

“Worldview as a Concept: Prospects and Perils”

In the introductory remarks to his book *Heretics*, G. K. Chesterton writes these crucial words about the importance of worldview:

But there are some people, nevertheless — and I am one of them — who think that the most practical and important thing about a man is still his view of the universe. We think that for a landlady considering a lodger, it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy. We think that for a general about to fight an enemy, it is important to know the enemy’s numbers, but still more important to know the enemy’s philosophy. We think the question is not whether the theory of the cosmos affects matters, but whether, in the long run, anything else affects them.”¹

I was struck by this quote when I first read it, and I am still struck by it today. After all, what could be more important or powerful than the way individuals conceptualize reality? Is any thing more fundamental than a person’s set of presuppositions and assumptions about the basic make up of the universe? What is more significant than a human being’s foundational system of beliefs? Is there anything more profound or influential than the answers to the deeper questions that the very presence of the universe poses to us all? In agreement, then, with Gilbert Keith Chesterton, I submit that the most practical and important thing about a human being is his or her view of the universe and theory of the cosmos — that is, the content and implications of one’s worldview.

For this reason, I believe that conceiving of biblical faith as a worldview has been one of the more important developments in the recent history of the Church. Though such a generous vision of reality is rooted in the best of the Church’s tradition, for various reasons — especially the reductionistic pressures stemming from modernism — this bigger biblical picture of things has virtually vanished. “We have rather lost sight of the idea,” Dorothy Sayers once noted,

¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, in *The Complete Works of G. K. Chesterton*, ed. David Dooley, vol. 1, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 41.

“that Christianity is supposed to be an interpretation of the universe.”² In recent memory, however, this larger perspective has been hidden under a basket and its light almost extinguished.

In this contemporary setting of dwarfed versions of the faith, the concept of worldview has, in a sense, come to the rescue. It offers the Church a fresh perspective on the holistic nature, cosmic dimensions, and universal applications of the faith. Plus, the explanatory power, intellectual coherence, and pragmatic effectiveness of a Christian worldview not only make it exceedingly relevant for believers personally, but also establish it as a solid foundation for vigorous cultural and academic engagement.

At the same time, this vigorous use of worldview has not been without its detractors. More than a few have raised their voices in a chorus of criticisms that should not be silenced, and that in fact are often helpful in shaping the use of the term for the better. For these reasons, then, we will do well to understand as much as we can about worldview as a concept, and the prospects and perils associated with its use in the Church and in the Christian academy.

That is what I wish to discuss in this presentation. I will begin with a brief look at the origin of the worldview concept and its use in the protestant evangelical Church. Next I will seek to offer an apologetic for the prudent use of notion based on some theological reflections on the term. And finally, I will invite you to listen in on conversations I have had recently with two worldview critics — Dr. Theodore Plantinga of Redeemer University College (Ancaster, Ontario) and Dr. Jack Heller of Huntington College (Huntington, Indiana) — as I present their various objections to worldview and offer my responses. And if in this presentation, I fail to address any particular concern you may have about the notion of worldview we can certainly discuss that during our time of conversation. So let’s begin with a brief look at the history of this term.

² Dorothy L. Sayers, *1937-1944: From Novelist to Playwright*, vol. 2 of *The Letters of Dorothy Sayers*, ed. Barbara Reynolds, preface P. D. James (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 158.

A History of the Concept of Worldview

There is virtually universal recognition that the notable Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant coined the term *Weltanschauung*, that is, worldview in his work *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790. It originates in a quintessential Kantian paragraph that emphasizes the power of the perception of the human mind. Kant writes, “If the human mind is nonetheless to *be able even to think* the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of the noumenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our intuition of the world” [*Weltanschauung*].³ That last phrase — “our intuition of the world” — is an English translation of Kant’s coined German term *Weltanschauung*.

The context of this quotation suggests that for Kant, *Weltanschauung* means something rather simple like a perception of the world gained empirically. Martin Heidegger notes that Kant employed *Weltanschauung* in reference to the *mundus sensibilis*, that is, as a “world-intuition in the sense of contemplation of the world given to the senses”⁴

From its coinage in Kant, who used the term only once and for whom it was of minor significance, it evolved rather quickly to refer to an intellectual conception of the universe from the perspective of a human knower. Kant’s Copernican revolution in philosophy, with its emphasis on the knowing and willing self as the cognitive and moral center of the universe, created the conceptual space in which the notion of worldview could flourish. The term was adopted by Kant’s successors and soon became a celebrated concept in German intellectual life.

³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment: Including the First Introduction*, trans. and intro. Werner S. Pluhar, with a foreword by Mary J. Gregor (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 111-2 (emphasis original).

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans., intro., and lexicon Albert Hofstadter, *Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 4.

Weltanschauung captured the imaginations not only of the German intelligentsia, but of thinkers throughout Europe and beyond. The term's success is seen by how readily writers in other European languages adopted it either as a loanword, especially in the Romance languages, or as a copy word in the idiom of Slavic and Germanic languages.

This concept, indeed, had legs. Given its prominence, it was impossible for it to remain isolated on the Continent for long. Soon it crossed the channel to Great Britain and made its way across the Atlantic to the United States. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, within seventy-eight years of its inaugural use in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, *Weltanschauung* entered the English language in 1868 its naturalized form as "worldview." Ten years later, the German term itself gained currency as a loan word in Anglo-American academic discourse. Since their mid-nineteenth-century beginnings, both *Weltanschauung* and worldview have flourished, and become significant terms in the thought and vocabulary of thinking people in the English-speaking world.

Throughout the nineteenth century, therefore, *Weltanschauung* became enormously popular. By the 1890s, the Scottish theologian James Orr could say that as a concept, it had become "in a manner indispensable."⁵ It is no wonder, then, that Orr himself, as well as Abraham Kuyper, capitalized on its notoriety as a convenient and potent expression to configure their respective versions of a comprehensive Christian worldview of Calvinist persuasion.

Original Worldview Thinkers in Protestant Evangelicalism

The headwaters of the worldview tradition among Protestant evangelicals can be traced to two primary sources, both of which flow from the theological wellsprings of the reformer from Geneva, John Calvin (1509-1564).⁶ The first is

⁵ James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World as Centering in the Incarnation* (New York: Scribner, 1887; reprint, *The Christian View of God and the World*, with a foreword by Vernon C. Grounds, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989), 365.

