



Institute for Christian Studies
Institutional Repository

Griffioen, Sander, Richard Mouw and Paul Marshall. "Introduction," in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, edited by Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen, Richard J. Mouw. Lanham, Md.: University Press, 1989, pages 8-13. [pdf also includes Title Page, Table of Contents and Preface]

Note: This Work has been made available by the authority of the copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research and may not be copied or reproduced except as permitted by the copyright laws of Canada without the written authority from the copyright owner.

**Stained Glass:
Worldviews and Social Science**

Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen
and Richard J. Mouw, editors

UNIVERSITY
PRESS OF
AMERICA



Lanham • New York • London

Copyright © 1989 by

University Press of America,® Inc.

4720 Boston Way
Lanham, MD 20706

3 Henrietta Street
London WC2E 8LU England

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

British Cataloging in Publication Information Available

Co-published by arrangement with the
Institute for Christian Studies, Ontario, Canada

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stained glass : worldviews and social science / Paul A. Marshall,
Sander Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw, editors.
p. cm.—(Christian studies today)

"Papers . . . presented at a conference held in July 1985 at Calvin
College in Grand Rapids, Michigan"—Pref.

"Co-published by arrangement with the Institute for Christian
Studies, Ontario, Canada"—T.p. verso.

Contents: On the idea of worldview and its relation to philosophy / Albert M. Wolters—On
worldviews / James H. Olthuis—On worldviews and philosophy : a response to Wolters and
Olthuis / Jacob Klapwijk—On Christian learning / Nicholas Wolterstorff—The approach to
social theory / Sander Griffioen—Sociology and progress : a worldview analysis of the crisis
of modern society / Jan Verhoogt—Worldview and the meaning of work / P.J.D.
Drenth—Society after the subject, philosophy after the worldview / William Rowe—Epilogue
: on faith and social science / Paul Marshall.

1. Sociology, Christian (Reformed Church)—Congresses. 2. Ideology—Religious
aspects—Christianity—Congresses. 3. Social sciences—Religious
aspects—Christianity—Congresses. 4. Reformed Church—Doctrines—Congresses. I.
Marshall, Paul A., 1948— . II. Griffioen, S., 1941— . III. Mouw, Richard J. IV. Institute
for Christian Studies. V. Series.

BX9423.S63S72 1989 190—dc 19 88—13888 CIP

ISBN 0-8191-7253-7 (alk. paper)

ISBN 0-8191-7254-5 (pbk. : alk. paper)

All University Press of America books are produced on acid-free paper.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American
National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library
Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984. ☺



Contents

Contributors		6
Preface		7
Introduction		8
Albert M. Wolters	On the Idea of Worldview and Its Relation to Philosophy	14
James H. Olthuis	On Worldviews	26
Jacob Klapwijk	On Worldviews and Philosophy: A Response to Wolters and Olthuis	41
Nicholas Wolterstorff	On Christian Learning	56
Sander Griffioen	The Approach to Social Theory: Hazards and Benefits	81
Jan Verhoogt	Sociology and Progress: A Worldview Analysis of the Crisis of Modern Society	119
P.J.D. Drenth	Worldview and the Meaning of Work	140
William Rowe	Society After the Subject, Philosophy After the Worldview	156
Paul Marshall	Epilogue: On Faith and Social Science	184

Contributors

Drenth, Pieter, J.D. is Professor of Psychology at the Free University of Amsterdam and from 1983-1987 was Rector Magnificus of that University.

Griffioen, Sander is Professor of Social Philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam, and Special Professor of Reformational Philosophy at the University of Leiden.

Klapwijk, Jacob is Professor of Philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Mouw, Richard is Professor of Christian Philosophy and Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. He was formerly Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College.

Marshall, Paul is Senior Member in Political Theory and Vice President of the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto.

Olthuis, James is Senior Member in Philosophical Theology at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto.

Rowe, William is Senior Member in History of Philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto.

Verhoogt, Jan is Lecturer in Theoretical Sociology at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Wolters, Albert is Professor of Theology and Religion and Professor of Classical Languages at Redeemer College, Hamilton, Ontario. He was formerly Senior Member of History of Philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas is Professor of Philosophy both at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan and at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Preface

The papers in this volume were presented at a conference held in July 1985 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. They are the fruit of a project on social philosophy sponsored jointly by Calvin College, the Free University of Amsterdam, and the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. The editors wish to express their gratitude to these three institutions for the support and funding that made this conference possible. Special thanks are due to the Philosophy Department of Calvin College for important services rendered both in the organization of the conference and the publication of this book. We also wish to acknowledge the help received from the Stichting voor Zuiver Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (ZWO), the Hague, Netherlands. The support given by the ZWO enabled Albert Wolters to do research in the Netherlands during the 1981-1982 academic year, which formed the basis for his contribution to this volume. The ZWO also supported Richard Mouw's research at the Free University during the first semester of the 1982-1983 academic year. During that period, the agenda for both the project on social philosophy and the July 1985 conference was developed.

