

IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH: APOLOGETICS AND WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS – ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The second International Conference on Reformed Education (ICRE II), held in Sumas, Washington, in September 2007, decided to set up an international committee to develop guidelines for the teaching of apologetics in our schools. Such a course, it was agreed, should first of all serve as a means of helping students deal with the ongoing attacks upon the faith in our post-Christian society. It should not only, however, serve as a defensive strategy but also as an offensive one, enabling students to answer questions about and objections to the faith by outsiders (1 Peter 3:15). It was further agreed to begin the project with the publication of an annotated bibliography providing material for teaching the various aspects of a course in apologetics. The first version of this bibliography follows. It is, obviously, a work in progress. Over time some titles may be removed, and a good many additional ones added. All those interested in this work are invited to contribute.

The present version is divided into four parts, namely (1) worldview analysis, (2) the subjective element in knowing, (3) faith and science, and (4) apologetics proper. Some of the books and annotations are in the Dutch language. They will be placed separately, under the proper headings. These Dutch entries usually consist of an annotation based on the information provided by the publisher, but a more personal impression is sometimes added. The latter is placed in italics. An asterisk (*) will indicate books that are discussed in both the English and the Dutch sections. The initials at the end of each entry indicate the author of the preceding annotation. E.g., [HvL] denotes Drs. H. van Leeuwen, [JAvL] Ir. J.A. vanLoon, [FGO] Dr. Frederika Oosterhoff. Unless otherwise indicated, the introductions are by the last-mentioned author.

I WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

An acquaintance with the role of worldview is essential for the defence of the faith, and the bibliography therefore starts with this aspect.

What is a worldview?

A variety of definitions can be given:

- *A worldview is a way of looking at the world from a specific vantage point or perspective.
- *It is a comprehensive framework of one's basic convictions about ultimate matters – such as the existence of God, the nature, duty, and destiny of man, the meaning of life, the outcome of history.
- *It serves as a norm or ultimate standard by which to measure all things.
- *It gives context, direction, and meaning to life and life's experiences.

*It is a more or less coherent system of thought, which unifies thought and life, and so helps one to see life as a whole.

*One author has compared it to the picture on the box of a jigsaw puzzle, which helps the puzzler to find a place for the many apparently unconnected fragments he encounters (Mark P. Cosgrove).

*Held consciously or not, its sway tends to be close to all-encompassing, determining or at least strongly affecting religious practice, social mores, politics, ethics, family life, education, and all other aspects of life.

*It is strongly influenced, also in the case of agnostics and atheists, by a person's religious convictions.

*It is pre-theoretical and may be held unconsciously, and serves as (coloured) lenses through which we look at reality.

*It may and often does take narrative form and so includes the recollection of past experience, becoming a means of linking the generations in a coherent story. This is evident also in the Christian context. God is the God of history, who has commanded his people to "tell the next generation" (Deut. 6:20-25, Joshua 4:21-24, Psalm 78). The narrative element underlines the fact that worldview is not just an intellectual concept, but concerns itself with praxis as well as understanding.

Synonyms

paradigm, metanarrative, symbolic world, spirit of the age (*Zeitgeist*), *Weltanschauung*, climate of opinion, presuppositions (Van Til).

Examples of worldview

Biblical or Christian Theism, naturalism, mechanism, nihilism, existentialism, Marxism, Islam, Hinduism, New Age.

The biblical worldview

The biblical worldview stresses the universal Lordship of Christ, and can be described in terms of creation, fall, grace and redemption, and the future restoration of all things. Like Christianity itself, the biblical worldview is not only about the saving of souls. It has cosmic proportions, for Christ is the creator, redeemer, and Lord of the entire universe. Therefore Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck could say that the follower of Christ must go through two conversions: from the world to Christ, and then from Christ to the world.

Based on the Bible, the Christian worldview must also be constantly tested by the Bible and reformed where necessary. While tradition is important, traditionalism is to be avoided. Areas wherein reformation of the Christian worldview has taken place in the past include slavery, racism, *Apartheid*, the position of women, social inequality.

The need to teach worldviews and worldview analysis in the Christian school

In today's post-Christian world, the biblical worldview is under attack by the non-biblical one(s) in our society. Students should learn first of all to articulate and defend their own worldview.

This begins in the family, in the church, and in the lower grades of the elementary school, where the biblical narrative is taught. There is a close connection between worldview analysis and apologetics. In order to learn to test the spirits, understand their culture, and speak with others in a multicultural society, students must in time be taught to analyze and evaluate competing worldviews, and to do so with reference to the teachings of the Bible.

