point. While strongly affirming

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of assumed beliefs and basic commitments. As will be seen, this wisdom embedded in the created order will be interpreted differently until one submits to the truth of Scripture regarding who God is and how all of creation is to relate to him. It is then, when by faith in Christ we are able to relate to God rightly and understand truth from Scripture, that one is able to see the wisdom embedded in the various academic disciplines and see their respective disciplinary findings and conclusions as illustrative of the truths that can be seen in Scripture.

general revelation as possessing real cognitive content, he also emphasized that human guilt universally revolts against this truth. He asserts,

God's universal disclosure in nature, history, and to the human mind and conscience is not in dispute. . . . What is rejected rather is the expectation that fallen man will translate general revelation into a natural theology that builds a secure bridge to special revelation; in that event special revelation has significance only as a crown that caps natural theology elaborated by man in sin.<sup>21</sup>

Even if one is optimistic in observing creation for knowing certain facts about a given discipline (e.g., physics), one will not, in a spiritually natural state, recognize these truths and see them in relationship to the biblical witness concerning the Creator God. Also, general revelation does not tell us what we ought and ought not to do with such knowledge as it relates to various ethical issues, worship of the triune God, and the way in which we are to exercise dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26-28).

We are not naturally in a right relationship with God, and general revelation is not adequate to show us how to rightly relate to him or live before him. We suppress this truth. As such, as a certain level, general revelation is insufficient, and while people can make observations about the world and the various academic disciplines, they do not interpret these findings in light of who God is and what he has done. This is why there is a dire need for more specific data regarding what the solution to our plight is. How can sinful humanity be reconciled to this holy God? God has provided that saving word to us in special revelation, namely, Scripture (Ps. 19:7-14).

### Special Revelation

We are told that long ago God spoke through the prophets, but in these last days, he has spoken through his Son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-4). Jesus is the fullest example of God's special

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<sup>21</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 2:117.

revelation, as he is God in the flesh (John 1:14). We do not have direct, tangible access to Jesus currently, and thus God gave us his Word to understand history in redemptive terms and to see how history climaxes in Christ (Luke 24:25-27; 44).

The Bible is God's Word to his people, in which he communicates a revelation of his person and his works.<sup>22</sup> The Bible is a story preeminently about one main character, the triune God, and one main plot, the display of his glory in creation amongst a people who will reflect that glory and dwell with him forever (Rev. 21-22). These writings contain factual historical information and doctrinal content, as well as commands and promises. In all of these different ways, God is seeking to communicate with his people.<sup>23</sup> Scripture is to be understood as the revelation of God, inspired by God, and thus, based on his own character, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative for us. The Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will (Rom. 10:13-17; Acts 4:12; Matt. 4:4). Scripture is sufficient in that it teaches concerning all things necessary for God's glory, and man's salvation, faith, and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible is also clear for those who, as they read, are illuminated by the Holy Spirit, seek God's help, and are willing to follow it (1 Cor. 2:9-16; cf., Ps. 19:7; 2 Cor. 4:3-4). Thus, Guthrie affirms, "Every area of human life and inquiry has at its foundation the reality reflected by God's revelation in Scripture. Therefore, Scripture forms the appropriate beginning point for shaping a worldview."<sup>24</sup> One could also say that general revelation cannot be rightly

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<sup>22</sup> For more on a theology of Scripture see John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2010); Peter Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002); Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> See Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 159-203.

<sup>24</sup> George H. Guthrie, "The Authority of Scripture," in *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education*, eds. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: B&H, 2002), 28. For further thoughts on the link between revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and authority, see R. Albert Mohler Jr.,

interpreted without special revelation. Scripture, therefore, is the final authority in thinking of revelation.

The Bible, understood in this light, comprehensively answers basic worldview questions such as how the world began, who we are, why we are here, how we determine what is moral, why suffering and evil exist, how those problems are effectively resolved, and where the universe is ultimately heading.<sup>25</sup> As the definite, special revelation of God, it provides foundation for truth. As such, Guthrie acknowledges that while Scripture does not address all technical aspects of modern inquiry in every field of study, “[it] does offer a view of reality and principles for interacting with that reality, that is, a general framework for how one thinks about life, thought, inquiry, and the implications of research. In other words, the Bible has much to say to a Christian in any of the academic disciplines at the level of presuppositions.”<sup>26</sup> The Bible also gives us theological language with which to engage any number of academic disciplines. Thus, as our presuppositions, theological commitments, and understanding of reality are shaped by God-revealed Scripture, we begin to think God’s thoughts after him in a manner that is fitting for pursuing and communicating God’s wisdom in any vocation or field of inquiry. As we do this faithfully, we learn what it means to love God and love others as we work in our respective fields. In the various disciplines represented in the academy, we will reject claims that do not comport with the truth of Scripture, receive knowledge that fits the biblical worldview and see it

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“When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy,” in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, eds. J. Merrick and Steven M. Garrett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 29-58.