⁶ Calvin apparently recognized that his own theological system constituted the basis for a "Christian philosophy," which may be roughly analogous to a Christian worldview. In introducing the subject matter of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he informs his readers that God provides guidance to help simple people discover "the sum of what God meant to teach them in

the Scottish Presbyterian theologian, apologist, minister, and educator James Orr (1844-1913). The second is the Dutch neo-Calvinist theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). Appropriating the concept from the broader intellectual milieu on the European continent, these two seminal thinkers introduced the vocabulary of worldview into the current of reformed Christian thought, and from them it spread into the broader evangelical church. In their creative efforts, they gave birth to an agenda to conceive of biblical faith as a vigorous, coherent vision of reality that opened up Christianity to full flower with benefits inside the Church and as a way to meet the challenges of the modern world head on.

According to Orr, a worldview denoted “the widest view which the mind can take of things in the effort to grasp them together as a whole from the standpoint of some particular philosophy or theology.”⁷ The Christian faith in Orr’s opinion provides such a standpoint, developing its loftiest principle and view of life into “an ordered whole.”⁸ While explaining and defending Christian doctrines atomistically may have its place, Orr believed that the worldview concept enabled him to set forth and validate Christianity in its entirety as a coherent system. Given the increasingly anti-Christian *Zeitgeist* of the late nineteenth century, he perceived “that if Christianity is to be effectually defended from the attacks made upon it, it is the comprehensive method which is rapidly becoming the more urgent.”⁹ Nothing less than a fresh, coherent presentation of the Christian definition of reality in all its fullness would be adequate for the times.

his Word.” He then says that this cannot be done in any better way than “to treat the chief and weightiest matters comprised in the Christian philosophy.” See his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. and indexed Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 6.

⁷ Orr, *The Christian View*, 3.

⁸ Orr, *The Christian View*, 3.

⁹ Orr, *The Christian View*, 4.

Like Orr before him, Abraham Kuyper saw his present cultural moment defined in both Europe and America by a life and death struggle between two antithetical worldviews, or as he called them, “life-systems.” As Orr proposed in his own lectures, Kuyper argued that a piecemeal apologetic approach must be replaced with a strategy that countered an all-encompassing modernism with a comprehensive Christian *Weltanschauung*.¹⁰

This conception of Calvinistic Christianity subsumed under the rubric of worldview was appropriated by Kuyper’s followers — the Dutch neo-Calvinists or Kuyperians — and passed down to subsequent generations.¹¹ Eventually it migrated with them across the Atlantic, and became a significant theme among them as an immigrant community in North America. Both Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario, Canada — where Kuyperian ideals and worldview thinking have flourished — were birthed out of this tradition.

This historic tradition and interpretation of Christian faith also influenced Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-84), without whom no discussion on the evangelical history of worldview would be complete. He affirmed what is now a commonplace that all people have a worldview and nobody, whether ditch-digger or professional thinker, can live without one. Philosophy is the only unavoidable occupation.¹² Also, his rich interpretation of a Christianity that was intellectually credible and embraced the whole of life was uniquely attractive to many. Indeed, his discussion of a significant range of cultural issues from a Christian point of view was quite refreshing after decades of fundamentalist obscurantism.

¹⁰ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

¹¹ For example, Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), D. H. T. Vollenhoven (1892-1978), Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987).

¹² Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, 2d ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 279-280.

Moving beyond the Dutch Calvinist orbit, both Gordon H. Clark and Carl F. H. Henry appear to be the specific heirs of James Orr's worldview legacy. As a professional philosopher writing from an evangelical point of view, Gordon Clark (1902-1986) was recognized at the height of his powers as "perhaps the dean of those twentieth century American philosophers who have sought to develop a Christian *Weltanschauung* consistent with the Christian Scriptures."¹³ Indeed, the title and content of one of his best-known books — *A Christian View of Men and Things* — suggests continuity with Orr's work.¹⁴

Orr's worldview tradition also influenced the late Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003) as well. During his student days at Wheaton College, Henry became enamored of comprehending and defending the faith as a total "world-life view" by reading Orr's volume. In his autobiography, he recalls that "It was James Orr's great work, *The Christian View of God and the World*, used as a Senior text in theism, that did the most to give me a cogently comprehensive view of reality and life in a Christian context."¹⁵ Through Henry, the idea of worldview in general and the notion of the Christian worldview in particular has been promoted widely among professional theologians and the evangelical public. "His emphasis was always on the big picture," said Kenneth Kantzer. "Above all he sought to think clearly and effectively, consistently and comprehensively, about the total Christian world and life view."¹⁶ This outlook animated his words in the influential manifesto *The Uneasy Conscience of American Fundamentalism* (1947) that

¹³ Ronald H. Nash, preface to *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark: A Festschrift*, ed. Ronald H. Nash (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), 5.

¹⁴ Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981).

¹⁵ Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986): 75.

¹⁶ Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry: An Appreciation," in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 372.

challenged the born again church to trace out and apply the redemptive power of the Christian gospel to the totality of human thought and culture.

Collectively, then, these noted thinkers handed the worldview baton off to others who have been running with it quite effectively ever since. Brian Walsh, Richard Middleton, Albert Wolters, Arthur Holmes, James Sire, Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, as well as myself, are just a few of the authors who have promoted worldview thinking and living vigorously in the evangelical community.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, in the entire history of worldview, no single philosophic school or religious community has given more sustained attention to or taken more advantage of this concept than Protestant evangelicals.

This extensive use of the worldview concept carries with it certain assets to be sure. But its use, perhaps even its overuse, also fosters some liabilities as well. Some debate the suitability of the notion in the Church, and confusion exists regarding its basic definition and character. There are also questions about its appropriation in the context of Christian higher education, and its use in the task of integrating faith and learning. In light of these and other issues that have clouded the worldview sky, I think it prudent to offer some theological reflections on the worldview concept in an attempt to consider the prospects of its prudent use in the evangelical Christian community under the authority of God's Word.

