

S T U D Y G U I D E



Battle for Our Minds

WORLDVIEWS IN COLLISION

by R.C. Sproul



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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Introduction

Battle for Our Minds focuses on the historic conflict of Christian theism with anti-Christian philosophy. As will be noted, progressive shifts in strategy have been employed since New Testament times, as non-Christian forces have struggled to influence and replace apostolic Christianity as the correct world- and lifeview.

As you pursue your study you will grow in awareness of the sharp distinctions that exist between Christian and non-Christian perceptions of life. As a conscientious Christian, perhaps you are often frustrated by the apparent growth of immorality and lawlessness in the world. This study will enable you to understand clearly the historical process and underlying causes that have brought Western civilization to its present crisis. As you perceive the growth of lifeviews arrayed against the classical Christian life and worldview, you will also see how we must re-arm spiritually to educate one another regarding our heritage. We need to challenge ourselves and those around us in learning to think clearly and to “think God’s thoughts after Him,” as Isaac Newton proposed, as we live and work in the midst of a non-Christian society.

In particular you will observe that the Christian Gospel is not the narrow single-issue concern of “evangelism,” as it is often misunderstood in our time. Paul in Athens (Acts 17) was challenging his audience at the very point of their underlying disobedience—their false and ungodly philosophy of life. As the base for spreading the good news of redemption, members of God’s kingdom still can and must speak to the entire spectrum of our religious, social, professional, civic, and cultural institutions. Unless our Gospel impacts all areas of the community—and not just our personal and private lives—the Christian message will increasingly become a paper tiger to be scorned and pitied but not respected. We have taken upon ourselves the yoke of obedience to represent effectively our Lord in the world. Each of us must be about our Master’s business in the particular sphere of our divine calling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R.C. Sproul". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

R.C. Sproul

Classical/Biblical Worldview

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The first teaching session deals principally with the classical/biblical view of the world as portrayed in three different models.

The first model perceives God as both transcendent to, and immanent in, the world. That is, God is both above and beyond, as well as present in, the world. In the second model, the supernatural and natural realms of reality are seen to be in communication with each other. God reveals Himself both in nature and in Scripture.

The third classical/Biblical model illustrates how the sacred and the secular spheres of existence are seen to be distinguished but not separate. God does intrude into the secular sphere and we may reach into the sacred.

The survival of Western civilization depends on the right understanding of the debate between the Christian and non-Christian views of life and the world.

LECTURE OUTLINE

A. Instruction

1. The downfall of the role of reason in contemporary society is seen in the work of the twentieth-century New Testament scholar Rudolph Bultmann.
2. This downfall is illustrated in the changed foundation of the church building after the earthquake in California.
3. The foundations of society have shifted as seen in abandonment of natural law in modern American society. Our *Weltanschauung* (worldview) has changed.

- B. Three models of the classical/Biblical view of God in relation to the world:
1. God is *transcendent* (above and beyond) but also *immanent* (near at hand):
 - a. God is immanent in His being (Acts 17:28; Ps. 139:8).
 - b. God is immanent in history by His providential ordering of events.
 - c. God is immanent in the incarnation of Christ.
 - d. God is immanent in by the Holy Spirit.
 2. There is communication between God and the natural order (Francis Schaeffer):
 - a. In nature (Ps. 19:1; Isaac Newton; Adam Smith)
 - b. In Scripture (Heb. 4:12)
 3. The secular and sacred spheres are distinguished but not separate:
 - a. The “secular” is the world of the ordinary.
 - b. The “sacred” is the world of the extraordinary.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What did Rudolph Bultmann mean by “demythologizing” the Bible?

2. Define God’s “transcendence” and immanence,” and state four ways in which God is immanent. (See Figure 1 on page 9.)

3. Francis Schaeffer said, “God is not silent.” In what ways does God reveal Himself? (See Figure 2 on page 9.)

4. What do the words *secular* and *sacred* mean? How are these spheres related in the classical/biblical view of reality?

