Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview is a great introductory book on Christian worldview, however for those already familiar with the topic, it may not bring much new to the table. This is not to take away from the fact that it is a very well written and thought out book though! It’s discussion of worldview is an important one since "it may function like a pair of glasses through which we see our world; only rarely do we look at the glasses themselves." According to Goheen and Bartholomew, "worldview expresses a set of beliefs that are foundational and formative for human thinking and life." Many can assume they see the world objectively and be unaware that we all experience the world through a mediated worldview. Hence, we must stop to intentionally look at the lenses through which we see the world, compare them to Scripture and see if in fact they may need to be modified or removed altogether. This is sometimes a difficult task however, as a person’s worldview can often influence their reading and understanding of Scripture itself, which is why it is also important to read from different authors, thinkers, and even eras in order to try to escape the lenses which we may not be able to perceive.

An Over-personalized Gospel

Goheen and Bartholomew do a great job of discussing the universal and all encompassing nature of the Gospel’s implications on all spheres of life and creation. They

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rightly point out the dangers of much of Western Evangelicalism’s tendency to over-personalize the Gospel to only "for me" and neglecting to see the communal and corporate nature of the Church which Christ established. This is a likely result of the individualism which plays an important role in Western society's self-understanding. They comment rightly that, "the biblical story is not to be understood simply as a local tale about the Jewish people. It begins with the creation of all things and ends with the renewal of all things. In between, it offers an interpretation of the meaning of cosmic history." Therefore, not just our stories but all of reality must find its place in this story.

Gospel Contextualization

I agree with them that our beliefs must flow from Scripture—a reflection of a Protestant commitment to Sola Scriptura—and also the recognition that these beliefs must be expressed within a cultural context. Therefore, contextualization must inevitably happen. As we seek to contextualize the Gospel to our situation, worldview becomes vitally important in shaping how we go about that process. This embodiment of the Kingdom of God takes on a particular cultural shape, and thus brings us to a crossroad, where we live in a world whose story is incompatible on numerous points with the Christian worldview. The book does a good job of sounding an alert to the dangers of the Church succumbing to taking the culture's narrative as primary. "The inevitable result for the church is compromise and unfaithfulness, for it will not be offering the Gospel to the world on the Gospel's own terms, namely, that it alone is the truth about our world and about our lives in it."7

A Christian Worldview

Their discussion of Kuyper’s Reformed perspective on rejecting the autonomy of human reasoning in shaping worldview was quite interesting. In opposition to those who "held the view that neutral human reason operating properly will support a Christian perspective of the world. In other words, they concede common epistemological ground with non-Christians," while Kuyper posited that one's

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3 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 3.
4 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 3.
5 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, xiv.
6 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 8.
7 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 8-9.
epistemology is a result of one’s worldview. Hence, the "natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him" (1 Cor. 2:14). Worldview must begin with the Gospel, and thus a proper understanding of sin and the extent of its affects on people apart from God will be fundamental in developing a right perspective to engaging the culture and responding. "We trivialize both sin and God’s love for the creation if we dismiss his wrath from the biblical story."

The book also does a good job of summarizing various prevalent worldviews in history such as the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Modernism and Postmodernism. It is also good at pointing out the danger of opposing modernism on its own terms—reducing the Gospel to a merely intellectual framework. We can see some of these potential dangers in the realm of apologetics today, which sometimes may fall more into intellectual one-upmanship than actually engaging the heart. "If thinking Christianly becomes disconnected from the whole experience of life in Christ Jesus, it leads to a distorted, intellectualized Christianity lacking grace and humility." It must as much about a real relationship with Christ "as it is about rigorous critical thinking that arises from this relationship." With regards to this, there is a clear need for presenting and defending the coherence of the Christian worldview against rival philosophical systems, and thus the importance of a well thought out systematic theology for every believer. "Proof-texting is simply woefully inadequate in this regard; what is needed is a sense of how the major beliefs of the drama of Scripture hold together and how one can build on them to develop a Christian understanding and critique of the culture of the day." Every worldview must answer questions of life, origins, morality, meaning and destiny. How one answers these questions significantly shapes how their life is lived and consequently how society is shaped, laws are created and what the future will look like.