Introduction

Worldviews and social science—the title of this book reveals its two concerns. The concept of worldview has deep roots within the Calvinian tradition. Abraham Kuyper, founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, said in his Princeton lectures of 1889,

Calvinism did not stop at a church-order, but expanded in a *life-system*, and did not exhaust its energy in a dogmatical construction, but created a *life- and world-view*, and such a one as was, and still is, able to fit itself to the needs of every stage of human development, in every department of life.¹

The Free University of Amsterdam is not the only school that has benefitted from Kuyper's emphasis on Calvinism as a "life-system," or "life- and world-view." The histories of both Calvin College, established by Dutch immigrants in 1876, and the Institute for Christian Studies, founded in 1967, would be incomprehensible apart from the conviction that Calvinism is more than a set of theological doctrines. It is a comprehensive framework for all of life.

The various ways Kuyper expressed this conviction in his Princeton lectures—"life system" "life- and world-view"—were introduced as equivalents to the German word *Weltanschauung*, which at the time was the standard term used to convey the notion of a set of beliefs that underlie and shape all human action.² This notion became so popular that Herman Bavinck, Kuyper's partner at the Free University, noted that from 1902-1908 no fewer than twelve German books appeared with the word *Weltanschauung* in their titles.³ By then, the term already had a long career, having originated with Kant, been deeply marked by Romanticism, and subsequently having branched out into widely divergent directions, as represented by Kierkegaard, Engels, and, later, Windelband and Dilthey. By the time Kuyper was using the word "worldview" it had become a loaded term. Especially hotly debated was the relation of worldview to philosophy and science, with answers differing markedly among different schools. The paper by Albert Wolters in this volume presents a useful typology of this development.

When Christians adopt a term, they cannot turn a blind eye to its historical development and the connotations the term has acquired in various contexts. Some argue that during the Romantic era, the term "worldview" picked up certain problematic characteristics that it has

never since lost. Wolters (who, ironically, has done so much to revive interest among Christians in the concept of worldview) warns that the concept has acquired connotations of *historical relativity*. The very idea of worldview, he says, implies a forfeit of all claim to universal validity.

Basic to the idea of *Weltanschauung*, Wolters explains, is that it is a point of view on the world, a perspective on things, a way of looking at the cosmos from a particular vantage point. It therefore tends to carry the connotation of being personal, dated, and private, limited in validity by its historical conditions. Even when a worldview is collective (that is, shared by everyone belonging to a given nation, class, or period), it nonetheless shares in the historical individuality of that particular nation or class or period.

Yet, in Wolters' opinion, the term still has value. Most important, the idea of worldviews has helped highlight the fact that philosophy—and theoretical thought in general—depends upon pre-theoretical visions that function much like religious commitments. Because of these features, the idea of worldview offers a critique of the rationalist heritage we have from the Greeks, in which theoretical thought is seen as self-sufficient and immune from personal commitments.

The paper by Nicholas Wolterstorff takes issue with the *totalistic* implications of worldview approaches to science. Kuyper, he shows, insisted on the contribution of the subject to the practice of science—a valuable emphasis in itself, but one that easily develops into a one-directional, non-interactionist view of the relation between religion and the practice of scholarship. This one-sided view, Wolterstorff explains, has its roots in the expressivist vision of life (science is an expression of the self), which was characteristic of the Romantics. But science is not solely an expression of the self, Wolterstorff argues. It is likewise the outcome of the impact of the world on us. (It should be noted that Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd rejected Kuyper's expressivist understanding of science. They held that scientific activity is directed outward toward the investigation of the structures of reality and cannot be conceived of as a mere elaboration of an underlying worldview.)

William Rowe asks whether the problems related to the worldview idea do not really stem from an older tradition, i.e., the subjectivism of the modern era, which came to clear expression for the first time in the philosophy of Rene Descartes (1596-1650). Rowe's prime concern is the emergence of the optic metaphor (*view, viewing, viewpoint*) in Cartesian philosophy.

Two of the discussants seem to be less critical of the Romantic heritage. Like Wolterstorff, James Olthuis rejects the totalistic implications

of worldview approaches. His paper emphasizes the formative impact of experience upon worldview. It is true that the worldview we hold influences how we experience the world, but our experience likewise influences our adherence to a worldview. When experience seems to contradict our worldview, we experience a worldview crisis, which may lead us to change or even abandon the worldview we hold. However, Olthuis is less critical than other contributors regarding the Romanticist emphasis on the historically singular. His paper is concerned primarily with the relation between the individual and worldview.

Finally, Jan Verhoogt's paper expresses sympathy for an often-neglected aspect of worldview discussions: the way the Romantics' defense of worldviews served to bolster their resistance to the onslaught of Enlightenment rationalism. A similar theme appears in Lyotard's and Fernand Dumont's biting critiques of modern rationalism, as shown by Rowe and Sander Griffioen.

We can summarize these issues in a set of questions that form the first major focus of this volume.