Prospects: Theological Reflections on Worldview

In tracing out the history of the worldview concept in a variety of disciplines, it is fascinating to observe how basic descriptions of it reflect the worldview of the one offering the description. For example, Hegel's idealism, Kierkegaard's theism, Dilthey's historicism, Nietzsche's atheism, Husserl's phenomenology, Jaspers' existentialism, Heidegger's ontologism, Wittgenstein's linguisticism, and the postmodernists' skepticism affected their hypotheses on worldview deeply. There is a sociological relativity to theorizing about worldview. Any view of worldview, unsurprisingly, is itself worldview dependent.

¹⁷ David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), Appendix A.

The question, then, emerges regarding the implications of a Christian worldview on worldview theory: what nuances does Christian theism as a *Weltanschauung* impart to the notion of *Weltanschauung* itself? How do Scripture and theology contribute to our understanding of this important idea?

This is an important task. Several critics have voiced concerns about possible menacing connotations associated with worldview when it comes to its use in the Church. By the time James Orr and Abraham Kuyper appropriated worldview for Christian purposes, it had already become drenched with modern implications. Within the framework of European idealism and romanticism, it connoted a thoroughgoing subjectivism and a person or culture-relative perspective on reality. Consequently, worldviews were not considered “facts,” but “values,” and were consigned to the domain of private life.

The status of worldview becomes even more questionable in the context of postmodernism which is characterized famously by an “incredulity toward metanarratives.”¹⁸ As reified constructs and as instruments of power and violence, worldviews must be “deconstructed” and shown to be nothing more than privatized micronarratives possessing little, if any, public authority.¹⁹

Given this background, evangelicals who employ the language of worldview regularly would be irresponsible to neglect the historical development of this term and the significations it has acquired in modern and postmodern parlance. The question, then, is this: Can worldview be regenerated and baptized in biblical waters, cleansing it of modern and postmodern impurities, making it useful for Christian service?²⁰ I believe that it can.

¹⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, foreword Fredric Jameson, *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 10 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

¹⁹ William V. Rowe, “Society After the Subject, Philosophy After the Worldview,” in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, Christian Studies Today (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 156-183.

²⁰ Sander Griffioen, Richard Mouw, and Paul Marshall, “Introduction,” in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, Christian Studies Today (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 8, 10.

If believers can be sanctified and if culture can be renewed, then perhaps an intellectual conception can be converted as well. Even biblical authors themselves frequently appropriated language and concepts from their surrounding cultures and used them in the context of Holy Scripture with fresh theistic meaning to convey the unique content and wisdom of divine revelation. Has this not provided something of a precedent that has been followed in post-canonical theological reflection when it comes to employing non-biblical terms and concepts to convey biblical themes and truths? Perhaps worldview falls into this category!

As a matter of fact, plucking the concept of *Weltanschauung* out of recent intellectual discourse and using it for Christian purposes can be compared admirably to St. Augustine's ancient strategy of appropriating pagan notions and employing them suitably in the church. He believed firmly that all truth was God's truth, and in his famous "Egyptian Gold" analogy in *De Doctrina Christiana*, he explains on the basis of a story found in Exodus 11-12 how that truth can be recovered and utilized in superior ways by believers. For just as the Israelites appropriated the gold and silver of the Egyptians and used it service to God, so Christians can appropriate the intellectual gold and silver of non-Christian thinkers and employ it in Christian service as well.²¹

Now I submit that the notion of worldview is a valuable piece of "Egyptian gold." If we follow Augustine's reasoning, we can propose that believers need to claim it for their own, and convert it to Christian use. In doing so, however, we must cleanse it of its pagan associations, reform it biblically, and make it a concept serviceable to the kingdom of God. As St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10: 5b, ". . . we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." The theological reflections that follow will attempt to do just that.

My goal in reflecting on worldview theologically is to discern what inferences or connotations are built into this notion when it is examined from a

²¹ St. Augustine, *Teaching Christianity: De Doctrina Christiana*, The Works of St. Augustine for the 21st Century, intro., trans., notes Edmund Hill, vol 11 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 159-160 (§2.60).

Christian standpoint. Overall, I will make four assertions that impart biblically based nuances to worldview that stand in noticeable contrast to its secular significations.

Issues of objectivity. To the extent that the term worldview has been tinted or tainted for over two centuries with the hues of relativism, an affirmation of theological, cosmological, and moral objectivity rooted in God is the antidote. *Worldview in Christian perspective affirms the existence of the Trinitarian God whose essential character of love and justice establishes the moral order of the universe and whose word, wisdom, and law define and govern all aspects of created existence.* God is the ultimate reality whose Trinitarian nature, essential character, moral excellence, wonderful works, and sovereign rule constitute the objective reference point for all reality. As a construct ontologically grounded in God Himself, the nuance of objectivity is built into worldview from a Christian perspective.

Issues of subjectivity. In its philosophic history, worldview has also been understood in subjectivist terms as an individual's particular interpretation of life. As cognitive, affective, and volitional beings, all people by necessity must understand, care about, and act in the world. Christian theology would agree, recognizing this to be the operation of the heart. *Worldview in Christian perspective affirms that human beings as God's image and likeness are anchored and integrated in the heart as the subjective sphere of consciousness which is decisive for shaping a vision of life and fulfilling the function typically ascribed to the notion of worldview.* Life proceeds "kardiologically, out of "a vision of the heart." That, I propose, is basically what a worldview is. In Christian terms, however, this subjectivist dimension, while legitimate, is restrained by divinely ordained objective realities, and must be converted to the truth of them by the grace of God. Human sin and malevolent spiritual influences, nonetheless, seek to freely promote autonomous conceptions and ways of life.

Issues of sin and spiritual warfare. People are in a fallen condition, however. They suppress the truth in unrighteousness and manufacture surrogate deities and errant perspectives on the world. *Worldview in Christian perspective,*

therefore, implies the catastrophic effects of sin on the human heart, resulting in the fabrication of false, idolatrous belief systems in place of God, and the engagement of the human race in cosmic spiritual warfare in which the truth about reality and the meaning of life are at stake. There is no way out from this spiritual, intellectual, and moral destitution apart from the grace of God.

