Lecture 1: “Introduction; Gospel & Culture”

There are three views that one could take when it comes to the relationship between gospel and culture:

(1) The Isolation View: Gospel and culture are distinct, non-overlapping categories of life and the world, operating in isolation. The gospel guides the Christian as she delicately and deliberates navigates this world’s terrain; and it guards the Christian from traversing on unwelcomed territory. The culture is inherently evil, whereas the gospel is good news. The culture seeks to infiltrate the Church’s camp, and it is the job of the vigilant Christian to ward off culture’s imperiling effects. The eternal truths of the gospel must be safeguarded, generation after generation, from the clutches of culture, for the sake of the Church’s purity and God’s glory.

(2) The Accommodation View: The gospel is always embedded in culture: they are inseparable and indistinguishable. Accordingly, it is the Christian’s duty to accommodate the gospel to the ethos of culture in order to “become all things to all people.” So, if in a theologically liberal culture, for example, the bodily resurrection of Christ is disbelieved, we creatively cater to the culture and theologize a metaphorical resurrection. Because gospel and culture are inseparable, Christians must be “wise as serpents,” and speak a compelling narrative within their cultural context.

(3) The Transformation View: The gospel transforms culture. Christians recognize that the gospel and culture are inseparable, but not indistinguishable. The gospel is not detached from culture (thus it is like the Accommodation View [AV]); but neither is it defined by it (unlike AV). The gospel consists in eternal truths (thus it is like the Isolation View [IV]); but these truths are apprehended within and applied to various cultural contexts (unlike IV). The call of the Christian is to live faithfully to the Christ of the gospel, seeking to serve through its transformative power a culture-inhabiting world.

To be sure, there is truth to be found in (1) and (2). For (1): The gospel does act as a guide in our journeying through this world; of course, it’s good news; and certainly we are called to safeguard the gospel and the Christian tradition (Ju. 3). But, the gospel is meant to impact the culture; not to operate in isolation from it. The gospel—the good news of the Kingdom of God—is meant to leaven its environment—culture (Mt. 13.33).

For (2): Yes, the gospel is embedded in culture. It is true that there are timeless, literally eternal, truths in which the gospel consists; however, in view of the essential elements of the gospel message—e.g., the cross' being a Roman instrument of death—we can see that the gospel is embedded in culture both in its core message as well as its presentation by us to others. That said, the gospel should not be accommodated, i.e., distorted, watered down, etc.; rather, when in 1 Co. 9, Paul talks about how he has become “all things to all people” for the sake of the gospel, we must note that it is the not the gospel that has become all things to all people, but rather we who—our attitudes, affirmations, and actions—must reach the world.

What, then, is the biblical warrant for the Transformation View? Here are three particularly helpful passages:

(1) Romans 1.16 (cf. 8, 15): “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”—this gospel-wrought salvation is the groundwork of the whole epistle of Romans.

(2) Philippians 1.3-5: “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you . . . because of your partnership in the gospel . . .”

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1The following manuscript is adapted from my lecture notes for a course at Biola University. Where authors are referred to by name without citation, the material is drawn from: Os Guinness, Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2014); David Horner Mind Your Faith: A Student’s Guide to Thinking and Living Well (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2011); Cornelius Plantinga, Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); and Philip Ryken, What Is the Christian Worldview? (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006).
(3) Rev. 14.6: “Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.”

To tie things up regarding the question of Christian versus secular music: When it comes carefully analyzing and critically evaluating any cultural artifact—i.e., any humanly produced item of culture—it is, first of all, crucially important to think specifically theologically. (Of course, it is important to think theologically when it comes to analyzing anything whatsoever—but, of course, I would make that claim: I’m a theologian after all!) To “think theologically” means (inter alia) we must have: a firm grasp of the doctrine of Creation—that Yahweh has created all things good; an appropriate appreciation of the doctrine of the Fall—that he has allowed humanity to turn away from his goodness; and a biblically wide understanding of the doctrine of Redemption—that he has provided a way of salvation and that he continues to work in and with creation to reconcile and restore all things and people to a state of flourishing and fullness, i.e., of shalom.

In addition to framing the analysis of culture through a theological lens, the Transformation View suggests that we need carefully consider the following aspects of any given cultural artifact or phenomenon. I call these aspects of analysis the three Is of Christian theological cultural analysis:

1. The intention of the artist—e.g., Is it to edify and glorify? Or to dehumanize and invert the created order? What the artist (filmmaker, songwriter, poet) intends matters.
2. The inherent value of the artifact—e.g., Is it true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy (cf. Phil. 4:8)? Or false, dishonorable, unjust, impure, perverted, or otherwise degrading? Here is where we consider aspects such as: lyrics, aesthetic excellence, appropriateness, form & function, etc.
3. The impact of its application—e.g., Does it contribute to human and social flourishing? Or to destructive ways of thinking and being? (To note, within the realm of ethics we could substitute for “artist”, “artifact”, and “application” the terms “actor”, “acts”, and “activity”, respectively.)

We need in place both our theological framework and cultural analytic framework when considering whether some artifact ought to be considered Christian or not, Kingdom-conducung or not. We will talk more about this in a subsequent lecture as we discuss the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom. (In fact, we will be doing much more of this dual-analysis throughout the rest of this course.) But, briefly put, a helpful question to ask when analyzing culture is: Does it advance or enhance the Kingdom?

Lecture 2: “Theology, Society, and Worship”

Introduction

Last time we looked at the relationship between gospel and culture. We discussed the Accommodation View and the Isolation View, both of which we found to be inadequate, as well as the Transformation View which we found to be theologically and biblically more satisfying. Today I want us to ask a slightly broader question: What is the relationship between theology and society? The gospel is one facet (indeed arguably the foundation) of Christian theology; but it remains only one facet. Culture is the expression of the general ethos of a given society; still it does not exhaust what we mean when we talk about society—it’s crucial to it, but not comprehensive of it. For these reasons, I would like to broaden our scope as we consider the relationship between theology and society.

The two main points of today’s lecture has to do with: (1) the strong interconnection between theology and society; and (2) how worship is everything. We ought to begin by defining a few key terms.

By “theology” we mean simply: discourse about God. The two Greek words “theos” and “logos”, which comprise the term, mean “God” and “word” (cf. McGrath, 2010: 102). So Christian theology is enquiring about, engaging with, and explaining God.

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2 Why don’t I write “humanize” as a contrast to “edify”? If something is Christian, i.e., of the Kingdom, it will by virtue of this fact be something that humanizes: to be aligned with the purposes of God is to be in a fully human mode of existence, just as Christ is the preeminently human (and divine) one “[who] is the image of the invisible God” (cf. Col. 1.15).]
By “society” we mean that “enterprise of world-building”—whereby schools, governments, religious rites, the arts, and other institutions and practices—are humanly constructed typically in the fashion of what sociologist Peter Berger calls a “dialectical phenomenon” (cf. Berger, 1967: 3). A simple (if simplistic) example of what Berger means would be: the social institution of legislation whereby a collective of human persons write into the laws of a society certain prohibitions which coerce all those belonging to said society to abide by them. Society can be simply defined as the infrastructure of the realm of human interaction.

Finally, then, by “worship” I mean something as what the late Harvard (then University of Chicago) theologian Paul Tillich defined as “faith,” calling it “ultimate concern”: “Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned . . . If [the object of faith] claims ultimacy it demands the total surrender of him who accepts this claim, and [] promises total fulfillment” (see Tillich, 1957: 1). Everyone worships something; worship involves everything we do, think, say, and feel. The only question is whether what we worship is worthy of and befitting a truly flourishing human life.

The interconnection between theology and society

In the first part of this lecture, we ask: What is the relationship between theology and society? Does theology, when properly construed and practiced, necessarily impact society? Isn’t theology, especially certain branches of academic theology, too abstract, even abstruse, to make a dent in the real world?

I think we should acknowledge that certain forms of theology (perhaps all too often) function as mere exercises in intellectual theorizing. But even then—e.g., Anselm’s ontological argument for the existence of God—theology was done for the sake of helping the Church better understand and engage God and his world. (Anselm offered his Proslogion [Discourse on the Existence of God] as a prayer, after all!) Even the sometimes mind-numbing Medieval metaphysics was meant to serve and equip the Church who in turn was meant to serve the world at large. So even so-called academic theology is (or was meant to be, at least) practical.

Certain divisions of theology—e.g., practical, historical, philosophical, etc.—have an even more obvious social effect: whether as instruction for the Church and her rituals and traditions (practical theology); or in service of debates and argument for the salvation of others (philosophical theology). So major theological issues inform how we approach everything from church governance to church-government relations. But also the main Christian theological categories or themes—namely, Creation, Fall, Redemption, Glorification—have direct bearing on how we think about, live in, seek to shape, and pray for the world in which we live. In other words, theology is the Christian’s view of the world which (sometimes consciously and other times less so) informs our actions within it. Simply and profoundly, theology is inherently culture-shaping.

