

“The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,  
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.” - Proverbs 1:7

“Christianity is not a realm of life; it’s a way of life for every realm”<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

When I came to Dallas Baptist University I had a rather violent reaction to what I thought was a profound category mistake. Coming from the public school system, I had a deeply embedded idea of how “religious” claims ought to relate, or should I say, ought *not* to relate, with “worldly affairs.” To paraphrase Os Guinness, I thought that “religion might be privately engaging but publicly irrelevant.”<sup>2</sup> I was astonished at the unashamed integration of all these “religious” beliefs into other realms of life, even though I myself was a Christian. The key word for me was: unashamed. I thought to myself, “How could these people be so shameless in their biases?” My reaction to this wholistic vision of life was so serious that I almost left the university to go get myself a “real” education, one where my schooling wouldn’t be polluted by all of these messy assumptions and presuppositions, even if they were Christian. My worldview lenses saw “education” as something totally separate from my “faith.” I was a model student of the American public school system, and like most other students whether Christian or not, the separation of “church/state” and “faith/education” was only a small part of something much deeper and much more profound, the separation of my “faith” from the rest of my “life.” Our public schools are churning out record numbers of people who have this same split vision, in which “faith” is a private thing, which is not to be integrated into the classroom. After all, this is a *public* school, isn’t it? In many ways, the problem of dualism can be summarized in the

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<sup>1</sup> I do not know who coined this phrase, but I use it throughout my paper.

<sup>2</sup> Os Guinness said this in a lecture delivered at PCPC last semester.

perversion of Jefferson's phrase: "separation of church and state" but that specifically will not be my subject here.

Over the last few years, I have come to know that this split vision of reality and life is not Biblical and is actually a sin.<sup>3</sup> I would characterize my former self alongside most other Americans in that I was a methodological religious dualist. In the "Introduction to Worldview" course at Dallas Baptist University, students are asked to interview someone, using James Sire's seven worldview questions. What is astonishing is that during both of my required interviews, the person that I had chosen asked me, "Is it okay if I answer with my faith?" This is a perfect representation of methodological religious dualism. The interviewee was really saying, "Can I use my faith (which is over there) to answer your question (about something over here)." This is the exact separation of faith from the majority of life that this paper seeks to address. What is Christian Dualism, and why do so many Christians subscribe to it?

Firstly let me define very generally what Christian Dualism is. Moreover, Dualism is the idea that all of life can be separated into two main categories: the sacred and the secular. This fragmented vision of reality puts "spiritual" things in the "sacred" category and "worldly" things in the "secular" category. This view creates a hierarchy where the only meaningful things in existence are those things that are in the "sacred" category. In his brief survey of the history of Western thinking, Schaeffer outlines how the non-spiritual side of the dichotomy always "ate-up" the spiritual side.<sup>4</sup> If you begin cutting up reality and life, one side inevitably will end up ruling over the other side and it may or may not be the side that you yourself are prizing.

Dualism also leads to a hierarchy of callings. After all, some jobs are more holy than others right? If you were to ask the average Christian, "What would be the highest calling in

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<sup>3</sup> Understanding and combating dualism takes several passes. It is a deeply embedded subconscious presupposition.

life?”, he or she would invariably answer, “to be a missionary.” The key point is this: dualism falsely believes that some subjects are unimportant and do not need to be integrated into the Christian life. Dualism says there are some realms of life where faith is off-limits. This fragmented vision of reality is not Biblical and makes “being salt and light” to the rest of the world all but impossible. This paper seeks to understand and critique Christian Dualism, especially Christian Religious Dualism.

### What Is Meant By “Christian Dualism”

As mentioned above, people generally use the phrase “Christian Dualism” to refer to a number of different “split vision” dichotomies. In order to better understand each of these specific dichotomies and their interrelatedness, we should first examine three basic meanings of the phrase. Sometimes the phrase “Christian Dualism” can lump all of these dichotomies together, but sometimes there are important differences and distinctions that need to be made. These are the three main dichotomies.

#### *Christian Anthropological Dualism*

This dichotomy is more than a mere duality, which in its own right would be acknowledged. It is the view that man is composed of two separate substances, one being an eternal and good part, and one being a temporal and bad part. These substances are usually called “body” and “soul/spirit” respectively. The problem is that this duality has been absolutized into a master/slave dualism, in which the body is the rebellious slave of the soul and must be ruled as a subject is ruled by his king. **This describes how a Christian views the composition of man.**

#### *Christian Metaphysical Dualism*

This dichotomy is also more than a mere duality, which again, in its own right would be acknowledged. It is a view that makes “heaven” important and the “Earth” rather unimportant. Heaven is the “true light”, making the earth just a “shadow” of sorts. This dualism is an

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<sup>4</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer repeatedly uses this illustration of the higher side “eating up” the lower side in “*Escape from*

absolutized duality, which results in a morbid obsession with all things “otherworldly” because “this world” is seen more or less as garbage. **This describes how a Christian sees reality.**

#### *Christian Religious Dualism*

This is the view of life that relegates faith to a small area of life as something private, having nothing to do with the majority of daily life. This is pure disintegration of the Christian faith from every realm of life. **This describes how a Christian uses his/her faith.** Critiquing this dualism specifically will be my chief objective. But first let me describe Christian Wholism.

