

Charles Colson & Nancy Pearcey: How Now shall we live?

Marshall Pickering 2000 (USA 1999)

Notes by Alison Morgan Oct 2001

500 pp of text, many more of notes and bibliog; a daunting read, but astonishingly comprehensive in their exploration of the main thesis: which is that our culture (US) has embraced a pseudo-scientific world view which is leading it into rapid decline, and that only Christians working in every sphere of life with a Christian world view offer any hope of recovery. Profound and detailed analysis of the contemporary culture – an essential read. Book made longer by inclusion of many anecdotes and illustrations.

Introduction

Jews in exile cried out to God, how should we then live. Same q rings today. Our culture is at best morally indifferent; slide into barbarism. But we are maligned as bigoted if we try to stop it. 'Battle weary, we are tempted to withdraw into the safety of our sanctuaries, to keep busy by plugging into every program offered by our megachurches, hoping to keep ourselves and our children safe from the mounting destruction' x. But if we concentrate on church things we ignore our responsibility to redeem the culture, and our faith remains privatised and marginalised. We must show the world that Christianity is more than private belief or personal salvation, but a comprehensive life system that answers all of humanity's questions. The church's failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system or worldview that governs every area of existence.

Two types of grace, saving grace and common grace. Common grace is that which God's power sustains creation, holding back the sin and evil that would otherwise overwhelm it. We are agents of common grace, called to help sustain and renew creation, uphold created institutions of family and society, pursue science and scholarship, create works of art and beauty, heal and help those suffering from the results of the Fall.

Central questions a world view must answer are 3:

- creation – where did we come from, and who are we?
- Fall – what has gone wrong with the world?
- Redemption – what can we do to fix it?

I: WORLDVIEW: WHY IT MATTERS

1. A new creation

Account of the transformation by Christians of Garcia Moreno Prison in Quito, Ecuador.

2. Christianity is a worldview

Our choices are shaped by what we believe is real and true, right and wrong, good and beautiful. Our choices are shaped by our worldview. A worldview is the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the big picture that directs our daily decisions and actions. Every world view can be analysed by the way it answers the 3 basic questions above. Basis for the Christian world view is God's revelation in scripture. But many believers fail to understand that scripture is meant to be the basis for all of life. God has a plan which goes beyond personal salvation. Christianity is a way of seeing and comprehending all reality. Genesis. God spoke everything into being out of nothing; everything finds its purpose and meaning in him. Jesus, I am the way, the truth and the life – nothing has meaning apart from him. Christianity isn't just personal salvation or social action or religious observance; it is ultimate reality. To deny God is to blind ourselves to reality. We make the bold claim that Christians actually live happier, more fulfilled, more productive lives by every measure.

Our calling is not only to order our own lives by divine principles but also to engage the world. To do that we have to understand the ideas that compete for people's minds and hearts.

3. Worldviews in conflict

World divided not by geographical boundaries but by religious and cultural traditions: worldviews. Western vs Islamic vs Confucian. Within the western have clash between Judaeo-Christian framework and those who favour postmodernism/multiculturalism. Western culture may soon dominate the globe; people complaining all over world about US cultural invasion. The invasion isn't by the Christian worldview but by the other one.

The conflict in west is between theism and naturalism: belief in creator God vs belief that natural causes are sufficient to explain everything that exists. These 2 systems are utterly opposed.

Naturalism: results in moral relativism (because there is no source of truth); multiculturalism (all cultures are morally equivalent); pragmatism (whatever works is right); utopianism (belief that if only we create the right social and economic structures, we can usher in an age of harmony and prosperity); this-world perspective (no judgment). Result is a postmodern

culture, which rejects any notion of a universal, overarching truth and reduces all ideas to social constructions shaped by class, gender, and ethnicity. Institutions have embraced this so aggressively that they enforce codes of political correctness; tolerance has become so important that no exception is tolerated. But if all ideas are equally valid, none is really worth our allegiance, worth living or dying for. Result is a climate of apathy.

4. Christian truth in an age of unbelief

Account of discussion on crime with Bulgarian justice minister. He said crime is caused by social and economic forces, and that people respond to environmental conditions. Colson that crime is a matter of people choosing to do wrong; the individual's moral failure; and that only love changes human behaviour.