<sup>25</sup> For further elaboration on this point see David S. Dockery, “Shaping a Christian Worldview,” in *Shaping a Christian Worldview*, 1-15. To better understand how Christians can respond to modern challenges regarding the worldview described in Scripture, see Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Guthrie, “The Authority of Scripture,” 20.

as a basis for worshipping our great God, and we will redeem those claims that are in need of clarification and nuance.

### Man as Image-Bearer and Sinner

In light of the above points, all of humanity must come under the authority of God's Word to us. It is important to recognize that God created all things good and made man in his image (Gen. 1-2). Whether one thinks of image-bearing as primarily functional, relational, or substantive in nature,<sup>27</sup> the goal of an image is to point others to the thing that is being imaged. In other words, images glorify their source. In this case, humanity was made to glorify God in every facet of their lives, testifying to the fact that "from him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36).

However, Adam and Eve rebelled and sinned against God, causing all of humanity to come under the condemnation of sin and death (Gen. 3; cf. Rom. 5:12-21) with the result that we are still image-bearers (e.g., Gen. 9:6), though that image is now deeply marred. Sin is any lack of conformity, active or passive, to the moral law of God. This may be a matter of act, of word, of thought, or of inner disposition (Ex. 20:1-17; Matt. 5:21-30; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:3). Sin is directly opposed to all that is good in the character of God, and just as God necessarily and eternally delights in himself and in all that he is, so God necessarily and eternally hates sin (Hab. 1:13).

Thus, God, in his infinite grace and love, established covenants with his people Israel, and the climactic covenant given is the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27; cf. Heb. 8:1-13). Through the life, death, and resurrection of the God-man, Jesus Christ, God has brought

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<sup>27</sup> For more detail on the doctrine of the image of God, see Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

about redemption and forgiveness of sins for those who will repent and place their faith in him (Rom. 3:21-26). Jesus is the true image of God (Heb. 1:3) who demonstrates what humanity was intended to do all along as image-bearers, doing what they could not on their behalf because of their slavery to sin. Salvation comes through repentance and faith in him alone as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10), Savior (John 3:16), and Treasure (John 6:35). He will one day consummate his kingdom and reign with his people forever (Rev. 19-22).<sup>28</sup>

## **2. Correlation Between Worldview, Scripture, and the Discipline of Theology**

While the tie between the Christian worldview, the authority of Scripture, and the discipline of theological studies seems quite apparent, there are some key points that need to be drawn out in further detail. Again, theology is disciplined reflection on God's self-revelation aimed at knowing and loving God and living out God's mission and purposes. Typically theology will focus on key topics that frequently come up in Scripture,<sup>29</sup> seeking to articulate what the whole Bible says about that particular topic. Specifically, in understanding the connection between these branches of learning, one must discuss what is to be rejected, received, and redeemed. Certainly one cannot be exhaustive in such an inquiry in a paper of this nature. However, key examples of each approach can be offered, and this will be done specifically in the doctrines of God, Scripture, and redemption.

First, concerning the doctrine of God, if one is to remain faithful to Scripture, the ideas of process and open theism must be rejected. In process theology God operates in a non-coercive way with creation, and in this scheme humans possess total autonomy and libertarian freedom.

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<sup>28</sup> For helpful commentary on these four categories that make up a Christian worldview (creation, fall, redemption, consummation), see Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1999); Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> For example, prolegomena, Scripture, God, humanity, angels, sin, Christ, salvation, Spirit, church, last things.



God is so immanent and connected to the world, he grows and changes as we do.<sup>30</sup> Open theism also affirms libertarian freedom for humans, but denies that God is so immanent that he is constantly evolving alongside of his creation. Instead, advocates of this view propose that, out of deference to human freedom, God chooses not to exercise all of his divine attributes at all times. Due to this belief, God's exhaustive divine foreknowledge would be denied.<sup>31</sup>

I reject the beliefs of process and open theism outright. Christians should instead affirm the fact that God is omnipotent (Ps. 115:3; 135:6), omniscient (Ps. 139:1-16; 147:5; Rom. 11:33-36; Heb. 4:13; 1 John 3:20), sovereign (Deut. 32:39; Ps. 135:5-6; Isa. 45:5-7; Dan. 2:21; 4:34-35; Rom. 9:6-26; Eph. 1:11),<sup>32</sup> and also relates to his creation, specifically humans who are made in his image, through covenants (Deut. 4:39; 10:14-15; Josh. 2:11; Isa. 57:15).<sup>33</sup> In other words, God is both transcendent and immanent, majestic as creator and sustainer of the universe, and relational in his initiative to connect with his people by his covenant presence and revelation. Process and open theists slide too far toward the side of immanence, and some classical theists can err toward the side of emphasizing only transcendence. A faithful presentation of the

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<sup>30</sup> John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001) 141-42. For works by adherents of process theology see John B. Cobb, David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1976); Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (New York: State University of New York, 1986); Alfred North Whitehead *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978).