#### What Is Meant By “Christian Wholism”

As with “Christian Dualism”, “Christian Wholism” can actually refer to a number of different areas. These areas are the exact same as the dualist’s, but with a totally different perspective and emphasis. The wholist refuses to prioritize one supposed “part” over another. Wholism is recognizing the profound singularity of persons, reality, and life.

#### *Christian Anthropological Wholism*

This is the view that man should be seen as a “differentiated totality.”<sup>5</sup> Man should not be so viciously separated into two substances, one of which is “important/redeemable/valuable” and better than the other. **This describes how a Christian views the composition of man.**

#### *Christian Metaphysical Wholism*

Metaphysically speaking, we are living in only one reality. This view acknowledges the duality between “Heaven” and “Earth” but it fails to absolutize the former over the later. It is a view that makes “heaven” and the “Earth” one cohesive whole, rather than two fragmented pieces. **This describes how a Christian sees reality.**

#### *Christian Religious Wholism*

This is the view of life that emphasizes that life should be viewed as one cohesive whole. This means that faith will have a hand in everything. It is not a “private affair” relegated to some miniscule corner of life. Faith should not be seen as a “realm of life”, but a “way of life” for

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*Reason*” (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1968) p. 13

every realm. The “sacred/secular” split is roundly condemned because *all* of life is sacred. **This describes how a Christian uses his/her faith.**

### Two Illustrations of Christian Dualism

A few weeks ago there was a patient at a Mesquite hospital whose heart had stopped beating and she had to be resuscitated. While she was in the ICU I went to visit her on a number of occasions, and on one day a deacon from her church was also there. As we waited in the lobby, he remarked, “Debby sure has been through a lot you know. If I were her, I would be ready to go. I, myself, am ready to get on out of here. I’m ready to leave this old world.” This man meant well, but nestled within his good intentions and honest care for this woman was a deep theological *vision*, which belittled “this” world as something “non-spiritual”, as something that we should be quick to “get rid of.” Many people have this view in part because of verses that at first glance, *with dualistic lenses* seem to indicate that we should have a low view of the Earth. One such section is Philippians 1:21,23 where Paul says, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”, and “I desire to depart and be with Christ which is better by far.” Now I would agree with Paul and with any person who would say that death is gain because in it, we gain Christ in a real and tangible way, and this *is* what this passage is teaching. But this is not how most people interpret these verses. Death is gain for most Christians because *that* life is better than *this* life. *That* reality is better than *this* reality. Rooted in this “split vision” language is the idea that “this” world is not a part of redemption; it is permanently lost. But is that what Paul is saying here? The key question that we have to answer is this: why is death *gain* to Paul? Death is gain to Paul not because he thinks that living in the redeemed creation is a bad thing, but because he longs to see and be with Christ in a direct physical sense. The lens of dualism has made many of us read this passage incorrectly. These verses does not denigrate “Earthly life” as something bad, rather, it

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<sup>5</sup> This is Dr. Naugle’s term.

prizes “tangible Christ” as something to be longed for by all of the redeemed. This view does not belittle Christ in any way. In fact, it is the most Christ-exalted reading of the text. Which is more Christ-exalting, the man who says: the Earth, this Earthly life, and the temporal are all good, but I would trade them in an instant if it meant gaining Christ in a tangible way, or is it the man who says the Earth, this Earthly life, and the temporal are all bad, but I would trade *them* in an instance if it meant gaining Christ in a tangible way? Clearly the former makes much of Christ whereas the later sees Him merely as “something better than garbage”, an easy qualification to meet. Some sacrifice! If one sees the Earth, this Earthly life, and the temporal as all bad he/she might as well be saying: I am willing to lose my “garbage” if it means gaining you. This not only belittles Christ as something “just better than garbage”, it also belittles the creation that He came to redeem. Reading this text dualistically makes Paul’s sacrifice ridiculous. This Earthly life is good, but tangible Christ *is* better.

Here is a second illustration of Christian dualism. Picture a Baptist congregation all dressed in their Sunday best sitting quietly in a worship auditorium. It’s been a long week, and now they find themselves back in the same pew, reading the same bulletin, just waiting for the inevitable routine to begin. Now picture the worship leader as he comes in and goes to his normal position. “Before we begin this morning,” he says, “I just wanted to remind everyone that it’s our responsibility to *always* be in worship. I’ve been worshiping the Lord all week, and I hope you have too.” Now freeze the picture. If we go out into your auditorium we are sure to find many people with strange and confused looks on their faces, because most of them do not understand what their worship leader just said. The thoughts in most people’s minds are, “Does he really expect me to go to my work and lead my co-workers in a worship song? He knows I can’t sing.” “Oh, maybe he means that I should start a Bible study with my fellow co-workers.”

“Surely he doesn’t mean that I should be sharing my faith with them. What *does* he mean?”

Hence, most congregates are at a loss because they truly don’t know what the worship leader meant when he said “We should always be worshipping the Lord.” This is picture perfect dualism.

The congregant can’t understand the concept of worshipping God through the *totality* of life because he/she has relegated “worship” to only the “spiritual” side of the equation. He/she has no *framework* for worshipping God through: work, music, eating, learning, driving, walking, etc...