I shall return to this point about the strong interconnection between theology and society below. But for now, I want us to see that, if this is true—that theology is inherently society-making—then it would behoove us as Christians to be like the men of Issachar “who had understanding of the times” (1 Ch. 12.32). Because theology is transformative and because what we believe will impact ourselves and the society in which we live, we must theologize well. And, not only must we have a good grasp of our theological heritage; we must well analyze our current social-cultural moment in order to best appropriate the theology we have. In short, we must draw from the riches of Christ’s wisdom found in His word and our tradition; and we must be in tune with the Holy Spirit to see what he is doing in the world around us.

To undertake this theological task, we must look to those who have walked before us. Here I am reminded of C. S. Lewis who, drawing on Isaac Newton (and in turn arguably on Bernard of Chartres), writes in the preface to his The Allegory of Love: “But when all is said, doubtless I have still failed to mention many giants on whose shoulders I have stood at one time or another.” Here I don’t want to fail to mention this giant of a mentor of my own, Os Guinness. I recall once when I, along with a few colleagues of mine, was having lunch with Os since he was in town. As usual, we began with some small talk, and then moved into questions about ministry. One of the questions I had for Os (this is some years ago now) was whether he thought that breaking into Hollywood and pop culture more generally would be a particularly strategic way of changing society and effecting the Kingdom. His response, somewhat to my disappointment, was that the world (in this case, more specifically our nation) could be changed when everyone everywhere, thinking about, acting on, and speaking about the things of the Kingdom in every God-blessed vocation in every place, would faithfully and excellently live our their respective callings. (Os’ book, The Call, is based largely on this premise.) All this to say, through
the course of learning and thinking over last few years, not to mention working through my doctoral program, I now find myself in complete agreement with my mentor, and find especially that a long view of historical change and the Christian tradition has moved me to this position.

For this reason, we would do well to consider the steady study and prayerful ponderings of those who have walked before us.

As a great, careful, prayerful thinker, recently Os has articulated what he calls the three “menaces” that beset the contemporary global scene: namely, Islamism, illiberalism, ideological consumerism (Guinness, 2014: 19). If theology is going to be society-shaping—indeed, as I argue above it will necessarily so be, one way or another—then it would be wise for us to consider the challenges of our historical moment that someone like Os, along with many others, see as particularly pressing and potentially historic. [By the way, these three Is that Os points out align roughly with the three categories you are asked to engage in your cohort Redemption Projects: religious pluralism, global poverty, and sanctity of life issues.] (This is why I think it’s so important for believers who are younger to sojourn with those who have walked a bit further down the path; hence your Mentorship assignment.)

So, according to Guinness, these three global menaces seem to confront humanity. Guinness goes on to describe what he sees as three crucial factors most likely to shape the human future: (1) globalization; (2) the Christian faith in the context of advanced modernity; and (3) the sovereignty of God (25-26). To note, Guinness is very quick to add that no one but God knows the future, how it may or may not be drastically different from what our best analysis suggests—an does so by discussing the importance of the sovereignty of God. That said, this recognition is no license for an attitude of fatalism or an excuse for a failure to engage the world. Humility (in our analysis about the future) is not mutually exclusive with hard work (in affecting the present). Put another way: analysis and asking God are compatible. What I want us to see [and not just for the sake of the Midterm, though you might well pay attention to what we’ve just written here] is that these three factors are not ideas which impact individuals who in turn impact the world; rather, they are conditions we find in the world already present and active, conditions to which humans are responding. They are bottom-up, not top-down. The conditions of globalization, modernity, and God’s sovereignty have to do with what is called the “sociology of knowledge” or “world-setting” rather than the strict “history of ideas.” The world-setting of a given society crucially influences how individuals and groups within that society think, act, speak, and interact with one another. Allow me to explain further what I mean.

According to Guinness (26.1-2), modernity plays an indispensable and inestimable part in shaping society. Horner also suggests something similar on a much more micro scale (20.1) by considering the relationship between our moral character and our intellectual apprehension of truth. To note, Horner in this book majors on the side of how ideas influence our lifestyle, i.e., beliefs determine behavior and our becoming (20.2a). Guinness tends to focus on the “sociology of knowledge” whereby the “spirit, systems and structures” of modern life impact the way we think. These are what we might call the social ideas that make up the “plausibility structure” of a given society (to borrow a term from Peter Berger). Put succinctly: the current of culture conditions the construction of worldviews.

Here I return to my point above about the strong interplay between theology and society. Not only is theology inherently impactful on society; society impacts theology. What do I mean? Well, it is almost an immediately apparent fact that all theology is done within the context of a given social-political culture. Whether it’s Karl Barth (the giant early twentieth-century theologian and principal author of the Barmen Declaration) writing profoundly on the singular Lordship of Christ in response to the false lord of Nazi Germany’s Hitler; or the liberation theologies coming out of the social-political context of an economically embattled South America; or contemporary theologians responding to climate change, sex-trafficking, global poverty, and interreligious conflict—whatever the social context, that it had and always will have an impact on the theologies which emerge out of it is undeniable. These examples suggest the reverse direction in which the relationship between theology and society flows: so the theology-society interplay is dialectical.

Guinness gives a helpful example in Chapter Three of his book (61-62; which we’ll read later in the semester) wherein he talks about how the Christian conference and celebrity culture mimics essentially the business
world and Hollywood, respectively. This sort of analysis is critical to purifying our own lives as well as providing redemptive critique to a Church which has capitulated to the cultural context of modernity.

*Biblical basis for the interconnection between theology and society.* By the way, we know that this strong view of the relationship between theology and society is also biblical. We find from the very beginning, God calls humanity to: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1.28). This divine injunction given to humanity is what theologians often refer to as “the cultural mandate”; so called because Yahweh charges humanity with the task of creating, sustaining, caring for, even naming all that is around us. Thus, in response to God (theology), humanity is tasked with culture-shaping (society). Theology is divinely designed to be socially transformative.

**Worship is everything**

In addition to understanding the relationships between gospel and culture and between theology and society, there is a third relationship that might help us to grasp the importance of theology in everyday life: the relationship between worship and life. Here we will bring the discussion down to a very practical level of looking at the attrition rate of Christians after college.

According to Horner (23), who draws on Steven Garber, the three most important factors that have helped students to remain faithful to Christ throughout their college years are: (1) the having of a worldview sufficient to engage and expose competing worldviews; (2) the having of a mentor as well as a disciple; and (3) the choosing to live in community with fellow followers of Jesus—in short, credibility, continuity, and community; that is, credibility of worldview, continuity of discipleship, and community of believers.

Relatedly, Horner writes, “From a biblical perspective, worship is everything and everything is worship” (30-31). What does he mean? First, worship is everything: that is, worship drives our lives; we all worship something (Ro. 1.18-25); it orient[s] who we are and what we do. At the same time, everything is worship: every dimension of life is a part of the arena of worship; that is, the whole of life is an act of worship (Ro. 12.1-2, 4-8); everything we do is an act of ascribing to God or some idol, some “object” or other, the worthiness that he (or something) possesses such that he (or it or they) hold our attention, allegiance, and affections.

If this is true—that everyone worships something, and that everything we do is worship—then there is one crucial question that emerges: what is worthy of worship? Surely, any object could fit the bill; but the question is: which object should? And how are we to determine the answer to this question? The answer is: whatever is most worthy of worship. While utterly simple when considered one way (indeed almost tautologous), this response is actually quite profound: if worship is everything and everything in life is a form of worship, then it makes profound sense to worship the most worthy thing or being. And this kind of worship, as one would expect, comports with what it means to flourish as a human person, since worshiping a most worthy object just is to worship well or best. It’s not exactly like, but still analogous to, eating the best foods, drinking the best drinks, and thinking about that which is most worthy of our intellectual activity: what is most worthy comports with and is indicated by what is most flourishing for us as human beings.

So when we consider rightly the enterprise of education or marriage or career or recreation, we see these dimensions of life as a means of worshipping the Creator of these goods. We may enjoy them in their own right insofar as they are indeed goods of God’s creation; but we must also understand how they are to be used for the greater good of glorifying God. “Fearing God is seeing everything in relation to him” (Horner, 31).

We need to have a long view of the Christian faith. When Plantinga writes (as you’ll read next week in the preface to his book) that St. Augustine is “as close as we get, after Scripture, to a universal Christian voice,” he would seem to agree with the idea that evangelical Christianity is older than the Roman Catholic or Reformed or Anglican Christian traditions: it is the faith of the disciples and of the blind man who now could see: it is a faith which is founded on and flourishes on the announcement of the good news of the Christ who is come.