People will listen to our case for the truth of Christianity if we cast it in terms of the questions they have. Opposition – we have no more reason to be angry than with a blind man who stepped on our foot. Most of those who object to Christianity are simply spiritually blind, and it is our task to help bring them into the light.

The oyster offers a good analogy. Oysters make their own shells, so if the shell is badly formed, the problem is not in the shell but in the oyster. Likewise, when a culture deforms and decays, don't ask what went wrong with the culture; ask what went wrong with the cult – the religious core. The material order rests on the spiritual order [Romans 1]. 'The hope for today's world is a renewed and vibrant spiritual order, a culture-creating cult, men and women of another type, arrayed for the great battle of principle against principle.'

II: CREATION: WHERE DID WE COME FROM, AND WHO ARE WE?

5. Dave and Katy's metaphysical adventure

Story of Christian father taking child to Disney and having no answers to the promotion of the doctrine of creation by chance; and realising how undermined her faith is by the way these things are taught as fact at school.

6. Shattering the grid

Kepler: *the chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order and harmony which has been imposed on it by God* .

Is nature our creator? Dominant world view is that this life is all there is, and nature is all we need to explain everything that exists. This view permeates classroom curriculum and popular culture alike. Naturalism is a philosophy, because it begins with premises that cannot be tested empirically. And whatever you take as the starting point of your world view functions, in effect, as your religion. Naturalism parades as science but is in fact religion.

The Christian must be ready to separate genuine science from philosophy. Evolution, as typically taught, confuses the two, presenting as science what is in fact naturalistic philosophy. When we question this we are labelled ignorant reactionaries who are trying to halt the progress of science. We must convince people that the debate is not Bible vs science. We must challenge the assumption that science is the same as naturalistic philosophy. And we must answer philosophy with philosophy.

On one side is the naturalistic world view, claiming that the universe is the product of blind, purposeless forces. On the other is the Christian world view, telling us we were created by a transcendent God who loves us and has a purpose for us. There are therefore 2 starting points: I believe life is the result of chance; and I believe life is the result of design. This isn't about science. It's epistemology.

7. Let's start at the very beginning

First q any world view must answer is how it all started. Most ancient cultures believed the world to be eternal. Science has uncovered dramatic evidence for a starting point. Big Bang. Second law of thermodynamics (that it all winding down). First law of thermodynamics (matter cannot just appear or create itself). Creation is not now a matter of faith, but of science. And science has begun to sound eerily like Genesis 1: and let there be light.

Anthropic principle: the physical structure of the universe is exactly what it needs to be in order to support life. Earth boasts wealth of characteristics that make it capable of supporting life: eg

- if it were fractionally closer to or further from the sun life would not be possible
- orbit must be nearly circular in order to maintain constancy of temperature and life to continue (other planets have elliptical orbits)
- properties of water; eg the only known substance whose solid phase is less dense than its liquid phase
- big bang had to have precisely the right velocity to prevent collapse or dissipation of matter; ie law of gravity must be accurate to within 1 part in 10 to the power of 60.
- within atom, if relative mass of neutrons and protons were reversed, the thing would not hold together and the structure of the universe would be impossible; and if electrons and protons carried different strengths of charge, atoms would all fly apart.

It turns out that the slightest tinkering with the values of the fundamental forces of physics would have resulted in a universe where life was impossible. How to explain this without postulating a creator? Well, various batty attempts which stretch credulity – eg parallel universes (unprovable), or notion that universe wanted to be known so created man (participatory anthropic principle). The fact that so many scientists are willing to accept wild speculations about unseen universes for which not a shred of observational evidence exists suggests something about both the power of the modern atheistic ideology and the cultural agenda of many in the scientific profession. When we try to explain any natural phenomenon, there are 3 possibilities – chance, law, design. If the phenomenon is irregular, erratic, unspecified, we conclude it is random. If it is regular, repeatable, predictable, we conclude that it is the result of natural forces. But if it is unpredictable and yet highly specified, we conclude that it is designed.

Most obvious inference is that the universe *appears* to be designed because it *is* designed.