Issues of grace and redemption. The merciful character of God and His redemptive work are the central elements in biblical thought. *Worldview in Christian perspective affirms the gracious inbreaking of the kingdom of God into human history in the person and work of Jesus Christ who atones for sin, defeats the principalities and powers, and enables those who believe in Him to obtain a knowledge of the true God as the creator, judge, and savior of the whole cosmos.* This kind of salvific transaction is wholly transformative in converting believers to God and renewing their perspectives on the whole of reality by truth. The formation of a Christian worldview, therefore, is ultimately a function of God's saving grace.

Thus the implications of a divinely grounded objectivity, the reality of an embodied, heart-based human subjectivity, along with the themes of sin and spiritual warfare, grace and redemption are the inferences built into the notion of worldview in a Christian context. Within this biblical framework, the term worldview assumes appropriate Christian nuances, and any harmful implications associated with the word historically are muted.²² Through this process of Christian naturalization, the concept as a valuable piece of "Egyptian gold" receives a new identity, and makes it useful for service in the Church and acceptable to her Lord. Thus, it seems that the concept of worldview, despite its pedigree, should find a warm welcome in the kingdom of God.

²² Furthermore, if I may add one more point to this discussion overall, to say that the origin of the word "worldview" in German thought automatically disqualifies for Christian service is an example, I think, of the genetic fallacy. This mistake in thinking occurs when someone irrelevantly attacks the *genesis* of a view (or in this case, term), and not the view (or term) itself. Reject this, the faulty reasoning goes, because it comes from a bad source. However, something's origin does not always tell us about its present state. We cannot refute an idea just because of the place from which it hails. A new context can make all the difference in the world! Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Certainly.

But others are not so sure. So, now I invite you to join in on to two conversations I have had recently with critics of the worldview concept who are fond of pointing what they believe to be the significant perils associated with its use.

Perils: Two Conversations

Theodore Plantinga, Redeemer University College. In the December 2002 edition of his self-published online journal *Myodicy*, Prof. Theodore Plantinga who is professor of philosophy at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, presented a thirty-one page, single spaced response to my book *Worldview: The History of a Concept* that had appeared in July of that same year.²³ His article, titled “David Naugle and the Quest for a Theory of Everything” contained seven primary criticisms of the worldview concept which are based on his long-standing opposition to the notion. Graciously, Professor Plantinga, who is Alvin and Neal Plantinga’s second cousin (in case you are wondering), allowed me to respond to his criticisms in an article titled “In Defense of the Concept of Worldview” that appeared in the May 2003 edition of his *Myodicy* journal.²⁴ In what follows, I will present three of his most important criticisms along with my response for your consideration.

First of all, Plantinga objects to worldview because it falls prey to “visualism,” that is, to “the systematic overestimation of the importance of vision in the process of human experience and thought” (section 9). Nicholas Wolterstorff faults the term for a similar reason, especially when Christian world[and life]view development is presented as the goal of Christian education. Wolterstorff writes: “Notice the word *view* at the end. For all its desire to be holistic, a desire captured in the words ‘world and life,’ this perspective fails, it seems to me, in its goal. It fails to be fully holistic. It emphasizes thought,

²³ Theodore Plantinga, “David Naugle and the Quest for a Theory of Everything,” available at <http://www.redeemer.on.ca/~tplant/m/MCD.HTM#>

²⁴ David Naugle, “In Defense of the Concept of Worldview,” available at <http://www.redeemer.on.ca/~tplant/m/MCF.HTM#>

intellection, cognition. It stresses intellect. It sees the school as dealing with a *view*.”²⁵ Thus, for both Plantinga and Wolterstorff, it seems that the notion of worldview is too heavily dependent upon sight and mind to be of value to the Christian community as a way of approaching Christian faith and as the goal of Christian education.

In a related concern, Plantinga also asserts that if we insist on understanding Christianity as a *worldview*, we will wind up neglecting the biblical emphasis on hearing. Worldview visualism offsets the auditory emphasis in the Bible, along with its related concern for faithfulness and obedience (section 10).

In response to the charge of visualism, I am aware of this liability associated with the term *worldview*, as Prof. Plantinga notes, and I do respond to it on p. 334 of my book. There I appeal to a concept called “wholesight” advocated by Parker Palmer as a holistic way of apprehending reality. This concept fuses sensation and rationality with other cognitive capacities such as imagination, intuition, empathy, emotion, and faith. It is a way of knowing that engages the whole person and the whole world. I also invoke the ancient concept of “*adequatio*” which suggests that everything human beings are and all that they possess is given by God in epistemic grace to enable them to know and apprehend the diversity of beings that constitute the cosmos, both spiritual and physical. People in developing worldviews worthy of the name must draw upon the whole array of epistemic resources available to them in constructing their concepts of the universe.

As a multi-cognitive construct, therefore, critics need not read the term *view* in *worldview* in such an unimaginative, flatfooted way. It smacks of fundamentalist literalism. With a greater degree of hermeneutic sensitivity, let such critics recognize that it is intended to convey metaphorically an overall perception and grasp of the world that is not limited to sight or mind, but is derived from all of our human epistemic powers. The word *Trinity* doesn’t convey

²⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning*, eds. Gloria Stronks and Clarence W. Joldersma (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), p. 107.

the biblical doctrine of one God in three persons perfectly. Yet orthodox believers well know what is meant by the term. Let's apply the same linguistic grace to worldview as well.

In response to the concern about hearing and obedience, biblical worldview advocates could emphasize very simply the spiritual significance of hearing and doing as a central component of a biblical worldview, thereby solving the problem! All it takes is a little explanation or clarification, and the apparent criticism falls by the way side. For whatever it is worth, and it may not be worth much, a computer search of the New American Standard Bible indicates that 377 verses contain the word "hear" (Hebrew: *shama*; Greek: *akouo*), and 616 verses contain the word "see" (Hebrew: *raah*; Greek: *blepo*; *horaο*). It would seem that sight as well as hearing must be an important human experience!