<sup>31</sup> Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 69-73. For works by adherents of open theism see Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001); John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> For several works that speak against the beliefs of process and open theism, and instead affirm a classical view of God see John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth, *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003); Bruce Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000); idem., *God's Greater Glory*.

<sup>33</sup> Embedded in the discussion of God's providence, transcendence, immanence, and human freedom is the concept of impassibility (i.e., that God does not possess nor is he directed by sinful passions and emotions). For a helpful work in this area see Rob Lister, *God is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

doctrine of God, however, will embrace both realities, neither diminishing his majesty nor his relationality.<sup>34</sup> In worldview terms, this yields an appropriate focus on God's character and attributes, resulting in proper worship (Heb. 12:28-29), and grace-wrought imitation (Eph. 5:1; 1 Pet. 1:16-17).

A second example of correlation deals with the doctrine of Scripture. In terms of espousing a belief as to the character of Scripture (i.e., inerrancy, infallibility, authority) there is a broad spectrum of belief amongst biblical scholarship. While some in biblical scholarship operate without a faith commitment, certainly one can "redeem" the study and conclusions of such scholars, provided the evidence and findings comport with the text of Scripture. However, one must also recognize when an unbelieving scholar's worldview and methodology are driving the conclusions rather than the actual evidence, and in this instance will likely have to reject their findings.

An instance of errant worldview and methodology in biblical scholarship that actually goes in an anti-biblical direction can be seen in the school of higher criticism and the historical-critical method. At its heart, this school of thought is committed to "historical consciousness." In other words, the biblical texts must be understood merely as a product of their own human culture and history.<sup>35</sup> Higher critics see Scripture as temporally and culturally bound rather than eternally significant, as error-prone rather than inerrant. Many also base their conclusions on a worldview that separates faith and reason, and postulates a closed universe that does not allow

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<sup>34</sup> For greater detail regarding how this relates to issues like divine sovereignty and human freedom, freedom and foreknowledge, and the problem of evil, see Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 625-798.

<sup>35</sup> David Finkbeiner, "Built Upon the Truth: Biblical Authority Yesterday and Today," in *Foundational Faith: Unchanging Truth for an Ever-Changing World*, ed. John Koessler (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 48-49.

for miracles or prophetic prediction.<sup>36</sup> In short, higher criticism emphasizes the humanity of Scripture to the exclusion of its divine side, and this must be rejected.<sup>37</sup>

In contradistinction to this framework, as was stated earlier, I affirm Scripture to be the revelation of God, inspired by God, and thus, based on his own character, inspired, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative for us. In other words, I affirm that God has made himself known through a communicative act.<sup>38</sup> This propositional and personal communication is “breathed out by God” (2 Tim. 3:16), meaning the words of Scripture, written down by men, are in fact God’s words.<sup>39</sup> In keeping with the fact that God inspired the words in Scripture, and given the reality that he does not err or lie (Titus 1:2), we affirm that Scripture is without error, incapable of error, and serves as an authoritative word for the Christian life. As such, Scripture is not “temporally and culturally bound,” rather it transcends time and culture as God’s sufficient Word. Again, in worldview terms this holds significance as it relates to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. As God’s Word we are to submit and come under its authority in all areas, recognizing that while we certainly correlate Scriptural truth with general revelation, Scripture contains all the divine words necessary for any aspect of life to live faithfully before him.<sup>40</sup>

One final example of correlation deals with the doctrine of redemption. The accomplished work of salvation purchased by the perfect life, atoning death, and victorious

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<sup>36</sup> Albert Wolters, “Worldview,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al., eds. (London: SPCK, 2005), 855.

<sup>37</sup> Finkbeiner, “Built Upon the Truth,” 49. For a survey of the history of higher criticism see Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 221-459.

<sup>38</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 617-18.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-44.

<sup>40</sup> This definition of sufficiency is derived from David Dockery, “Special Revelation,” in *A Theology for the Church*, 146; John Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 220; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

resurrection is at the very heart of the Christian faith. As such, one key area in the work of redemption that would have to be rejected would be any belief system that suggested a way of salvation other than faith in Jesus Christ alone. This would include the teachings of both universalism and inclusivism. Universalism, or pluralism, teaches that “because all experience is concept-laden, the great world religions constitute different ways of conceiving and experiencing ultimate reality, and hence different forms of life in response to this reality.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, world religions all interpret and communicate the ultimate truth about God, and thus all of these different paths eventually lead to eternal salvation. Inclusivism seeks to privilege Christianity and speak more specifically about the person and work of Christ as the means of salvation. However, they tend to merge common and saving grace, believing that God is present to the whole world as he works among all people in various religions. A faithful adherent of a particular religion is working with what they have, and God sees this as worship done to him.<sup>42</sup>

In studying Scripture one must affirm, in opposition to the aforementioned views, that salvation is exclusively bought by Jesus, applied by the Holy Spirit, and believed through the message of the gospel. Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again, and repentance and faith in him and his work is the only way to be brought into right relationship with God the Father (John 14:6; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). There is salvation found in no one else, and there is no other name under heaven that we can be saved by (Acts 4:12).<sup>43</sup> Demarest concurs, stating “The clear burden of the NT is that saving grace comes through the person of Jesus Christ. . . . Christianity is not just one

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<sup>41</sup> John Hick, “Response to ‘A Particularist View,’” in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 183.