Coram Deo and Imaging God

Also with regards to developing a coherent systematic theology comes the central question of who Christ ultimately is—is he only your "personal Saviour" or is he Lord of all,

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8 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 15-16.
9 See Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 46.
10 See Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 51.
12 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 20.
13 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 28.
14 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 24-25.
Creator, Ruler, Redeemer and Judge? The book does a good job of bringing out how a right understanding of this and our life lived "coram Deo"—in the presence of God—affects our Christianity. "To live coram Deo is to live in and to be aware of God's presence, responsive to his word, ready to serve him." It is this same understanding which Kuyper argued that all of life must be lived in response to God and His Lordship over all of it. The book points out the dangers of an erroneous Gnostic Dualism which sometimes has snuck into the Church, seeing the material as evil and only the spiritual as good. "[Evil] is not essential to the nature of the world, and it may be removed without changing the essential nature of that which it has disfigured." It is this very point which Paul writes against, that everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving in 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

The book also raises the question of what does it mean to be created in God's image and to image God? Though this was not the most thorough treatment of this topic, I thought it did a good job of highlighting some of the major points. Henri Blocher notes that an "image is only an image. It exists only by derivation. It is not the original, nor is it anything without the original. Mankind's being as image stresses the radical nature of his dependence." Also, to image God is to reflect God and thus mirror His character. It is to act as His representatives in creation, as vice-regents and stewards. This study of the meaning of the "image of God" then becomes vitally important in discussions regarding ecological care and the abortion and euthanasia debate—a topic which was unfortunately not presented in much detail in this book.

Redemption's Narrative

The book also brings up an important point that restoration in the Gospel narrative does not mean a return to the undeveloped state of creation as in Eden, but rather creation’s development is from a garden (Eden) to a city (New Jerusalem). "This great city, the goal of history, is the work of God's redemption, his restoring of the whole creation, including its history, to reach its appointed goal." So far from seeing cultural development and scientific advancement as things to be shunned, they are to be part of God’s redemption.

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15 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 32.
16 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 35.
17 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 37.
18 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 40.
19 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 42.
20 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 43.
21 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 41.
of all things for His glory. All of creation is said to wait in eager expectation for the revealing of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19), and we live in this "already-not-yet" tension.

**Importance of Eschatology**

This raises the question of eschatology since one's theological understanding of eschatology will have practical implications on how we live out the Gospel and the formation of our worldview. "The implication of a true eschatological perspective will be missionary obedience, and the eschatology which does not issue in such obedience is a false eschatology." If one has an escapist view, the understanding of how to live in the "already-not-yet" will suffer greatly. For example, D.L. Moody's "concern for evangelism and his sense of urgency are admirable. However, his understanding of mission 'between the times' has been drastically diminished, even disfigured, by an unbiblical view in which salvation is individualistic and concerned with escape from this creation." The book categorizes the various views in a few ways; grace against nature—which may lead to failing to see salvation as the restoration of God's good creation, grace above or alongside nature—which fails to sense a tension or antithetical encounter between the Christian worldview and other worldviews, or the one which it espouses (and I concur), grace seen to infuse nature. In this view, all fields are part of God's good creation—entertainment, sex, journalism, politics, scholarship, business and art—and God is Lord over those dimensions. In fact, there is not a "sacred vs. secular" divide which many have perceived. "For Luther, every human responsibility is a sacred vocation—and equally sacred, whether one is called to bear the Christ child or to put supper on the table." We are to serve God in all these areas of life as the Kingdom of God will be comprehensively restorative—as all of creation and life is restored to serve the Lord as they were meant to.

**Church History**

The book also highlights the importance of understanding church history in order to not repeat the errors of the past. We saw a fair share of embarrassment at the Church's reaction to legitimate scientific discoveries which challenged their preconceived views.

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about the earth being the center of the universe, and the Sun revolving around it. Max Wildiers comments, “Instead of accepting the challenge and reflecting on faith in a new perspective, the Church opted for an easy conservatism, keeping the enemy at bay by means of its anathemas... This failure to accept the challenge of a new world picture was a great loss to the Church and to Christianity.”

They were unaware of the lenses which they brought to the text. This is relevant when talking today about much of the discussion revolving around the age of the Earth and the Genesis creation account. The study of history has been pivotal in the shaping and development of my own worldview and I found this book’s overview helpful as well.