BIBLE STUDY

1. Write your personal, thoughtful response to these Scripture passages:
 - a. Acts 17:28

- b. Psalm 139
- c. Psalm 19:1
- d. Hebrews 4:12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How important is the debate over life-and worldviews? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Rudolph Bultmann said that the miraculous elements of the New Testament were merely “the husk” of Christianity. What do you think would happen to “the core” of Christianity if Bultmann’s so-called miraculous “husks” were all simply lifted out of the New Testament?
3. What does Dr. Sproul’s illustration about the California church building specifically say to us about changes in twentieth-century Christianity? Give instances from your observation of such changes that have taken place in your own time.
4. Many today suffer from what is called an “identity crisis.” How do you think a better knowledge of God helps people understand themselves?
5. What do you perceive to be the effects of the modern sense of God’s absence from man’s daily affairs? Can you trace the cause of this sense of the divine absence?
6. Notice in Figure 1 (page 9) that God is both transcendent to and immanent in His creation. The lines in the figure that connect God and the world depict this relationship. Give examples in the Bible and from general human experiences showing that God is both transcendent and immanent.
7. The New Age movement is openly pantheistic (“all is god”). What single aspect of God’s relationship to the world is illustrated by New Age pantheism? What do you think is the contemporary human condition that, in part, drives people to New Age beliefs?
8. Francis Schaeffer said, “God is not silent.” Can you have two-way communication with God? How often and in what ways do you perceive that God is showing Himself to you through nature? How has Scripture recently helped you to see the will of God for some aspect of your life?
9. How we perceive the relationship of “the sacred” and “the secular” spheres will determine how “practically Christian we are. Someone has said, “Be spiritual in the

natural realm, and be natural in the spiritual.” Thus, these two areas of existence normally should pervade, or interpenetrate, each other, for example, how spiritually significant, or how “sacred,” is your decision to make a job change? To have an abortion? Or how you educate your children?

10. How would you answer someone who said to you, “Leave God in church; we’re in the business of making widgets here, and God has nothing to do with making widgets”?
11. Dr. Sproul says Western civilization itself depends on a correct view of God’s relation to the world. Can you explain why?

TEN AREAS OF CONCERN

GOD

The first worldview, the classical/Biblical, perceives all of existence from the perspective of divine creation, providence, and redemption. This view is well illustrated in Figure 1 (page 9), in which we see an unbroken relationship between the Creator and the created world. God is self-existent and preexistent. He is not only *transcendent*, that is, above and beyond the natural order, but He is also *immanent* in the world, that is, He pervades every aspect of His creation and actively rules over all created existence.

RELIGION

Worship and all that directly or indirectly pertains to the religious life is based on the revelation of God. Man does not look within, but above, that is, to God as the revealed (in His Word and in His world) focus of worship.

THE CHURCH

The church is the divine institution of redemption. Man is not alone in his quest for eternal life, but God has committed the direction for that life to the community of faith (the church), who is always accountable to the Scriptures. God has committed to the church “the ministry of reconciliation” to Himself (2 Cor. 5:18).

SCIENCE

The study of the physical order is reverently carried out in recognition of nature’s createdness and, therefore, its sacredness. There are no “brute facts,” as Immanuel Kant called the facts of the universe, but all facts are *created* facts and bear witness to their Creator. The order and design inherent in the creation permits scientific inquiry and investigation, all to the praise of the Creator. We are to “think God’s thoughts after Him” (Newton). See Figure 2 on page 9.

GOVERNMENT

Human government is instituted for regulating society according to divinely revealed principles. “Church and state” are indeed separate entities under divine providence, but this separation by no means implies “separation of God and state.”

LAW

In a similar way, human laws are derived from the Biblical view of society as a divine institution to be regulated by divine ethical principles. They reflect the character of God and are founded upon His self-disclosure.

NATURE

The natural order is not ultimately a mystery in the classical/Biblical view, but is itself a wordless revelation of the Creator. God’s glory and beauty are reflected in nature.

LIFE

In the Christian view, all life is necessarily sacred, especially the life of man, who is created in God’s image and thus is to live life *coram Deo*—ever under God’s authority and for His glory. This “sacramental” aspect of life drives the ethical structures in the classical/Biblical model.

THE ARTS

The goodness, beauty, truth, and glory of God also become the objects of the practice of the arts in this scheme. The arts mirror the creative act of God and highlight the glory of His creation.

WORK

Immediately built on the previous principle is the sacredness of every kind of work as a divine commission. Thus, not only is church-related activity a holy calling, but all so-called “secular” employments as well are seen as divine appointments. (See Figure 3 and page 9).

CLASSICAL/BIBLICAL**God**

Self-existent and preexistent; transcendent and immanent; absolute and sovereign Creator; revealed in nature and Scripture

Religion

Based on revelation (Nature and Scripture).

Church

The divine institution of redemption; “the body of Christ” comprising community of faithful

Science

All viewed in terms of createdness; world is cosmos, not chaos; “think God’s thoughts after Him” (Newton).

Government

Created by God as servant of divine government; church and state separate, but not God and state.