As long as we acknowledge a “split vision” of life, one that separates “spiritual” things from allegedly “non-spiritual” things, our vision of worship will always be “the singing that we do on Sunday.” Because of dualism, no matter how hard we try we will never understand what “comprehensive worship” really means, what we need is a *new framework*. Worshipping at work, for example, does not mean bringing those religious things (over there) into your work and daily life (over here) because this would still acknowledge a duality, which, in this context, is wrong.<sup>6</sup>

#### An Illustration of Christian Wholism at Its Best

Now let me illustrate Christian Wholism. The best illustration of Christian Wholism is to imagine the Creation *before* the Fall. Imagine for a moment that the Fall of Creation had never occurred, and the year is 2004. How would you view work in a creation that never went awry? How would you view culture? The mandate that God gives to Adam and Eve in Genesis is to “fill” the Earth and “rule over” Creation. Work in this kind of picture would clearly be a communal affair, one where each person received his/her personal calling from God. The work that each man did would be an act of worship and always done with a *communal* perspective. There would be one humanity, one Earth, and one God who rules over all. This vision of

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<sup>6</sup> This is exactly why I wanted to separate the different nuances of “Christian Dualism” because in Metaphysical Dualism, there is a duality for sure, in Anthropological Dualism, there may or may not be a duality, but in Religious Dualism there is no duality at all.

Wholism is breathtaking because it flies in the face of such “split vision” dichotomies that dualism offers us.

### Six Causes of Christian Religious Dualism

Christian Religious Dualism, that is, our tendency to separate our faith from other realms of life is caused by a number of different things all working together to make integration extremely difficult. My chief question is “Why are so many Christians methodological religious dualists?” I will answer this question using information that I have learned since my introduction to Christian Wholism and my own personal experience with Christian Dualism.

### *Christian Anthropological Dualism*

Perhaps one of the chief culprits of Christian religious dualism is Christian anthropological dualism. In fact if we begin to see through the lenses of Christian anthropological dualism and Christian metaphysical dualism, then we will have no trouble sliding right into Christian religious dualism. These two dichotomies are chief components to a robust religious dualism. Just how do so many believers come to the conclusion that anthropological dualism is biblical. To answer this question, we turn to Plato.

Plato viewed the human persona as a composition of two radically different substances. One part he called “soul” and the other part he called “body.” There are a plethora of lines from Plato’s various writings, which could be used to illustrate this radical dichotomy, but here is just one such example from the *Phaedo*:

“Look at it this way: when the souls and the body are together, nature orders the one to be subject and to be ruled, and the other to rule and be master. Then again, which do you think is like the divine and which like the mortal? Do you not think that the nature of the divine is to rule and to lead, whereas it is that of the mortal to be ruled and be subject.”<sup>7</sup>

These Platonic presuppositions were read into the Biblical text causing many well meaning Christians, even famous theologians, to come to the conclusion that Dualism was right. Man *was*

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<sup>7</sup> Plato (edited by John M. Cooper) “*Phaedo*” (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1997) p. 70



composed of two opposing parts, one eternal (redeemable), and one temporal (non-redeemable). With these lenses the Biblical view of “man as a totality” was lost.

In addition to Platonic influences, there was also considerable influence from Gnosticism. In the Gnostic worldview, knowledge is the saving agency; the world and flesh are both considered bad. Gnosticism became a radical perversion of the Christian faith and especially the ministry of Jesus. It was fought by the early church fathers, such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. “They defended Christian Orthodoxy from these heretical ideas.”<sup>8</sup> Gnosticism has experienced a revived comeback in our own day and age, although not necessarily the classical Gnosticism of the First century. Both of these influences, which belittle the body and treat it as something “non-spiritual” have led to the devastating affect of Christian anthropological dualism. Both have affected the way in which believers view and define a “human being.”

#### *Christian Metaphysical Dualism*

A second cause of Christian Religious dualism is Christian metaphysical dualism. Christian metaphysical dualism was also read into not out of the Bible. The Bible makes a clear duality of “Heaven” and “Earth” to be sure. But this duality is not meant to be absolutized, pitting the “higher” one over the other “lower” one. This kind of dichotomy sounds more Platonic than Biblical because of its similarities with Plato’s “Form theory.” Plato called the really, real things “forms” everything else mere shadows. According to Plato, nothing that we see and experience on Earth is a form, we are living in the realm of mere “shadows.” This Platonic dichotomy is very “otherworldly” and denigrates this world as something “low.” The Bible, on the other hand affirms the inherent goodness of creation in *all* its many multifaceted aspects. It should be noted that Plato is not the only influence here. St. Augustine also had his own metaphysical dichotomy of the “eternal” versus the “temporal.” More will be said about

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<sup>8</sup> Don Closson, “The Gnostic Matrix” <http://www.probe.org/docs/Gnostic/html> Accessed on 4/1/04

Christian metaphysical dualism during the “Understanding the cosmic-ness” section, so let this suffice for now.

#### *Social Pressures of Pluralism & Tolerance*

Thirdly we turn to the reigning ideology of “Tolerance and Pluralism.” It would only be foolish if we did not acknowledge that a powerful cause for this radical disintegration comes from our surrounding cultural context. We are living in a “post-Christian”, indeed, “post-everything” culture where there are more views and opinions on all manner of subjects than ever before.<sup>9</sup> Christians today are under strong pressures to accept other people’s worldviews. We are constantly encouraged to “keep an open mind” and accept the fact that everyone has a “different perspective.” As Darrell Charles points out, there has been a radical shift in how we define these two words over the last century. Formerly, “pluralism” simply meant that there is more than one opinion or view, but now it means that *all* opinions and views are *equal*. Likewise, “tolerance” formerly meant forbearance in the presence of something disliked, but now it means that *anything goes* whether private or public.<sup>10</sup> All things must be “tolerated.” This makes “deliberately sustaining a Christian worldview in all that we do” arduously difficult.