8. Life in a test tube?

A little science estranges a man from God. A lot of science brings him back. Francis Bacon.

Attempts to create life in test tubes. Problems: pure lab conditions don't even approximate to the primordial soup (and require the exclusion of ultraviolet light which makes the amino acids they make break down); the amino acids are of left-handed and right-handed kinds in equal proportions, but only left-handed ones are required by living things; and they hook up to one another randomly and never produce a protein capable of functioning in a living cell; and they break down immediately under the influence of the same energy source which made them in the first place. So these experiments really prove that life can be created only by an intelligent agent directing, controlling, and manipulating the process.

In 60s, 'mathematicians began writing computer programs to simulate.. the trial-and-error processes of neo-Darwinian evolution over the equivalent of billions of years. The outcome was jolting: the computers showed that the probability of evolution by chance processes is essentially zero, no matter how long the time scale' (S L Miller, *From the primitive atmosphere to the prebiotic soup to the pre-RNA world*, Washington 1996). Gradually scientists began to abandon the idea of chance in favour of it having come about under the compulsion of forces in matter itself. But they can't think of one. 'When it comes to the origin of life, science is squarely on the side of creation by an intelligent agent'.

9. Darwin in the dock

Best argument against Darwinism: organisms stay true to type. Small variations occur, but not species division. Genes combine to produce different characteristics, but no new genetic material is added, and so no major change can occur – mice can't grow feathers. Only source of new genetic material is random mutations. You have to hope that against the trend somehow beneficial mutations occur, and lots of them in a single organism – very improbable. Attempts to make it happen have produced alteration in existing structures (eg eye colour) but not the creation of new structures.

Schaeffer. Suppose a fish evolves lungs. What happens then; does it move up to the next evolutionary stage? No, it drowns. You'd have to transform it all at once, otherwise gradual change would just bring handicap.

Darwin: if it cd be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which cd not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down. Take bats. Webbing would only be a disadvantage until it turned into wings. And there are no transitional fossils for bats. Or human eye.

10. Darwin's dangerous idea

Darwinism isn't just about mutations and fossils; it is a comprehensive philosophy stating that all life can be explained by natural causes acting randomly – which implies there is no need for a creator. And without a creator, the entire body of Christian belief collapses. Consequences of consistent Darwinism: no life after death, no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning for life, no free will. There is much more at stake here than a scientific theory. Creation has become a fierce battleground because it is the foundation of the entire Christian world view. Everything stands or falls on it.

Evangelism can no longer start with salvation from sin, because people no longer understand what it is – no concept of a holy God who requires certain things of us. It's like starting a book in the middle. Must begin with Genesis and posit God as the explanation for life, drawing on the scientific evidence above.

11. A matter of life

Story of a US Vietnam soldier.

12. Whatever happened to human life?

Descartes unleashed the idea that the human mind, and not God, is the source of certainty; human experience is the fixed point round which everything else revolves. And so morality comes from the human mind, not from God.

Abortion. 'Choice' argument seems compelling. But abortion, infanticide, euthanasia all part of the same thing; all depend on the way a culture views human life. If it bears the stamp of a divine maker, it is infinitely precious. If it is simply a product of biology/nature, then utilitarian values become the dominant determinant.

13. In whose image?

Only the Judaeo-Christian view of life conforms to reality, to the nature and character of the human condition as we actually experience it. Only the biblical view creates a sustainable and rational and truly liberating basis for human life.

- Which world view corresponds with scientific evidence?

- Which world view provides the strongest basis for human dignity?

Multiculturalists insist that all cultures are morally equivalent. But in a culture which truly upholds the God-given dignity of individuals, widows are not burned on their husband's funeral pyre (India), sold into slavery (Sudan), and life is not sacrificed to satisfy ancestors or an angry god (some primitive cultures). Christianity has accorded men and women dignity unlike any other belief system in the world.

- Which world view gives a sense of meaning and purpose? Arguments for abortion/euthanasia seem persuasive only because the purpose of life has been reduced to something shallow, a simplistic sense of happiness as emotional fulfilment, career success, or wealth. No sense of a higher destiny. But men and women cannot live without purpose. Westminster Shorter Catechism: what is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy him forever.

