CURRICULA
and
A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW
Your worldview effects your curriculum

- Your worldview...undergrinds how you view curriculum and curriculum planning. Conversely, the sum total of all educational decisions you make reflects your worldview.

- Van Brummelen (1988:86)
Definition of a worldview

- The comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things.

Wolters 1986:2
Characteristics of worldviews

• Tendency towards pattern and coherence
• An attempt to unify and integrate beliefs in an inclusive way.
• It is pre-scientific. One can say that a worldview lies more on the level of wisdom about life and common sense than on the level of academic knowledge
SEE THINGS AS A WHOLE

• To see things interrelated as a whole is to get one’s bearings on the map of life, to know one’s way in the confusing interplay of ideas, to find relatedness in what we do

• Holmes 1985:3
THE CHURCH’S FAILURE

- The church’s (theological Institutions?) singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system, or worldview, that governs every area of existence. This failure has been crippling in many ways

  - Colson and Pearcey
THE NEED FOR A DEPENDABLE WORLDVIEW

• My personal experience in life was that when an integral Christian worldview grips one’s heart, a new world opens up. It brings light into the darkness. It orientates, motivates and inspires. It is liberating. Just as a ship cannot navigate the stormy sea without a rudder, chart, compass and anchor, one should not attempt one’s life’s journey without a dependable worldview.

• Van der Walt 2008:11
Young people need to survive worldview challenges

- Christian education is likely to be an exercise in futility if it does not prepare our young people to confront and survive the worldview challenges that they will surely meet as soon as they leave the security of the Christian home, and probably even while they are still living at home and being educated in a Christian environment, due to the pervasive influence of the media and the Internet.

- Pearcey 2004:12
A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

• This is an attempt to write a biblical worldview on the basic big questions asked in worldviews about God, sin, nature and man in all his relationships

• It is done from an interpretation of Reformed principles.
GOD AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS CREATION

God maintains his creation through the Son

- God did not create and then left His creation, no, He is still, creatively active in His creation, maintaining it by His involvement through the Son and the Holy Spirit.
THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST

• For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Col. 1:16 -17)

• Jesus is the origin and end of all things; nothing has meaning apart from Him. Nothing exists apart from Him (Psalms.2; 8; 110; and Phil 2:5 -11).
IMPLICATION FOR CURRICULA

• If not yet existing in curricula then the appeal is to give Christ His rightful place as the Alpha and Omega of everything (Rev. 22:13).

• The suggestion is then that the Theological institutions should scrutinize their curricula to see to what extend it is Christ centric.
All creation is called upon to glorify and to enjoy God.

• The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks: “What is the chief end of man?” The answer given is profound: “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

• It’s a staggering thought that man can know and glorify and enjoy the sovereign God, fulfilling his purpose through their lives.
IMPLICATION FOR CURRICULA

• If the perception exists that the Christian tradition is all about “gloom and doom” then it should be eradicated in curricula.

• A joyful spirit should therefore also prevail in classrooms and on campus as part of the so-called “hidden curriculum.”
Man received delegated powers and freedom.

- Man, as the image of God, can, and should, become God’s representative in all spheres of life – he has received delegated powers to do so. Man is, after all, the crown of the Trinitarian God in this world.
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• A biblical orientated worldview should emphasize the fact that the students should be creatively God’s representatives, not only in the church environment but also in the social, economic and political spheres.
Man serves either the true god or an idol.

- Often that idol is something concrete, like financial security or professional success; in other cases, it may be an ideology or set of beliefs that substitutes for religion. Whatever form the idolatry takes, according to Romans 1:18 those who worship idols actively suppress their knowledge of God, while seeking out substitute gods. They are far from religiously neutral (Pearcey 2004:40).
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• The supreme sovereign God of Scriptures should be the underscoring principle in curricula of theological.

• Students should be made aware of different modern idols and philosophies that can subtract them and others to serve the only living God.
IN WHAT KIND OF REALITY/WORLD ARE WE LIVING IN?

• The universe’s beauty, design, order and regularity reflect God’s glory – his infinite wisdom, power and sovereign nature (Samples 2007:93).

• One can thus say that man lives basically in a good world.
THEOLOGY OF CREATION

• We must move away from a theology of salvation and redemption to a theology of creation. The saving God is the same as the God of creation.... To separate them and to concentrate only on saving and redeeming the world is to deny creation. We are not destined to be saved from this world, but in this world.

— Donovan 1990:112
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• This world is our good home – it is here that we are being called to serve the Lord and our fellowmen and to rule wisely over nature, the animals, plants and the water. Ecology should indeed form an important part of all curricula.
What went wrong?