#### *Personal Lack of Faith*

The fourth cause of Christian Religious Dualism comes from the human propensity toward unbelief. The basic premise here is that it takes more faith to “deliberately sustain the Christian worldview” in all areas of life than it does to assign it only some minor corner. Additionally, Dualism many times “just makes life easier” for people. It makes them less accountable for God given gifts and responsibilities in creation. It is a sin to forsake our position in Creation to be *Imago Dei*. We must intentionally sustain our faith in every realm of life, for

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<sup>9</sup> J. Daryl Charles, *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism* (Intervarsity Press, 2002) p. 75

<sup>10</sup> J. Daryl Charles, *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism* (Intervarsity Press, 2002) p. 75

every realm of life is endowed with God-given creational goodness, and is being redeemed through Christ our “cosmic” Redeemer.

#### *A Gross Misunderstanding of Holiness*

Fifthly, many Christians also have a warped idea of holiness. When holiness is interpreted in spatial terms, meaning that the believer is physically supposed to withdraw from certain areas, “to be separate and distinct” so to speak, holiness is perverted into justification for laziness. As mentioned previously it takes more faith to “deliberately sustain the Christian worldview” in every realm as opposed to relegating to some corner, or seeing it as one slice of life’s proverbial pie. Most believers falsely interpret the call for Christian holiness to be grounds for personal *extraction* from culture, when in fact it is a call for *diligence and transformation* of culture. When we see holiness this way, we lose all sight of the Redeeming Power that Christ has affected into all of Creation, and our responsibility of engaging and transforming our culture for the Glory of Christ is lost. Holiness means being and doing what was creationally intended; it means fulfilling our roles as the *Imago Dei* of creation. This means that holiness is a change in how we view things and what we do (in reference to the moral life). It does not mean suspending who we are and running from God’s cultural mandate. We are still the *Imago Dei* in spite of the Fall.

#### *A Poor Understanding of the Biblical Meta-narrative*

This is beyond question, a major contributing factor to forming Christian Religious Dualism. Much of the following paper will address the differences in the overall Christian meta-narrative as we compare the Christian Dualist’s story to the Christian Wholist’s story. Since this section is covered in more detail later, I will simply say this: Dualism fails to see: (1) the inherent goodness of “cosmic” creation, (2) the “cosmic” restoration of creation after the “Fall”,

and (3) these misunderstandings combined have lead to a partial view of the actual Biblical meta-narrative and hence, justification for Christian Religious Dualism.

Five Major Realms of Life: Comparative Stories

Next I would like to do some side-by-side comparisons of dualism and wholism to examine the radical perspectival differences between these two views. In many ways the two are living in two totally different worlds, with two totally different faiths. My hope is to illustrate and exhort us to the Wholist perspective by demonstrating how small, limited, and miniscule the Christian Dualist perspective is on these four areas. The four areas of which I would like to examine are: (1) worship, (2) education, (3) work, and (4) culture.<sup>11</sup> For the sake of simplicity I will let these charts stand on their own.

**Worship (Dualist)**

Done in Songs  
 Limited to “spiritual times”  
 Done with a part of the body (regrettably)<sup>12</sup>  
 Am Optional Human Endeavor

**Worship (Wholist)**

Done in all of Life  
 Done all of the time  
 Done with the whole body (proudly)  
 A Creational Responsibility

**Education (Dualist)**

Separate from God’s plan  
 Consumerist’s Mentality  
 Worldly  
 Not an ethical matter  
 Negative  
 Private

**Education (Wholist)**

God’s Mandate  
 To be a full human  
 Worship  
 Excellence expected  
 Positive  
 Communal

**Work (Dualist)**

Necessary evil – To each his own  
 Bad  
 Worldly  
 Not an ethical matter  
 Negative  
 Private

**Work (Wholist)**

God’s calling  
 Good  
 Worship  
 Excellence expected  
 Positive  
 Communal

**Culture (Dualist)**

Withdraw from It  
 Separate from God’s Plan  
 Not Spiritual

**Culture (Wholist)**

Transform It  
 God’s Mandate  
 Very Spiritual

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<sup>11</sup> Walsh & Middleton identify three main areas where dualism shows itself in: how we view work, how we view culture, and how we read the Bible.

<sup>12</sup> Think for a moment at how much we use the supposed “physical” portions of the dichotomies in our “spiritual” endeavors. Look at the role of the “physical” in Communion, Vocal Praise, Lifting Hands, Kneeling, Reading, Thinking (Brain not Soul), Feasts, Fellowships, and Baptisms.

Bad  
Worldly  
Not an ethical matter  
Negative  
Individually based

Good  
Worship  
Excellence expected  
Positive  
Communally based

As you can tell, being a Christian dualist and a Christian wholist has profound implications on how we view these four areas of life. It affects how we view and define worship, education, work, and culture. Getting the Biblical perspective right is critical because these two views carry such far-reaching consequences.

