

APOLOGETICS: GIVING A REASON FOR OUR HOPE

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

FALL 2017

REVIEW

- Biblical Foundations for Apologetics
- The Importance of Worldviews in Apologetics

Preview

- The Christian Worldview

WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
 - Everyone has a worldview
 - A worldview involves “big question” beliefs
 - A worldview functions like an intellectual filter or a pair of spectacles
 - A person’s worldview can change, but large scale changes are difficult

WORLDVIEWS IN APOLOGETICS

- Some things to know about worldviews
 - A worldview contains its own standards for evaluating truth claims
 - A worldview will include answers to questions like: How should we evaluate truth claims? How should we evaluate evidence? What's reasonable/unreasonable? How can we know something is true? What is possible/impossible?
 - Example: “Miracles are by definition a violation of the laws of nature, but the laws of nature cannot be violated; therefore, miracles have to be impossible in principle.” – Discuss: What does that objection assume?
 - Another way of putting it: The ultimate standards for evaluating truth claims are not independent of a person's worldview; they are part of the worldview itself.
 - Some implications
 - Apologetics encounters are really two opposing worldviews in conflict
 - Unbelievers/believers do not share neutral standards for evaluating evidence
 - Facts are not interpretive free (not subjectivism because we affirm the objectivity of facts/evidence)
 - Therefore, simply pointing to “the facts” doesn't get to the main issue – the person's faulty worldview

WHY THINK IN TERMS OF WORLDVIEW?

1. It helps us to understand why people see the world as they do
 - Everyone recognizes there are fundamental disagreements about important issues. But why?
 - Examples: Why do some people think evolution is irrefutably certain while others reject it? Why do some celebrate a transgender person competing in the Olympics while others think it is insane? Why do some think Planned Parenthood is a great service to women and a defender of women's rights and others think it's an institution that provides a killing service?
2. It helps us to make meaningful comparisons between different religions and ideologies
3. It helps us to make reasoned evaluations of different religions and ideologies
4. It helps us to have constructive conversations with unbelievers

WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS (JAMES ANDERSON)

- Theology: fundamental beliefs about God and about ultimate reality
- Anthropology: fundamental beliefs about *humans*
- Knowledge: fundamental beliefs about *knowledge and truth*
- Ethics: fundamental beliefs about *goodness and morality*
- Salvation: fundamental beliefs about the *basic human problem and its solution*

WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS

- Theology: fundamental beliefs about God and about ultimate reality
 - Is there God? What is God like? How does God relate to the world? How does God relate to human beings?
 - Every worldview has a ‘god’ – an ultimate reality and ultimate authority.
- Anthropology: fundamental beliefs about *humans* (origins, nature, purpose, etc.)
 - Where do we come from? What are human beings (image of God or unintended products of evolution)? Are we just physical beings or embodied souls? Are we special or unique in any way? Do we exist for a particular purpose? Are we basically good or basically bad or something in-between?
 - Theology and anthropology cannot be separated; what you believe about God has implications for what you believe about humanity

WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS

- Knowledge: fundamental beliefs about *knowledge and truth (how, whether, what)*
 - Can we know anything at all? What can we know about God? What can we know about the universe? How do we know what we know? What is the best kind of knowledge? Are there any limits to knowledge? What are the best ways to improve and expand our knowledge?
- Ethics: fundamental beliefs about *goodness and morality*
 - Is morality real or illusory? How do we know what is right and wrong? Is morality objective or subjective (Does it transcend time and cultures or does it vary from person to person or culture to culture?) Are there any moral absolutes? Why should we try to be good anyway? Are we accountable to anything or anyone for the way we live?