Second, Prof. Plantinga believes that another danger associated with worldview is that it encourages "top-down theorizing in which the philosopher...gets to dictate to people in other disciplines what sorts of theories they should embrace" (section 10). The fear here seems to be a deductive one, that everything in thought and life is inferred *a priori* from "dictatorial" worldviews, no exceptions. They give orders, but are unwilling to take them. They are one-way streets, admitting no traffic in the opposite direction.

In response, I assert that all people everywhere are deductively oriented in that their thinking and living are based on and flow forth from some kind of foundation. That foundation is likely a faith commitment in either God or an idol. It may be a conscious or unconscious set of presuppositions and beliefs, whether religious or secular in nature. But foundation there will be. This seems unavoidable, given the fiduciary and cognitive nature of human beings. Prof. Plantinga himself acknowledges his own belief in the role and power of presuppositions in human life (section 5). A good measure of "top-down theorizing" seems inescapable, not only for intellectuals, but for all people.

At the same time, I do *not* believe that worldviews are epistemic tyrants. In fact, I maintain that they sustain an interactive relationship with outside influences and can be affected and changed. I point this out quite clearly on page

208, which Prof. Plantinga acknowledges, though he doesn't seem to think I make much of it. I suppose if that is all I had to say on the matter, that would perhaps be true. However, in two other places, I carefully describe how worldviews are shaped and reshaped by external input (pp. 270-71). I also indicate how adherents of various worldviews must be in dialog with others who hold alternative perspectives in order to ward off myopia and provincialism (pp. 326-27). As I mention in concluding these respective discussions, worldviews are always works in progress as a result of our ongoing participation in life (p. 271), and through the exercise of "dialogical imagination" (Mikhail Bakhtin) by which alternative viewpoints are exchanged, an ever-increasing understanding of reality will be achieved (p. 327). Therefore, worldviews fulfill a foundational role in human experience, but they certainly are not, and perhaps shouldn't be, omnipotent.

Third, Prof. Plantinga also objects to the use of worldview because "it systematically overestimates the amount of unity and uniformity among Christians" (section 13). When Christians speak of "the" Christian worldview, it creates the impression that all believers since Bible days have believed the same thing, or at least they should. The concern, it seems, is about a worldview-induced uniformitarianism.

In response, let me say first off that unity among believers, presumably in orthodoxy and orthopraxy, is a Christological ideal grounded in our Lord's high priestly prayer with evangelistic implications: "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me (John 17: 20-21, NASB). Unity in a Christian worldview may not be such a bad thing after all!

Be this as it may, I would like to go on record as clearly affirming, nonetheless, the value of Christian worldview pluralism, as Arthur Holmes does in his *Contours of a Worldview* (Eerdmans 1984). I see great value in the fact that different Christian traditions have contributed remarkable insights into the nature and practice of the faith, and that these insights need to be appreciated,

harvested, and applied. My own recognition and advocacy of Christian worldview pluralism is on display in the first two chapters of my book where I trace the history of worldview thinking not only in Protestant Evangelicalism, but also in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. I make the appeal at the end of the second chapter that, without compromising convictions, each tradition profit from the wisdom that each has to offer the other, especially in this matter of worldview development. That I recognize the contributions of multiple sources to understanding Christianity can also be seen in Appendices A and B in which I summarize a number of significant expressions of a Christian worldview, and offer an extensive bibliography of books and articles that I was not able to deal with in the text of my book. As B. B. Warfield once said, a Christian ought to be like a busy bee, gathering honey wherever it may be found!

Visualism, deductivism (top-down theorizing), and uniformitarianism, then, are three of Plantinga's chief concerns about worldview and its use in the Church and academy, along with my attempts to offer a cogent response to each. Now we move on to a second conversation with worldview critic Prof. Jack Heller who is professor of English literature at Huntington College.

Jack Heller, Huntington College. Prof. Heller has written two articles that have appeared in recent editions of the new, feisty online journal *The New Pantagruel*. The first article was titled, "Christian College Professor Flunks Christian Worldview Tests," and the second was called, "Further Scandal: Christian College Professor Doesn't Teach from a Christian Worldview."²⁶ Of the two articles, the second is the most germane for our purposes, and of his six primary complaints, the following four, along with my responses, seemed most worthwhile.

(1) *The lack of specificity about "what it means to teach from a Christian worldview."* Because of his institutional address at Huntington College, students, parents and administrators rightly assume that Prof. Heller

²⁶ For these articles, see volume one, issues three and four of *The New Pantagruel*, available at: http://www.newpantagruel.com/issues/1.3/christian_college_professor_fl.php; http://www.newpantagruel.com/issues/1.4/further_scandal_christian_coll.php

teaches from a Christian worldview. After all, Huntington College is “an evangelical Christian college of the liberal arts,”²⁷ and is also a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

But what does teaching from a Christian worldview mean? Prof. Heller’s concern is pedagogical in nature, about how to teach maturely from a given slant, in this case, a Christian one. This legitimate question arises in Prof. Heller’s mind because of the dubious manner in which teaching from a Christian worldview is sometimes undertaken. As he asks in regard to Edith Wharton’s novella *Ethan Frome*, should his goals be (1) to identify the unacceptable naturalistic worldview and the accompanying immorality of the chief character, (2) to contrast this with Christian belief in order to reject the former and embrace the latter, all leading (3) to a rejection of the ethos and issues of Wharton’s novella because of its worldview orientation?

For Heller, this kind of “worldview criticism” depends on “facile labeling” (that is, on cheap worldview identifications), and the text itself and its artistry become an excuse for “amateur philosophizing” (that is, for cheap apologetics). Instead of this balderdash, Prof. Heller asserts that his method is to respect and discuss the “fictional world” present in the text, and let the students themselves analyze its validity pro or con.

Daniel Siedell, curator of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, has also leveled this same criticism of worldview criticism. In a recent email to me, Siedell asserted that “it’s been my experience that ‘worldview’ analysis doesn’t really spend enough time on the work of art itself in its haste to get to the worldview” [in or behind the work of art].

I agree with this assessment. All too often, worldview advocates, despite good intentions, fail to treat texts and other artifacts with the integrity they deserve. All too often they rush to worldview judgments that short circuit a fuller

²⁷ <http://www.huntington.edu/default.htm> (December 27, 2004).

hermeneutic and critical process. There is much more to say about human *poiesis* than its worldview origin, content, or impact.