**Works Cited:**


Lecture 3: “The Liberal Arts & Longing for Shalom: What is Education for?”

What is Christian education for? The answer one gives to this question will depend on what one sees as the role of education more generally. Education, from the Latin “educare,” has to do with leading one out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of truth. Learning has fundamentally to do with illumination. My alma mater, the University of Oxford, has as its motto “dominus illuminatio mea”—“the Lord is my light”—taken from the Biblical passage of Ps. 27.1. The Christian tradition has founded institutions of learning in view of the fact that the Creator of the wonder-filled world has entrusted humanity to explore, enjoy, and engage this world—and a most natural and necessary way to carry out this task is to educate ourselves about it.

One implication of Ps. 27.1 is that the Lord—who he is, what he says—can and ought to undergird our education. The Lord who is our light illuminates our path as we navigate this wild, if sometimes wearying, and wonderful world; so being in relationship with our God is crucial to learning well since education is (or is done best as) an extension of our devotion.

Another implication of this understanding of education is that integration of faith and learning is, well, integral to Christian education. If what is learned is based both on what we learn in God’s Word and observe God’s world, then essential to education is our integrating our theology with all the other academic disciplines—indeed the rest of life. A third implication is that education can and ought to result in bringing about a world aligned with the purposes of its Creator: education is for the sake of redemption. Christian education (like theology), then, is inherently transformative: both personally and socially.

So perhaps this triad captures the essence of a Christian view of education: illumination, integration, impact. This is like the subtitle of Plantinga’s book—A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living (or “faith, learning, and service” as he writes on pp. xi and xiv in his preface). What other triad do you know of which captures this vision of university education? Biola’s three core values are: Truth, Transformation, Testimony.

If the university, on a Christian view, is for truth, transformation, and testimony (faith, learning, and service; or illumination, integration, and impact) what, specifically is liberal arts education? Well, frankly speaking, not very different: a liberal arts education, as conducted in the medieval university, was education in the seven arts of: grammar, rhetoric, and logic (the trivium) and geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy (the quadrivium). Today, we might divide these arts into the human, natural, and social sciences.

In classical Greek terms (for example, for Aristotle): Technē, or craft, is something done for the sake of some other end: e.g., the technique used in medicine for the end (telos) of making someone healthy; or the technique used in shipbuilding for the end (telos) of building a ship; etc. By contrast, praxis, or acting (action), is done for its own sake: e.g., playing a flute for the sound it makes. This distinction between making and acting helps clarify another distinction important to Aristotelian: that between technē (craft) and aretē (virtue), where aretē, or virtue, is the having of a certain disposition for acting. So: to pursue and possess a virtue—i.e., an excellence or mastery of an art—is to have a certain (proper) disposition to act. This distinction carries over to today’s usage of the terms; for example, we speak of a “technical institute” that trains students in specific trades or crafts or techniques; and of a “liberal arts college” which focuses on training students in mastering various arts or disciplines mastered for the sake of becoming fully flourishing human persons. And this training, for us as Christians, simply means becoming the kind of being God intended us to be: beings made in the image of God (Gen. 1.27), imitating Christ “who is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1.15).

So liberal arts education is education wherein students learn about and take on certain dispositions of acting—the virtues, the arts—which are attendant to a life that is liberated to flourish in the human goods. In other words, liberal arts education is about learning to flourish according to what it means to be human. Again, in view of the previous lecture, we see how education and devotion—word (logos) and worship—are intimately intertwined: Worshipping is an integral part of what it means to flourish; therefore, a liberal arts education is an integral part of a life well-lived which in turn is requisite to a worshipful life. But what does this truth mean practically? What does worshipful liberal arts learning look like?

It is learning built on faith; it is learning to think through all of the academic disciplines—psychology, political science, sociology, history, nursing, and all of the rest—Christianly, Kingdomly, Biblically. Christian liberal arts education is about asking: how the truth of Christian theology applies to this or that discipline; how the
employment of Christian theology transforms (renews) one’s thinking about the discipline in question; how this truth and transformation results in service of the world, i.e., a testimony of the God of Christian theology.

We’ve talked about liberal arts which in turn has led to a discussion about learning-and-life—ideas captured in the first two parts of Biola’s triad of Truth, Transformation, and Testimony. How, then, do these ideas relate to the third topic of today’s lecture, longing for shalom?

Well, to practice what I preach, let’s put on our thinking cap—i.e., let’s think theological. As we shall be reading soon, the grand narrative of Christian theology consists in what we might call the “four-fold doctrine”: Creation, the Fall, Redemption, and Glorification (which Plantinga calls “Vocation in the Kingdom”). Theologically, we know that: “All has been created good . . . [b]ut all has been corrupted by evil” (Plantinga, xv). So, as Plantinga writes: “The point of all this learning is to prepare to add one’s own contribution to the supreme reformation project, which is God’s restoration of all things that have been corrupted by evil” (xii).

Christian theology’s four-fold doctrine helps us understand how education flows from devotion results in transformation.

But why all this talk about learning leading to impact? The reason is two-fold. First, as we’ve been discussing theology, worship, and the gospel are inherently impactful. As his very first commandment, the God we worship charged humanity with the cultural mandate: thus, the invitation to relationship with God (theology) was based on the idea that we are tasked with subduing and caring for creation (society-making). Indeed, the doctrine of humanity being made in the image of God (imago Dei)—albeit controversial exegetical terrain—is arguably fundamentally about “imaging forth God” as we rule with him, caring for and beautifying the world, a world which is fallen but being redeemed. The first reason, then, that I have been emphasizing the importance of impact is because that it is fundamental to the divine imperative of our existence.

Secondly, the reason we talk so much about truth and transformation ultimately as resulting in testimony is that the aim of God’s cosmic redemption project is shalom—that for which all of creation longs. As followers of Jesus, we are to join in the cosmic reconciliation project. As we read in 2 Co. 5.17-21:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. . . . All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; . . . in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you . . . be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And in Romans 8.19-23:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. [T]he creation was subjected to futility . . . in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves . . . groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

In the divine cosmic order of things, truth (2 Co. 5) and transformation (Ro. 8) must lead to testimony—that is, our joining with God in his reconciliation project.

I would like to note that that which God is in the business of doing befits, indeed best fits, our humanity. To help clarify what I mean, let us consider the first question in a historic seventeenth-century document, the Westminster Catechism (Longer and Shorter):

Q. 1. What is the chief and highest end of man?
A. Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.

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I appreciate John Piper’s thesis in his book *Desiring God* wherein he argues that: “The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever” (Piper: 2003, 18). Our worship of God is most complete and correct when premised on the fact that it is joy unimaginable to so worship God. As Piper puts it: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.” I would go on to say that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him, and we are most satisfied in him when we are flourishing according to and within his cosmic reconciliation program. And the aim of this program is *shalom*. Thus, the worship of God—God’s glory—is connected to our joining in his cosmic plan: our contributing to and exercising of human flourishing amounts to the expansion and enhancement of universal shalom and thereby the glory of God. In this way, *shalom* is society-shaping; and society-shaping contributes to *shalom*. And what exactly is *shalom*? According to Plantinga (15), *shalom* is not only peace of mind and cessation of violence, but the state of universal flourishing, wholeness, delight: in short, the way things are supposed to be. Ultimately, it is fallen creation finally fully redeemed; temporarily, it is human flourishing and the worship of God.

And there is real longing in this world: indeed longing colors the whole of creation, both the natural and the social worlds. We see it in our films, our music, our art, and we feel it in ourselves. We want, as Lewis writes (and Plantinga echoes), to go “higher up and further back” (cf. Plantinga, 6). We want to fill the God-shaped hole in our soul. Augustine famously put it: “You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You” (*Confessions*, Bk. 1). Or again, as we read in Scripture: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes, 3.11-12). There is real longing in the world, and our joining in God’s ministry of reconciliation (human flourishing and God’s glory) is aimed at providing the divine and human resources to meet that longing.

There is one final thing I need to say: inner change precedes and extends into world change. This millennial generation is so intensely concerned about and involved in causes for social justice —sociologically, our historical moment has been said to consist in a “movement of movements.” But we must remember that our deeds must originate in our devotion.

### Lecture 4: “The Christian Doctrine of Creation”

Today in our next lecture, we will be looking at the Christian doctrine of Creation. There are three important truths can be derived from this doctrine: (1) that a self-sacrificing life is the most satisfying life; (2) that human persons are inherently communal beings; and (3) that the body matters just as much as the soul. (And with respect to the third truth, there are three important implications we shall consider.)