<sup>42</sup> See Clark H. Pinnock, “An Inclusivist View,” in *ibid.*, 98-100.

<sup>43</sup> For more on the exegetical detail concerning these and other passages pertaining to an exclusive view of salvation, see R. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips, “A Particularist View: An Evidential Approach,” in *ibid.*, 229-39.

way among many; it is ‘the Way’ (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23).”<sup>44</sup> In worldview terms, this means that we understand the ultimate problem of the world is sin, and while other means are helpful in bringing about human flourishing (education, medicine, etc.) the key need of all humanity is the truth of and belief in the gospel. These serve as several examples of many regarding what must be rejected, received, and redeemed in the field of theological studies.

### **3. Role in and Commitment to Christian Higher Education**

God has granted me the esteemed privilege of teaching Bible and theology at a Christian institution of higher education. While I serve in other ways within the institution (e.g., department subcommittees, HLC accreditation committee, Speaker’s Guild, etc.), I understand my primary role at Cedarville as that of teaching biblical truth to (mainly) undergraduate students. This is a role that I have a great love and respect for, knowing that the potential impact had on others is quite large. This is especially so as we send students into every area of the world with knowledge in various disciplines, all equipped with a biblical view of life and reality, and ready to engage the world with the gospel.

Having served in pastoral ministry for several years, I understand at an intimate level the beauty of the church. I see Cedarville University as a servant to the church, equipping many students to serve their families, work place, and their local churches with excellence, ambition, and gospel clarity. Cedarville stands in a strategic position, preparing for students for all manner of skill sets and vocational realities, while undergirding every area of study with theological truth and Christian worldview implications. In terms of equipping leaders with a biblical worldview for lifelong service, Cedarville is doing an outstanding job.

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<sup>44</sup> Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997), 90.

As such, I hold a deep commitment to the institution and hope to serve students here well for many years to come. I love college students and recognize the unique moment this is in their lives, as they will make decisions that will affect so much of what they will do in the years to come. Through instruction in the classroom, personal mentoring, meals shared, and attending various events, my hope is to be an influence in the lives of students to the end that they treasure Christ above all things.

#### **4. Relationship Between Faith and Practice**

In reflecting upon a biblical worldview and the Christian beliefs that I hold to, it becomes apparent that these realities shape my approach to lifestyle and teaching. My deep and abiding passion is to see students study the Bible, develop a robust theology based on Scripture, formulate a Christian worldview, apply these realities to everyday life, and teach others to do the same. As I am convinced of the veracity and relevance of Scripture and theology, I am dedicating my life to coming under the Word of God in full submission and equipping students with the tools needed for faith and practice. In line with my commitment to Christian education, my aim is to demonstrate the relationship between faith and practice in three ways. First, aligning my lifestyle with the realities of biblical truth. Second, I aim to show students that calling and vocation matter to God and theological studies contribute to whatever their vocation may be. And finally, I seek to approach my teaching as a means of discipleship, modeling for students what it means to live and learn as a disciple of Jesus so they can go and do the same.

#### **Christian Theology, Worldview, and Lifestyle**

God is there and he is not silent. He has spoken to us in creation, conscience, and, more specifically, in the Bible. In Scripture I want to increasingly know, love, and delight in the

Trinitarian God who is revealed. As a teacher of theology I am reminded that there is an ordering to the great calling of my life: I am to study the Scripture, to do it, and to teach what it says (Ezra 7:10). That ordering matters. Before I teach in the classroom or the church, I am to dedicate myself to studying the Word of God. Then I am not just to be a hearer, but, by God's grace, I am also to apply what Scripture says to my life (James 1:22-25). Before I bring to bear on students the words of Scripture to understand and apply, my call is to do this personally.

Practically, this means I am up early every day, studying Scripture (I do a plan where I read through the whole Bible in one year), praying for specific needs of my family, students, faculty, and staff, and I am seeking to bring specific application to bear on my life from Scripture (I often reflect on this through journaling). I do this to continue to grow in my love for God and in my love for others, seeking to serve with humility and selflessness (John 13:1-17; Phil. 2:1-11). I am also dedicated as a member and teacher at Grace Baptist Church to worship with God's people, hear from God's Word, and continue to pursue sanctification in community (Heb. 3:12-13). The means of Scripture, prayer, and Christian community are key to my growth. This is essential, as I want to not just bring biblical data to students for exams. My aim is to get into the Word of God so as to be transformed and live a life of worship (Rom. 12:1-2). This sets me up to bring truth in the classroom with passion and authenticity as God continues to work in my life.