- Which world view provides a sense of assurance about our ultimate destiny? Every view of human life is shaped by 2 assumptions: our origin and our destiny. If we assume eternity, then everything we do takes on meaning and dignity.

- Which world view provides the most certain motive for service and care of others? How about untouchables, karma?

14. God makes no mistakes

His autistic grandson's capacity for love.

III: THE FALL: WHAT HAS GONE WRONG WITH THE WORLD?

15. The trouble with us

Second element of a world view is the way it explains the presence of evil. Man created with the unique dignity of being free moral agents. The doctrine of original sin is the only philosophy empirically validated by 35 centuries of recorded human history... The 'enlightened' world view, on the other hand, has proved to be irrational and unliveable.

16. A better way of living?

Syanon cult in Los Angeles.

17. Syanon and sin

When people reject the biblical teaching of sin and evil and then embrace the great modern myth of utopianism – that human nature is intrinsically good and can form the basis of a perfect society – we come face to face with the human capacity for evil. Rousseau, *The Social contract*, begins 'man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains'; he called on reformers to set people free from the chains of institutions, rules, customs, traditions. Yet what we got was the most oppressive regimes of the modern world. How? Because he did not define freedom as the assertion of rights against the state, but against the forms and institutions of society – family, church, class, local community. Result was the 'politics of redemption' – idea that politics can be the means not only of creating a better world but of transforming human nature. Interesting that at same time he was writing the *Social contract* he was in relationship with woman who bore him 4 illegitimate children, all of whom they left on the orphanage steps. His state turns out to be one that liberates its citizens from troubling personal obligations.

18. We're all Utopians now

[annoying this, though, cos a lot of *Utopia* is tongue in cheek]

We now assume that crime is caused by poverty, and that when neither gets better it must be because the state isn't doing enough. Produces entitlement mentality even in those who do not fulfil the basic duties of citizenship. Crime is not a matter of the soul but a technical problem that can be solved by engineering the right social conditions (liberal approach) – this view treats people as passive products of the environment. Crime is a calculation of incentives, so the solution is harsher penalties (conservative approach) – this view is equally dehumanising because it reduces people to complex calculating machines.

19. The face of evil

In the modern classroom children are taught to like themselves, and correction diminishes a child's self-esteem. Bad behaviour indicates not enough love/approval, needs not met. Even in the home, a sense of duty has been replaced by a sense of entitlement, sense that we have the right to what we want, even if it means violating standards of proper behaviour. Children love fairy tales because they're stocked with villains; children instinctively know that evil exists, and need to read

about the victory of good over evil. Parents who stop them reading these stories deny them the chance to face their real fears within the safe realm of fantasy.

Experience of preaching gospel in a Swedish prison; no response, because no sense of sin – they all saw selves as victims, with no personal responsibility and therefore no need for personal transformation.

20. A snake in the garden

Fall. Broad understanding of sin – not breaking a few rules but a pervasive thing. It disrupts relationship with God, with each other, and affects all of nature. Christian belief cannot be privatised, because it is the truth about all reality. Need to face guilt, not bury it under layers of psychological jargon.

21. Does suffering make sense?

A God who did not abolish suffering – worse, a God who abolished sin precisely by suffering – is a scandal to the modern mind:
Peter Kreeft

God and evil – how come? Solutions – deny God exists; deny suffering exists; place God beyond good and evil; limit God's power; God has created evil to achieve a greater good. None is satisfactory.

Human free will. Decision to sin made in spiritual realm by Satan and other angels; entered our world through free moral choice made by first humans; plague spreads from there.

IV: REDEMPTION – WHAT CAN WE DO TO FIX IT?

22. Good intentions

Nathanson and impact of watching abortion he had performed on film.

23. In search of redemption

Advertisers are attuned to the human yearning for salvation and eager to exploit it. Through advertising, the 'religion' of appetite and ego gratification is offered to us as a solution to the human dilemma, a comfort in our insecurities, a way of salvation. The most advanced tools of communication and persuasion are being used to press us into the service of America's most popular deity, the idol of consumerism. But practising the religion of consumerism is like drinking salt water – the more you drink, the thirstier you get.