First, the doctrine of Creation commends a self-sacrificing life as the most satisfying life. Let’s begin by looking at this notion which Plantinga brings up in the reading for today: *perichoresis*. In the Greek, the term literally means: to dance (*choreio*) around (*peri*). (As Plantinga points out, “*perichoresis*” and “choreography” share the same etymological root.) More poetically, *perichoresis* is “divine hospitality”: each person of the Godhead “making room for,” bringing glory to, celebrating the others.

This key theological idea bears on the doctrine of Creation: Christ, who created the *cosmos* (Col. 1.16-17; Jn. 1.1-3), both in the overflow of the Trinitarian *perichoresis* made all things, and in his Incarnation modeled the perfectly flourishing human life, a model according to which: “the way to thrive is to help others to thrive; the way to flourish is to cause others to flourish; the way to fulfill yourself is to spend yourself” (Plantinga, 22). Or, as Jesus himself said, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt. 10.39). Jesus calls us to a love of him, which surpasses even that of our dearest family (v. 38); and this “cost” of discipleship yields the most rewarding, because rightly lived, life. A self-sacrificing life, for the sake of Christ and others, is the most satisfying one. This is the first thing to say about the Christian doctrine of creation: that Christ, who out of *perichoresis* made the universe, also models the perfect perichoretic human life; and that the Christian view of Creation commends and commands a costly, flourishing life of perichoretic, joyful, sacrifice.

The second point to be made about the doctrine of creation is that human persons, created in the image of the Triune, communal God, are inherently communal beings as well. Whereas the first point has to do with living for others, this second point has to do with our living with others. Human persons are naturally relational
beings. From the moment of birth—indeed of conception (!)—to the continuation of life to the moment of death the human need of others is evident and inherent in our being. From pre-natality and nourishment to education and entertainment to parenting to politics—every aspect of human life is thoroughly interactive and dependent on other human (and non-human) beings. No human is an island. (Indeed, even islands are so defined in relation to other geographical bodies!) Every human is a child of some parents; every parent is responsible for a child; every brother is a sibling to another; every human being relates to every other human being, whether directly or distantly, mindfully or merely as a member of the same species.

Hannah Arendt, the famed mid-twentieth century social and political theorist, puts it as follows: “The theatre is the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art.”4 What explains this connection between politics and theatre, Arendt continues, is the fact that “[a]ction . . . is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act” (188). In other words, political action, like dramatic acting, is both others-oriented and effective only “in constant contact with the web of the acts and words of the other men” (188).

Going further, Arendt insightfully observes: “The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember” (95) this social reality. As Arendt reminds us, in the classical world, “to die is the same as ‘to cease to be among men’ . . . no living creature can endure it for any length of time” (20). For this reason, Aristotle could write with little controversy that “man is by nature a political animal.”5 Thus, human persons are not only naturally relational, but necessarily so.6

The third point about the Christian doctrine of creation I would like to point out is that the material matters just as much as the “mind” or soul. Many a controversies have been stirred by suggesting, for example, that the body was too evil for Jesus to inhabit (Docetism), or that all that is material is inherently evil (Gnosticism). But the traditional Christian view is that neither the seen nor the unseen is inherently evil because all of creation (i.e., visible reality) has been created good (!).

And there are three crucial implications that follow from this truth, each of which I spell out further below: (1) that we, being embodied beings, have a sexuality, and that particular sexuality—i.e., male or female—makes a difference; (2) that activities which primarily involve the mind are no more “spiritual” than activities which involve the body; and (3) that creation care counts.

Regarding the first implication, namely, that every human person has a particular sexuality, and that that sexuality makes a difference, we must, standing against the contemporary crippling cultural current, vigilantly maintain and lovingly articulate that sexual differences are grounded in our spiritual-biological natures, not in socially constructed identities. Not all of our cultural progress on sexual issues is misguided: for example, the professional and family roles that traditionally were occupied (nearly) exclusively by men (e.g., doctors, lawyers, etc.) or by women (e.g., homemaker, caretaker, etc.) are now taken up by the other sex. But the “andrognization”—or complete sexual indiscrimination—of male and female human persons, especially among today’s youth, is wrongheaded and culturally destructive. For certain practices, discrimination based on sexuality is morally wrong: paying men employees more than their women counterparts; or worse, favoring and therefore allowing newborn baby boys to live while killing their sisters. (To note, there is a double-evil here: murder (1) based on sexual discrimination (2).) But sometimes discrimination based on sexuality is morally fitting, indeed in some cases biologically required: consider the sanctity of heterosexual marriage (a redundancy by definition) as well as breastfeeding. And such sexual discrimination is necessary because it is natural—i.e., based on the sexed natures of our beings, male and female. On a Christian view, sexuality is spiritual and biological, and has implications which are social; whereas, from the standpoint of our current cultural climate, sexuality, or rather gender, is social, and the implications are indeterminate.

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5 Aristotle, Politics, Blk. 1, Ch. 2.
6 Necessity, I realize, is a nasty if nebulous notion within philosophy; the kind of necessity I have in mind here is a nomological sort, i.e., having to do with nature, specifically human nature (which too is a much-disputed notion). To the disputes over important ideas there seems to be no end.
In other words, discrimination in itself is not wrong; what is immoral is discrimination based on features irrelevant to the issue at hand. So, in the case of a difference in salary amount for male versus female employees is morally wrong since sexuality is not a relevant feature in an employment context. However, on the Christian view at least, discrimination (as it were) on the basis of sexuality in the context of marriage is justified—indeed, morally obligatory—because here sexuality is a relevant feature of the morality of marriage. Being male or female is essential to what it means to constitute a marriage.

Of course, just which features of a particular issue are considered relevant is often the crux of the matter. For those who advocate “homosexual marriage,” sexuality isn’t relevant; for those who favor a traditional view do. There seems to be an interesting irony here: those of the former camp, i.e., those who tend to advocate “homosexual marriage” are also the ones who advocate a gender-identity politics based on the importance of sexual differences; that is, defenders of homosexual rights (including the right to “homosexual marriage”) defend such rights on the assumption that sexuality, specifically homosexuality, is a real, non-negotiable, feature of human personhood, and that this real, non-negotiable, feature makes a real difference.

Our culture is obsessed with having sex, but fails to realize that having sex requires having a sex; and that each one of us having a sex derives from the fact of our having a particular nature from which certain and not other dispositions and activities (such as those listed above) naturally follow. Sexual differences make a difference, and these differences are grounded in our distinct natures.

It is important to note, even if briefly, that not all differences are differences of value; and this truth applies to sexual differences. For example, while it may be the responsibility of the mother to play a dominant role in rearing in the child during its earliest months of existence (including those in the womb!), we wouldn’t conclude that therefore women are sexually more (or less) valuable than men. Or, take the somewhat more controversial example of Biblical male headship: even if (!) one were convinced that the injunction according to which men in marriage are accountable to God as heads-of-the-household is biblically justified, one would not be within his rights to conclude that therefore he is more valuable to God than women are. A difference in role does not necessitate a difference in value.7

Regarding the second implication—that activities of the mind are no more sacred than activities of the body—the words of Martin Luther come ringing to mind: “It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests and monks are called the ‘spiritual estate’ while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the ‘temporal [secular] estate.’ . . . All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference between them.”8

So bodily exercise, baking, and business matter just as much as mental exercise, mentoring, and ministry. That material matters matter as much as (for example) ministry has become an increasingly well-established truism within Evangelicalism today. What is less well received is how this truth applies to the rest of creation—which brings me to the rest and final implication: the creation care counts.

As important insight regarding the Christian’s responsibility for creation care comes from a renown Biblical commentator, Gordon J. Wenham, whose widely referenced commentary on the book of Genesis makes this point: The author of Genesis would have been familiar with the “[a]ncient [Egyptian and Assyrian] kings [who at their best] were . . . devoted to the welfare of their subjects,” ruling them with great “benevolent royalty” (cf. Wenham, p. 33). Therefore, the message in Genesis chapter one is that, in the same way human persons, being made imago Dei, are to rule or more accurately care for creation, doing so as “benevolent royalty”—i.e., as deputies of God. The ancient kings ruled with great care those whom they ruled; likewise, all of creation is to be given divine-like benevolent care by us who are the vice-regents, sub-rulers, of our Benevolent Royalty.

A few final points: The Christian doctrine of Creation underscores three crucial truths:

(1) the purpose of our existence (Isaiah 43:6; Eph. 1:6);
(2) the grandeur of God; and
(3) humanity’s specialness.

7 For more, see Peter Kreeft, Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Heaven (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990).
Lecture 5: “The Christian Doctrine of the Fall”

Today we will be looking at the Christian doctrine of the Fall and (perhaps somewhat unexpectedly) the sociological notion of reification, splitting the lecture into these two parts.