### Understanding the “Cosmic-ness” of the Christian Story

The key to understanding the Christian story, and hence wholism, lies in viewing the Biblical Meta-narrative in its “cosmic-ness.” We need to see just what original creation consisted of in order to understand the subsequent Fall, and Redemption properly. The following chart seeks to describe all that is enveloped in “Cosmic Creation.” It simply shows the multi-faceted nature and properties of what is meant by “Cosmic” Creation.

Persons of Creation –	All of the living beings in creation, especially man. What it means to be Imago Dei, man as God intended.
Places of Creation –	All of the many places in creation, every space, every nook and cranny.
Things of Creation –	All of the things of creation, whether natural or man-made. All of the many physical items that are in creation. Trees, books, lamps, computers, buildings, mountains, etc... <sup>13</sup>
Ideas of Creation –	All of the inherent Institutions and Abstracts of Creation. Examples are: Science, History, Culture-Forming, Love, Beauty, Marriage, etc... All of the non-tangible, inherent parts or infrastructure of creation.
Activities of Creation –	All of the activities that go on in creation, especially human activities. Examples are: running, singing, dancing, learning, rotation and revolution of planets, etc...

When someone says “cosmic” creation he/she is emphasizing the grandness and large-scale interrelatedness of *all* that creation IS. It is cosmic; it is more than just “two people in a Garden.” Again, if we would simply imagine for one moment that the Fall had never occurred, it is easy to see this *multi-faceted infrastructure*. It is reasonable to assume that we would still be doing much

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<sup>13</sup> Some would argue here that, these may not be an original part of creation, but I would argue that much of what we have learned, built, and constructed would have been done, even if there were no Fall. We would still be exploring the creation and enjoying what God has made. We would still be fulfilling our role of “filling the Earth and subduing it.” (Genesis 1:28) Much of what we are doing would still be being done, it just that it would be done in a much more God-glorifying, theistic way.

of what we are doing now, it's just that we would be working from a perfect presuppositional platform. Everything would have been done to the glory of God, and always in a sense of worship. The doctrine to emphasize, is the doctrine of inherent creational goodness. Now that we're armed with a general sketch of what constitutes Creation, let's move, piece by piece, through the Biblical story.

### *Cosmic Creation*

Creation is filled with inherent goodness. After all that God had made we read alas, "God saw all that He had made, and it was very, good."<sup>14</sup> Creation as God intended it was inherently and comprehensively good. This means that all of the *person* of creation was good. All of the *places* of creation were good. All of the *things* of creation were good. All of the *ideas, institutions, and infrastructure* of creation that are inherent to its design were good. These are things like: Biology, Astronomy, Carpentry, Poetry, Beauty, Love, and Culture-Building – these were all good. Lastly, all of the *activities* in creation were good. All of the actions of creation<sup>15</sup> are inherently good. Running, singing, writing, procreation, building, constructing, taming – all of these are a part of the creation, and all of these were completely good. Understanding "Cosmic" Creation is simply understanding the large scale project of creation, there is much more about creation than simply "human beings in a garden."

### *Cosmic Fall*

Next, we move to examine the "cosmic" Fall. After Adam and Eve's rebellion in Genesis three, we read, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."<sup>16</sup> When God cursed the ground, He cursed *all* of Creation because of what man had done. Man is a being who is able to affect change in history whether for the better or for

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<sup>14</sup> Genesis 1:31

<sup>15</sup> Obviously I don't mean all in the strictest sense of the word. God did forbid them to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Everything else is what I am focusing on; immoral actions are always going to be an exception.

the worse. This is a profound “re-ordering” of the entire universe. One man, one woman, one tree, one bite - and there was “cosmic” change. The Fall did not only affect Adam and Eve, it affected the totality of creation. All of *man* was lost. All of the *places* of creation were lost. All of *things* of creation were lost. All of the deeply interwoven *ideas and institutions* of creation were lost. All of the *activities* of creation were lost. The Fall is “cosmic” because it affected all of creation; there is much more about the Fall than simply “man’s loss of fellowship.”

### *Cosmic Redemption*

Now comes the miracle. Because of what Christ has done, all of creation is being redeemed. “Cosmic” redemption is God’s power to fully restore the Fall of Creation back into Creational Beauty. In Romans eight, Paul writes about how the totality of creation is eagerly longing for full redemption. In verse 22, we read, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”<sup>17</sup> With Christ’s ministry, the Kingdom of God has come. All of Creation, while not fully redeemed yet, *is being redeemed* in present time. All of the *man* is being redeemed. All of the *places* of creation are being redeemed. All of the *things* of creation are being redeemed. All of the inherent *institutions* and great *ideas* of creation are being redeemed, that is to say: the very intangible infrastructure that is built into Creation is being redeemed. And lastly, all of the *activities* carried out in creation are being redeemed. The redemption is “cosmic” because it is proportional to the Fall and affects the totality of creation. Redemption is something much more profound than “God saving humans.” This account thus far has been the wholist’s perspective, but now we will turn to Dualism.