24. Does it liberate?

Marxism and the myth of progress

25. Salvation through sex?

Liberation of sex from morality. Sex presented as more than mere sensual gratification; a form of redemption, means to heal the fundamental flaw in human nature. Free sexual expression is seen as the means to a full and healthy life.

25. Is science our saviour?

Genetic engineering. Confidence in technology to solve all ills. Science is a wonderful tool for investigating God's world. But it cannot solve the human dilemma, or give hope and meaning.

27. The drama of despair

For many modern thinkers, the alternative to the Christian message of salvation is not any of the ersatz salvations we have discussed but a free fall into pessimism and despair. Existentialism. Dawkins and the selfish gene. But science does not compel us to adopt any world view that denies the reality of redemption and dramatises nature as a stage for perpetual conflict. Many pessimists engage in circular reasoning – they banish God and conclude that the universe is meaningless; and since it is meaningless there can't be a God. Atheism is presented as the conclusion when it is in fact the hidden premise. Growing popularity of high risk sports is rebellion against the futility of life. Life isn't exciting enough, because it isn't about anything.

28. That new age religion

Attraction of eastern religions. W secularism is materialistic, limiting reality to what can be tested scientifically. E mysticism is spiritual, opening the consciousness to new levels of awareness. New Age is vehicle for disseminating a world view. Where did we come from: we are fragmented off from the universal spirit. What has gone wrong: we have forgotten that we are part of God. What is the source of our salvation: to rediscover our true nature and link up to the God within.

29. Real redemption

Lining up Christianity with other world views reveals:

- it begins with an accurate diagnosis of the human condition
- it provides the only answer to the problem of sin
- its offer of salvation is based on historical truth

V: RESTORATION – HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE?

30. The knockout punch

Danny who became a Christian in prison.

31. Saved to what?

Transformed people transform cultures. And that is what every believer is called to do. When we are redeemed from sin, we are not only freed from the sinful motivations that drive us but also restored to fulfil our original purpose, empowered to do what we were created to do: to build societies and create culture, and in doing so, to restore the created order. It is our contention in this book that the Lord's cultural commission is inseparable from the great commission. Mustn't confuse this with the liberal social gospel. Christians are not only saved from something, but to something. We are meant to proceed to the restoration of all God's creation, which includes private and public virtue, individual and family life, education and community, work, politics and law, science and medicine, literature, art and music. Through the centuries, when Christians have lived out their faith by putting both the cultural commission and the great commission to work, they have renewed, restored, and even built new cultures. They have literally turned the world upside down.

After Rome fell, it was the Christians who saved civilisation in one of the most inspiring chapters of history.

The Irish monasteries became refuges for vast numbers of Christian scholars and monks fleeing the barbarians- between AD 650 and 850 more than half of all known biblical commentaries were written by Irishmen. Thus the Irish saved civilisation.

At the dawn of the third millennium, we face the same challenge and opportunity that the early church and the medieval monks faced: to build a culture informed by a biblical worldview. We must obey the 2 great commissions: to win the lost and to build a culture. Christians must seize this moment to show the world, just as the Irish did centuries ago, that Christianity is not only true... it is humanity's one great hope.

32. Don't worry, be religious

How do we redeem a culture? From the inside out. From the individual to the family to the community, and then outward in ever widening ripples. We must begin by understanding what it means to live by Christian worldview principles in our own behaviour and choices – else we will interpret the biblical commands according to the spirit of the age and end up conformed to the world. The dominant cultural voices argue that individuals have a right to live in any way they choose and that *society* has a responsibility to pick up the tab for any negative consequences that result. Disastrous consequences of this value-free morality. Welfare has not given everyone the same opportunities; it has helped create a permanent underclass that is disordered and demoralised. By compensating for irresponsible behaviour, government has subsidised it, creating more of it. Result is that cultural leaders are searching for a common secular language to revive a sense of civic duty and virtue. New opportunity to make case that living according to the biblical moral order is healthier for both individuals and society. Recent studies show that:

- alcohol abuse highest amongst those with little or no religious commitment
- inverse correlation between religious commitment and drug abuse
- strong correlation between participation in religious activities and the avoidance of crime
- high levels of religious commitment correlate with lower levels of depression and stress
- persons not attending church are 4x more likely to commit suicide (biggest factor)
- strong inverse relation between church attendance and divorce
- church goers report higher marital and sexual satisfaction
- church goers have better health and lower mortality
- religion protects against mental disorders

Christianity not an arbitrary set of rules and restrictions that repress and distort our true nature, but actually describes our true nature and shows us how to live with it.