Despite the legitimacy of this criticism, however, at least two things must be said in response. First, while worldview criticism might be one-dimensional and pursued rather frantically out of religious or apologetic interests, this does not make it an *illegitimate* aspect of critical analysis. Indeed, it was a significant component to G. W. F. Hegel's own aesthetic philosophy.²⁸ Nonetheless, this approach does need to be supplemented with other forms of interpretation and analysis in order to provide a more complete understanding of the work under consideration. On the other hand, simply to let a text speak for itself and allow students to process the moral world it creates, as Prof. Heller proposes, seems deficient and unwise. Impressionable students need the hermeneutic and philosophic guidance of seasoned Christian professors to help them understand and critique texts and their implications, recognizing the power of stories (and other *objets d'art*) to shape consciousness and conscience for better or for worse.

Second, though Prof. Heller fails to acknowledge this, a considerable amount of intelligent work has already been done on the subject of faith-discipline integration that relates a Christian worldview to academic enterprises in sophisticated ways. One resource among many is a book titled *The Reality of Christian Learning: Strategies for Faith-Discipline Integration*, edited by Harold Heie and David L. Wolfe.²⁹ Originally published in 1987, it was recently re-released in January 2004 by Wipf and Stock Publishers. In 352 pages, it spells out a clear line of demarcation between integration and pseudo-integration,

²⁸ Naugle, *Worldview*, pp. 71-73.

²⁹ Harold Heie and David L. Wolfe, eds., *The Reality of Christian Learning: Strategies for Faith-Discipline Integration* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004). See also Robert A. Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning: A Worldview Approach* (Eugene: Cascade Books, A Division of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), and David Claerbaut, *Faith and Learning on the Edge: A Bold New Look at Religion in Higher Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities has assembled a helpful bibliography that, in part, addresses faith-discipline-worldview issues and is available at:

articulates the role of substantive and methodological presuppositions, value commitments, and systematic schemata (worldviews) in scholarly endeavors, and explains and illustrates compatibilist, reconstructionist, and transformational integrative strategies across the academic disciplines. The approaches detailed in this volume are considerably more advanced than the rather superficial approaches with which Prof. Heller seems to be pre-occupied. To be sure, more work needs to be done in this area, and individual scholars and particular institutions can certainly improve the depth and quality of their worldview based educational efforts. Much of Christian scholarship is still at an adolescent stage of development. To suggest, however, that there is a lack of specificity in the available literature about what it means to teach from a Christian worldview is simply false.

Be that as it may, Prof. Heller still has trouble connecting with commonplace descriptions of the tasks of Christian professors who are suppose to teach from a Christian worldview. For example, he is befuddled by Claude O. Pressnell's way of articulating the task of Christian scholars that includes a reference to the deleterious effects of the fallen human intellect and a call for intimacy with Christ as an academic prerequisite. If the intellect is fallen, and Heller believes that it is, then how is it at all possible to have confidence in a Christian worldview? Furthermore, what, if anything, does intimacy with Christ have to do with capable teaching, say of Shakespeare or Wharton?

In response to these two concerns, let us remind ourselves, first of all, that the reason why it is possible to have epistemic confidence in a Christian view of the world is because the created, though fallen human intellect, has been redeemed and renewed in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12: 1-2; Eph. 4: 23-24; Col. 3: 10). The noetic effects of sin are adequately, though not perfectly, reversed through the noetic effects of eschatological redemption which is "already" but "not yet." In place of a previous ignorance and foolishness, believers are given the gift of the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2: 16), along with the significant task of developing this

new spiritual and cognitive “sense” (Jonathan Edwards) based on the Spirit-taught Word of God. Obedient disciples of Christ graciously know revealed truth, which is not only soteriological but also cosmological in scope, and it is this all-embracing truth that sets them free (John 8: 31-32). Christian conversion and sanctification, then, have profound implications on the effective operation of the human mind. As Bernard Lonergan states, “It directs a person’s gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of his psyche. It enriches his understanding, guides his judgments, reinforces his decisions.”³⁰ Prof. Heller’s worldview agnosticism, therefore, is biblically unwarranted and contrary to the epistemic implications of the Christian gospel.

Second, in contrast to Prof. Heller’s embrace of a modern anthropological dualism that separates will from intellect and allows for a division between a scholar’s moral condition (values, faith, private life) and cognitive function (facts, reason, public life), a biblical anthropology rooted in the Hebraic concept of the *imago Dei* is holistic in character, and ties together ethics and epistemology. Who we are in character and conduct affects what we know and how we teach, for as Jesus states, “the mouth speaks out that which fills the heart” (Matt. 12: 34). Significant voices in the Christian intellectual tradition substantiate this integrated vision of the faculties of the human person and the ethics-epistemology nexus. In Augustine’s terms, “Now whosoever supposes that he can know truth while he is still living iniquitously is in error” (*De Agone Christiano*).³¹ Or as Thomas Aquinas states, “unchastity’s first-born daughter is blindness of spirit.”³² And as contemporary Maritain scholar Ralph McInerney argues, “The virtuous life is a necessary ... condition for the successful theoretical use of the mind.”³³ Thus

³⁰ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 131.

³¹ Quoted in James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 97.

³² Quoted by Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1965), pp. 19-20.

Prof. Heller's Enlightenment-based fact/value dichotomy is contrary to the holism of a biblical anthropology and is rebuffed by leading thinkers in the Christian tradition. Intimacy with Christ, that is, a scholar's spiritual and moral condition, has much to do with teaching and impacts academic output.

(2) *The lack of specificity regarding the content of “a distinctively Christian worldview.”* Not only is Prof. Heller flummoxed by the lack of specificity regarding Christian worldview *pedagogy*, but he also registers complaint about the lack of clarity regarding Christian worldview *content*. Claude Pressnell's comments are again disappointing for Heller because he “evades a question that his description of the Christian scholar's task begs to have answered: What does he mean by ‘a distinctively Christian worldview’?”