The Christian doctrine of the Fall

The Christian doctrine of the Fall of humanity tells us about the condition in which we find ourselves: as alienated from God and addicted to sin. Our guilt has separated, estranged, alienated us from our own good, our Creator; our corruption we are perverted in our minds, polluted in our hearts, and prone to choose what is wrong, i.e., what is bad for us. (Plantinga is particularly helpful here; cf. 54ff.) Focusing on the corrupting effects of the Fall, Plantinga considers three key effects of the Fall:

(A) Three important effects of humanity’s Fall

One of the key effects resulting from humanity’s fall from grace is a thorough-going perversion of the rest of fallen creation. As Plantinga puts it, perversion involves “turn[ing] God’s gifts away from their intended purpose” (p. 54). An easy example to point to would be the perversion that takes place when one sexually prostitutes oneself, turning God’s good, indeed inestimably good, gift of sex into a commodity that is sold. But this isn’t the only example. Perversion can be instanced in sexual prostitution, but, as Plantinga points out, one could just as easily prostitute one’s mind: God has given to some (more than others) a mind which possesses, say, incredible business acumen; yet this gift of the intellect can be turned into a mechanism for misdealing, fraud, or other perverse ends. Perversion pervades, all too often, the whole of our lives and the society in which we live and which we build.

A second key effect of the fall of humanity has to do with the pollution of our hearts. This effect is played out anytime one “introduces into [an event or relationship] something that doesn’t belong to there” (p. 55). Just as toxic acid pollutes a freshwater stream, so do any elements that do not belong to a given event or relationship pollute the event or relationship in question. A helpful example here might be the dating relationship which (in many cultures) often precedes marriage: When a couple is dating and this dating becomes very intimate, elements of sexual intimacy may be introduced to such an extent and in such a manner which pollutes this otherwise pure relationship. Dating (especially in group settings) is good: it usually helps persons, preferably in the context of community as well as parental and pastoral counsel, have an insight into the person whom they’re considering for marriage. And sex is good: it is a part of God’s created order which he decrees as good. But two good things, when added together in the wrong context or at the wrong time, can be bad. The good of relationship and the good of sexual intimacy have been polluted. Sin has this effect.

The third and final key effect of the fall of humanity can be framed in terms of punishment in the form of addiction. This may seem an odd thing to say: that punishment is an effect of fallenness. Normally, we might want to think of addiction to sin as the cause of the Fall—not the effect of fallenness: that is, in its attraction and addition to sin, humanity chose to turn away from God and therefore fell. But when we speak of addition to sin as punishment resulting from the Fall, we are talking about the way in which, given our having chosen not-God, we have been given over to our perverted and polluted desires and ways (Ro. 1.21-32) such that we now second-naturedly (against our original nature) continue to choose what is perverted and polluted. Our addiction to sin is a punishment and in this way an effect rather than a cause of the Fall. A particularly poignant illustration of this idea of addiction to sin as punishment comes from C. S. Lewis who writes:

The Germans, perhaps, at first ill-treated the Jews because they hated them: afterwards they hated them much more because they had ill-treated them. The more cruel you are, the more you will hate; and the more you hate, the more cruel you will become—and so on in a vicious circle for ever (Mere Christianity, 131-132).

At first, the Nazi soldiers killed the Jews because they hated them; later they hated them because they killed them. Sin has a punishing effect which comes in the form of addition to itself—and this vicious cycle is a result of the Fall. Or as the Apostle Paul puts it:

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me (Ro. 7:19-20).
In sum, the guilt which distances us from our God and the corruption which destroys us within ourselves and in relation to others are self-presenting realities that no rightly thinking person would deny. But the problem is that because of our fallen nature we are (all too) often not thinking rightly; that is, we do not see things as they really are, as God sees them. And this self-deception is not just a psychological description of a mental disorder: it is a real problem for all of us to some extent or another (cf. Jer. 17.9-10), a problem which results from our having fallen deeply, drastically, and quite detrimentally. In brief, in our fallenness we are alienated from the good and addicted to what is evil.

(B) The specifically intellectual effect of the Fall
There is a specifically intellectual effect of the Fall that I would like to touch on, if for no other reason than the fact that we are in a university in which intellectual exercise counts for a whole lot, to put it mildly. To discuss this point, there are two concepts or Christian doctrines that may prove helpful: the Doctrine of the Transcendentals and the Doctrine of the Total Depravity. Let's take each in turn.

Simply put, the Medieval doctrine of the Transcendentals suggests that there are certain transcending categories under which fall any and all objects—whether concrete such as artifacts or persons, or abstract such as ideas or ideals. Put differently, there are certain descriptions of objects which apply to every object in existence or even conceivable. The descriptions or categories are the Transcendentals of goodness, truth, and beauty, since any given object, person, idea can be described in terms of goodness, truth, or beauty.

Think of it: indeed, think of any particular artifact, person, or idea, and notice that it can be described in terms of one or more of the Transcendentals. Everything from animals (e.g., a good dog) and plants (e.g., a beautiful rose) to mathematical principles (e.g., a true theorem) and moral facts (e.g., harming the innocent is evil)—all such things belong to some transcendental or other. Arguably, nothing exists which isn’t good or evil, true or false, or beautiful or distorted. To be sure, there are gradations of goodness, truth, and beauty—indeed, this truth is what’s beautiful about this doctrine (!): that is, every baby could be morally better, or more evil; some religious traditions are truer, or less true, than others; every sentence could be written more, or less, beautifully than others (including this rather lengthy and clumsy one!). In short, these properties, which apply to every existing object, transcend the objects which they describe, and are thereby called “transcendentals.” And goodness, truth, and beauty are the standard transcendentals (originating in Platonic thought and further developed by Christian medieval theologians).

How is any of this philosophical jargon related to Christian theology and human flourishing? Answer: by way of the doctrine of the Fall. Allow me to explain. Because of the noetic (Grk. nous = mind) effects of the Fall, humanity is inclined to distrust God’s ways and His word and to distort the world which he created. (See Gen. 3.1-6; cf. 2.15-17.) God’s ways reflect true goodness and his goodness toward His us, his creatures; His word—whatever He says—is truth which can be trusted; and his world (including the heavens) declares His glory, or tiferet, which is Hebrew for “beauty.” Yet, in our postlapsarian state, we frequently misperceive what is good, true, and beautiful, and thereby flagrantly misrepresent goodness, truth, and beauty in and to the world around us and ourselves. We utter falsehoods—sometimes knowingly as when we deceive, and other times unwittingly as when we are mistaken; we make bad art; we treat others and ourselves wickedly. In short, the tragic opposites of goodness, truth, and beauty—i.e., degeneration, deception, and destruction abound in us and in the world because of us.

Sometimes these instances of ugliness are the result of deliberate intent; other times they are the result of accident; still other instances result from a sincere effort to bring about what is good (or true or beautiful), but simply doesn’t pass muster. In other words, because our minds are corrupted by the noetic effects of the Fall, the world is filled with ills resulting from fabrication, failure, or finitude, or some admixture of these.

One important implication of this point about the doctrine of the Transcendentals and the doctrine of the Fall is that we, who are in Christ, have as a fundamental calling on our lives to redeem and reconcile all things according to the way in which God saw as good (2 Co. 5.17-21; cf. Gen. 1.31). In other words, we are to bring out and bring about goodness, truth, and beauty (GTB) in the world. We must produce artifacts, construct political structures, and lead lives which contribute to the net GTB in the world. Redemption simply means restoring the value of something as originally made. That is a fundamental call for those in Christ.
What, then, about the second doctrine, the doctrine of Total Depravity, in relation to Doctrine of the Fall? Simply put this doctrine suggests that, on this side of eternity, humanity will never be as good as it could be since “evil contaminates everything”9; at the same time, we must keep in mind that presence of divine grace, coupled with the work of divine redemption, means that humanity will never be as evil either. In the words of Augustine, the city of God and the city of man “are entangled together in this world [saeculum]” until the final judgment at the eschaton.10

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn puts it: “If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?” And “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart.”

Or, as Jesus describes it, there are both wheat and tares in a given field, and until the “harvest [at] the end of the age” (Mt. 13.39), we will not know which is which. We must take seriously the depravity of humanity—and therefore not negotiate with terrorists, for example—while also recognizing and thanking God for the presence of divine “common grace” which keeps the universe and history running.

So: while we take seriously the doctrine of Total Depravity and the effects it has on fallen humanity, we also know that there is truth to be found in other worldviews and world citizens.

_The sociological notion of reification_

This discussion about the wheat and the tares, the city of God and the city of man, brings me to the next (and final) point of this lecture which has to do with the notion of reification. The point here is: given the reality of a fallen world, when we set out to redeem it with the transcendents, we would do well to recognize the sociological impact made by certain instances of GTB, or tragically by their opposites of degeneration, deception, and distortion. The impact made has crucially to do with the notion of reification. But what, in layperson’s terms, in the world (literally) are we talking about here? Well, let’s define our terms.

