



2026 MACDONALD LECTURES IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A WORLDVIEW?

The Importance of Metaphysics for Theology

with

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PROVOST



SESSION NOTES

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LECTURE ONE

Why We Love “Worldview”: Examining the Evangelical Obsession

Evangelical Popularity

“Conceiving Christianity as a worldview has been one of the most significant developments in the recent history of the church.”

– David Naugle

Ubiquity & Ambiguity

James Orr (1844–1914)

Adaptation of Kant's idea of *Weltanschauung*

Subject/Object relationship

Comprehensive view reduced to a postulate

Christianity *is*:

an object – a fact that is revealed in time

a worldview

an apologetic; contrasted with other cosmologies

Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920)

Cosmic Cultural Battle: Christianity vs. Modernism

Two Kinds of Science/Epistemologies

Comprehensive apologetic counter

Complete philosophy for life

Carl F. H. Henry (1913–2003)

Contra Bultmann (existentialism): modern vs. mythical worldviews

Contra Barth (dialecticism): rejected worldview as an epistemological category

Grounded in propositional special *and* general revelation

Presumes universality and contextuality

Presuppositions that ground the orderly sequence of postulates

Epistemic ground of revelation

Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984)

Culture-shaping philosophy

Stark division between belief and unbelief

“Line of Despair”

Attributes of Ambiguity

Unified/Whole system/Grid

Employed as a counter to modernity

Juxtaposed apologetic

Postulate external to the person (individual)

Christianity (and ultimately God) is something that is within the subject/object relationship. The person is the subject – the worldview is the thing the subject looks through, and God is the object. Worldview is a grid/postulate that is external to the person.

The Great Evangelical Worldview Irony

LECTURE TWO

What Is and Is Not a Worldview

Classical Metaphysics

Connection

Reflection

Participation

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804): Problems and Solutions

Modernity as anti-metaphysics

Rationalism vs. Empiricism

Synthesis and Distinction

Phenomenal vs. Noumenal

Two problems with judgment

“supersensible” and *Weltanschauung*

Metaphysics of Morals and experience

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911): Worldview as life

Complexity and innumerability

“Interconnectedness of Individuals”

3 Human experiences

Orr’s Adaptation of Kant

Retool Christianity in a modern context

Purely contrasted, never intermingled

Rejecting metaphysics always creates problems

Worldview IS NOT

Worldview IS

“Thrownness” and Mosaic

LECTURE THREE

Examples of Reframing the Question

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921)

Bavinck and Kant

Empiricism's failure

Rationalism's failure

“Human Need”

Thinking and being

Being and becoming

Becoming and acting

Revelation is key

Rescues the role of metaphysics in Christianity...almost

Metaphysics & Christianity: the brilliance of tension

Charles Taylor (1931–)

“Social Imaginary”

The grids of worldviews cannot be entirely defined

Complexity of social life

“Social Imaginary” mimics metaphysics more than Kant’s
Weltanschauung

“Image of the Imagery” – reflection and connection over
postulation

Current Evangelicals and “Christian” Worldview

Graham Cole – “frame of reference” – “finding” the frame for interpretation

Josh Mulvihill – biblical worldview: “a set of beliefs, assumptions, or values based upon the Bible that determines how a person lives.”

Ronnie Campbell – apologetical theodicy: Christianity *as a* metaphysic

William Hasker* - Christianity is “a religion in search of a metaphysic.”

LECTURE FOUR

The Reality of Social Metaphysics for Christian Theology

Misleading Metaphor

4 problem areas

- “A-priorism”
- Intellectualism
- Resistant to Learning
- Self-contained

Metaphysics over Worldview

Social Metaphysics in Augustine’s Two Cities

Contrary Foundations

Interwoven and Intermixed

Saeculum

Religio

Christians as *alien sojourners*

Social Metaphysics and Science

“Which worldview makes better sense of the evidence?”

Subject/Object Observation

Social Metaphysics and Biblical Theology

19th-century German/ *Heilsgeschichte* / Romanticism

“Self-disclosing narrative or framework”

Universal Theological Method

Perspicuity extended from meaning to structure

Problems

- presumes universal and tacit interpretive narratives
- product of *Weltanschauung*
- seeing the “real world” of the biblical authors

Vertical *and* Horizontal Theology

History, Theology, and Social Metaphysics: A River Runs Through Us



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