In dualism, there is a radical change of perspective. Remember that dualism is a “split-vision” of life that relegates faith to some small portion of life and insists that some things are “non-spiritual” and either beyond redemption or irrelevant to living in creation. In the dualistic

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<sup>16</sup> Genesis 3:17

version, only a part of the *person* of creation is being redeemed, the other part is lost. Only a part of the *places* of creation are being redeemed, the other parts are lost. Only a part of the *things* of creation are being redeemed, the other parts are lost. Only a part of the great *ideas* of creation are being redeemed, the other parts are lost. And lastly, only a part of the many *activities* of creation are being redeemed, the other parts are lost. Dualism reduces God's activity to a small fraction of potential cosmic activities. With all that is going on in creation, God remains by and large, disinterested in the world that He has created and maintains. But this fragmented perspective of Dualism is wrong. Wholism argues that no matter who you are, where you are, what things you have around you, what inherent institution or idea of creation that you are using, and no matter what activity you find yourself doing,<sup>18</sup> you are first and foremost living in Creation.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, a closer look at Dualism will reveal that the only real emphasis of redemption is placed on the *person* of creation, and that, only being the better half, i.e. the "soul." Christians must understand that the whole of man, all of the places, things, ideas, and activities of Creation are also being redeemed. The activities in creation, like: running, singing, learning, planting, building, etc.. were *all* lost in the Fall but are *all* recovered in Redemption.

Hence, Dualism is chiefly a profound misunderstanding of the "cosmic-ness" of the Biblical meta-narrative. It teaches that only a part of these areas of creation are being redeemed. The two that are most under-emphasized are (1) the inherent ideas and institutions of creation, like the human culture-building project, earth cultivation project, Education, Artistic Expression, etc...and (2) the many activities that are carried out as a legitimate part of Creation. The following chart will show what happens when we leave out each specific piece of Redemption.

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<sup>17</sup> Romans 8:22

<sup>18</sup> Again, I do not mean those things that God forbids as evil.

<sup>19</sup> Again, I would obviously make an exception of immoral activity.



**If Christian Redemption Leaves Out**

A Part of the Person  
A Part of the Places  
A Part of the Things  
A Part of the Ideas  
A Part of the Activities

**We Get**

Anthropological Dualism  
Metaphysical Dualism  
Metaphysical Dualism  
Religious Dualism  
Religious Dualism

To correctly view the Biblical story, we must not merely say that “man” was lost and that “man” is being recovered, but rather that “all” was lost and that “all” is being recovered.

Cosmic or Non-Cosmic Redemption: Comparing Wholism to Dualism

Now I turn to look at the Biblical Story, not as a slow analysis, piece by piece, but as a quantitative whole. I want to answer the question: Is there a problem in viewing redemption as something “non-cosmic?” In what follows I will try to answer that question.

Dualism belittles God’s power because if dualism is right, then God is *not* able to redeem the canvas of creation. Let me put it this way. In the Biblical view of redemption, we have the unfolding of the three main parts of the Christian Story that were previously outlined: “Cosmic Creation”, “Comic Fall”, and “Cosmic Redemption.” To illustrate this story figuratively, you might say that in the Biblical story, we have: ten ounces of Creation, ten ounces of Fall, and ten ounces of Redemption. But the dualist’s perspective is different. According to Dualism, the story reads: ten ounces of Creation, ten ounces of Fall, but one ounce of Redemption. Dualism teaches that God is not able to fully restore the canvas of creation to its original creational beauty. It teaches that some areas of creation and human life are beyond redemption and “off-limits” to our faith.

The distorted view of Dualism implies that God gave *man* the ability to radically and “cosmically” reorganize all of creation, hence the “cosmic-ness” of the Fall, but that *He, himself*, lacks such far-reaching “cosmic” power. God responds to 10 ounces of Fall with one ounce of redemption? Where’s the glory in that? Dualism belittles God’s power over the *totality* of creation. Dualism seems to be, in this case, a radical arrogance of man’s power over creation,

because man's actions affect cosmic significances but God's actions allegedly affect little or no cosmic significances. Dualism is Christ-belittling because it imagines that He is unable to affect "cosmic" change.

The non-Cosmic nature of Dualism's Redemption should present obvious problems that even the dualist will notice. Because of this problem, some dualists respond here by saying, "But I don't believe in a "cosmic" Fall, so Jesus doesn't have to be a "cosmic" Redeemer. Essentially he/she is saying that, "I can hold to a non-Cosmic Redemption because I am not convinced that there was a Cosmic Fall." This argument sounds clever, but as you will see, it can't be right. For if the Fall of man is *not* cosmic, and it did not affect cosmic significances (which would indeed mean that Jesus does not have to be a Cosmic Redeemer), then the earth, this Earthly life, the body, and the temporal are all still good, but that is precisely what dualism insists is bad! If the realm of which the dualist is complaining never fell, then on what grounds whatsoever do we have a reason to withdraw from them? In that case we are straight back to perfect Wholism, everything is now as it was in the beginning. But this certainly isn't the dualist's perspective! This absurdity leads us straight into one last rebuttal.

The dualist is left with one final response. Rather than arguing that the Fall is not Cosmic, which would indeed mean that Jesus doesn't have to redeem every single realm of life, the dualist might challenge that all of Creation is *NOT* built inherently good. This view would seek to allege that some parts of creation were created as inherently "evil" or "wrong." In that case, the realms of which the dualist remains withdrawn, are realms which *by their creational order are inherently evil*. This would then mean that all of creation was not good, and that God built some parts (either whole realms or a part of every realm) of Creation as inherently evil. This view, however is simply ludicrous. Creation as God intended it was excellent. There is nothing

in Genesis one and two that would indicate that God built a part of every realm as inherently evil. All of the person, places, things, ideas/infrastructure, and activities in Pre-Fall Creation are all *good*.

