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## “Total Truth” –A Bold Manifesto for the Christian Worldview

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Nancy Pearcey is a gifted writer, and one of the brightest minds serving evangelical Christianity. Raised in a Scandinavian Lutheran home, she grew to know about Christianity as a child without coming to faith in Christ. She eventually became an adult convert to Christianity, but only after an intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage that took her from one side of the Atlantic to the other—including time at Francis Schaeffer’s L’Abri, a study center for young people asking big questions.

Pearcey now serves as the Francis A. Schaeffer Scholar at the World Journalism Institute and as a Visiting Scholar at the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola University. She is also well known for her work as a Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute in Seattle. An articulate opponent of evolutionary theory and one of the church’s most gifted authors, Nancy Pearcey brings a wealth of credibility and passion to this book.

Total Truth serves as a basic introduction to Christian worldview thinking, but its depth and clarity of thought sets it far above the usual fare. Throughout the volume, the influence of Francis Schaeffer is apparent. One of the twentieth century’s most significant apologists, Schaeffer was an eccentric and magnetic figure who helped an entire generation of struggling young evangelicals find their way into biblical Christianity. Schaeffer served as a prophet of cultural engagement during an age of rebellion among America’s youth, and he shaped the thinking of an entire generation of theologically-minded Christian young people.

Nancy Pearcey’s conversion came when she recognized that “God had won the argument,” and that her response must be to “give my life to the Lord of Truth.” In other words, she came to believe that the gospel is true, and that its truth demanded obedience. “Once we discover that the Christian worldview is really true, then living it out means offering up to God all our powers—practical, intellectual, emotional, artistic—to live for Him in every area of life. The only expression such faith can take is one that captures our entire being and redirects our every thought. The notion of a secular/sacred split becomes unthinkable. Biblical truth takes hold of our inner being, and we recognize that it is not only a message of salvation but also the truth about all reality. God’s word becomes a light to all our paths, providing the foundational principles for bringing every part of our lives under the Lordship of Christ, to glorify Him and cultivate His creation.”

One of Francis Schaeffer's key insights was the split in the modern mind that separated "religious" truth from all other truth. This "two-story" division of truth into secular and sacred spheres ultimately undermines the Christian truth claim and leaves believers with nothing more than a claim to "spirituality" and "meaningful experiences" rather than objective truth and biblical authority.

Nancy Pearcey conducts a thorough autopsy on these deficient patterns of thought, demonstrating throughout her book that all too many Christians fall prey to this kind of thinking. She tells a story of a theology teacher in a Christian high school who drew a heart on one side of his blackboard and a brain on the other. He told his class that the heart is what we use for religion, while the brain is what we employ for science. What this teacher was insinuating is that Christianity is a matter of feeling and emotion, while science is a matter of fact and objective truth. As Pearcey laments, "Training young people to develop a Christian mind is no longer an option; it is part of their necessary survival equipment."

Too many believers, Pearcey insists, "have absorbed the fact/value, public/private dichotomy, restricting their faith to the religious sphere while adopting whatever views are current in their professional or social circles." She continues: "We probably all know of Christian teachers who uncritically accept the latest secular theories of education; Christian businessmen who run their operations by accepted secular management theories; Christian ministries that mirror the commercial world's marketing techniques; Christian families where the teenagers watch the same movies and listen to the same music as their nonbelieving friends. While sincere in their faith, they have absorbed their views on just about everything else by osmosis from the surrounding culture."

In *Total Truth*, Nancy Pearcey offers a solid theological engagement with the critical intellectual issues of our times. While she presents a devastating critique of secular philosophies ranging from scientific materialism and Darwinism to rationalism, she also gives a constructive and biblical theological framework for establishing the structure of the Christian worldview. She lays this out in terms of three great themes: Creation, Fall, and Redemption. Every worldview, she explains, must provide a theory of how the world came to be, explain what has gone wrong with humanity, and point to some hope of redemption. By using such a theological grid, Pearcey suggests that "we can identify nonbiblical worldviews and then analyze where they go wrong." Furthermore, Pearcey explains, the first great affirmation of her worldview grid underlines the importance of asserting the truth of Christianity at the very point of creation. "If the grid of Creation, Fall, and Redemption provides a simple and effective tool for comparing and contrasting worldviews, it also explains why the biblical teaching of Creation is under such a relentless attack today. In any worldview, the concept of Creation is foundational: As the first principle, it shapes everything that follows. Critics of Christianity know that it stands or falls with its teaching on ultimate origins."

In other words, we cannot create a synthesis of biblical truth and evolutionary theory. This is absolutely correct and urgently important—for to surrender the Bible's truth claims on the origin of the universe is eventually to abdicate the totality of the Christian truth claim. After all, Christian truth does not come as isolated claims linked together by an underlying spirituality. To the contrary, Christian truth is a comprehensive and unitive whole that produces transformed lives precisely because the Gospel is true.

If believers allow Christian truth claims to be pushed into an "upper story" of mere opinion, while suggesting that science and other forms of knowledge deal with "facts," we surrender the integrity of faith itself and are reduced to offering Christianity as a form of spiritual therapy rather than as a message of transforming truth.

As Pearcey explains, "To be loyal to the great claims of our faith, we can no longer acquiesce in letting Christianity be shunted aside to the value sphere. We must throw off metaphysical timidity, be convinced that we have a winning case, and take the offensive. Armed with prayer and spiritual power, we need to ask God to show us where the battle is being fought today, and enlist under the Lordship and leadership of Christ."

So, why are evangelicals so vulnerable to intellectual timidity? Nancy Pearcey has a quick answer. While theological liberals were busy denying cardinal doctrines of the faith, evangelicals were simply retreating into an upper story faith where Christianity was reduced to an experience. Furthermore, many evangelicals bought into various philosophical movements that undermined clear-headed thinking. Others are simply blinded to their own intellectual, moral, and spiritual compromises by the pervasive seduction of contemporary culture.

*Total Truth* is one of the most promising books to emerge in evangelical publishing in many years. It belongs in every

Christian home, and should quickly be put into the hands of every Christian young person. This important book should be part of the equipment for college or university study, and churches should use it as a textbook for Christian worldview development.

Why does all of this matter? As Nancy Pearcey remarks, “These are not merely abstract intellectual matters fit for philosophers and historians to debate in the rarefied atmosphere of academia. Ideas and cultural developments affect real people, shaping the way they think and live out their lives. That’s why it is crucial for us to develop a Christian worldview—not just as a set of coherent ideas but also as a blueprint for living. Believers need a roadmap for a full and consistent Christian life.”

Serious Christians ought to be developing an entire library of books intended to apply the Christian worldview to every area of life, thought, study, and culture. Total Truth will be an important part of that library, and may also be the catalyst for other good books that will follow. In the meantime, quickly get a copy for yourself and send another to a young college student. In so doing, you just might be sending an intellectual life preserver to someone about to drown in a sea of secularism. Never underestimate the power of the right book put in the right hands at the right time.

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