As mentioned, the prevailing worldview affects all areas of life and thought. In section 2 of this bibliography we will note how an acquaintance with the role of worldview helps in understanding the origin, nature, and demise of scientific paradigms. There are other connections between worldview and curriculum. Literature and history, apologetics and philosophy, geography, politics, art, and music are also affected by the prevailing worldview and, in turn, influence it. Some examples of the connection between worldview and culture: The classical Greek worldview can be described as humanistic, and this humanism was reflected in Greek literature, historiography, science, religion, politics, art, sculpture, architecture, and so on. The difference between God and man was relatively small: gods were portrayed in human form, and human beings were portrayed as godlike. A not dissimilar worldview prevailed during the Renaissance and much of the modern period, and was similarly reflected in the various aspects of the dominant culture. The very different character of late- and postmodern art, literature, music, religious attitudes, ethics, and views of history and science, reflects the non-humanistic, fragmented, and far more pessimistic worldview of today.

Evaluating a worldview

James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (see Bibliography below), pp. 214-7, states that a worldview must

- * have inner intellectual coherence – that is, it must not contain sets of propositions that are logically inconsistent
- * have the ability to apprehend the data of reality – that is, the data of experience, science, the experience of others, and so on
- * truly explain what it claims to explain, and
- * be subjectively satisfactory by being true

Comparing the biblical worldview to competing ones, Sire concludes that the former comes closest to meeting these four criteria. He admits that also for the Christian questions and problems remain, but adds that biblical theism, far better than any other worldview, *explains* the presence of such questions and problems.

Thinking and living

Contemporary writers on worldview analysis emphasize, more so perhaps than writers of the past, the danger of assuming that an intellectual knowledge of the Christian faith and worldview is sufficient. They warn that right thinking does not necessarily lead to right living; that orthodox Christians may confess the faith and nevertheless walk in the way of the world. The warning is to the point and must be taken to heart: parents and teachers and other adults must not only *talk* the faith, they must also *walk* and model it.

Nevertheless, in an age that tends to elevate praxis and experience above intellectual comprehension, it is well to keep in mind that the intellectual element serves an important function. Allow me to conclude this introduction with a relevant quote taken from the well-known book by American historian Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Eerdmans, 1994, p. 26). Noll quotes Charles Malik, a Lebanese diplomat and Eastern Orthodox Christian, who had been invited to speak at the opening of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in 1980. Believing that the greatest danger facing American Evangelical Christianity was the danger of anti-intellectualism, Malik complained that among evangelicals

. . . People are in a hurry to get out of the university and start earning money or serving the church or preaching the Gospel. They have no idea of the infinite value of spending years of leisure in conversing with the greatest minds and souls of the past. . . . The result is that the arena of creative thinking is abdicated and vacated to the enemy. Who among the evangelicals can stand up to the great secular or naturalistic or atheistic scholars on their own terms of scholarship and research? Who among the evangelical scholars is quoted as a normative source by the greatest secular authorities on history or philosophy or psychology or politics? Does your mode of thinking have the slightest chance of becoming the dominant mode of thinking in the great universities of Europe and America which stamp your entire civilization with their own spirit and ideas? . . . For the sake of greater effectiveness in witnessing to Jesus Christ Himself, as well as for their own sakes, the evangelicals cannot afford to keep on living on the periphery of responsible intellectual existence.

While never ignoring the need to stress Christian praxis, the Reformed school may not forget that its specific educational function is to help students develop a Christian mind. It should, therefore, continue to deal with the question: What is the role of the school in helping students to move from the periphery to the centre of “responsible intellectual existence”? And how is this to be done?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beverluis, N.H. *Let Children Come: A Durable Vision for Christian Schooling*. Christian Schools International, 2001, 168 pp. Although it is not mentioned in the title, the author gives considerable attention to the role of the Christian worldview in education. In a very balanced exposition, he points out that Reformed thinking has always sought to combine “the intellectual vigor of Calvin” with his “religion of a burning heart,” and urges his readers to keep both aspects in mind in their life and teaching. Christ’s Lordship is all-encompassing, and students must learn this. They must also learn that “the biblical piety of knowledgeable worship must be bonded to sound learning about God’s many-splendored world. . . .” Curriculum is important: Christian schools are not mission agencies but academic institutions. An informative and inspirational booklet. [FGO]

Fernhout, Harry. "Christian Schooling: Telling a Worldview Story," in Ian Lambert and Suzanne Mitchell, eds., *The Crumbling Walls of Certainty: Towards a Christian Critique of Postmodernity and Education*. Christian Schooling Series, 1997, pp. 75-98. Referring to Reformed philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff and other authors, Fernhout warns against a single-minded stress on the intellectual aspect of the faith. Christianity is as much praxis as theory. Christian thinking is indispensable for a life of discipleship but does not by itself produce it; discipling, disciplining, and modeling also are needed. The intellectual implications of worldview teaching, moreover, may not fit the elementary grades or the more practical-minded among secondary students. Fernhout further stresses the importance of a narrative approach in the teaching of religion and worldview, in order to help students to order their experiences in a manner that is consistent with the larger story. Man is a story-telling being, who sees the present arising out of the past and heading into the future. By means of biblical instruction each new generation must be drawn into the plot of the story as told by the Bible. [FGO]

