

Towards a Biblical Worldview

Shifts in my worldview themes:

1. Epistemology:

- my old epistemology was: theology = idealism, science = positivism
- my new epistemology is: theology and science = critical realism

2. Mechanistic/Organic

- my old view was that the world is fundamentally mechanistic in nature. It is built up from fundamental particles such as atoms and quarks which act in accord to mechanistic laws. This raised the problem of how did organic, thinking, planning beings emerge that seek to relate to one another. The organic was built on an essentially mechanistic view of reality
 - = in this view human engineering is possible and necessary. Humans can shape and improve the world they live in.
 - = in this view hard science and quantification are important elements of engineering.
 - = in this view order is the supreme value, and chaos is evil. The unknown is a problem, not a mystery to enjoy.
- my new is that the world is fundamentally organic in nature. In the beginning is God, not matter and laws. God creates a material world that operates according to the order he placed in it [mechanistic to a considerable extent] but he created humans as beings who can shape and use the world because they understand the intrinsic order within it.
 - = in this view the supreme value is shalom and relationships of love. Chaos is not necessarily evil but is often unformed potential. Mystery is intrinsic to the universe itself, and the unknown not something to be feared, but an occasion to marvel at the work of an infinite God.

3. Self/Other:

- my old view was: supernatural vs. natural. God intervened in the natural only through the 'violation' of natural laws in miracles.
- my new view is: Creator and creation. The existence of all creation is under the ongoing providence of God
 - = this calls for a rejection of the terms "natural" and "supernatural" and the differentiation between "natural" and "miracle." It calls me to see everything as God's activity. What we call 'natural law' are the habits of God.
 - = this rejects the view of an 'excluded middle' and sees angels and demons as part of this creation. We must take them and their work seriously.
 - = this rejects the dualism of matter and spirit and calls me to take the material world seriously as a part of God's eternal purposes.

4. Cognitive, Affective and Evaluative:

- my old view was modern and separated cognition from affectivity and morality, and placing a priority on cognition.
- my new view is to place evaluation [judgment and response] at the hear of human response and to see cognition and affectivity as providing the input for human choice.
 - = this calls me to redefine faith not simply in cognitive or affective terms, but in terms of cognition and affectivity that leads to a response. Faith is that on which we act. Conversion, therefore, is a change in allegiance--in making Christ the Lord of my life.

5. Sets:

- my old view was that reality consists of intrinsic bounded sets. Everything can be sorted into non-overlapping categories. The law of the excluded middle ruled.
- my new view is that relational sets are the dominant theme and intrinsic sets are subordinate. The deepest realities are relational in character. Intrinsic identities are secondary. I am defined primarily in terms of my relationships.
 - = this calls me to connect justification and sanctification as part of one conversion process.
- my new view is that, from a human point of view, the dominant understanding is in terms of fuzzy sets, and that well formed sets are subsidiary. Much of what I see is 'through a glass darkly,' and much of the reality I see is intrinsically fuzzy.
 - = from God's point of view the dominant reality is well formed sets. For example, he knows who are his and who are not, when a person begins and dies, and what the deep structures of reality are.

6. Grace and Law:

- my old view was that righteousness is to keep the moral laws of the universe, and that forgiveness requires the forensic payment of the penalty demanded by the law.
- my new view is that broken relationships are the dominant theme of sin, and that breaking the law is subsidiary.
 - = this means that sin begins with breaking our allegiance to God and that lead to disobedience to his instructions and wishes for us.
 - = this means that salvation must be seen first as reconciliation to God, the restoration of shalome and peace, and this is made possible by his grace. Salvation also involves bearing the consequences of violating God's laws by payment for the penalties of sin, but this alone is not enough. The ultimate goal of salvation is not only to stand as righteous before God, but to be restored to a personal relationship to him in eternity.

7. Equality and Hierarchy:

- my old view was that hierarchy is essential to maintain order in society, particularly a fallen world.