In concluding these two rebuttals, let me offer this simple summary. To resort to the argument that some realms of life were created inherently evil is just ludicrous and does not fit well with Genesis 1-2. Likewise, to say that the Fall is not “cosmic”, (having in mind that this “non-cosmic ness” would then justify Jesus’ “non-cosmic” Redemption) only turns out to be equally absurd because in turn, it advocates Wholism.<sup>20</sup>

The biblical message is that *all* is sacred, *all* has fallen, and *all* is being redeemed. In the resurrection of Christ, we may find a strong parallel to this paradigm. Jesus became a fully living and breathing human being.<sup>21</sup> He lived as man and embraced all of what it means “to be man.” This corresponds to “a full view of creation.” Next, Jesus died. His life was completely taken away from him; His death is complete. Christ’s death can be seen as a “full view of the fall.” But here is where the dualist’s perspective falls miserably short. According to the Gospels, what was fully *alive*, and fully *dead*, had become fully *restored*. Jesus’ resurrection is a beautiful statement of a “full restoration.” The resurrection shows us that God did not give Jesus’ life a partial restoration but a comprehensive, “full restoration.” Jesus’ story parallels the Christian meta-narrative because it shows: ten ounces of life, ten ounces of death, and ten ounces of restoration/new life. Redemption is a cosmic affair; everything is affected in the Fall, and everything is affected in Christ’s redemption.

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<sup>20</sup> Dualism teaches that there are realms of creation that are presently evil. To be presently “evil”, these realms must be either (1) created inherently evil or (2) affected in the Fall but presently beyond redemption. These are the only two options, and both of them will be refuted. The first has just been engaged and the second is engaged throughout the paper.

<sup>21</sup> This statement has profound implications for Christian anthropological dualism. What better affirmation of the good of the human body than “the Word becoming flesh?”

Dualism leads us to a tragic, but false conclusion. If it is true that mans' actions carried cosmic significances, affecting everything in creation, but Jesus' actions carried miniscule significances, redeeming only part of the person, only a part of the places, only part of the things, only part of the ideas/institutions of creation, and only part of the activities of creation, why should the believer be inclined to *rejoice*? How can we rejoice in the sight of such loss? At a practical level, Dualism just seems to be wrong.

### Two Absurdities for the Christian Dualist

#### *The Incarnation*

The incarnation of Jesus is the most “body-embracing”, “this-life-exalting”, “temporal-redeeming” affirmation that we could ever hope for. What better indication that the human body is good than the fact that the Second member of the Trinity became the Imago Dei Himself? As Dr. Nigel Cameron said, “Jesus didn’t only *become* a man, He is *still* fully man right now.” Jesus went through all of what it means to be a human. If the body were not so important why would Jesus have come in bodily form? The same can be said of the resurrection. If the body were not so God honoring and God glorifying, why would Jesus have had a bodily resurrection? The fact that Jesus entered time, lived as a human, experienced all of the human life, lost His body and received it back is strong indication that the body is an inherently beautiful thing; it is not something to be ashamed of.

#### *Physical Aspects of “Spiritual Activities”*

Have you ever noticed how involved your body is in a typical worship service? It is strange that while in the pursuit of such higher and better “spiritual” activities that we find it necessary to utilize our bodies constantly. Look at the role of the “physical” in: communion, vocal praise, lifting hands, kneeling, reading, thinking, feasts, fellowships, and baptisms. These activities show that man and reality are one cohesive whole. Despite Dualism’s attempts to

divide man and reality into two opposing parts, we still exhibit profound cohesion and singularity.

### Two Stiff Challenges for Christian Religious Dualism

#### *Salt of the Earth & Light of the World*

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told His disciples, “You are the salt of the Earth. You are the light of the world.”<sup>22</sup> Christian Religious Dualism is the idea of taking all of the salt of the Christian faith and dumping it all in one corner of life. If there is such a thing as the “sacred/secular” dichotomy where “faith” remains disintegrated from most areas of life, then dumping that salt all in one place is just what Jesus intended for us to do. But that would not match up well to the nature of “salt” and “light.” This verse clearly indicates that the disciples, carrying the Gospel Message, are to permeate their culture, as salt would be used to permeate meat for preservation. This verse is a direct challenge to Christian Religious Dualism because its visual picture is unmistakable. The Christian faith is something that is to thoroughly permeate every realm of life. I say again: Christianity is not a realm of life; it’s a way of life for every realm.

#### *All Things to the Glory of God*

Similarly, Paul told the Corinthian believers “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”<sup>23</sup> This clearly implies that one can do all things to the Glory of God. Whether: eating, drinking, singing, or learning, we can glorify God in every realm of life. *All* has fallen but *all* is being redeemed. It is impossible to read these verses and have them make any sense if Dualism’s “split vision” is right. Dualism wants to say just the opposite, that something some realms of life are “holy” and other realms are “unholy.” I say again: Christianity is not a realm of life; it’s a way of life for every realm.