There is a catch 22, however. On the one hand, if the notion remains substantially undefined, it is amorphous and presumably unhelpful. On the other hand, if its content is clarified significantly, the discussion changes from Christian worldview pluralism (“a”) to Christian worldview exclusivism (“the”), and the specific worldview formulation becomes subject to a plethora of sociological, historical, theological criticisms from those who presumably disagree with it. Worldview thinkers are damned if they do, and damned if they don't define it. But sooner or later, what is excluded and included in the notion must be spelled out. All that Prof. Heller is able to marshal from his sources on this matter are the *exclusion* of anything that undermines a modernist, objectivist version of truth (so David Dockery), and the *inclusion* of objective moral standards rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. But if the gaps aren't filled in and “if that's all there is” to a Christian worldview, then the concept is left open to political aggrandizement by conservative Christians.

But Prof. Heller surely knows that others have certainly filled in the gaps regarding biblical worldview content — David Dockery certainly does in his other writings³⁴ — and there is much more to it than what he is admitting. A number of

³³ Ralph McInerny, *Art and Prudence: Studies in the Thought of Jacques Maritain* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1988), p. 5.

Protestant Evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox writers have spelled out the essentials of the Christian vision among whom there is a rather amazing consensus.³⁵ The basic elements of the narrative of Scripture — namely God the Father’s *creation* of very good world that subsequently *falls into sin* because of a primeval human rebellion whose comprehensive effects are overcome by the fulfillment of a *plan of salvation* through the *incarnation* of the Son of God who provides a *cosmic redemption* that renews all things through the Spirit empowered Church and will be *consummated* at Christ’s second advent in the establishment of the new heavens and earth — forms the specific content of a Christian worldview. These worldview “pillar points,” as I like to call them, have constituted classic Christian orthodoxy, found embodiment in historic statements of faith, provided the framework for the theological reflections of the leading doctors of the Church, and supplied the meaningful context for the lives and service of the saints and martyrs throughout the ages. To be sure, detailed interpretations of these basic worldview themes have varied from tradition to tradition. This is why it is important to refer to “a” rather than “the” Christian worldview. But this Christian worldview pluralism — Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical — should be regarded as a cross-pollinating source of enrichment for the worldview tradition in which one stands, rather than as the root of a nascent liberalism or an unhealthy Christian elasticity, as Prof. Heller claims. At least, that is the way it has worked for me and others I know. Nonetheless, if this much of biblical faith is clear — creation, fall, salvation history, incarnation, redemption, church, consummation — then is there any real reason for Prof.

³⁴ David S. Dockery, “Introduction: Shaping a Christian Worldview,” in *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education*, ed. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), pp. 1-15.

³⁵ In chapters 1-2 of my own book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, I survey the “wonder of worldview” in the Protestant evangelical, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions.

Heller to complain about a lack of understanding what constitutes a distinctive Christian worldview?³⁶

(3) The imposition of a reductionistic “mere Christianity worldviewism” on writers as culturally diverse as the Beowulf poet and Flannery O’Connor. I see this as the crux of the matter for Prof. Heller, even though it is a sub-specie of the first issue he raises in his article, namely “what does it mean to teach from a Christian worldview?” Prof. Heller is justified in asking whether or not the notion of a Christian worldview is capable of uniting “such historically, culturally diverse writers” as the Beowulf poet all the way up to Flannery O’Connor (if each of these were Christians, then presumably they had some kind of Christian view of reality). He is rightly concerned about the possible imposition of a rather rigid, “one-size-fits-all” interpretation of the Christian faith upon a diversity of authors in the Western canon that would becloud their idiosyncrasies and other important aspects of their lives, transform them into contemporary evangelicals, and reduce intelligent criticism to an enforced “mere Christianity worldviewism.” Undoubtedly, some educators “armed” with a Christian worldview employ this strategy. But for Heller, it is woefully monochromatic and too definitive for his taste. Mine too.

Once again, however, a question must be raised: Is this a liability of the Christian worldview concept *per se*? Does a Christian worldview in and of itself demand this kind of teaching? Or is this not the fault of a faulty worldview

³⁶ In addition to works on the content of a Christian worldview discussed in chapters 1-2 of my book, I also summarize additional evangelical worldview contributions in Appendix A. To this list, I would now add the following: Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004); Philip Greenslade, *A Passion for God’s Story: Discovering Your Place in God’s Strategic Plan* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2002); Tim Chester, *From Creation to New Creation* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2003); Vaughn Roberts, *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Story-Line of the Bible* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

Also consult the works of the canonically-shaped biblical theology by Graeme Goldsworthy and William J. Dumbrell.

pedagogy that is rather unsophisticated in technique, and/or employed with too much apologetic or political zeal?

While Prof. Heller may assert that the trouble is inherent in the “abstracted and naïve certainty of a worldview” itself, the history of the concept shows that it actually embodied relativistic connotations as the product of German idealism and romanticism. For this reason, both Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger contrasted the subjectivist character of worldviews with their respective scientific philosophies, arguing that the former supplies its advocates with values, while the latter is the source of unadulterated facts. The modern scientific attitude, not the phenomenon of worldview as such, is the source of epistemic stridency along with its prejudiced pedagogical consequences. Hence, the solution to the “worldview problem” is not to be found in its dismissal, but in an overhaul of what it means to know and teach.³⁷

(4) The proposal of Debora Shuger’s notion of “habits of thought” as an alternative to worldview. Since Prof. Heller believes that “worldview” is a product of the German Enlightenment that brings with it “the secularizing insistence that the search for truth can terminate on proper positions and principles,” he proposes Debora Shuger’s more relaxed expression “habits of thought” as a useful substitute. This notion suggests that individuals and societies organize their thinking around certain dominant tropes or various rhetorical and figurative devices. By avoiding the alleged dogmatism fostered by worldview, it is a good way to convey, say, the rough and ready mindset of the English Renaissance and the tentative attitude of St. Paul toward his own belief system (see 1 Cor. 13: 12). The notion of “habits of thought” is intuitively impressive for Prof. Heller, fits his own experience, and squares with biblical

³⁷ Michael Polanyi’s epistemic vision in my estimation is one of the best alternatives to modern ways of knowing and teaching and is presented in his books *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) and *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966). I also highly recommend Esther Lightcap Meek’s *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, Baker Books, 2003) who draws significantly on Polanyi’s thought as a basis for her own relevant epistemic insights. For a discussion of Polanyi’s pedagogical significance, see Ronald Lee Zigler, “Tacit Knowledge and Spiritual Pedagogy,” *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 20 (1999): 166-67.

injunctions to examine one's way of thinking. Hence, he believes it is best to equip students with mature "habits of thought" rather than burden them with the abstracted, naïve certainty of a worldview.

