

A DISCUSSION CONCERNING “WORLD VIEW” AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

FIRST SESSION: WORLD VIEW AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE: FANTASY AND REALITY:

1. How the topic of “world view” enters modern discourse:

Best scholarly resources on this: David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*
James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant*

Immanuel Kant and the modern struggle to come to terms with knowledge and human destiny.

Idea that one can’t “get outside” the general framework imposed by the nature of consciousness. (Kant)

We can only study how we “take” things, perhaps how we *must* take them.

We can study how our view of things develops. 19th Century as the century of History.

Still, can’t “get outside” No way of evaluating our overall view of things in terms of how it fits with reality. Everyone has a world view, largely borrowed from their cultural history.

2. How “world view” became a preoccupation among Christian thinkers:

It’s “Apologetic” intent. A way of responding to attacks on Christian faith and institutions, especially by those claiming to prove Christianity false by reference to the findings of “new knowledge” or of “science.”

“Tu quoque.” You criticize me and I reply: “You too!” The Christian says to the attacker: “You attack me for being irrational, but you also have unproven assumptions.”

The advantages of “Presuppositionalism” in apologetics: We all have presuppositions of our outlook that we cannot prove, cannot “get outside” of. That is true of me (the Christian) and it is true of you (Islam, Secular Humanism, whatever). You can refute me from *your* assumptions, and I can refute you from *my* assumptions. But I believe your assumptions are false or ungrounded, and you can believe the same of mine. “Never the twain shall meet.” But at least you can’t prove me wrong in a way that I must accept it.

All that is left is choice or miraculous inspiration of faith. It is small wonder that the great names among the world view apologists have been strong Calvinists. Man cannot come to saving faith by reasoning. Noetic corruption has made that impossible, and, anyway, that would be salvation by human works.

3. This explains why much of the discussion of world views is *comparative*, that is, a matter of considering the advantages of one world view over against another, trying to show which is superior. More “scientific” or less “scientific,” for example. Or Christians who want to get the monkey of “irrationality” off their back, or at least share it with others. But this often results in people talking but no one listening, willing to learn, letting fair logic have its way.
4. Comparative world view discussions tend to be defensive, to focus on what is professed rather than on what is practiced, start and stay at an abstract level, get identified with an overall culture, and in general to resolve nothing to the satisfaction of those who previously held other positions. They tend to do culture wars and not deal in a loving and intelligent manner with *individual people* and *specific issues*. The wisdom and goodness of loving our neighbors and our enemies is meant for “world view” opponents too.
5. Is there another way to approach world view issues? One that opens the possibility of “common ground,” not locked-in and immovable presuppositions? I think there is. It is one that starts from the questions we all face in life and have to answer by living, not just by thinking. These questions are:

- A. What is reality?—What do we have to deal with? What can we count on?
- B. Who is well-off, has the good life?—What is to be acted for?
- C. Who is a really good person?—Who are we to become?
- D. How do we become really good persons?

Now, as humanity has moved along through the Modern period of history, it has pushed the question of *knowledge* to the center.

- E. How do we know the answers to 1-4?

6. Let us understand a world view as a set of answers to these five questions, answers that are implicit in how people act, not in what they say. Of course what they say is still important.

Such a world view will be more or less complete and consistent. That will be a matter of degree.

It will for the most part have been communicated to the individual by his or her surroundings, and most of it will probably never have been thought of or thought out, except for very unusual persons.

Religions are “ready-made” world views. They bring answers to all five questions. This is one reason why religion has such power over human life and is certainly not going to go away. It is also what makes religion dangerous. But also what can make it good—depending on what the religion teaches and practices.

7. There is no such thing as a scientific world view.

There is no individual science or combination of sciences that answers the five questions. This is just a fact. Examine the sciences to see.

There are scientists who have world views. And they often claim that their science proves their world view. Simply examine that claim logically. Logic is your friend: a friend of human kind. Dr. Provine’s statement as an illustration.

A general statement about Darwin’s biological theory of natural selection on this point.

8. Is there a Christian world view?

If we individuate world views by answers to the above five questions, there are probably several.

But Christian faith is not a world view, though it may rule out one or more.

On the other hand there certainly are Non-Christian world views: for example, secular humanism, atheism, agnosticism, Buddhism, Islam, etc. etc.

9. Christian faith, Christian living—“Christianity” in that sense—is first and foremost a practice, a way of living, a life, centered in confidence in Jesus Christ. It is not a “head trip” of theological correctness alone.

Confidence that he and his heavenly “abba” loves us, has made provision for us, and has the key to all that life was meant to be. Now and forever. Obvious implications for world view.

“To whom shall we go. You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68)

Our confidence in him as a confidence in spiritual life in the Kingdom of God. As discipleship, learning from him how to live our lives in the Kingdom of God now. Resurrection life.