Holmes, Arthur F. *Contours of a Worldview*. Eerdmans, 1983, 240 pp. This is the first in a series of "Studies in a Christian World View" that was sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies under the direction of Carl F.H. Henry. Holmes begins with a discussion of the nature of worldviews, and of the human need for a worldview that ties all things together. He proceeds by giving the contours of worldviews, pointing out the differences between the Christian worldview and competing ones. He gives much attention to the question of truth and emphasizes that the subjective element in knowing does not imply the non-existence of truth and true knowledge. (On this point see also the Introduction to section 2 of this bibliography.) [FGO]

Nash, Ronald H. *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas*. Zondervan, 1992. 176 pp. The author, professor of philosophy and theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida, provides a helpful overview of the questions Christian teachers are bound to ask in connection with the topic under discussion, such as: What is a worldview, what is the Christian worldview, and how are we to choose a worldview? Nash looks at competing worldviews, including naturalism and the New Age movement. He deals with the problem of evil, as well as the Christian doctrines of Christ's incarnation and resurrection, and concludes with a chapter entitled "Winning the Battle in the World of Ideas." Throughout, the author stresses the superiority of the Christian worldview and urges Christians to arm themselves intellectually so that they can explain and defend the faith. [FGO]

Naugle, David K. *Worldview: The History of a Concept*. Eerdmans, 2002. 384 pp. This book, whose author turned from dispensational millennialism to the Reformed faith and now serves as professor of philosophy at Dallas Baptist University, is the most comprehensive study on the topic to have appeared in recent years. Deeply researched and clearly written, it delves into the history of the worldview concept, shows how the prevailing worldview affects not only everyday life but also a variety of academic disciplines, and analyzes the concept's philosophical roots up to and including the rise of postmodern philosophies. The author devotes two chapters to the role of worldview in the natural and social sciences, summarizing in some detail the work of

Michael Polanyi and Thomas Kuhn. As will be shown in section 2 of this bibliography, he also deals with the relationship between worldview and subjective relativism. Naugle further provides a description of the Christian worldview, noting as one of its central aspects the cosmic spiritual battle between the forces of light and darkness, and suggests criteria by which to evaluate worldviews. He concludes with mentioning the philosophical and theological dangers of worldview (making it into an idol, forgetting that Christ must be at the centre) as well as its undoubted benefits. Among the latter: The biblical worldview shows that Christianity can satisfy the standard test for truth that philosophy has devised; it gives cognitive confidence and provides an apologetic strategy; it warns against a theological reductionism, showing that creation is more than a doctrine against evolution and that sin and redemption affect more than people; and it provides a vision of wholeness, uniting the various experiences of our lives. *Worldview* is a rich book that should be read by anyone interested in the history, nature, and role of worldview. [FGO]

Pearcey, Nancy. *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity*. Crossway, 2005, 511 pp. Another excellent book on the role of worldview and worldview analysis. Pearcey's theme is that Christianity is not simply about the saving of souls or the provision of truths that make the personal life bearable. Rather, it is a total truth and provides us with guidance and norms for every aspect of human existence. In working out this theme, Pearcey gives considerable attention to Intelligent Design, suggesting that it can serve as an umbrella under which Christians can fight the enemy of secular naturalism. The reach of a worldview is illustrated with respect to the ideology of pan-evolutionism, which, she shows, affects every aspect of modern life, from ethics to education, from politics to philosophy. The book concludes with a fine chapter on "True Spirituality and Christian Worldview." A study guide has been included in this edition to facilitate group discussions. [FGO]

Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*. 2nd ed. IVP, 1988. 246 pp. This is a handy, concise, accessible textbook that could be used in secondary schools. The author discusses Theism (the biblical worldview) as well as Deism, Naturalism (including Marxism), Nihilism, Existentialism, Eastern Pantheism, and the New Age, and concludes with a brief chapter on the choice of a worldview. The criteria Sire suggests for the evaluation of worldview have been given in the introduction to this bibliography. [FGO]

Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. Eerdmans, 1985. 98 pp. The writer, who teaches religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, explains the worldview concept and provides a description of the reformational or biblical worldview, showing its significance for the Christian's life and work. He points out that this worldview, which must be constantly tested with reference to Scripture, assumes the relevance of the Bible for the totality of our culture, not only for religion. Wolters devotes three chapters to an analysis of the reformational worldview with reference to the biblical histories of Creation, Fall, and Redemption. In connection with the fall, he distinguishes between structure and direction, writing that the structure of creational givens remains, in spite of the directional perversion as a result of the fall. Creation is not responsible for the ills of the

world; there was a completely good creation, and creation will be restored. In the concluding chapter the author looks at some of the practical applications of the biblical worldview for the societal, cultural, and personal lives of Christians. Under the heading "Personal Renewal" he gives special attention to the areas of human aggression, spiritual gifts, sexuality, and dance.
[FGO]