To reify (Lt. rēs = thing) an object means to perceive a given human construction or cultural phenomenon as a bare fact or nonnegotiable aspect of reality. For example, whether we enter into a government building (or an entire political system for that matter!) or encounter the game of baseball (or even the baseball itself!), and if we perceive the building or the baseball as something more than a human construction which exists as a function of a collective recognition that it exists, then we reify that object.11 To put simply (if roughly): acting as if some social-cultural (or political) object is unchangeable or nearly so is to reify that object. Some examples may help.

When one is purchasing food at the grocery store (rather than simply walking away with it); when a basketball player draws a foul; when a Nazi officer claims to have been “just taking orders”—in all these instances of cultural-social life, a process of reification is taking place (some more fatal than others of course). Grocery stores, basketball games, and military operations all require a degree of reification in order to exist and function the way they do. Arguably, every single human society engenders and encounters reification.12 This discussion seems fine and fairly trivial, even if unusual. So what does it have to do with the doctrine of the Fall, and of thinking theologically through the whole of life? The answer has largely to do with media.

Because media—whether the new social media, or traditional forms such as radio, theatre, and news broadcasts—because they have a particular immediacy about them, we tend to reify what is being

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9 Plantinga, _Engaging God’s World_, 60.
10 See Augustine, _The City of God_, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1886 [ca. A.D. 416-422]), Bk. 16, Ch. 26; Bk. 1, Ch. 35.
11 Berger defines reification as: “Reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products—such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will” in Peter Berger, _The Social Construction of Reality_ (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 33.
communicated, especially when they are emotionally charged.\textsuperscript{13} This isn’t to say, however, that all reification is evil; certainly not: buying (healthy) food at the store is usually good and necessary, and stores are reified realities. What I’m suggesting is that media tends to reify ways of understanding the world into one’s mind and more broadly into culture such that when it comes to redeeming the world for Christ’s glory and our good, it is utterly crucial to create cultural goods which evince and exude goodness, truth, and beauty rather than degeneration, deception, and distortion. In other words, redeeming the world has crucially to do with reifying the transcendentals.

By the way, not all non-Christian music falls under the curse of EFD. In other words, not all so-called secular music is profane: there is often something redemptive (to greater or lesser degrees) in secular songs. To restate what was said earlier: truth—and beauty and goodness—is to be found wherever God’s grace has allocated it; and his grace is allocated throughout the universe. Again drawing on Augustine: “[L]et every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to its Master.”\textsuperscript{14}

So, in connecting this notion of reification to our first lecture wherein we discussed the three Rs of Christian theological cultural analysis, I would like to point out three Rs which are important to keep in mind when considering the sociological explanations and effects of a given social phenomenon or artifact: viz., the way in which certain media not only reflect a given culture, but also reinforce the perceived values and views of that culture, and in turn reify these perceptions as reality. Plantinga writes: “all of life is sacred: the whole of it stands under the blessing, judgment, and redeeming purposes of God” (xv).

There are two key lessons to learn here: (1) given fallen human nature, we can see that addiction in reification (doctrine of the Fall); and (2) we can redeem the world with GTB, reifying these transcendentals.

\textbf{Lecture 6: Forming a Christian Worldview—Summary (Guest lecturer)}

\textit{In today’s lecture, we want to: (1) summarize the fundamental elements of a Christian worldview—i.e., the four-fold theological theme of Creation-Fall-Redemption-Glorification/Vocation; (2) define what a worldview is; and (3) list a number of non-Christian worldviews. Let’s begin with (2).}

\textbf{Defining a worldview}

A worldview is one’s set of ABCs: affections, beliefs, and commitments. We come to the world with particular affections (in our hearts) that arise out of and also shape, various beliefs (in our heads)—both of which lead to certain commitments (which move our hands). Over time our commitments, in turn, shape and color our beliefs and affections, forming in us a certain character—out of which further affections, beliefs, and commitments arise. One’s worldview colors and conditions the way we think, act, hope, and pray. In other words, a worldview both describes and guides the way one interacts with the world, others, and oneself.

In analogical terms, a worldview is perhaps not so much like a pair of eyeglasses but a pair of eyes (cf. Ryken, 8); not what we see through but what we see with. It’s the ABCs of our soul. As Lewis writes: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else” (C. S. Lewis, “Is Theology Poetry” in \textit{The Weight of Glory}).

\textbf{The foundational elements of a Christian worldview}

A Christian worldview, then, provides a thematic framework—viz., the four-fold doctrine of CFRG—through which to view the world and by which we live our lives. As Ryken puts it, the Christian worldview helps us “gain God’s perspective on why any particular thing was made in the first place (Creation), what has gone wrong with it (Fall), how we can begin to find its recovery in Jesus Christ (Grace), and what it will be like in the end (Glory)” (Ryken, 10). A Christian worldview provides a framing answer to the questions: Why is there something rather than nothing? What is the human condition? What is the answer to the problem of evil (not so much why there is evil—although perhaps this too—but how do we deal with the evil and sin found in the human condition)? And how will it all end?

\textsuperscript{13} To note, traditional media (songs and films) tends to have a greater tendency toward reification than social media mainly because the former are uni-directional whereas the latter are interactive.

\textsuperscript{14} St. Augustine, \textit{On Christian Doctrine}, Blk. 2, Ch. 18, Sec. 28.
Worldview—the Key that Unlocks the Door to Everything?
Many Christian (and other) thinkers and theologians seem to suggest that worldviews are the silver bullet, the solution to all of the problems of humanity and most especially for Christians the problem of hypocrisy. On this point, is there anything we would add to Ryken’s diagnosis, his critique, of the problem of Christians’ not living up to their identity in Christ? (See pp. 10-11.)

Worldviews plus world-setting
I used to think that whenever followers of Christ failed to live up to the name of Christ it was because of a lack of a robust enough worldview. “If they just thought correctly about God and his world and his ways, they would live rightly; they would close the hypocritical gap between what we believe (doctrine) and how we live (life).” But what I failed to see is that there are conditions we find in this world—our world-setting—which must be accounted for when evaluating the doctrine-life gap (cf. 1 Tim. 4.16). These conditions are not used as an excuse for the hypocrisy we see; yet should be considered as real parts of the analyzing the doctrine-life gap. Christian sanctification, then, is a function not just of worldviews, but also of world-settings.

Ex. of world-setting affecting worldview
Five cult members kill a woman with a baby at McDonald’s in a province in south China. How does theology matter? I’m not interested in censoring cults per se. (There is a deep and important tradition of religious freedom within Christian history.) But in illustrating how world-settings inform worldviews, and why academic analysis matters with regard to theological integrity, we can—indeed must—consider how social movements such as cults begin and end, and accordingly utilize such analysis to combat cults both sociologically as well as doctrinally. Anthropology and sociology matter because it informs and improves on our theology.

The Virtues of a Worldview
That said, there are very specific implications which follow from the fact that worldviews impact on our way of life: for example, the Christian doctrine of Creation informs our worldview in such a way that we know how to view and therefore interact with the created world. To spell this example out, consider the question: What is the Christian’s stance toward created goods such as the God-ordained institution of marriage? What about baseball games and BBQs? Or mission trips versus music concerts? Or friendships for their own sake (rather than for the sake of eventually evangelizing them)? Or making money?

Yes, enjoyment is Christian so long as it is enjoyment in Christ. St Augustine in his On Christian Doctrine makes a helpful distinction between use of a good versus enjoyment of a good. Augustine argues that we can enjoy created goods (including persons in friendships or marriage) insofar as we enjoy them in God. I used to argue: (romantic) love is for marriage and marriage is for the kingdom; but ... and Francis Chan says similarly: rather than focusing on the family, we need to focus on the mission to which our families are called. However, RC teaching (going back to Augustine) suggests that there is a proper place to enjoy created goods “in the Lord” (On Christian Doctrine, Ch. 33, Sec. 37).

Secondly, such enjoyment is a way to worship. One way to glorify God is to enjoy him as Creator—to thank him for all the good he has made. And to enjoy our Creator God involves enjoying (not worshiping, of course) what he has created. Ryken lists some created goods: marriage, family, communities and cultures, work (Gen. 2.15), rest and recreation (18-22). We also enjoy creation, and its Creator, by exploring it: so science, music (which involves discovering the musical laws inherent in nature), the arts (which imitates the realities found in nature)—all these exploration glorify our creator God.