- = a rescue mentality in mission outreach and helping others.
- my new view is: the dominant theme of Scripture is equality, the subdominant theme is servant leadership.
- = racism, classism, genderism and ethnocentrism are evil and must be resisted. They are rooted in self and group pride, and oppose mission and care for the marginal
- = the quality of a society is measured by the way it treats its marginals: oppressed, poor, sick, orphaned, widowed, minority group.
- = where leadership is exercised through power and status, it must be exercised in terms of responsibility, not rights, servanthood not authoritarianism, giving up one's self and one's rights for the sake of the others under one's care. The leader must do what he/she asks of others as a model, not command them to do what he/she does not want to do.

8. Spiritual Warfare:

- my old view was that there is spiritual warfare in heaven between God and his angels, and Satan and his fallen angels.
- my new view is that there is a cosmic battle between God and Satan, but it is defined in terms of Christ and the cross, not in a modern triumph of power and might.
- = it is not an animistic view of gods and spirits fighting for territory
- = it is not an Indo-European battle between a good god and a bad god to see who will establish the kingdom
- = it is the battle of God seeking to win rebel sinners, and Satan trying to keep them from deserting him. It is a battle of love versus hate, grace versus accusation and judgment, of redemption over conquest.
- = the goal of the battle is not victory but shalom, peace and cooperation
- = the mean of the battle is cooperation with God and with one another, not competition and the triumph of the victor. Success is measured by how we seek to redeem the lost, help the poor, heal the sick, and empower the oppressed.

9. This World and Other Worlds:

- my old view was that this world is central to our lives, and we are to make the most of our lives here and now. Therefore success, health, comfort and material goods are important in themselves as goals in life. The other world [heaven] is something we enter after we finish life, and not an important ingredient of the present.
- my new view is that the ultimate reality is heaven [and hell] and that these are the context in which we live our present lives. We are surrounded by clouds of angels, saints and God as well as Satan and demons, and ultimate concerns are the final test of any life and service.
- = this does not mean that life on this earth [a la Max Weber] is unimportant, but concerns for this life are the subdominant theme.

10. Time and Progress:

- my old view was that the quality of life is progressing through science and technology

TOWARDS A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

OLD

1. *NATURAL* /
Supernatural

- body/soul
- social gospel/evang.
- natural and moral laws
- excluded middle

NEWs

CREATOR /
Creation

- body-life-spirit
- whole gospel
- God's design and orders
- included middle and bottom

**2. *MECHANISTIC* /
organic**

- begin with impersonal matter and natural laws laws
- stress on order and control
- amoral (if morality, it is breaking impersonal moral laws)

***ORGANIC* /
mechanistic**

- begin with God (intelligent, moral, loving being)
- stress on relationships
- moral and morality is breaking relationship

3. ORDER

- **intrinsic sets**

- **bounded (digital) sets**

- **relational sets**

- **fuzzy (analogical) sets**

4. LAW AND GRACE

- righteousness is keeping the impersonal moral law

- sin is breaking the law

- righteousness is building right relationships of love and peace

- sin is broken relationships-hate oppression, greed

5. *HIERARCHY / EQUALITY*

- hierarchy is essential order

- equality and servant leadership is God's way

6. SPIRITUAL WARFARE

**- Myth of Redemptive
Violence**

**- Myth of Divine
Sacrificial love**

7. EARTHLY KINGDOMS AND KINGDOM OF GOD

**- my first citizenship
is my nation**

**- my first citizenship
is the Kingdom of
God. I am a
'resident alien' in
my earthly nation**

8. *EPISTEMOLOGY*

- Postivism - Instrumentalism - Critical Realism

**- formal
signs**

**Saussurian
signs**

**Peircian
signs**

Towards a Biblical Worldview

1. Theology--In the Beginning God--Top Down;

1.1 Theocentric--not androcentric: revelation is God speaking to us and showing us reality from outside, not from the subjective position within history/culture.

1.1 Trinitarian view of God: Transcendence and immanence combined in all divine acts.

1.2 Top down--not foundationalist

1.3 Revelation: incarnational in nature.

- Not==culture, In culture, To culture.
- critical contextualization

2. Grand Narrative or Drama: The Kingdom-Church-Evangelism:

- the Bible is the story of God's acts in creating and bringing all things under his divine reign.

2.1 Perfect creation--contingent dualism

- we need to see created reality both organically and mechanically--complimentarity. Nature is ordered and its 'laws' are really God's habits or orders, not autonomous principles that operate outside of God.