### A Biblical-Theological View of Calling and Vocation

Taking into account the reality of a worldview as described by Scripture, one must recognize both the value God places on all vocations, as well as the means by which we can train students to integrate a biblical worldview into the warp and woof of everyday work life. Thus, here the focus will be on how God views calling and vocation. This is significant as one seeks to shape within students a worldview that grounds all of their reality at all times, and not merely Sunday

mornings.

“Vocation” is a Latin word, *vocatio*, derived from the verb, *vocare*, to call. The English equivalent would be the noun “call” or more precisely, “calling.” Martin Luther is well known for his use of “vocation” as referring to secular offices and occupations, rather than merely a ministerial role.<sup>45</sup> Today, the term has become common-place, another synonym for a profession or job. But behind the term is the notion that every legitimate kind of work is a distinct “calling” from God, requiring unique God-given gifts, skills, and talents (Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 7:17).<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the Reformation doctrine of vocation teaches that God himself is active in everyday human labor, family responsibilities, and social interactions.<sup>47</sup>

Tim Keller points out this fact and asserts that work is ultimately meaningless and futile, unless the God of the Bible exists. Because this God does indeed exist and has revealed himself, “then every good endeavor, even the simplest ones, pursued in response to God’s calling, can matter forever.”<sup>48</sup> God created the world with the intent that man would work (Gen. 2:1-3, 15). While every vocation has been ultimately frustrated by the reality of sin, God has brought redemption through Christ, and the whole world will one day be redeemed at his return. As such,

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<sup>45</sup> Luther states, “Therefore I advise no one to enter any religious order or the priesthood, indeed, I advise everyone against it, unless he is forearmed with this knowledge and understands that the works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before God by faith alone.” Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church” in *LW*, Word and Sacrament II, eds. Helmut T. Lehmann and Abdel R. Wentz (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1959), 36:78.

<sup>46</sup> Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 4, defines 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 and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service.”

<sup>47</sup> See Karlfried Froehlich, “Luther on Vocation,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1999): 195-207; Robert Kolb, “Called to Milk Cows and Govern Kingdoms: Martin Luther’s Teachings on the Christians’ Vocations,” *Concordia Journal* 39, no. 2 (2013): 133-41.

<sup>48</sup> Tim Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (New York: Dutton, 2012), 29.



God desires us to see our work here on earth as mirroring his creative work “when we created culture that conforms to his will and vision for human beings—when it matches up with the biblical storyline.”<sup>49</sup> Salvation and a biblical-theological worldview undergird this vision of vocation, otherwise we will not properly interpret all of life in light of God and his purposes. Whatever vocation God calls one to, it should be seen in light of the gospel—which frees us from finding our identity through work—and pursued in a way that demonstrates love to God and neighbor.

Thus, when Paul exhorts the believers in Ephesus to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which they had been called (Eph. 4:1) this is certainly in reference to their application of the gospel in doctrine and behavior. Said differently, Paul is exhorting the Ephesians to apply the realities of a biblical worldview to their ethics, jobs, and cultural situation in a way that demonstrates love for God and people. Regardless of the vocation an individual is called to, God upholds that vocation with great value and expects us as Christians to enact a biblical worldview in all spheres of our existence. And these realities need to be clearly communicated to students here at Cedarville, who embody a multitude of majors, disciplines, and future vocations. As such, my goal in the classroom is to help students see how theology intersects with their career choices, whether they are aware of that at first or not.

### Education as Discipleship

Recognizing that God values all vocations as legitimate ways to bring glory to him, I also want to consider how Christian higher education can contribute to the training of students for integrating this worldview. At a comprehensive school, such as Cedarville University, this is a vital task. Presented with the responsibility of teaching future engineers, nurses, businessmen,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 184.

pastors, educators, journalists, and a host of other fields, the opportunity is ripe to impact a generation to live out their faith in a robust manner.

Dockery astutely remarks, “Thus, our goal at Christian universities in every course must be to engage the subject matter, the true and various options associated with it, and issues of our day in the various areas of learning while recognizing that God, the Source of all truth, is central in every discipline.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, as we seek to disciple students through our educational endeavors, the biblical worldview is always at the forefront of our minds. The triune God has revealed himself in creation, history, conscience, Scripture, and ultimately Christ. While man was created in God’s image, they fell into sin, and thus redemption through a Savior is necessary. Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the Father. The Spirit continues and applies Christ’s redemptive work in the world, and at the end of time the triune God will complete the work inaugurated by Christ through judgment and the restoration of all things. The primary purpose of all of God’s work as depicted in this biblical worldview is to reconcile sinful human beings through Christ for the praise of his glory.<sup>51</sup>

This God-revealed truth is the framework for understanding and interpreting the world, events of human history, and our responsibilities toward God and one another. As such, the various disciplines that are taught in a Christian university are valuable and should have God at their core. There is a place for music and the arts because God is the God of creation and beauty. Courses in the social sciences can make observations to strengthen society and families,

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<sup>50</sup> David Dockery, *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society Through Christian Higher Education* (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 84.

