

A Summary:

DEFENDING THE FAITH (APOLOGETICS AND WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS)

The second International Conference on Reformed Education (ICRE, 2007), agreed that schools in Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands join forces in preparing a document that can be used at the senior elementary and high school level to teach apologetics. An important aspect of any apologetics course is worldview analysis, and our committee agreed that we would *begin* by focusing on that issue. We are asking you to participate in this work. To guide the discussion, we submit hereby a preliminary framework for worldview analysis. In due time, we hope to turn to apologetics proper.

Our aim is to produce a professional development document. It may lead in time to the production of an outline for teaching apologetics and worldview analysis across the curriculum, or for one general course. That is up to the individual schools. Our concern is to provide teachers with rationale and background material, to propose teaching strategies, and to suggest resources.

Worldviews and isms

Note on sources: I have discussed some of the following topics in some detail in the Annotated Bibliography on Apologetics (AB), especially Parts I (Worldview Analysis) and Part II (The Subjective Element in Knowing), and in my ICRE paper "Integrating Faith and Learning" (IFL). Both are or should soon be available at the Teachers College website (FGO).

1 *Present-day worldviews.* Introduction of the various present-day worldviews and isms, with emphasis on the biblical worldview.

2 *Introduction of historical worldviews.* This implies a study of cultural periods, each with its own worldview (e.g., classical Greece, the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, up to and including the postmodern period). Knowledge of present and past worldviews is relevant for the study of many school subjects (religion, science, history, literature, music, art, philosophy, even mathematics).

3 *Theory of knowledge.* It is more and more recognized that the prevailing theory of knowledge (epistemology) has always played an important role in cultural periods and their worldviews (scientism, objectivism, subjectivism, relativism, etc.) and continues to do so. In analyzing worldviews, attention should be given to this aspect. Students at the senior level should know (and be able to evaluate) prevailing theories of knowledge (IFL, AB II). They, as well as younger students, should also be told about the limitations of human knowing.

4 *In connection with 2 above: The nature of the relationship between worldview on the one hand and religion, science, art, etcetera, on the other.* This must be worked out in sufficient detail. Some examples:

4.1 *The role of worldview in medieval culture*

The medieval worldview was characterized by the idea of cooperation between divine grace and illumination on the one hand, and man's natural powers on the other. This is evident in the following:

(i) Doctrine of salvation: justification was not by faith alone, but also by works (although grace came first)

(ii) Knowledge of God. As the medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas (d. 1275) taught, many of the truths of revelation could be proved by reason (such as the existence of God, his omniscience and providence, the immortality of the soul). Other truths, however, belonged to the *mysteries* of the faith. They could be known by divine revelation only, and therefore required faith. Among them were the Trinity, the Incarnation, Christ's sacrifice, the Resurrection, the Last Judgment. (Nevertheless, although matters of faith, these truths were not contrary to reason. Reason could be used to uphold them in the face of attacks by unbelievers.) .

This idea of cooperation between God and man can also be illustrated with reference to two of the great cultural achievements of the Middle Ages:

(iii) the greatest epic of the period, Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. In this epic Dante travels through Hell and Purgatory to Heaven. In Hell and in most of Purgatory he is guided and taught by Virgil, a Roman philosopher who, although a pagan, was greatly esteemed by Christians and stood for the power of reason. Toward the end of Purgatory, however, Virgil is replaced by Beatrice, who symbolizes faith and revelation, and guides Dante into heaven. And before he is brought into the presence of God himself, he needs the guidance of St. Bernard, who symbolizes mysticism and love.

(iv) the Gothic Cathedrals. Like scholasticism, and like Dante, they were compendiums of all knowledge - the knowledge of things visible and invisible, things human and divine; and again like scholasticism and Dante they placed all aspects of that knowledge into their proper compartments. They also manifested the Thomist belief in the cooperation between divine grace and man's natural powers.

4.2 An example showing the connections between worldview and *science* is given in IFL pp. 9f. It's about the very important role of worldview in the change from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican model of the universe. Something similar is to be done with Darwinism (*Ibid.*, p. 10). There are many other possibilities. Drawing attention to the relationships will make the study of the various subjects far more interesting. It will also show the essential unity of cultural periods. No less importantly, it will illustrate the subjective element in science and so form an aspect of apologetics proper.

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