2.2. Fall and demonic

- evil is not coexistent and eternal with God and righteousness. It is derived, a distortion of good.
- Satan and the fallen angels rebelled against God's rule
- humans chose voluntarily to rebel. They are coconspirators, not victims.
- humans construct systems of corporate rebellion against God: 1) social systems that keep people from converting through fear and violence, 2) cultural ideologies that blind people.

2.3 Spiritual warfare

- God is unconditioned love. He loved us when we rebelled. He loves Satan but not the rebellion.
- God remained righteous even though this meant dying. He did not use violence as the supreme tool to defeat Satan. The Cross the the supreme victory.
- We are called to love our enemies, to bear suffering rather than to inflict it, to see what potential God sees in them and not focus on what they did in the past. We are to be redemptive in our response to our enemies.

2.4. Soteriology

- sin is ultimately a question of allegiance, of idolatry, the worship of the self, self-possession.
- fundamentally it leads to broken relationships, unwilling to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. See. Norman Kraus
- the law was given later to deal with external violations, and to stop them by punishing them. This was the basis of the Trespass Offering in the O.T. It failed to do the job. Sin abounded.
- we need to be born anew, to have new inner spirits with no longing to sin. This is the Sin-Offering. If we are new, we no longer need the law because it is written in our hearts.

2.5 Ecclesiology

- not a club, corporation or a crowd. It is a covenant community.
- in it the people are a new people that leave behind ethnic, gender and class identities.
- in it people are all priests - equality. Hierarchy is the Indo-European myth
- leadership is servant leadership, putting the others before one's self, responsibility rather than rights.
- church and state: not Christendom (Catholic and Reformed), or two-kingdoms (Lutheran) but a counter cultural community (Hauwerwas and Wilimon).

2.6. Eschatology.

- God's mission started with creation. With the fall he began his 'mission within the mission, to bring salvation and restore creation. Then his original and eternal mission will begin. In it we will have a part as 'rulers' within the Kingdom.
- teleology is very much a part of life. We are in a history that is moving in a definite direction towards a clear and known ending

3. Metatheology

- we need to start with Scripture, study it humbly on our knees, ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and use community hermeneutics involving God's people from all the world and including the saints who have gone before

4. Centered-Sets

- the fundamental categories are relational: extrinsic and centered
- relationships, organic priority
- allegiances and idols

5. Included Middle

- we need to reject the Greek dualism of Supernatural/Natural, the modern secularism of all is Natural, the animistic that we are surrounded by spirits whom we have to defeat or placate. We need to develop a biblical view of God, the spirit world, Satan, evil and battle, and take these seriously in our everyday lives and planning.

- we need to see ourselves and the systems (ideologies and social structures) we construct as fallen. We are not passive victims of the battle between God and Satan
- the battle between God and Satan is not one of power but of authority and legitimacy
- the battle is for the hearts and minds of humans in their rebel state and after conversion
- the victory is in the Cross, the supreme power encounter or battle in spiritual warfare.

6. Epistemology--Critical Realism:

- as humans we see through finite eyes and so see in part. God who sees all is the final judge of all things and the perfect knower
- human knowledge is limited but can know truth. We see the world through a glass darkly, but we do see. Our knowledge is in the form of mental maps or models which are mediated through symbols and worldviews. These maps are complimentary because we with our finite minds can only see parts of the whole at a time.
- we need hermeneutical communities to help us see our personal and cultural biases.

7. Linear event time:

- (see eschatology and teleology)

8. Creation-Creator:

- modern world is making a relentless effort to treat the world as autonomous, independent from God
- creation is dependent on God continually in his ongoing creation.
- the prime reality is God, not nature. Nature has an owner. Nature functions within God's guidelines and conforms to his rule
- nature has a purpose. All affirms' God's greatness and sovereignty/
- nature was created good.
- science and technology are not anti-God so long as they affirm god's purposes and appropriate the laws of creation to honor and glory God.
- creation needs God, not God who needs creation.
- Wholism
- David Bosch: dichotomy and dualism as represented by the theological views of Ecumenical and Evangelicals, liberals and conservatives, is not only between complete identification versus complete separation between church and world, but also between the spiritualization and humanization of the mission of the Church and salvation. It leads to the tension between evangelism and socialresponsibility. He believes the dualism has caused the failure of both sides to integrate the different vision in such a way that the tension between them becomes creative rather than destructive.
Bosch calls for a convergence of these views, affirming that the church is both a theological and sociological entity, an inseparable union of the divine and human.
- Moulton: the alternatives are between evangelism and humanization, between interior conversion and improvement of conditions, between the vertical dimension of faith and the horizontal dimension of love.