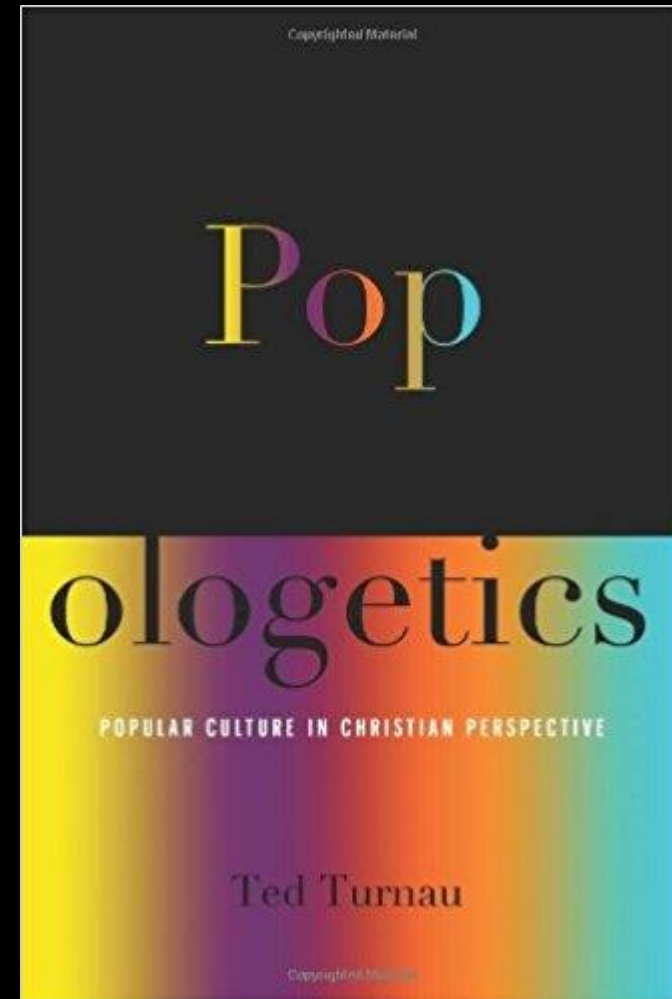
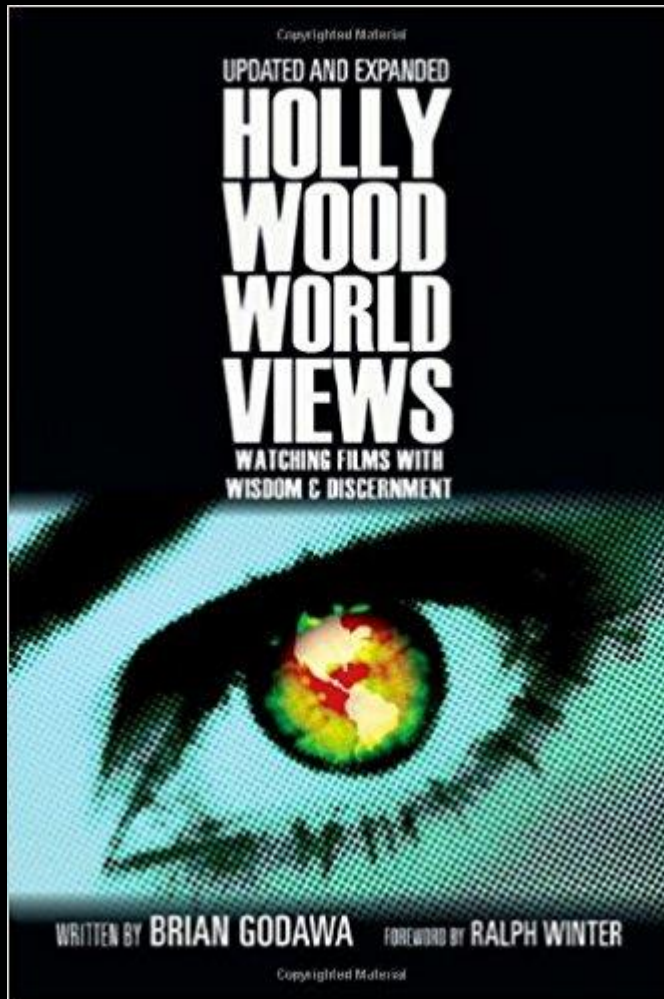
WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A WORLDVIEW: ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS

- Salvation: fundamental beliefs about the *basic human problem and its solution*
 - Every worldview has an explanation for what is wrong with the world and its solution.
 - What is humanity's most serious problem (extinction, hatred and bigotry)? What (if anything) is the solution? Are there multiple solutions? What part (if any) do we have to play? What part (if any) does God have to play? What are the prospects for the problem being solved?