<sup>51</sup> This summary of the biblical narrative is derived from Mark Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 41.

recognizing foundationally the image of God in his creation of humans. The discipline of economics can help address systemic problems facing communities and society at large, as well as how wealth is produced and used.<sup>52</sup> Political science can strategize about ways to address issues of government, war, justice, and peace, recognizing that God is sovereign over all creation, and yet he has also granted authority to man in a secondary sense (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). These are displays of love for God, love for others, and astute understanding of a discipline that is rooted in a biblical-theological framework.

All of this is possible because Scripture grounds and interprets reality, and gives us theological/worldview language by which we can describe reality. It must be maintained, therefore, that this kind of approach to education can only be bolstered through a constant renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2) by faculty in the Scriptures as well as the key tenets of theology. This requires not only understanding the macro-level worldview component of biblical revelation, but also being able to interpret the fine details of biblical texts. This in no way insinuates that faculty members in science, history, or education need to become “biblical scholars” in any technical sense, but they must be biblically conversant enough to understand the big picture of the Bible and apply specific texts to their field.<sup>53</sup> The understanding and application of this biblical worldview may not always render results that are largely different from the secular world (e.g., a Christian and an atheist will agree that  $2+2=4$ ), but the foundation

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<sup>52</sup> For a recent example of how theology shapes economics, see Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus, *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> David S. Dockery and Timothy George, *The Great Tradition of Christian Thinking: A Student's Guide* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 77, affirms this point, saying, “The shaping of the Christian intellectual tradition in our day calls for a robust recovery of ‘the faith once for all delivered to the saints.’ This does not require that every member of the faculty become an expert in the history of Christian doctrine. . . . But it does mean that everyone involved in learning, teaching, and research should recognize the biblical narrative and its unfolding in the life of the church as the environment, the *umwelt*, by which his or her specific work and discipline is to be understood and carried out.”

from which knowledge springs will truly differ and alter a great deal of our fundamental beliefs and practices.

Likewise, while teaching in theological studies, I continue to benefit from dialogue with students and faculty in various disciplines. By staying abreast of current research and having a knowledge of the questions that are being asked in various disciplines, I can be challenged to think about how theology intersects with such questions. In this way, my goal is to stay tethered to the pertinent questions of the day, and offer answers that will provide value in the realms of biblical interpretation, theological formulation, worldview, as well as apologetics. This is so as theology is a culminating and systematizing discipline seeking to address contemporary concerns with unchanging biblical truth.

Much of what has been said thus far about education as discipleship has been centered on content, but one should also understand the role of discipleship for character.<sup>54</sup> Dockery remarks, “The goal of Christian higher education involves students, staff, and faculty learning and teaching together, keeping faith with God whom we remember and in whom we hope.”<sup>55</sup> That phrase “keeping faith with God” signifies that we are not merely training students to regurgitate content on a test; we are seeking to shape their minds, hearts, and service to be distinctively Christ-centered. Educational instruction, understood as discipleship, in the framework of a biblical worldview, has the potential, by God’s grace and the power of the Spirit, to renew minds, revive hearts, and bring a resolve to live ethically before God at both a personal and

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<sup>54</sup> For an outstanding study that details how one can do their work with virtue, see Andreas Köstenberger, *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011). While the book was written primarily to academic scholars, who would certainly benefit from reading it, the contents of this book could be applied to any Christian in any field as the author discusses such virtues as holiness, diligence, courage, passion, creativity, integrity, wisdom, grace, humility, and love. Certainly this is the kind of character we want to see our student shaped by in Christian institutions.

<sup>55</sup> Dockery, *Renewing Minds*, 109.

social level. My instruction, therefore, seeks to drive home application of what our students must do in their various fields based on who they are in Christ, which is known through the worldview contained in Scripture.

## 5. Methods and Means for the Classroom

In theological studies, my task is not merely to think about how one specific discipline (e.g., nursing) should integrate Scripture into their teaching. Rather, the task of the theologian is to think about how the specific content taught in Bible classes can and should resonate in such a way as to impact every major represented.<sup>56</sup> This is no small task. Since much of my teaching over the first six years of my time here at Cedarville has been focused on the Bible minor (courses taught also include preaching, teaching, and theology electives), I will deal within that scope in seeking to demonstrate specific application.