33. God's training ground

Family. Need to be proactive rather than reactive, by confronting underlying worldview assumptions. Cannot determine people's world view by asking their position, eg for/against homosexual marriage. Must ask how they justify their views. Many people retain traditional ideals but regard them as personal choice. From Enlightenment onwards, philosophers postulate a hypothetical presocial 'state of nature', in which individuals are the only ultimate reality, and social bonds are created by the choices they make. Manent: basic tenet of mod liberalism is that 'no individual can have an obligation to which

he has not consented'. So marriage becomes not part of the way we were created, but a personal choice. Has been called the philosophy of the unencumbered self, a worldview that depicts the isolated self as prior to all commitments and moral obligations. In traditional societies, a person's identity was found in and expressed through social roles; today roles and responsibilities are regarded as separate from one's core self, identity. So eg mothers work, because personal fulfilment is more imp than marriage and family. Family now treated as a loose collection of rights-bearing individuals who hook up with others in whatever ways they choose to for their own benefit. Time for Christians to make case for biblical view of marriage and family.

Vision for families – called to make home and family a ministry, educating children in biblical world view and equipping them to have an impact on the world.

Marriage – teach avoidance of premarital sex (higher divorce rate), cohabitation (ditto), do marriage preparation to help couples identify their strengths and weaknesses so they can iron out major conflicts first; offer post marriage support (most divorces trace back to habits established in early years); have older couples as mentors/counsellors. In Modesto, California, the churches agreed to make couples take 4 months of preparation, take a premarital inventory, meet with mentor couple. 10 years later the city's divorce rate had dropped 40%.

34. Still at risk

Teacher training emphasises self-esteem and social equity over and above work. American kids score at the bottom in terms of skills but at the top in terms of self-esteem. We're making them feel good about doing badly... Goes back to worldview; children not to be taught facts and truths, but how to conduct a process of enquiry – cos we don't believe in facts and truths, and the human mind is everything. Faulty view of creation has led to the conceptual and moral relativism that plagues modern public education. Increasingly classroom time taken away from classics of W culture and devoted to politically correct causes – treating ideas as expression of race, class or gender. Most educators no longer define education as fostering the search for truth and transmitting a valued heritage, but as empowering students to struggle against patriarchy, racism, classism. Christian approach: goal of education should be to teach them truth. Parents must teach children a Christian worldview by which to interpret and critique what they learn at school.

35. Anything can happen here

Story of officer Salvatore Bartolomeo in Brooklyn.

36. There goes the neighborhood

As he helped clear out the things that attract crime to a neighbourhood – the signs of social disorder and decay such as loitering, panhandling, graffiti, abandoned cars, vacant buildings, litter – so serious crime reduced. New strategy in inner city New York to counteract sharp rise in crime since 60s view that the cause of crime is poverty, and the growing up of the baby boomers. 2 key Supreme Court cases, 1972 and 1983, striking down statutes against vagrancy and loitering on grounds people had a right to choose lifestyle – thus overturning concept of public order and personal responsibility. Civil liberties came to be defined in individualistic terms, denying right of communities to promote their values or insist on standards of public behaviour.

Breakthrough in early 80s when social scientists Kelling and Wilson advanced the so-called broken window theory. If a broken window is left unrepaired, soon all the windows are knocked out – it sends a message that no one cares, no one is in charge, there is no penalty. Same with a city; one that allows public disorder sends message that the authorities can't/won't enforce standards of behaviour. Decent people move out, criminals move in. Degeneration of inner cities results.