A list of non-Christian worldviews
Finally, in advance of your CWA assignment: see Ryken pp. 11-18 and 40 for a smattering of worldviews: deism (11), naturalism (11, 40), secular humanism (12), Buddhism (12), Hinduism (12, 40), Native American spirituality (12), New Age paganism (16), pantheism (16, 40), atheistic materialism (16), existentialism (18). The point of this assignment is for you to become sufficiently familiar with a particular non-Christian worldview that you could detect it when found in culture and critique (plurivocally) from the perspective of a Christian worldview.
Lecture 7: “The Christian Doctrine of Redemption”

A helpful (if obvious) principle of biblical studies goes as follows: there’s less contest about what a text says in view of its context. As we consider the biblically wide view of Christian Redemption, let us look (even if briefly) at several passages which should serve as a useful overall framework regarding this important Christian doctrine. Then, we’ll discuss the resurrection of our Lord as we consider the theological foundation of Redemption. In other words, we’re looking at: What is the doctrine of Redemption? And how is it Christian—that is, how is it not mere humanistic moralism?

**Biblical basis**

Let’s begin with Acts 10.9-15. As the Holy Spirit of God is beginning to establish the Early Church, some of its would-be leaders—the Apostle Peter, in this passage—are being trained (by God himself!) on certain foundational theological matters, one of which has to do with the Mosaic Law of the Old Covenant. Is it lawful to eat only certain kinds of foods made from particular animals, and not others? Or is all that God has made indeed “clean”? The resounding answer from the Lord of all creation is that all creation is of the Lord.

Not only are all things of the Lord, but they are also “for the Lord.” Connecting this doctrine of the good of all creation in Acts 10 with another biblical passage, we know that without question all things are for our Lord—truly all things, from government heads to gourmet dishes: “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities”; again, “all things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1.16). Here is yet another reason why all of life is worship: because all that we have and do and say and think are avenues through which to worship the Creator who is Lord over all that we have and do and say and think about.

Going further, Paul details the list of “all things” in another passage found in 1 Timothy chapter four where he argues as follows: We must spurn those who “devot[e] themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,” teachings with which they “forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created” (vv. 1-3). For, contrary to such demonic teaching (!), Paul reminds us that “everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer” (vv. 4-5). Everything in life is to be enjoyed and engaged in their own right—e.g., proper marriage, various foods, political life, hip hop culture—insofar as they are enjoyed and engaged as one prayerfully considers what the word of God has to say about them. (To note, this is why not any form of “marriage” goes; it’s also why we can’t rightly claim that all “music” is “just music”; and so on. For St. Paul argues that, for followers of Christ, prayerful understanding of the word of God is prerequisite to analyzing the sacredness of any given human activity, institution, or endeavor.)

This seemingly new lesson given for and from the leaders of the Early Church is really not so new at all. As we read in Genesis chapter 1, verse 31: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” Of course, given the doctrine of the Fall, we understand that the world and all that is in it has been deeply marred by the groaning effects of sin and evil. For this reason, as we saw earlier, all of creation longs for restoration, shalom. And this is precisely where redemption comes in: all those in Christ are made new for the sake of joining with God in making all things new (2 Cor. 5.17-21).

So, then: Acts 10 alongside 1 Timothy 4, undergirded by Colossians 1 and Genesis 1, should help us to take on a very wide view of a Christian theology of redemption—a biblically wide view indeed!

Before moving on to the final section of this chapter (on the importance of Christian critique), I would like for us to consider why Redemption is not (merely) humanism. That is, how is participating in God’s cosmic redemptive project different from merely living morally? The answer lies in the resurrection of our Lord undergird.

There are three key ways that the doctrine of Redemption is connected to the Resurrection of our Lord: (1) by personal identification—in salvation we die and rise again with Christ (cf. Ro. 6.4-8); (2) by communal membership—we enter into a community which reflects the message of the Resurrection by our very life together, i.e., from liturgical practices such as the eucharist to the “mercy ministries” of serving at the local soup kitchen (cf. Ro. 12-13); and (3) by verbal proclamation—individually and collectively we announce the
good news of the basis of Christian redemption, i.e., the Resurrection (cf. Ro. 10.9-17; 1 Co. 15).\textsuperscript{15} In these three ways—by participation in the death and new life of Christ, by participation in the Body of Christ (his Church), and by participation in the gospel of Christ—we redeem the world for Christ. Interestingly, we can sum up these connections between Redemption and the resurrection of our Lord as follows: with our lives, our liturgy, and lips we redeem the world in a way that is connected to the foundational reason for such redemption, namely, the resurrection of the Son of God.

So: when we build universities and hospitals; when we start NGOs and for-profit companies; when we create art and build arguments; when we attend church service and prioritize mid-week small group meetings—in all these acts, we are participating in the redemption of this world. Likewise, when authors write books (and live out their theses!) on creation care; when engineers travel 10,000 miles to help rebuild a city devastated by an earthquake; when sociologists, psychologists, and journalists critique something in the public square; when parents raise another generation of faithful followers of Jesus—in all these acts, again we redeem the world. We must keep in mind (again) that intimacy precedes impact. Theologically: the indicative drives the imperative (Eph. Chs. 1 and 4; 2 Co. 5.17-21).

**Critique a crisis**

Speaking of critique: this is a very important concept. The notion of critique has originally to do with the idea of correctly assessing and suggesting a remedy for a given crisis (Gr. krisis) infecting the public life of a given society. Making critique a key part of one's engagement with the world—one's participation in redemption—is a very Christian thing to do. Indeed, it is rather Judeo-Christian in that the prophets of old were essentially the equivalent of a modern-day social critic: they stood (sometimes literally) on the margins of society, looked into a given malaise of sin in the community, and offered a critical word for the health of its people.

In Ecclesiastes we read that there is a time for building up and a time for tearing down (cf. 3.1-8); and tearing down is not just physical: it's also intellectual. But the intellectual “tearing down” is not done for its own sake. Almost anyone can say what is wrong with a given state affairs. Rather, critique is different from mere complaint in that true critique—i.e., Christian redemption—is a “tearing down” which ultimately seeks to edify or “build up”—i.e., to redeem the goodness, truth, beauty that has been lost. As an example of critiquing a cultural artifact through a Christian worldview, an artifact which we must remember is situated always within a given cultural world-setting.

I would like to end with three principles of Christian Redemption. A theologically and practically Christian way to redeem the world with GTB is:

1. ... by Appreciation not Absorption (Ro. 12.2).
2. ... in Between war and wonderment
3. ... through Communities/networks

**Lecture 8: ”Vocation & our GPS in the Kingdom of God”**

*Calling, Vocation, Profession*

There are three terms which often get confused and conflated: calling, vocation, and profession. The first two of these terms are essentially synonyms; the third is quite distinct. That said, the first two terms have a primary as well as a secondary sense in which they can be understood (from the Christian perspective, at least); hence, the confusion and conflation.

The term “vocation” comes from the Latin verb "vocare" which in English means “to call.” And “calling” in English means, well, calling. So these two words in English have the same meaning, making it easy to confuse. So: rather than confusing them, it would be better to use the terms largely interchangeably—i.e., to refer to the same idea. But a problem arises, often in conversation, as one asks another “What is your vocation?” when one actually means to ask “What is your profession?” Well, “What’s the difference?” you ask. It's quite straightforward: whereas vocation or calling refers to that arena of analysis, activity, and asking for which

\textsuperscript{15} For more on the connections between Redemption and the resurrection, see Plantinga, Engaging God’s World, pp. 81-100.
one is uniquely gifted and unquestioningly passionate; one's profession or job is that activity—usually between 9am and 5pm (often for a season in one's life) in which one carries out much, but not all, of one's calling. (Recently, it isn't uncommon if one were to hold multiple professions throughout one's lifetime, even concurrently at times, all of which is aimed at fulfilling one's vocation.) In brief, vocation includes profession but goes beyond it. Pointing to one's profession is often simple: a profession inevitably is marked with a title easily recognizable by others (not the least of whom is the income tax agency of one's nation!); whereas, defining one's vocation is usually a bit more difficult. (The difficulty is a function of the ultra-personal nature of vocations: it involves so much of one's being, e.g., one's identity, passions, gifts, and goals.)

Now, there is one further (and final) element to complicate (with the hope of clarifying) the picture: for the follower of Christ, vocation or calling has two senses: there are what Os Guinness calls "primary" and "secondary" callings (cf. Guinness, The Call). Our primary calling, as a follower of Christ, has to do with the One who calls us to follow. All of life is sacred; so everything counts as worship. And these truths imply that we live the whole of our lives in response to the "glorious grace" for which and by which we have been saved (cf. Eph. 1.5-6). That is, we live our lives as a response to the One who calls us to "deny [ourselves] and take up [the] cross and follow [him]" (Mk. 8.34). This primary calling invites us to explore, develop, and engage in our secondary callings: again, that arena of analysis, activity, and asking for which one is uniquely gifted and unquestioningly passionate. And our secondary calling gets explored in and eventually expressed through a myriad of ways, including (and usually most obviously) the various professions one holds throughout the course of one's life.