### Discipline-Specific Application

The Bible minor at Cedarville is composed of five courses: The Bible and the Gospel, OT Literature, NT Literature, Theology 1, and Theology 2. The scope and sequence of these courses is intentional as we seek to teach students about Bible study methods and spiritual disciplines, followed by a survey of the whole Bible, and culminating with the key doctrines of the Christian faith. Every student at Cedarville will take these classes and thus will be grounded in foundational principles and beliefs that will shape their entire worldview.

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<sup>56</sup> All faculty in every discipline should seek to think as theologians. As Christians we must all exercise disciplined self-reflection to rightly understand God and the various facets of doctrine. This must be heartily affirmed, while also acknowledging the needful role of the “vocational” theologian. The theologian assists Christians in discerning, interpreting, and applying Scripture in a fitting manner. This involves right thinking, desiring, and doing alike, requiring all of our faculties. In essence, the theologian’s task is to understand the drama of redemption and make it understandable for a contemporary audience, which provides the pathway for accurate measures of integration. For more on this, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 243–63; idem, *Faith Seeking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 146–47.

These courses are essential in that they will equip students with an understanding of Scripture and doctrine. The Bible serves as our basis for all knowledge and living, and thus as students are exposed to these truths they will be able to formulate more accurately how Scripture impacts their life in general, and their vocation specifically. This educational process continues as students think through the various loci of theology and also briefly consider basic issues of apologetics and ethics. These courses are thus meant to form students in such a way that they see life from a distinct perspective, and in so doing they will pursue spiritual growth and seek to impact their sphere of influence with the truth and implications of the gospel.

With this sequence in mind, I refer back to previous classes often while teaching Theology 1 and 2 (the courses I teach most often). This is to ensure that students are retaining what was said in a particular class, but also to show the connections that must be made in moving from the study of one particular passage, to understanding the content of the Bible as a whole, and then finally comprehending what the whole Bible says about a variety of crucial topics. All of that content is shaping the way they think, so I refer back to the content of previous classes to make those connections. I also structure each doctrine I teach with four key areas: biblical foundations, historical development, theological synthesis, and practical application. While each of these areas does not receive the same amount of time, I want students to recognize each is important for the theological task, and it is all driving toward biblical wisdom, a biblical worldview, and life application.

Of course, the danger is that students could merely learn content and compartmentalize their learning from the Bible minor, never allowing it to truly impact the way they actually live each day. Certainly as Christians, students need to learn this content to understand the nature of Scripture and the God they worship. Also, faculty from respective disciplines will certainly work

diligently to see that students are integrating their faith into their majors in appropriate ways. However, I am cognizant of the fact that many students here are not going into full-time vocational ministry, and as such I seek to highlight suitable and, at times, specific ways these truths must be applied.

We cannot assume that students will always be able to make these applications on their own, nor can we solely focus on how each doctrinal nuance is applied to every conceivable major. Rather, I seek to be aware of who I am teaching and prepare so as to give students ways they can engage in “fitting participation in the drama of redemption.”<sup>57</sup> This always demands that students be shown how the storyline of Scripture is the real story to which they must dedicate their lives. They must also understand the key biblical topics that form a cohesive theological framework. As they continually meditate on these biblical-theological truths (Ps. 1:1-2) through various lectures and discussion, students will be able to interpret all of life and contend with every other worldview. At root, I aim to show students in these classes that all of life is to be God-centered, Bible-saturated, and gospel-oriented.

### Integration in the Classroom

Upon coming to Cedarville and teaching classes (particularly Christian Worldview Integration, and Theology 1 and 2) to a variety of students, it became apparent that students had a number of specific questions regarding not only theological content, but also worldview application, apologetics, and ethics. The first couple of years in teaching allowed me to delve into Scripture with Cedarville students in mind, leading me to think more specifically regarding the realities of the biblical storyline, a systematic theological framework, and its application to life. I was delighted to see students captivated by the content and realities of the Word of God, and I

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<sup>57</sup> Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 363.

worked diligently to also point out how that truth equipped us for “every good work,” (2 Tim. 3:17) at times in discipline-specific ways. The revealed Word of God was shaping them cognitively, affectively, as well as volitionally. Answers in class demonstrated an increasing understanding of the “relevance” of Scripture and theology to all that they did. I learned a great deal in seeking to disciple students to know the whole Bible and live faithfully before God as a result, and students also began to increasingly understand the role of Bible and theology in terms of their walking in wisdom in all facets of life.