ANALYZING WORLDVIEWS

- Note that these five areas are closely interrelated
 - Remember: “A worldview is a ‘network’ of a person’s ultimate beliefs, values, assumptions, and ideas.”
 - Discussion Question: How does your belief about God shape any of these other areas?
- Four ways to identify a person’s worldview
 1. Pay close attention to what the person says
 2. Pay close attention to how the person lives
 3. Consider the person’s upbringing and education
 4. Ask direct questions in a wise way

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Big Idea: The Christian worldview has implications both for *what* we defend (the content of our apologetic) and for *how* we defend it (the method of our apologetic).
 - We want to defend the Christian worldview with a Christian worldview. We want our apologetic to be a distinctly Christian apologetic.
 - Some apologetic approaches turn out to not be consistent with the Christian worldview.
- Overview of the Christian worldview (TAKES)
- Why think about a Christian worldview?
 - (1) Not everyone is used to thinking about Christianity as a comprehensive worldview
 - (2) So that we know exactly what we are defending
 - (3) So that we can think about how the Christian worldview affects how we do apologetics

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Theology

- There is a God (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:6)
- The Bible is very specific about what God is like (attributes)
 - God is “a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q4)

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Theology

- God is a *perfect being*: he possesses all perfections and no defects (Matt. 5:48)
- God is the *Personal Absolute* (John Frame)
 - Absolute – not limited by or dependent on anything else
 - Everything other than God is limited (dependent upon God)
 - Personal – God has attributes we associate with a personal being (mind, will, plans, divine affections)
 - This belief about God sets the Christian worldview apart from most other worldviews
 - Implication for apologetics: we can make any argument that certain things we take for granted presuppose [require] an absolute and personal God
 - Example: You can't have objective morality without the Christian God (Personal Absolute)
- God is a *Trinity*: one God in three distinct Persons (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)
 - God is One and Many: both *ultimate unity* and *ultimate plurality*

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Theology
 - God's relation to the world
 - God created the world *ex nihilo* (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16; Heb. 11:3).
 - God does not depend upon the world; everything other than God depends upon God for its existence.
 - The Creator-creature distinction – God is distinct in his being from the world
 - God is both *transcendent* and *immanent* (Isaiah 7:14; John 1:14).
 - Transcendent – separate from and over the creation
 - Immanent – present with and in the creation
 - Christianity uniquely keeps God's transcendence and immanence in balance
 - Isaiah 57:15: "For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite."

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Theology

- God's relation to the world

- God is the *sovereign Lord* of creation (Ex. 3:14) (John Frame, Lordship attributes)

- *Control*—God's sovereign power in creation and providence (e.g., Rev. 4:11; Eph. 1:11).
 - *Authority*—God's absolute rights over the creation (e.g., Rom. 9:20; Jude 25).
 - *Presence*—God's closeness to, and personal relationship with, his creatures (e.g., Rev. 21:3-4).

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Theology
 - Creation is a finite reflection of its Creator: it is rational, moral, purposeful, orderly, one/many.
- Some implications for apologetics:
 - Apologetics should aim to demonstrate the biblical God (not merely generic theism).
 - Apologetics should be conducted under the lordship of God (1 Pet. 3:15).
 - Apologetics should aim to show the dependence of all things on God (existence, rationality/logic, purpose/meaning, order of the universe, morality)
 - A person using rationality/logic to reject God is relying upon God to reason!
 - Apologetics can employ arguments from the creation to the Creator.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Anthropology (fourfold state of man)
 - The Christian worldview has a distinct view of man (origin, purpose, problem, solution)
 - *Created humanity*: we were created by God in his image (Gen. 1:27; 9:6).
 - Man was made to commune with God and to reflect God in certain respects
 - *Created purpose*: “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever” (Isa. 43:7; Rev. 21:3-4).
 - *Discuss*: How does your belief that God created humanity with a purpose determine your ethics?
 - *Tip*: test the coherence of a person’s anthropology and ethics