There is also the positive side of history that we can learn from, with the early Church’s refusal "to be known as adherents of a merely private religion, one that offered spiritual, individual, future, and otherworldly salvation. Instead, the church declared itself to be a public community that offered truth to everyone: the true meaning of the world, of history, and of human life." Due to the incarnational nature of the Gospel, it requires that it takes on various cultural forms without compromising its comprehensive demands. It was not meant to stay a Jewish expression, but to find its home in every culture as the disciples were commanded to go into "all the world" and preach. As a result, "the gospel affirms the genuine insights of any culture, including those of the pagan classical culture into which it was first introduced." By taking a look at the successful instances of Gospel contextualization the Church today can glean valuable wisdom in facing some of its challenges today.

**Postmodernism**

Goheen and Bartholomew point out very well the significant changes that postmodernity has brought with it. "In postmodernity, doubts concerning our ability to know truth, to perceive reality, and even to be sure of what it is to be human undermine the foundations of modernity." This has put the Enlightenment view of hope in the promise of progress in danger of final collapse. So postmodernity has perhaps helped us in seeing the problems with the lenses of the Enlightenment, however ironically, postmoderns’ own

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30 Goheen, *Living at the Crossroads*, 76.

denial of worldviews and absolutes conceals their own allegiance to a specific worldview. "For, ironically, postmodernism is absolutely convinced that the proposition 'Truth cannot be found' is itself true. Thus, although postmodernism professes to despise worldviews, it is, ironically, precisely that which it professes to despise!" Ultimately, postmodernity remains an unworkable and unliveable worldview. In our profoundly secular and individualistic culture, the freedom to choose has become ultimate—reflected in the fact that any critique of homosexuality being seen as homophobic or abortion being seen as a denial of a person’s "right to choose." The nature of personalized and subjective truth has no doubt played into this tendency.

The Missional Church

The book also brings up some great points about Islam’s response to the challenge of worldview, and even what Christianity can learn from Islam in its uncompromising stance. Also, there is good discussion of the Church’s approach to being a missional community and how we should seek to build the Kingdom in non-violent and non-coercive ways. True faithfulness in our era will be one of fierce conflict against the cultures set at odds to the Gospel worldview, and it may involve suffering. However, “If we take seriously our duty as servants of God within the institutions of human society, we shall find plenty of opportunity to learn what it means to suffer for righteousness’ sake, and we shall learn that to suffer for righteousness’ sake is really a blessed thing.” The book also talks about the recovery of true tolerance, which does not accept all truth claims as true but rather respects the rights of every person to have their own beliefs. They also had some very helpful examples in business, government, sports, art and education to bring to reality what the implications considered in the book would look like in the real world.

The Church and the Arts

Finally, as an artist, I took particular interest in their discussion of the role of redeeming the arts in Christian life. I found it quite helpful and related a lot with what they had to say on this topic. “Our leisure, even our play, is a matter of serious concern. There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God

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and counterclaimed by Satan.... It is a serious matter to choose wholesome recreations."34 If we reduce God’s gift of artistic expression to cheap Christian bumper stickers, shabby evangelistic dramas, melodramatic Christian films to scare audiences to conversion and pencils with bible verses, we trivialize the Gospel and do injustice to the huge breadth of creativity which God has blessed us.35

Concluding Thoughts

In terms of what I thought was perhaps lacking in the book, I would have liked to see some more discussion about the impact that various modern aberrant theologies have had on Christendom in our times. Word of Faith and Prosperity Gospel theologies have infected a large portion of the world, especially in developing countries, and play a huge role in the formation of their "Christian" worldview. These are problems which we will have to know how to respond to if we are to engage with the culture of our times effectively. Also connected, it would have been helpful to have a discussion about Charismatic and even Dispensational theology, which have also made quite an impact in our era. Reflecting on what the book covered, it seems like there may be a sort of alternating pattern in the historical development of competing worldviews—from Enlightenment and Romanticism, Modernism and Postmodernism—which makes me wonder what the next shift in worldview may be. Whatever the case, I think these conversations need to happen, and this book is a great read to get people started in thinking through these issues. Definitely worth checking out.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


35 Goheen, Living at the Crossroads, 184.