Law

All Human laws derived from eternal norms of God’s laws.

Nature

Created by God, nature is thus a vehicle of divine revelation.

Life

Life sacramental (sacred); loss of man’s significance greatest loss of 20th century.

The Arts

Bear witness to the Creator—the true, the good, the beautiful

Work

Coram Deo (“before the face of God”); joy in serving God in every kind of work as a divine appointment; an eternal reward for work “well done.”

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

As you have considered the classical/Biblical view and its ten main areas of impact on our existence, perhaps the above question still nags you: “Does it make a lot of difference whether I measure my view of life by the classical Christian view in every department? Aren’t we all incorrect in some ways? Paul said that we now see in a glass dimly, so I can wait until haven to see everything clearly.”

But let’s suppose you do have an unclear grasp of God’s transcendence or His immanence. Imagine yourself one day facing certain death, for instance, Is God the One who is in charge of the situation, or is it all a matter of chance? Again, can the Christ who said “I will never leave you” now keep His promise after all? You can see at once that your understanding of God’s transcendence and immanence really matters?

Also, some professing Christians seem lackadaisical about their responsibilities as church members. “What difference does it make? I believe in Jesus. Going to church doesn’t save me, does it? But this is the wrong question. The real question is, “What difference has it made in your life that Jesus died for your sins?” Do you care about His work? The church is His special work, His bride under adornment. He established the church to do His redemptive work in the world. For good reason Scripture tells us not to abandon the church (Heb. 10:25).

And what about science? Maybe you’re a medical doctor. What difference does it make that you have accepted the view that human origins are mired in the swamps and microscopic life of prehistoric time? How does this affect your attitude toward people? God said He made man in His image, uniquely “forming” man out of the dust, but raising him to the pinnacle of creation. If that is a myth obscuring the fact of evolution, then people are little more than insignificant objects among many of Kant’s “brute facts.” Why be concerned about the sanctity of human life?

As part of your class discussion, continue through the remaining seven areas of life and in each instance give an analysis of what this world- and lifeview would mean if you consistently tried to live it out. Use the chart to help restate what was taught. Then complete the education process by evaluating the implication of this thinking and how it should be applied to your life.

