

TABLE 8.1
Summary of Stories of Change

		TRADITIONAL RELIGION	WESTERN NATURALISM	EVANGELICAL GNOSTICISM	HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY
THE NATURE OF:	God	Good and evil personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces control the physical world	Does not exist	Distant and largely disconnected from affairs of this world	Sovereign, loving, personal, and relational Being who is the Creator, Sustainer, and Reconciler of all things
	Human Beings	Similar to rest of natural world; deep spiritual connection to family, tribe, and nature	Autonomous, purely material, highly intelligent animal	Autonomous individual with separable body and soul	Highly integrated mind-affections-will-body-relational being
STORY OF CHANGE:	What is the Goal?	Harmony and prosperity for one's family or tribe	Material consumption	Get the soul to heaven for eternity and enjoy material consumption in this life	Serve as priest-kings whose entire being lives in right relationship with God, self, others, and rest of creation
	How is the Goal Achieved?	Manipulate the spirits to gain power	Handouts or economic growth	Evangelism to save the soul plus handouts or economic growth for the body	Through the gift of the Son and Spirit, the triune God accomplishes our reconciliation to God, self, others, and the rest of creation
THE INDIVIDUAL'S RELATIONSHIP TO:	God	Spirits are to be feared, appeased, and manipulated	God does not exist	Primarily legal	Intimate, loving community and worship
	Self	At the mercy of spiritual beings and forces, so has little power to affect change in world; no different from trees or animals	Center of the universe with the capacity to control the world to increase one's consumption	Soul is so valuable that Christ was willing to die to save it from eternal punishment	A priest-king uniquely created to extend the reign and worship of God
	Others	A potential threat to the harmony and prosperity of one's family or tribe	Competitors for control of material world	Other individuals who are loved at arms-length	Intimate, loving community that is served sacrificially
	Rest of Creation	Live in harmony with it rather than try to develop it	Closed machine that can be used to increase personal consumption	Closed machine that can be used to increase personal consumption	Open to actions of both humans and spiritual beings; humans should protect and develop it for God's glory