So primary role of state is not to chase down criminals after the act but to nurture public order. Augustine – a community can enjoy peace and harmony only by following the moral order. Wilberforce said the most effective way to prevent big crimes is to punish smaller ones. Chaos of last few decades is due to living by false philosophy of human nature. It doesn't work. Enter the Christians. People can restore neighbourhoods – examples of city parks, teenagers with hedge clippers. Studies show crime is highest in areas with most bars and fewest churches. Only Christians have worldview capable of providing solutions to problems of community life. The Perkins in Memphis, Tennessee.

37. Creating the good society

Virtuous society can be created only by virtuous people – with conscience not police; there is no police force large enough to keep an eye on every individual. People without personal morality fail in attempts to create public morality. No social morality without personal morality. Ethics now taught in university as social justice rather than as individual decency and honesty. Ask people how they decide what they *ought* to do; for without moral absolutes there is no basis for ethics. Colson thought self immune from corruption, yet went to prison for obstruction of justice. Because he didn't understand the deceptiveness of the human heart. At the heart of Christianity is a supernatural transforming power that enables us not only to know what is right but also to do it. When people act in accord with their true nature, they feel harmony, contentment, joy; happiness is the fruit of virtue.

38. The work of our hands

Modern concern with the economy. Bible has a lot to say about it. Redemption enables us to restore the original meaning and purpose of work. Scripture recognises and defends right to private property – implicit in 10 commandments. Wealth not an evil, but as end in itself it is. Right to private property doesn't mean we have the right to do whatever we like with our possessions. Secular work is sacred – that it isn't is a Greek idea; Eusebius C4 said service of God alone is highest Christian calling. Challenged by Aquinas and then Reformers. But since Enlightenment humans have not been seen as handiwork of God, living for high moral/spiritual purposes, to serve God and neighbour; instead, seen as merely part of nature, driven by self-interest and expediency. Result: the Protestant work ethic was separated from its Christian context of stewardship and service, and degraded into a creed of personal success. Adam Smith, founder of capitalism, defined work as a means of fulfilling one's self-interest.

Humane capitalism based on service to others. McDonalds in USSR had to teach cashiers to smile and say thank you – courtesy not required when all stores were government monopolies. Capitalism provides the best opportunity for economic growth and human freedoms, but only if tempered by compassion and regard for social justice. When work loses its transcendent purpose as means of serving and loving God, people begin to question its value.

39. The ultimate appeal

Martin Luther King Jr in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963. Right to protest against unjust laws, ie ones not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Tradition of civil disobedience goes back to Daniel.

Catholic concept of subsidiarity – higher social institutions (eg state) exist only to help lower ones (eg family). If the state goes beyond helping them – destroys them or takes over their functions – then it is acting illegitimately and destroying the social order. Supreme Court in USA is doing this, overturning religious and moral traditions. It redefined liberty in 1973 in an abortion case: 'liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life' – and so collective self-government by people according to a common moral code goes out of the window, labelled 'majoritarian intolerance'. With it goes any right to appeal to any authority higher than the court itself. It even overturns democratically enacted legislation, eg 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act; it declared it unconstitutional. Results: loss of moral authority in the law removes restraints on individual behaviour; reduces government to totalitarian procedures (protecting individual autonomy); removes our right to engage in moral debate; forfeits rule of law in favour of arbitrary human rule.

Toughest task today is to persuade people that they *ought* to govern their personal behaviour for the sake of public good. Individualism has grown so rampant that most people think society exists to serve them, and do not feel they owe anything to society. We need to argue that unless individuals restrain their own behaviour for the common good, government will have to restrain them by coercive measures, at the cost of our liberty. Loss of voluntary restraint (eg code of proper conduct towards opposite sex) means we need laws (eg sexual harassment) – we have been 'freed' from the older rules of courtesy and morality only to be hemmed in by new rules imposed by law.

Need for Christians to be good citizens, to be engaged in politics, to act as the conscience of society.