FIGURE 1

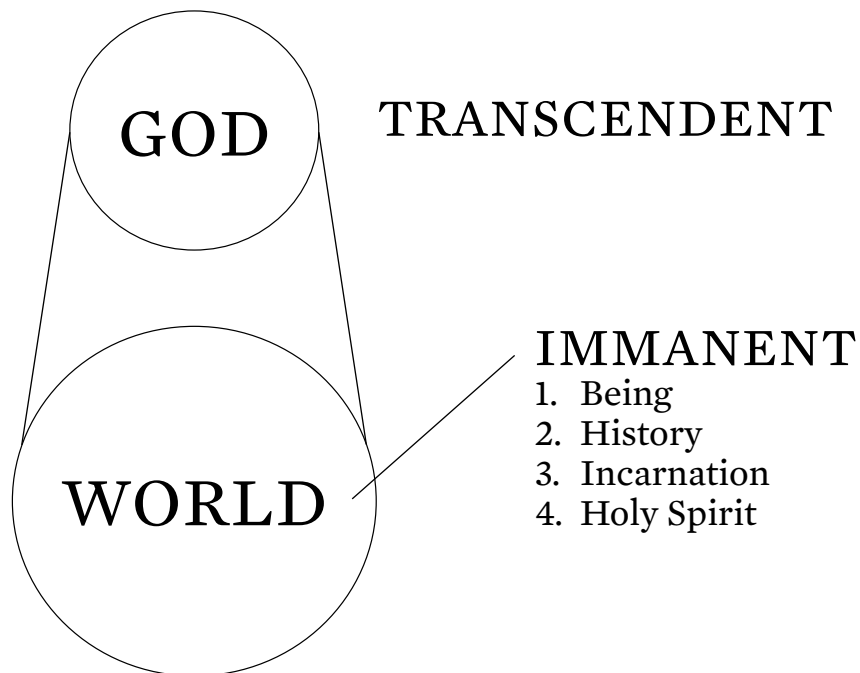


FIGURE 2

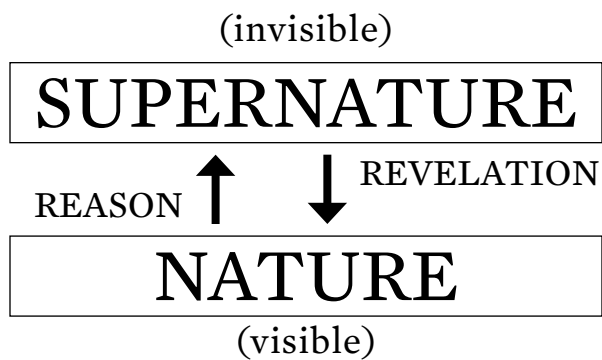
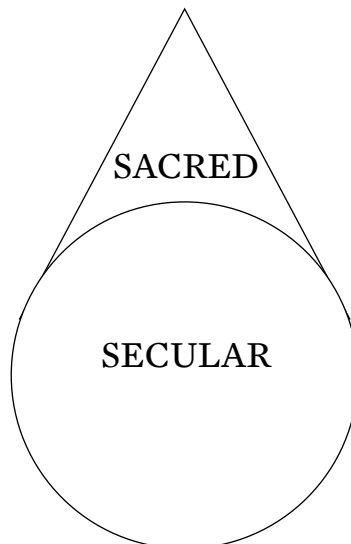
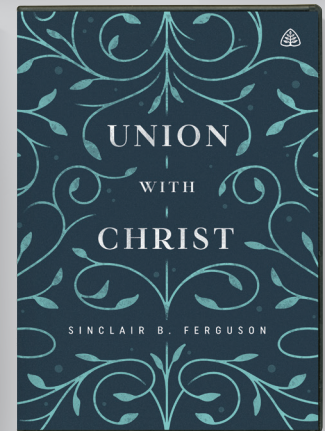
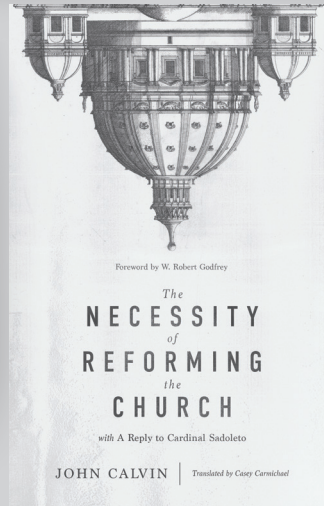
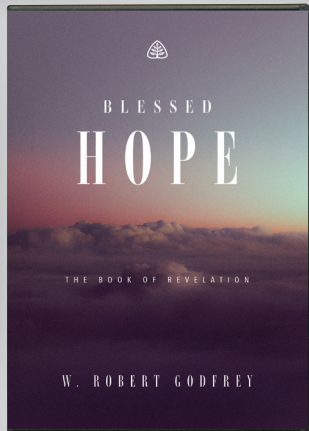
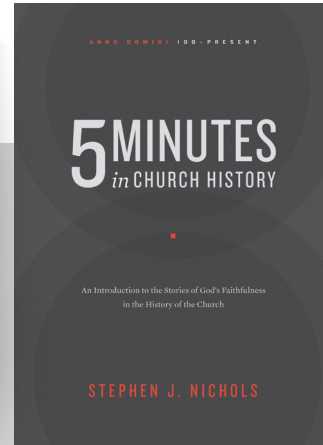
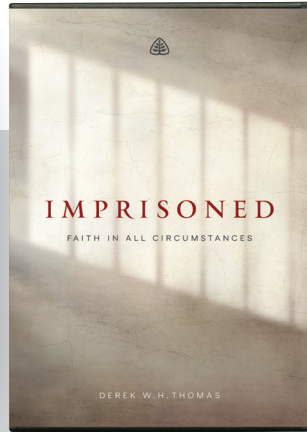
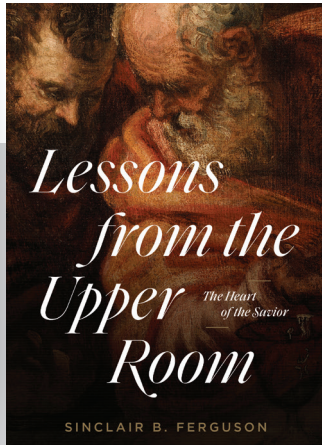
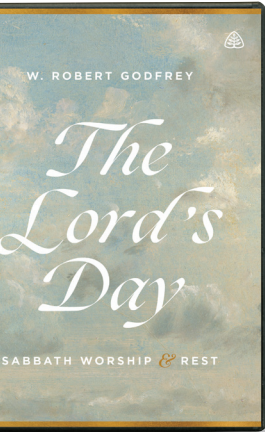


FIGURE 3



We want to see men and women around the world connect
the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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