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Anthropology (created, fallen, redeemed, glorified)
 - We are both bodies (physical) and souls (spiritual) (2 Cor. 5:1-10).
 - Matthew 10:28: And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
 - Contrast: worldviews that say we are purely material beings.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Anthropology (created, fallen, redeemed, glorified)
 - *Fallen humanity*: we are fallen in sin and separated from God (Gen. 3:6-8; Isa. 59:2).
 - Condition: We are in bondage to sin and death (Rom. 3:9-20; 5:12-21; 6:1-23).
 - Sin affects every aspect of our being: body, will, intellect, emotions, etc.
 - Result: Our sin has resulted in both *physical* death and *spiritual* death (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1, 5).
 - Our existence doesn't end at physical death.
 - Hebrews 9:27: And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Anthropology (created, fallen, redeemed, glorified)
 - *Redeemed humanity*: we can be restored in the image of God through Christ (2 Cor. 3:17-18).
 - We are released from bondage to sin and death (Rom. 6:1-23).
 - We will enjoy eternal life—both *physical* life and *spiritual* life (John 5:24; 10:10).
- Some implications of biblical anthropology for apologetics:
 - Apologetics should be done without fear.
 - Apologetics should recognize the noetic [intellectual] effects of sin.
 - Apologetics has a point of contact with unbelievers *because of their very nature*
 - Lots of common ground because despite what the unbeliever denies, they are still made in the image of God.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge (what we can know and how we can know it)
 - All human knowledge is grounded in divine revelation.
 - *Natural* revelation: available to *all* humans through *natural* means (creation, conscience, and providence)
 - *Special* revelation: available to *some* humans through *supernatural* means.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge (what we can know and how we can know it)
 - Humans can (and do) have *knowledge of God* through:
 - Nature (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-32; 2:14-25)
 - The existence and attributes of God are clearly displayed in nature (Rom. 1:20).
 - The law of God is written on human hearts (Rom. 2:14-15).
 - All people have a natural knowledge of God, though this knowledge is denied and suppressed (Rom. 1:19, 21, 32).
 - Scripture (Matt. 4:4; John 5:39; Rom. 15:4)
 - Scripture is God's Word: *what Scripture says, God says* (Matt. 19:4-5; Gal. 3:8).
 - Scripture is sufficient, clear, authoritative, and necessary (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - Scripture is the ultimate standard of truth (Isa. 8:20; John 17:17).
 - Scripture is self-attesting and self-authenticating (Isa. 8:20; Heb. 6:13).
 - Attestation: Scripture testifies to its own origins and authority
 - Authentication: Scripture sets the terms for its own recognition and does not rely upon an outside standard for its authority

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- Humans can (and do) have *knowledge of the world* through:
 - Nature (Matt. 16:2-3) – both logical reasoning and sense experience
 - Scripture (Gen. 1-2; Heb. 11:3; Luke 1:1-4)
 - Complimentary sources of revelation
- Human beings are in one of two states
 - Unregenerate unbelievers
 - Regenerate believers

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- A person's knowledge and understanding depends crucially on their spiritual state.

- Unregenerate unbelievers...

- suffer from the noetic (i.e., intellectual) effects of sin.
- suppress their natural knowledge of God in their unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).
- yet still have no excuse for their unbelief (Rom. 1:19-20).
- will not and cannot submit to God's Word (Rom. 8:7-8).
- are liable to the "futility of unbelief" (Rom. 1:21; 1 Cor. 3:20; Eph. 4:17).
- are kept by common grace from the full consequences of their sin and unbelief.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- A person's knowledge and understanding depends crucially on their spiritual state.

- Regenerate believers...