40. The basis for true science

Standard assumption is that science constitutes objective knowledge while religion is an expression of subjective need. Science is elevated to an overall philosophy to which religion must defer: scientific naturalism. It assumes the only things which are real are those which can be known and measured by experience and observation. It parades itself as the only source of knowledge. Christians should argue that it is incoherent and self-contradictory, for scientists have to exempt selves from the framework they prescribe for everyone else; they alone have to be capable of rational thought, hypothesis, recognising truth [rather like the lawyers, who define selves as the only moral absolute]. But science was only made possible in the first place because Christianity provided the underlying presuppositions: that the physical world is real (contrast Eastern cultures), that nature is good but not divine, that nature is orderly and predictable. Religion has been cast as enemy of scientific progress. But not. We need to communicate that what is at issue is not the specifics of evolution vs the specifics of Genesis. Rather, at issue is the worldview claim that life is the product of impersonal forces vs the claim that life was designed by an intelligent agent – worldview. We need missionaries not just in Africa but in science and in every other discipline.

Critical q: what *kind* of religion will receive the official approval of science?

41. Blessed is the man

Polish composer Gorecki and his commission from Wojtyla in 1977 for anniversary of martyrdom of St Stanislaw. Then his 3rd Symphony. Massive impact.

42. Soli Deo Gloria

Music. Why do contemporary composers write with such harsh dissonance? Due to shift in definition of art – it no longer reflects an objective reality (eg musical scale). Art was seen as rooted in the orderly structure and harmony of the universe God had created; basic justification for art is creation. And when God created the world, he cared enough to make it beautiful.

Art affects us at deepest level of soul. Jesus told stories, used images, appealed to emotions and senses as well as intellect. Hayden used prayer to break through writer's block, to find out if he had forfeited grace in some way.

Lots of examples of literature and art which reflect a Christian vision. Art used to have a high purpose. It lost it when modern science was elevated to idol status as sole source of knowledge, and realm of imagination and intuition was devalued. Art implied not to express truth. Artists overreacted, saying role of artist is to create, and art produced abstract styles in attempt to free itself from contamination by the everyday world and to construct an ideal, autonomous, quasi-spiritual world; and began to denounce ugliness of the bourgeois materialistic society which had threatened it by portraying ills of society with ruthless accuracy. But art that attacks all standards ends up destroying itself – exhibiting urinals, painting soup cans, dripping paint randomly on canvas, making junk sculptures. Art as rebellion.

Christians need to restore arts to their proper place; human creativity is derivative of God, reflective, working within bounds of what he has formed (Os Guinness). Read classics, nurture culture in the home: it represents a world view.

43. Touched by miracle

Martha Williamson and the programme on angels.

44. Does the devil have all the good music?

Every generation of Christians faces unique challenges... The challenge of living with popular culture may well be as serious for modern Christians as persecution and plagues were for the saints of earlier centuries. Kenneth A Myers.

Thanks to mod communications technology, popular culture has become intrusively pervasive. Impossible to avoid its influence thru ads, music, TV, radio, cinema, computer games, magazines, video arcades, internet. Popular culture is everywhere, shaping our tastes, our language, our values. But while most of us realise how dangerous it is to expose ourselves to immoral content, we often fail to realise that the *form* of popular culture affects us just as much. The medium is the message.

Eg take a sonnet/symphony. It has a complex structure. We have to work to appreciate it. But who needs courses to understand Madonna? Popular forms require no intellectual effort; popular culture strives to avoid making audience work. It offers immediate gratification, is designed to bypass the mind and appeal directly to senses and emotions; modern readers, viewers glide along without having to think about where they're going. Like junk food – some is fine, but a diet of it isn't. Popular culture erodes ability to concentrate, to analyse, to think, to do difficult things – which are the characteristics we need for our spiritual lives, for prayer and discipleship.

Danger is that Christian popular culture may mimic the mainstream culture in style, while changing only the content. But it risks creating a parallel culture which does the same things, but with a Christian veneer. The way to reverse the degradation of pop culture is once again to link art to truth. We must craft a biblically based view of the arts. Phil 4.8 whatsoever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely etc – think about these things. We must start being creative, and offering good books, music, TV shows which reflect a Christian world view.

45. How now shall we live?

Christians who understand biblical truth and have the courage to live it out can indeed redeem a culture, or even create one. This is the challenge facing all of us in the new millennium.

Story of Kim, the Vietnamese girl, and the power of forgiveness.