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew 5:13-14

<sup>23</sup> I Corinthians 10:31

### The Lie of Worldview Neutrality

As I stated at the beginning of my paper, I would strongly characterize my former self as a *methodological dualist*. Whether they realize it or not, most Christians are methodological dualists, because most Christians have a practice of “withholding” their religious beliefs from certain other (usually public) realms of life. Many Christians have deluded themselves into thinking that they should not engage a particular “realm of life” with their Christian faith because in a culture of plurality it must remain “neutral.” This fatal assumption practically “hands over” the whole of life with the naive idea that “neutrality” exists. Many dualists are only comfortable leaving their “faith” out of a particular realm of life because they have a deep presupposition that these realms, of which their faith remains withdrawn, are by and large “neutral.” But the key question for the dualist to ask is, are they? To put it another way, “If I don’t use my Christian worldview in being a plumber, *what* or *whose* worldview will I use? And will it *really* be neutral?”

Walsh and Middleton discuss dualism at length in their book, *The Transforming Vision*. In their argument against dualism they paint the Biblical picture of: Who are we? Where are we? What went wrong? And what’s the remedy? There are two implications of man being made in the Image of God: (1) our dominion or rule over the Earth, and (2) our religious freedom to either serve God or serve idols.<sup>24</sup> We are responsible to serve God in every realm of life, and dualism is a paradigm that allows us to worship idols in realms like politics, education, healthcare, the legal institutions, and the family. Walsh and Middleton go on to say “But the most devastating effect of dualism is that it necessitates a double allegiance. It forces us to serve two masters.”<sup>25</sup> So dualism leaves us torn into many fragments. Every realm of life must have a king, and if Christians just “withdraw” from a particular realm thinking it to be allegedly

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<sup>24</sup> Brian J. Walsh & J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision* (Intervarsity Press, 1984) p. 113

“neutral” they have erected an idol to be that realm’s king. The following charts demonstrate this simple principle.

Two Allegiances Resulting from Christian Dualism

1. Allegiance to Christ in the Sacred (spiritual) Realm
2. Allegiance to Idols in the Secular (worldly) Realm

Two Ways of Behaving/Operating in Every Realm of Life

1. Worshiper in Every Realm----->Obedient----->Image of God----->Wise
2. Idolater in Every Realm----->Disobedient----->Image of Idols----->Foolish

As Walsh and Middleton affirm, when we live as the dualist, we betray Christ’s lordship over *all* of life.<sup>26</sup> Most Americans are falsely entertaining the idea of “worldview neutrality.” I believe that an important step in curbing Dualism lies in simply demonstrating that there is no such thing as “worldview neutrality.” From my own personal experience I can tell you that it was much easier to see the error of my Dualistic thinking when I knew full well that somebody’s assumptions and presuppositions would have to be used.

Concluding Exhortations

Ken Meyers used a phrase during his interview with Dr. Naugle<sup>27</sup> that I have used repeatedly throughout this paper because it describes quite perfectly what we are asking believers to do. The challenge that we face is “deliberately sustaining the Christian worldview in all that we do.” With so many internal and external forces opposing integration, the Christian must commit himself/herself to the hard task of deliberately sustaining and thinking about his/her Christian worldview in every realm of life. If we ever hope to affect the reign of God in all of the Kingdoms of creation, then we must commit ourselves to the difficult task of deliberately sustaining our presuppositions.

By now, I hope that it is obvious that Christian Dualism is both a lie and a heresy. As someone who has experienced the liberating freedom of a wholistic Christian worldview, one

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<sup>25</sup> Brian J. Walsh & J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision* (Intervarsity Press, 1984) p. 113

<sup>26</sup> Brian J. Walsh & J. Richard Middleton *The Transforming Vision* (Intervarsity Press, 1984) p. 95

that embraces *all* of life and *all* of what it means to be fully human, I can boldly say that there is no greater need in our churches than a comprehensive, Wholistic Biblical Christian Worldview.

Understanding dualism's far-reaching effects is something that takes several passes to really "understand." The presuppositional framework of/for dualism is deeply embedded in the subconscious mind. Freeing up my mind to experience the "whole" Christian story has been the most liberating discovery of my life, short of my conversion experience. Taking this framework of Wholism to our brothers and sisters is a task for every thoughtful Christian thinker. When you see the world as a wholist, you just can't help but "to speak about what you have seen and heard."<sup>28</sup>

I conclude my paper with six concluding exhortations for ministering to dualists: (1) Abolish worldview neutrality. (2) Show the "Cosmic" inherent goodness of Creation (Goodness in the: person, places, things, ideas/institutions, and activities of creation). (3) Show the "Cosmic" work of redemption (Recovered Goodness in the: person, places, things, ideas/institutions, and activities of creation).<sup>29</sup> (4) Show logical absurdities inherent in Dualism. (The Incarnation and "Physical" Elements in "Spiritual" Activities) (5) Demonstrate: "All things to the Glory of God" & "Salt and Light" in every realm of life. (6) Recognize that we will have a king in every realm of life, even if it's not Christ. (7) Exhort the believer to "deliberately sustain" his/her Christian Faith in all that they do.

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<sup>27</sup> See "Mars Hill Audio Journal", Jan./Feb. 2003

<sup>28</sup> Acts 4:20

<sup>29</sup> You won't have to work hard on a "Cosmic Fall" because Dualism already insists that most of reality is hopelessly evil and permanently lost.



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