- integration makes the Gospel message and church relevant to tribal people with their holistic view of life similar to the Scriptures.
- danger of merger is to make mission everything and lose the sense of evangelism. Domino effect. Bosch keeps the distinction without eliminating their indissoluble and interwoven link in theory and practice.
- the very being of the church has an evangelistic significance. The love, care, fellowship and unity of God's people can attract the non-Christians to Christ, but conflicts, greed, division can damage the credibility of their witness to the world.
- Bosch: evangelism is that dimension and activity of the Church's mission which, by word and deed and in light of particular conditions and particular context, offers each person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing; embracing Christ as savior and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the Church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace and justice on earth; and being committed to God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ. P. 420.
- liberation theology's emphasis on poverty, evangelical reaction to economic dimension of salvation. Must not oppose glorification of God and building true humanity. One becomes escapist, and leads to fatalism and noninvolvement in the world. The other makes the Gospel a human revolution without God's presence.

10. Humans

- created in the image of God, so have infinite worth. All life is of worth, even the poor, old, sick
- created for community: maleness and femaleness are complimentary, not hierarchical. Mutual submission.
- all racism and sexism and classism is evil. We are one humanity. Therefore we can celebrate our differences.

11. Individual/group:

- O.T.: The idea of individual autonomy is entirely absent from the societies and cultures reflect in the bible. The family is the center, not only of social interaction of its members, but of the system of meaning out of which such cultures arose (Pilch and Malina 1993, 70-71).
- concepts of land, of honor and shame, and of tradition.- tribe, clans, - Akan
- N.T.: Pharisees, Sadducees [roles and stations, not individual]- rich, poor, etc.
- church: not a club or crowd, but a covenant community
- Modernity:- individual rights without responsibilities.

11. Hierarchy, Equality and Mutual Submission:

- hierarchy: Indo-European: caste and class systems, priority on order and control, bureaucratic social organization, impersonal, mechanistic
- equality: individual centered, rights, freedom, incommensurability, always argue who is higher, love of self, self-focus, taking not giving

- mutual submission: group over self, love for other, empowerment, give up rights for the sake of duty and responsibility and common good. Biblical.

12. Metaphors for salvation:

12.1 Sin is breaking God's commandments and require punishment for disobedience.

12.2 Sin is breaking our relationship with God and requires reconciliation and shalome

12.3 Sin is impurity and defiles God. It brings dishonor to him.

- God is Holy – pure, perfect.

- sin is defilement and requires washing to cleansing. It is imperfection.

- the core of the O.T. is purity and pollution. Sacrifices are to cleanse. Cf. Wenham 1979).

O.T. **HOLY [God and all that belongs to him]**

(opposites)

COMMON

- clean (opposites)

- unclean

Whatever is unclean must not come in contact with what is holy. Cleansing and purification are to make the people and tabernacle holy so they can approach a holy God. Holiness means wholeness and complete. Things conform to the class to which they belong (Douglas). Mixing crops, animals, clothing, marriages are incompatible with holiness (Wenham 1979, 169). Wholeness and completeness means something must be perfect, without defect or abnormality, without disease, body discharges, etc. "Douglas therefore contends that there was a system underlying the uncleanness regulations and their symbolism was consciously felt in ancient Israel. they expressed an understanding of holiness, and of Israel's special status as the holy people of god. . . . As they distinguished between clean and unclean foods, they were reminded that holiness was more than a matter of meat and drink, but a way of life characterized by purity and integrity (Wenham 1979, 170).

- cf. Mary Douglas, Michael Newton, Jacob Neusner on theories of pollution
- this is the message Hindus can understand

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