- Sin still has a comprehensive and destructive influence in this world.
- Man is not intrinsically good but still has the ability to choose what is right and what is wrong.
THE EFFECT OF SIN

• The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4).
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• Well aware of the sinfulness of man, a biblical curriculum will not breathe a spirit of “triumphantalism.” It will be realistic and sober about the devastating effects of sin in all spheres of life – also on the minds of people - including on that of theologians. Man should take responsibility for a lot of things happening in the world and in the church.
How can that which went wrong be remedied?
— God Himself entered into the world of humanity.

• The Incarnation is a vivid reaffirmation of a living God’s continued activity, of His purpose in creating and how He values his creatures

— Holmes 1985:69
God redeems the whole person

• I ask you to have a paradigm shift in relation to your concept of the word redemption. I plea for an all embracing perception of the concept to mean an integral, total and universal salvation.

— Du Preez (2009a:5)
DUALISTIC WORLDVIEWS

- Dualistic worldviews regularly restrict the meaning of the concept Kingdom of God.

- It can be limited in a pietistic way to personal faith; ecclesiocentrically locked up in the church as an institute; eschatologically regarded as something of the distant future; it can also (as in the case of the ‘social gospel’) be tied down to human, social and political structures

  - (Van der Walt 2008:104).
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• Curricula should not only emphasize the importance of a pious life but should help students to interpret the complex world that they are living in. This should be done in an integrating way where the strict dividing lines between church and the public realm should fade away.
End of part one on Worldview
Who are we? What does it mean to be human?

• Facing the ganglion of anthropological hypotheses, Christian scholarship is being challenged as perhaps never before to engage intensively in the reconstruction of a Biblical model of man. This is today a crucially important part of ongoing reformation.

— Spykman (1985:34)
BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

• Man: God’s authorized viceroy.
• Man is multi-faceted
• Man: created in the image of God.
• Man should have a relationship with God

“Man” here refers to all humans, men and women.
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

- Curricula should reflect the responsibility of man as God’s representative and image bearer on earth.
- Man then being a multifaceted being and not only a religious being in the parochial sense of the word.
- Traditional and modern idols that subtract man from true worship should be identified.
MEN AND WOMEN: GENDER ISSUES

• Gender should not be defined in terms of stereotypes.
• Both sexes are fully human and equal.
• The two sexes need each other.
• Those who are unmarried and childless are also fully human.
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• Old Testament, New Testament, Ethics, Church polity, Systematic Theology and Practical Theology curricula in theological institutes should clearly reflect the liberating message of the equality between the sexes and the unique contribution that each sex can make for a better church and a better society.
MAN’S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PEOPLE

– The “Ubuntho” principle.

• The Creator said: “It is not good for man to be alone.” One discovers his own goal in life in relationship and not in isolation. One really becomes more what he should be in relation to other persons – the so called “Ubuntho” principle.
The dignity of man and woman.

- Each human being is of intrinsic worth because each human being is created in the image of God. To treat a child of God as if he or she was less than this is not just wrong, which it is; it is not just evil, as it often is; not just painful, as it often must be for the victim: it is veritably blasphemous, for it is a spit in the face of God

— Desmond Tutu
• When Tutu deals with freedom for man as a central biblical theme he points out that not only is it real, it is also comprehensive – it is not merely a case of liberation from personal sin but also from political, social and economic structures that are oppressive and unjust and can enslave man and makes him/her less than what God intended it to be.
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• The values of the “ubuntho” principle, the dignity of all creatures and the meaning of true freedom should be imbedded in the curricula. A biblical view on sexuality should not be neglected in the curricula as this forms a very important part of society.
Man and the sanctity of life.

• Whatever the circumstance, the Christian, having been brought up in a culture steeped in the Judeo-Christian tradition that human life has intrinsic value because it was made in the image and likeness of God, do what comes naturally – save lives.
Man’s worth

• But if human life is simply a product of biology or nature, an utilitarian unit, then utilitarian values become the dominant determinant: “Get the dying, the infirm, the disabled, the non-productive out of the way of the living.”

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— Colson & Pearcey 1999:125
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• Christian Ethics at theological institutes has to empower their students along these lines of the sanctity of life to debate intelligently with the people of this world that think that they are the masters of their own fate.
Individualism and Communalism

• In Scripture both the unique individuality (John 21:20, 21) and the communal quality (1 Cor. 12:12 – 27) of the human person are recognized as fully complementary dimensions of human experience. There is no tension or conflict between them and neither is given priority over the other.
The Biblical way

- Liberalist individualism on the one hand and communalist socialism on the other. Our continent is encouraged to explore and follow a third way: the Biblical idea of man and community.