Secondary Callings
Having foregrounded the notion of primary calling and having distinguished secondary calling from career or profession, let us next now outline somewhat concretely how one might discern one's "vocation in the Kingdom" or secondary calling. In doing so, I shall begin with a few caveats.

Secondary callings as strategic
First, with regard to Kingdom vocation, sanctity and strategy are not mutually exclusive. In other words, that all of life is sacred does not imply that all that what we choose to do professionally is just as strategic in terms of Kingdom purposes as anything else. The need to be strategic about our profession means that we need to take account of what it means to "serve[] the purpose of God" in our generation (cf. Acts 13.36).

If, for example, the whole of the Christian universal church "felt called" to basket-weaving, something has gone wrong, dreadfully wrong (and it's not because I have some against this often beautiful craft). We need to think carefully and prayerfully—indeed strategically—as we consider where the Holy Spirit of God is working and where he would want us to spend the majority of our waking hours, laboring for God's Kingdom. Yes, all of life is sacred and therefore an act of our spiritual worship (Ro. 12.1); at the same time, we must apprehend the cultural-social, and indeed global, moment we're in so as to serve in "God's purposes in this generation" both faithfully and fruitfully. So: there are some secondary callings which are more strategic than others; or, more precisely, there are ways to deploy one's secondary calling more strategically than others.

A caveat: Just as intensely as we discern strategic callings, we can easily squeeze out the Spirit's work of simply speaking to us. Alternatively, we can begin to think that certain professions are more crucial than others. As Plantinga points out, John Calvin suggested that political life was the most important work of the Christian (109). Neither Spirit-less strategy nor secularist strategy is right: we must be thoughtful, reflective, and discerning while also relying on the Spirit of God and the Church community to give us "understanding of the times" (cf. 1 Ch. 12.32; Prov. 20.18).

Secondary callings as sacred
Secondly, there are some secondary callings which are more "sacred," in a sense, than others. As we have argued many times before, all of life is sacred. That said, there are some things in life—initiatives, activities, thoughts, industries, institutions—which obviously are more sacred than others. For example, the sex-trafficking "industry" is about as sacred as hell; social workers do more sacred work than the pornographers. In brief, there are things which are either more redeemed or redemptive than other things. (Consider also: poverty-reduction versus pornography; singing praises from a pure heart versus shouting at one's spouse; communion versus communism.) [Cf. 2 Tim. 2.20-21.]
Gifts and Passions in Service of God’s Purposes: GPS in the Kingdom

A simple yet perhaps rather precise way of discerning one’s secondary calling can be abbreviated with the acronym “GPS”—Gifts and Passions in Service of God’s Purposes in this Generation. There are in the Kingdom of God spaces in the world and holes in the human heart which need filling with GTB. Human trafficking in the Global South; rising suicide rates among the youth in Asia; the multi-trillion dollar mental health care industry in the US ($2.8T in 2012); as well as philosophy textbooks which need more truth; music and fashion which cry for more beauty; business which lacks goodness—all such needs (some more urgent; others more long-term) call for good and godly services to be rendered. And by considering the needs in the Kingdom and the unique GPS which are to be put into service of these needs, perhaps we have a clue, a very sound clue, to our secondary callings. Before moving on, let us take some time to unpack each of the terms that comprise the acronym “GPS.”

Gifts. Our gifts are those capacities to engender GTB, the exercise of which comes naturally to us. In exercising our gifts, we feel most like ourselves. Take as example, the gift of: public speaking, or hospitality, or film-making, or networking, or coordinating large events, or connecting affectively with victims of abuse, or caring for the sick, or envisioning a business. Some of these gifts come naturally to some; others to others. We each have a gift or several (Ro. 12; 1 Co. 12).

It may be helpful to distinguish between gift and skill: A gift, generally speaking, is a native ability, whereas a skill is trained over time; and given such training, potentially any able-bodied and -minded human person could perform a given skill. (Everyone can be trained in the skill of picking ripe apples; not everyone has the gift of developing a business to trade apples internationally.) It should be noted that the line between gift and skill is blurry at the edges. Consider, for example, painting, drawing, playing soccer, golfing: while some of us are ingeniously gifted at one or more of these activities, with enough training others of us will make a great skill out of them (even if this training is had rather late in life). The line between the gift of painting and skill of it is hard to draw (no pun intended); and I suppose most of us lie somewhere along these lines.

It is interesting to note that etymologically the term “gift” connotes (unsurprisingly) the idea of giving of oneself to contribute to the good of others; and the exercise of our gifts is something that others should enjoy.

Passions. Passions are those dispositions of the heart in virtue of which we deeply desire to engender GTB. If exercising our gifts makes us feel most like ourselves, then expressing our passions make us feel most alive. Our passions often: dominate our thought-life; drive us to work; inspire us to dream; make us wish things were different; keep us awake; wake us up; make us wait; cause us to pray; get us talking as well as draw us into silent pondering; stir our souls. Accordingly, in order to discern what our deepest passions may be, it would be helpful to turn these features of passions into question form: What inspires me to dream? What makes me wish things were different? What keeps me awake or wakes me up? What do I love to pray and/or talk about? What upsets me because it upsets God?

Whereas superficial desires come and go, passions have staying power. Of course, occasionally we will need to kindle them; but for the most part, our passions have a way of becoming a part of who we are—indeed, they shape our thinking, our feeling, our modus operandi.

A helpful way of thinking about one’s passions may be as follows: a deep and thought-through desire to see the values of the Kingdom—i.e., the transcendentals (GTB)—reflected, reinforced, and reified in the world of: e.g., human trafficking; global (or local) poverty; politics; business ethics; academic scholarship; popular culture (films, songs, fine art, museum curacy, radio studios, tour buses, concert venues); primary/secondary school education; professional sports; social media; laws; and nearly infinitely much more. Passions are those dispositions of the heart in virtue of which we seek to engender GTB, and which we just wouldn’t mind if we felt more deeply about.

Where the exercise of our gifts is something others enjoy, the expression of our passions is something we enjoy. And it ought to be both: We cannot afford to live out our secondary callings only because others enjoy
that we do so;\textsuperscript{16} nor can we live only for our own passions simply because we enjoy doing so. We must consider our gifts (what others enjoy our doing) AND our passions (what we ourselves enjoy doing).

\textit{Serving God's Purposes.} Finally, we must discern our gifts and passions, and deploy them in the service of God's purposes in our generation. In Acts 13.36, as part of a single-sentence summary of his life, we read that King David “had served the purpose of God in his own generation.” How we spend our lives matters gravely; and how we decide to spend our lives—taking into account what God seems to be doing in his cosmic redemption program in our generation and geography—matters even more. We could spin our wheels, so to speak, doing what we think is good or true or beautiful, and indeed they may well be so in and of themselves; but how much greater is it to align our analyses (thought), activities (work), and asking (prayer) with the global purposes of God in our historical moment.

In sum: one’s (primary) calling is first and foremost to the Caller, and then to the myriad of analyses, activities, and askings which overflow from our devotion to him.

\textit{A Final Word of Encouragement}
There is a sort of personal redemption that we should keep in mind with regard to the myriad of major decision we must make in our lives. Often many of us fear of making the wrong decision: whether having to do with marriage, a job, a career, or even which social event to attend on the weekend. What we can take comfort in is the heartening fact that God is the God of redemption, which includes (perhaps especially) redeeming less than perfect decisions. So redemption flattens fear. (See Joseph’s story in Gen. 37-50.)

\textit{Summary and transition}
Given that everyone has a worldview and given the implications of the doctrine of the Fall—that (among other things) all learning is “socially-located” or “committed” learning (cf. Plantinga, 67)—it is crucial to have reliable foundations or sources for one’s worldview. Where could we go to find such a trustworthy source, one more certain and reliable than any other? Where do we climb to find our Archimedean point? It seems we would do well to follow (in this case) the example of the Apostle Peter. In the gospel of John chapter six, St. Peter, on behalf of himself and the other disciples, responded rather prophetically when asked whether they too wanted to leave the Lord in view of his hard teachings, by confessing: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

If we are to grasp the reality of this world—what is good, true, beautiful about it, and what is not—it would seem to make good sense if we were to consult the words of the one who made this world. And it would seem that if the Lord of creation has a word for his creation, then in consulting this word (Scripture)—i.e., drawing deeply from its well, indeed meditating on it—we might begin to get a grasp of the truth of ourselves, this world, and most importantly himself.

\textsuperscript{16} There are almost always exceptions. Consider Mother Teresa who, serving in the poorest of the poor in Calcutta for most of her life, did so mainly because she just felt it was the right thing to do.