I have no grouse against the notion of "habits of thought" *per se*, and I can see it being used nicely as a stylistic alternative to "worldview" in appropriate contexts. It also reminds me of the lovely phrase — "the well-worn grooves of thought" — used by C. S. Lewis in his poem "In Praise of Solid People."³⁸ Nevertheless, the way Prof. Heller recommends this expression manifests a possible weakness.³⁹ In his concern to avoid what for him is the unattractive certitude associated with the evangelical worldview tradition, Heller's "habits of thought" seems to convey the opposite nuances of uncertainty and perhaps a little bit of skepticism. Just how much uncertainty and skepticism he wants to pour into "habits of thought" is the crucial question. When he claims that St. Paul's "habits of thought" caused him to think rather poorly of his current view of the world based on 1 Corinthians 13: 12, it seems that he attributes quite a bit of epistemic slippage to the notion.⁴⁰ If so, we might ask if Heller resides in the epistemic camp of the postmodernists? A responsible position like that of *critical realism* acknowledges the imperfections of human knowledge and the need for correction to be sure, but *without capitulating to skepticism or relativism or anti-realism*. Truth exists and is knowable, but sometimes we fall short, and need help in order to move closer to the truth. If this is what Prof. Heller wishes to communicate through the "habits of thought" concept, well and good. If not, then

³⁸ C. S. Lewis, "In Praise of Solid People," *Poems*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Fount Paperbacks, Harper Collins, 1994), p. 199.

³⁹ Here is an additional critique worth pondering: what is to prevent "habits of thought" from calcifying and taking on the ideological connotations that Heller earnestly seeks to avoid in worldview? Fascist "habits of thought" and "Fascist worldview" convey the same meaning for all practical purposes, so the former expression fails to secure any real advantage over the latter. The problems that Heller ascribes to "worldview" could also afflict his notion of "habits of thought."

⁴⁰ This assertion, I contend, is based on a misreading of 1 Cor. 13: 12 and the tension created by the "already/not yet" framework of eschatological redemption.

we have a problem from the vantage point of Christian conviction. He would serve himself and his readers well if he would articulate more clearly the epistemic position he intends to communicate by his use of this expression.

These, then, are four of Prof. Heller's chief criticisms of worldview thinking, especially as it pertains to Christian higher education, along with my responses: (1) worldview pedagogy, (2) worldview content, (3) worldview reductionism, and (4) a worldview alternative — "habits of thought."

In conclusion, I would like to make one final plea on behalf of worldview in regard to its transforming power in the lives of believers, particularly among a number of students I have known.

Conclusion

Perhaps it results from a combination of several factors—its biblical wholeness, its intellectual coherence, its empirical and transempirical comprehensiveness, its interpretive power, and its practical nature—but it seems that Christianity conceived in terms of a worldview possesses remarkable power to foster personal transformation and positive spiritual change in the lives of believers. And through these transformed Christians, it possesses remarkable potential to foster transformation and change in the Church and in the broader culture as well. That is its chief spiritual benefit.

Certainly whatever transformation and change may occur is a gracious work of God produced by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of redeemed men and women. Though particularly weighty and difficult to describe, in general it has to do with the comprehensive restoration of human beings as the *imago Dei* whose hearts are being reshaped in substantial ways by the truth and perspectives of the Scriptures. It begins with an enlarged understanding of God the Trinity whose existence, nature, and sovereignty constitutes the explanatory and unifying principle of the universe. It involves the recognition of the overall narrative pattern of the Scriptures consisting of the unmitigated goodness of creation, God's original purposes for humanity, the catastrophe of the fall, and the history of redemption culminating in person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the agent of new creation. This larger biblical story connects the

Old and New Testaments, unifies biblical theology, furnishes the background for the particulars of Christian doctrine and practice, and provides a narrative context by which believers can establish their own identities and make sense of their lives and discover their place in the world. It entails a profound Christian humanism based on an understanding of the dignity of men and women created as the image and likeness of God who possess a fundamental spirituality, a unique set of cognitive powers, and a distinctive cultural calling to be the stewards of creation which is to be developed for human blessing and God's glory. It shatters a multitude of malicious dualisms and reductionisms and replaces them with a biblically-based wholeness that appropriately unifies time and eternity, body and soul, faith and reason, sacred and secular, earth and heaven resulting in an inner psychological coherence, spiritual freedom, and ability to delight in creation and enjoy the totality of life. It generates the awareness that there is a presuppositional basis of life based on a tacit or explicit faith commitment rooted in the human heart. Such assumptions serve as the starting point for all forms of human life individually and corporately, giving rise to the ways people think, speak, and act in this world. These themes are at the heart of a biblical worldview and constitute the basis for significant personal, ecclesiastical, and cultural transformation.

No wonder that many Christians, especially students that I have known, testify to the difference that an encounter with a biblical worldview has made in their lives. For Crystal it provided an understanding of authentic Christian freedom, supplying the liberty to be a human being fully alive. For Angie it constituted her most significant discovery at the university. For Kendra it was the development of a wholistic perspective on life. For Matt it meant a deeper love for God and others in all things, provided a recognition of the value of all God-honoring vocations, and issued a challenge to be involved in society Christianly. For Rachel it was a grid of truth by which to renew culture, share her faith, and live in the fullness of her humanity. For Dayspring it supplied a reference point for all reality and a clarity of vision about the world. For Kevin it meant a fresh recognition of the incredible scope of redemption. For Jennifer it resulted in the breakdown of dualism and the

cultivation of deep love for learning. In short, these individuals have undergone a significant, spiritual transformation through their encounter with a biblical worldview involving the revitalization of their hearts and the formation of a new kind of Christian mind. When it comes, then, to worldview as a concept, and its prospects and perils, this is one its chief contributions. Thank you.