— Van der Walt (1994: 258)
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• A critical view on communalism and group pressure is needed in especially decision making processes in Africa. At the same way the biblical view that does not choose in favour of individualism either, should be explained.
Agape love and anthropology

- Racism and tribalism are not innocent ideologies. At the base of it is a selfish, egoistic love for the own race or the own tribe. Both affect one’s own humanity, both are an injustice to one’s fellow men, both sin against the command to love your neighbour as yourself, and is thus a direct sin against God.
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• Man’s inclination to self love that often results in the exclusion of others and that leads to tribalism and racism, is still a reality Africa and should be exposed. In the place of this egoistic love the implications of the Christian altruistic agape love should be spelt out.
Man: an inclusive approach towards the poor.

• Albert Nolan said:

• God has a special concern for the poor not because of their virtue but because of their suffering... because they are the ones being sinned against.
An inclusive approach towards all

• *In this (inclusive) community the voices of all disciples of Christ – young and old, male and female, black and white, schooled and illiterate, straight, lesbian and gay – are heard and honoured, loved and trusted.*
CURRICULAUM IMPLICATIONS

• Students should be made aware of the importance of the acceptance of HIV/AIDS people, the position of women, youth and children in the church as well as the acceptance of people from other cultures, language groups, tribes, social status, literate and illiterate, people of different sexual orientation, etc. This approach should clearly be the undercurrent in the curricula.
Man is called to be God’s steward

• What are we doing here on earth? A call for ecological sensitivity

• It should be clear in the Christian worldview’s stand that the earth belongs in the first place to the Lord and that man is called, according to the cultural mandate, to be God’s steward
CREATION: THEOCENTRIC

• The meaning of creation is that it exists for the glory of God, and therefore it is theocentric and not anthropocentric
The need for compassion for nature

• We have an urgent need for a Biblically justified and inspired vision of nature and man’s place in nature. This will have to be a vision with far more compassion about and greater sensitivity to our fellow inhabitants of the planet, namely those who have wings, fins and other coverings, whether they have four or two legs.

— Van der Walt (1997:56),
The importance of work.

- Some biblical principles:
  - All work is of equal importance
  - Work should be service to the fellowmen
  - This is a (servanthood) style of leadership, that will interpret the changing world in a meaningful way and will inspire people to be enthusiastic and not fearful

  — Amanda Visser
Work is in the power of sin

• Those who are obsessed with their work shut out all those around them. They cannot breathe, they are suffocated by their fixation on performance, perfectionism and productivity. They are preoccupied, unable to rest, seized with frantic activity. Perhaps above all else, they want to be in control of their lives

Marshall & Gilbert 1998:95
IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULA

• The implications of man’s greed and the catastrophic implications for the environment should be vividly impressed by the curricula. With this also the idea that this earth, after all, does not belong to man but to God. For this reason animals and plants, yes the whole creation, should be looked after with the necessary respect and compassion.
IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULA

• Work should be seen as part of man’s cultural mandate; part of man’s sanctification and man should not be enslaved by this. Work should be emphasized as fulfilling a service to society especially the poor. The equality of all work should be part of the whole paradigm shift of students.
IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULA

• Servanthood leadership should be imbedded in the theoretical but also “hidden” curricula through Christian modelling.
• Quality, also in all academic endeavours, should be emphasized as part of the honouring of God.
• Corruption and bribes should be addressed in especially Ethics classes as one of the big evils in, inter alia, Nigeria.
Man, politics and democracy

• A more broad definition of what democracy is can be:

• A matter of values essential for a way of life characterizes by equality of opportunities for all, respect for the dignity and rights of everyone and freedom of suppression

• Steyn 2007:4
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• The necessity for theological institutions to take up this challenge is obvious. They should be challenged to teach its students the values that accompany democracy as a way of life and as an avenue for meaningful participation in a democratic dispensation.

• Students should be motivated to be courageous prophetic voices in the political dispensation they encounter.
CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

• The theological institutes and all other training institutes for that matter, should be the breeding ground for democracy.

• The laudable ideals of states on the Africa continent regarding democracy depend to a large extend on the ability of these educational institutions to nurture democratic values in their students.
Live fully *hic et nunc*

- The Christian worldview is thus well cemented in this planet earth and is calling on believers to live life *hic et nunc* fully and joyfully.
ENJOY GOD’S WORLD

• In this light, I’ve talked about life, and experiencing life, and enjoying life, and being immersed in life. I’ve talked about the wonder and the joy of God’s world. I’ve talked about loving creation and throwing ourselves fully and joyfully into the tasks and opportunities that lie before us, that greet us with each day.