- (1) How has the idea of worldview functioned in the broader culture? What is its history? How has it been defined?
- (2) How has the idea of worldview been appropriated in the Calvinian tradition? When Kuyper, Bavinck, and other Calvinist forebears adopted the term to describe Calvinism, were they sufficiently aware of its problematic connotations? Are these connotations tied so closely to the notion of worldview as to make it unsuitable for use by Christians today?
- (3) Can the term "worldview" be salvaged? Can it be refined of unacceptable connotations of relativism and redefined to take into account the universal implications of the biblical ideas of creation and revelation?

Worldviews and Social Theory

If our first concern is with worldviews, our second is with the way worldviews affect science, especially the social sciences. With the exception of P.J.D. Drenth, the authors restrict the range of their consideration to the theoretical aspects of the social sciences and to social philosophy. A recurring theme is the problem of "pluralism," i.e., the fragmentation of social theory into a manifold of schools, traditions, and approaches. This rests in turn upon the broader problem of the

heterogeneity of modern society, where conflicting religions and “traditions” increasingly take over the public square.

A study of worldviews can be expected to provide clues to how social theory seeks to come to grips with pluralism. In the first decade of this century, Wilhelm Dilthey described the plight of modernity as a *Streit der Weltanschauungen* (a clashing of worldviews). Again, Thomas S. Kuhn gave the notion of worldview a special place in his account of the *imponderabilia* of scientific revolutions. In the wake of the Kuhnian revolution there seems to be remarkably widespread acknowledgement of the formative influence of worldviews. James Olthuis sums it up in these words: “Conflicts in life and science, we are discovering, come down to differences in underlying worldviews.”

The authors in this volume maintain that notions of worldview in social theory have to be measured against a specifically Christian understanding of the “rootedness” of worldviews in religious commitment. Both Dilthey and Kuhn sought a way of containing a plurality of worldviews within the bounds of a broadened concept of Reason (on this, see papers by Griffioen and Jacob Klapwijk). Because of that, they did not probe into the pre-theoretical roots of worldviews and the clashes between worldviews. The Christian understanding of the religious roots of worldviews (see papers by Olthuis, Verhoogt, and Griffioen) may prove to be a useful conceptual tool for clarifying debates about pluralism in the social sciences.

Ironically, all this talk about worldviews may soon become irrelevant. As Griffioen notes, some observers insist that people no longer adhere to worldviews, no longer live by a coherent overall vision. More than thirty years ago, Redfield commented, “Perhaps today among the literate of the West there are two stages for the drama of existence: a stage of stars, atoms, time, and space, through which man is whirled without obligation to him; and a stage of inner experience, unconnected with the other stage, where the problems and choices take place.” (*The Primitive World and its Transformations*). For many people, changes in the world have been so rapid and so unsettling that they are no longer able to make sense of it all. As Klapwijk poignantly remarks, the problem today may not be how to *retain* a worldview, it may be how to *regain* one.

Rowe shows how the theme of pluralism emerges from the post-critical philosophy of linguistic praxis, as developed by the later Wittgenstein and by Lyotard, a representative of “post-modern” French philosophy. Wittgenstein’s early emphasis on “viewing” and

“mirroring” the world is replaced in his later work by an emphasis on “saying” and “doing”—i.e., the linguistic praxis of language games. Lyotard draws on this notion of games in his crusade against the attempts of modern science to construct a consensus undergirding societal diversity. Lyotard argues for the unbounded plurality of such “games,” a plurality that can neither be reduced to a deeper unity nor be related to a “subject” (as *hypokeimenon*) as the hidden “player” that would provide society with a unitary point of view (compare Hegel’s “spirit” and Marx’s “proletariat”).

These developments are referred to in the title of Rowe’s paper: “Society After the Subject”—that is, after loss of the concept of a subject—and “Philosophy After the Worldview”—that is, after the shattering of all coherent worldviews. Because of post-modern conditions, there is no unity to societal life, and the consensus to which the social sciences aspire could only be attained if it were imposed on society by force. Hence, Lyotard argues, all attempts to achieve unity can only be terrorist.

Such stark pluralism can no longer be described as a *Streit der Weltanschauung*, for worldviews can conflict only if they compete as accounts of the same “world.” In the extreme pluralism of Lyotard, Kuhn, and Feyerabend, there is no single “world”—there are as many worlds as there are worldviews. It is possible, remarks Griffioen, that we are now on the threshold of the end of the age of worldviews.

We can summarize these issues in a set of questions that form the second major focus of this volume.

- (1) What are the dominant notions of worldview in social theory? Do they take into account the religious “rootedness” of worldviews?
- (2) To what extent, and in what sense, do worldviews function in accounts of pluralism? Are we indeed at the end of the age of worldviews?
- (3) What light can a Christian worldview concept shed on the pluralism debates?

It is hoped that this present volume will stimulate interest among a larger audience and inspire further reflection on the problematics of worldviews in the social sciences.

Footnotes:

1. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures On Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 171.
2. See *ibid.*, 11, note 1, in which Kuyper presents “life system” as a rendering of the German technical term *Weltanschauung*.
3. Albert M. Wolters, “Weltanschauung in the History of Ideas: Preliminary Notes.” Unpublished paper.

Sander Griffioen
Richard Mouw
Paul Marshall