

Reflection on Worldview

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The development of a Christian worldview has been rather recent in the history of the church. More specifically, the development of a Reformed worldview began with James Orr and Abraham Kuyper in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, both of whose ideas stemmed from the theology of John Calvin, one of the great reformers. Kuyper is probably the most well known among those in the Reformed faith and the structure of his worldview was Calvinistic, emphasizing God's sovereignty over all of life. He said, "there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" Others who have historically contributed to the idea of a Reformational worldview include Herman Dooyeweerd and Francis A. Schaeffer. What then, is a worldview? The concept of worldview has been described as a life perspective, confessional vision, principles, ideology, and/or a system of value. While the definition of worldview is not universally agreed upon, I believe that in the most basic sense, worldview is quite simply, the way in which a person views the world in which they live. The developments related to worldview and a Reformed worldview did not end with Kuyper and Orr, but have continued into the twenty-first century. Two scholars who have continued the discussion are Albert M. Wolters and James K.A. Smith.

In his book *Creation Regained*, Wolters defines worldview as, "the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things" (Wolters 2). Going into a little more depth, a person's worldview has to do with the basic or core beliefs about things that they hold to and the way in which these beliefs tend to form a framework or pattern. He differentiates between philosophy and theology in relation to worldview. Wolters says that both are comprehensive scientific and theoretical disciplines, but philosophy focuses on the structure of things, while

theology focuses on their direction. According to Wolters, philosophy and theology are specialized fields in which not everyone can have expertise. In contrast, worldview is related to wisdom and common sense and it is something that all people have, educated or not. Overall, Wolters' book is characterized by a conversation about structure and direction. He looks at each part of worldview in terms of these two ideas.

Wolters' book is outlined according to the Reformed worldview as is summarized by creation, fall, and redemption. In his discussion on creation, Wolters begins by redefining it and renaming it law, "to stand for the totality of God's ordaining acts toward the cosmos" (Wolters 15). He does this because the word creation is often limited to simply the creative act and he wants the sovereignty of God in these acts to be included in the term. In my opinion, the new term, law, is confusing because the reader has to realize that it is different from the traditional definition of law. I think it would have made more sense for Wolters to plainly redefine the word creation and correct our misunderstanding of it.

The scope of the fall is a curse for all of creation. Adam is the covenant head of the world and he is representative of humanity. As the second Adam, Jesus is the type that saves humanity. When God created the world, he intended for the world to be wholly and completely good. Sin, or the fall, introduced a new dimension to the created order. Original creation was the structure that God intended, and while sin doesn't destroy the good of creation, the cosmic curse of the fall shifted us away from the direction God originally intended for us. Now we are part of the world, which is a perversion of creation. Wolters says, "world designates the totality of sin-infected creation" (Wolters 64).

Because of the fall, we are now in need of redemption which is a return to original creation that affects the whole of creational life. It is through the grace of Christ that creation is

restored. According to Wolters it is important to choose restoration over repristination. It is impossible to go back to the original stage of creation. Rather we must realize that “Biblical religion is historically progressive, not reactionary” and that redemption claims all of creation bringing it back to its original, intended direction (Wolters 78).

Smith’s *Desiring the Kingdom* comes at the idea of worldview from a slightly different angle. He says that our worldview is in essence our habits and our practices and that as humans we are defined by what we love. Like Wolters, Smith introduces a few new terms and redefines some old ones for us. He begins with human nature which he calls dynamic. According to Smith, the human person is desiring and teleological. We are intending beings focused on an end goal, purpose, or ultimate love. Our ultimate love is what we worship and that worship is focused on a certain kingdom. In order to get to our ultimate love, we begin with practices which form habits which train our hearts and constitute the fulcrum of our desires. He also introduces the terms liturgy and pedagogy. Liturgy is a ritual of ultimate concern and a formative pedagogy of desire that tries to make us a certain kind of person. A pedagogy is simply educational practices.

In order to help us to understand these new concepts, Smith uses the analogy of the mall as a kingdom. There are four features to the mall’s version of a kingdom: “(1) an implicit notion of brokenness akin to “sin”; (2) a strange configuration of sociality; (3) the hope of redemption in consumption; and (4) a vision of human flourishing (“quality of life”) that is unsustainable” (Smith 95). According to Smith, the consumerism of the mall is all-consuming. If it is our kingdom, it infiltrates every part of our life. Although he believes that the church has not done a good job of combating the kingdom of the mall, so that it infiltrates every part of the Christian’s life, Smith believes that this is what the church should be doing. The ideas presented in the analogy of the mall really hit home to me. Without my realizing it, the consumer culture in which

on live has had a huge affect on who I am. It is easy to forget that the culture you place yourself in changes who you are. Smith reminded me of this, and made me desirous of re-evaluating my ultimate love and re-aligning my practices and habits with that.

Another interesting aspect of Smith's work is his ideas on worship. According to Smith, we worship because of failure to meet the standard of being made in God's image. Also, in the place of worship, you see the reality of your humanity. Smith says that to be human is to be called. We are called to worship God is a peculiar way in this world as his image bearers. Through worship, we affect culture, which is something that we cannot avoid. Smith also says that every part of our lives is worship because it is us "desiring the kingdom."

I believe that the worldview of a Christian should affect every part of life. It is important to note that we need to have a worldview because we need something to live by and it brings patterns of coherence to our world. It is like our blind spot. Everyone has one, and our brains attempt to fill in the gaps. When there are gaps in our lives and world, they are filled according to our worldview. This worldview should be shaped and guided in every way by the Bible. Scripture and worldview are intricately connected and this relationship should not be undermined. This is made explicit in 2 Timothy 3: 15-17 which says, "from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." The fact that our worldview is Reformed is also important. We need to live out this worldview in way that is different from all the different, competing worldviews we see around us. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of

your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

One of the more specific areas of life highly influenced by worldview, especially Reformed Christian worldview is that of calling and vocation. I believe that God has a specific calling and vocation in mind for each one of us. As is says in Ephesians 4:11-12, “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” No one vocation is holier or more Christian than that of another. Rather, I believe that every Christian should use their talents to the best of their ability within their calling and vocation and that if this is done, God will be glorified. Having a Reformed worldview should affect the way that we view our calling and vocation and the way that we live in and through these things. Like Smith says, it is the little things that we do, or our practices and habits, that show who we really are what our ultimate love is. In the workplace, Christian's should be aware of their ultimate love and strive to implement practices and habits that bring them closer to that end. I think that it is also important to keep in mind Smith's idea that every part of life is worship. I believe it is possible to worship God within and through your calling and vocation. We can also tie in Wolter's discussion on redemption. I believe that Christians should explore what it means to be redemptive within their calling and vocation and then work this out.

The importance of worldview and knowing and understanding your own comes to light in Mark 8:27 in which Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do people say I am?” Every worldview has an answer to the question, whether or not it is right or wrong. Without a clear understanding of your own worldview, this becomes a difficult question to answer. The answer becomes clear, however,

that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, within a Reformational worldview. It is within this truth that Christians need to live.

Works Cited

- Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. Print.
- Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005. Print.