This work truly began to come together for me when I taught a May term course in 2014, directly after my first full year of teaching. With nineteen students, I was able to know the participants in the class at a more intimate level and speak more specifically on a number of topics. Six of my students were nursing majors, several were theatre majors, others were in business, and still others in education and engineering. I took the opportunity to speak to students at the breaks, even during class, asking what they were learning specifically in their majors and what their field expected. From those conversations emerged for me a clearer sense of how Scripture addressed them, in general terms as Christians, and even in specific vocational terms, in a way that I believe bore greater fruit in their understanding. This dealt specifically with their understanding of the metanarrative of Scripture, learning to think in more robustly canonical and theological terms.<sup>58</sup> Coming to a fuller comprehension of life as created by God, marred by the fall, redeemed by Christ, and driving toward a new creation allows students to embody theological realities that undergird, define, and interpret their academic and vocational pursuits. This will happen increasingly through thorough Bible reading, asking textual questions, and determining theological significance for life, all of which will be encouraged in courses through

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<sup>58</sup> For a helpful description of understanding Scripture in terms of the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons, see Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).



teaching methodology and assignments. It also occurs as students develop their “theological vocabulary” in such a way as to speak into their disciplines from a Christian worldview perspective.

Three assignments that are intended to accomplish this reality in the lives of students include online quizzes (Theology 1 and 2), book reviews and theology papers (Theology 1 and 2), the Theology for Life paper (Theology 2). Online quizzes for both of these classes engage students with the vocabulary learned from class as well as their readings from the Grudem textbook. Like any discipline, theology has a particular vocabulary, and one must learn these terms to be conversant with a Christian worldview (as well as other worldviews).

In Theology 1 students review two books, one dealing with the doctrine of Scripture,<sup>59</sup> the other engaging with the Trinity.<sup>60</sup> Theology 2 requires a review of a book dealing with Christology<sup>61</sup> and how theology leads to distinctive, transformed lives.<sup>62</sup> The hope is that in these assignments (which requires summary, evaluation, and theological insights) students will see that doctrine is essential to the Christian life, God is the main character, as we see in Scripture, and our lives are characterized by our relationship to him. These assignments are tied to brief theology papers, wherein students sketch their belief of each doctrine covered, citing at least 10-12 biblical references as warrant for their beliefs. These kinds of assignments are important in helping students read Scripture thoughtfully and accurately, understand what it says about a

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<sup>59</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).

<sup>60</sup> Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012).

<sup>61</sup> Michael Reeves, *Rejoicing in Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015).

<sup>62</sup> David F. Wells, *God in the Whirlwind: How the Holy-Love of God Reorients Our World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).

particular doctrine, and continually formulate a biblical worldview so as to live faithfully before God.

In Theology 2 the paper focuses on theology for life, particularly in the relationship between vocation, the character of God, the content of the gospel, and the part they play in the mission God has given to us. Papers include a brief biblical theology (OT and NT) of work, a brief biblical theology (OT and NT) of the gospel and God's love and holiness, an brief explanation and rationale for choosing their career, and practical application regarding the way in which the theological realities of the doctrine of God, love, holiness, worship, and mission will affect the way in which they approach work. This serves as a helpful exercise in pressing students to think in theological terms regarding God, work, mission, worship, and the church, and hopefully offers them a more robust approach to each of these categories.

My goal is to continue to engage students at this level and to continue to dwell on Scripture's content to rightly understand its details, the overarching metanarrative, the doctrinal outworkings, and its call to wisdom in right living. If students can be equipped to think for themselves in these specific areas, they are equipped for living a fruitful and faithful existence. Ultimately, the desire for students, regardless of their respective vocation, is that they would come to grips with the textual world of the Bible and in embracing that reality live faithfully before God.

Briefly, on a more practical level, my goals and objectives for the classroom include knowing students and ministering to them personally and effectively. This involves printing off pictorial rosters of classes each semester so as to effectively learn names. It also constitutes collecting index cards on the first day of class containing prayer requests for students, taking prayer requests at the beginning of class, following up with students about those requests,

meeting with students during office hours, mentoring several young men each semester, meeting with students over lunch or dinner, and having classes over to our home for dinner so as to get to know them better. In all of this, my aim is to teach specific students specific truths from God's Word so that they can glorify God and enjoy him forever.

### **Conclusion**

Theology is a crucial discipline as we seek to equip students to reflect on God's self-revelation so as to know and love God, fulfill every good work, and participate in his mission in the world. God has deigned to reveal himself to us in his Word, and we are tasked as Christians with renewing our minds in its truth and seeing all of life from a God-centered perspective. This is a crucial task and must be taken seriously within the milieu of a Christian university, as we seek to prepare students for a lifetime of service to our Lord, whatever vocation they may enter.

In all of our academic endeavors we must be rooted in a Christ-centered approach that demonstrates how he is Lord of all. Noll aptly affirms this truth, claiming, "If, as Christians believe, 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' are hid in Christ (Col. 2:3), the time is always past for treasure hunting. The time is always now to unearth treasure, offer it to others for critique or affirmation, and above all find in it new occasions to glorify the one who gives the treasure and is the treasure himself."<sup>63</sup> My aim is to spread a feast of biblical and doctrinal proportions for my students, such that they may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so they can walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:9-10). In this endeavor, my hope is that students and faculty alike would see that the Bible is telling one grand story

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<sup>63</sup> Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 149.

which is applicable to all: God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory in Christ.

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