- are healed (at least partially) from the noetic effects of sin (1 Cor. 2:10-16).
- have a saving knowledge of God (John 17:3).
- readily submit to God's Word (Ps. 1:1-2; 40:8; Rom. 7:22).
- should think in a distinctively Christian way (Matt. 22:37; Rom. 12:2; Col. 2:6-8).

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- Some implications for apologetics:

- Apologetics involves an appeal to what has already been revealed.
 - Apologetics should be conducted in a way that acknowledges the self-authenticating authority of Scripture.
 - The way we do apologetics should never question, compromise or play down the authority of Scripture.
 - Apologetics must be conducted on the basis of a distinctively Christian view of knowledge [how we know what we know].
 - We don't have one theory of knowledge for apologetics, and then another for everything else we do.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Knowledge

- Some implications for apologetics:

- Apologetics involves appealing to what unbelievers *already know* (but suppress).
 - Apologetics with unbelievers involves a clash of entire worldviews.
 - The difference between unbelievers/believers is not that we basically have the same outlook and understanding of the world, but we just disagree on some important facts (God's existence, Christ's resurrection). The difference is an entire worldview (TAKES!) which governs our beliefs, values and assumptions.
 - Apologetics cannot convert an unbeliever apart from a work of the Holy Spirit. Apologetics may be necessary for a person to come to Christ, but it's not sufficient.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Ethics

- Morality is real, objective, and universal (Ps. 19:7-13; 96:10; Isa. 5:20; Judg. 21:25).
 - An objective moral *standard*: the law of God (1 John 3:4).
 - An objective moral *goal*: the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).
 - An objective moral *motive*: the love of God (John 14:15, 21; 1 John 5:3).
- Morality is grounded in God's character and will (Matt. 5:48; Isa. 61:8; 1 John 4:7-8).
 - The Bible connects morality to the character of God; we should behave a certain way because we are made in the image of God.
 - Morality is not independent of God and not intelligible apart from God.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Ethics
 - Moral accountability is grounded in divine judgment (Rom. 14:10-12; Acts 17:30-3).
 - 2 Cor 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. “
 - Moral truths can be known through both *natural* revelation (esp. conscience: Rom. 2:14-15) and *special* revelation (esp. Scripture: Ps. 119:9, 11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - Ethics is not subjective norm; it's a revealed norm.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Ethics

- Some implications for apologetics

- Apologetics is subject to ethical norms like any other human activity.
 - We must do apologetics by the right *standards*.
 - We must do apologetics for the right *goals*.
 - We must do apologetics with the right *motives*.
 - Apologetics can appeal to the moral knowledge that all humans possess.
 - Apologetics as offense can challenge the unbelievers basis for morality.

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Salvation

- The *basic problem*: human sin that invites divine wrath and judgment (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:9-20; 5:12-21; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 1:21).
- The *only solution*: divine salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 3:21-26; Eph. 2:16; 1 Pet. 3:18; John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Salvation
 - God's part in salvation: incarnation and atonement (Phil. 2:6-8; Gal. 4:4-5).
 - Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."
 - Our response: faith and repentance—not meritorious works, divine gifts! (John 3:16; Acts 20:21; Rom. 3:22, 27-28; 4:4-5; Eph. 2:8-9)

THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) WORLDVIEW

- Salvation
 - Some implications for apologetics:
 - Apologetics must proclaim and defend the gospel as part of the Christian worldview.
 - Apologetics should aim not merely for *belief in God* but for *faith in Christ*; we're not aiming to turn atheists into theists. We want people to be *Christians*.
 - Apologetics *cannot* succeed *apart from* divine grace (1 Cor. 15:10).
 - Apologetics *will* succeed *because of* divine grace!

NEXT WEEK

- Survey of Contemporary Apologetic Methods
 - Classical Apologetics: “Faith based on reason.”
 - Evidentialist Apologetics: “Faith based on evidence.”
 - Fideist Apologetics: “Faith beyond reason.”
 - Presuppositional Apologetics: “Reason based on faith.”
 - Eclectic Apologetics: “Take the best, leave the rest.”