

Worldviews in Conflict

Ronald Nash

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Preface

- Naturalism and Marxism go together
- Failure of Americans to think in terms of worldview
- The world of ideas
- Spiritual battle and the Christian's armor
- Christians ineffective apart from an understanding of worldview
- Overview of ensuing chapters

I. Chapter One: What is a Worldview?

A. A Worldview is a Set of Beliefs About the Most Important Matters of Life

B. Viewing Christianity as a Worldview

1. The importance of philosophy

C. The Important Role of Presuppositions

1. We all hold a number of unsupported beliefs

2. Augustine: we must believe something before we can know anything

“[T]he most important presuppositions in any person's system of beliefs

‘are the most basic and most general beliefs about God, man, and the world that anyone can have. They are not usually consciously entertained but rather function as the perspective from which an individual sees and interprets both the events of his own life and the various circumstances of the world around him. These presuppositions in connection with one another de-limit the boundaries within which all other less foundational beliefs are held.’” [Thomas Morris, 22]

“Even scientists make important epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical assumptions. They assume, for example, that knowledge is possible and that sense experience is reliable (epistemology), that the universe is regular (metaphysics), and that scientists should be honest (ethics). Without these assumptions, which scientists cannot verify within the limits of their methodology, scientific inquiry would soon collapse.” [23]

D. The Nontheoretical Foundations of Theoretical Thought

1. Humans are never neutral in regard to God

E. The Major Elements of a Worldview

1. God

“Does God even exist? What is the nature of God? Is there only one true God? Is God a personal being . . . or an impersonal force or power?”

a. Genuine atheists do not exist

According to Calvin, every person is incurably religious.

2. Reality

“What is the relationship between God and the universe? Is the existence of the universe a brute fact? Is the universe eternal? Did an eternal, personal, omnipotent God create the world? Are God and the world coeternal and interdependent? Is the world best understood in a mechanistic (that is, nonpurposeful) way? Or is there a purpose in the universe? What is the ultimate nature of the universe? Is the cosmos ultimately material or spiritual or something else? Is the universe a self-enclosed system in the sense that everything that happens is caused by (and thus explained by) other events within the system? Or can a supernatural reality (a being beyond the natural order) act causally within nature? Are miracles possible?” [28]

3. Knowledge

Is knowledge about the world possible? Can we know anything about ourselves? How do we know? Can we know anything with certainty. Is everything relative, or are there absolutes (truths that exist for all persons at all times in all places). Can we trust our senses?

4. Morality

Is all morality cultural? Are some things absolutely wrong? Does evil exist? Are ethics an evolutionary by-product?

“According to the Christian worldview, God is the ground of the laws that govern the physical universe and that make possible the order of the cosmos. God is also the ground of the moral laws that ought to govern human behavior and that make possible order between humans and within humans.” [41]

Why is any given action wrong?

5. Humankind

Are humans free, or is biology destiny? Are serial murders simply doing what they have been pre-programmed to do? Just captive to your biological chemistry. Are we just the tallest on the evolutionary chart, or are we separate, unique? Is the totality of man just a body or does he have an eternal soul? Are thoughts just a by-product of our physical brain? Or is there an objective difference between the mind and the brain. Is there life after death? Heaven or hell?

Cf. Lewis' Mere Christianity.

F. Additional Questions

1. A person's worldview may also include a set of ideals that lays out how he or she thinks things should be
2. A well-formed worldview may also contain an explanation for the disparity between the way things are and the way they ought to be

G. An Important Qualification

H. Conclusion

I. Chapter Two: The Christian Worldview

A. God

1. Theism verses polytheism, pantheism, etc.
2. Christianity as Trinitarian
 - a. The Incarnation

B. Ultimate Reality

1. Ex Nihilo creation
 - a. Plato

“Plato had suggested that a godlike being, the Craftsman, had brought the world into being by fashioning an eternal stuff or matter after the pattern of eternal ideas that existed independently of the Craftsman.” [35-36]

2. Everything that exists that isn't God depends on Him for existence
3. Order in the universe / science

C. Knowledge

1. Skepticism is self-defeating
2. The senses do give us information about the world

“[The Christian] believes also the evidence of the senses which the mind uses by aid of the body; for if one who trusts his senses is sometimes deceived, he is more wretchedly deceived who fancies he should never trust them.”

3. Some human knowledge does not arise from the senses

“Sense experience may be able to report what is fact at particular time. But sense experience is incapable of grasping what *must* be the case *at all times*. The notions of necessity and universality can never be derived from our experience.” [39]

4. Man created in the image of God

The Imago Dei explains why we have categories of thought / innate ideas that are essential in human knowledge. This philosophical tradition includes Augustine, Descartes, and Leibniz.

“Philosopher Alvin Plantinga has noted an important similarity between role that God-given categories and dispositions play in human knowledge and what Reformed thinkers like John Calvin said about belief in God.

‘Reformed Theologians such as Calvin . . . have held that God has implanted in us a tendency . . . to accept belief in God under certain conditions. Calvin speaks in this connection of a "sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all." Just as we have a natural tendency to form perceptual beliefs under certain conditions, so says Calvin, we have a natural tendency to form such beliefs as *God is speaking to me* and *God has created all this* or *God disapproves of what I've done* under certainly widely realized conditions.’

Plantinga shows no reluctance to describe the idea of God as ‘innate,’ that is, present in the mind from birth, not derived from experience.” [40]

5. The universality of many ethical norms

a. C.S. Lewis quote on page 41:

“Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of doublecrossing all the people who had been kindest to him . . .”

b. A Christian worldview demands universal moral norms

6. Distinction between principles and rules

Principles are universal, rules are specific. Cf. head coverings for women as a rule prescribed in 1 Corinthians and the principle of submission.

7. Situation or love ethic

“What a freak, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a marvel! Judge of all things, and imbecile earthworm; possessor of the truth and sink of uncertainty and error; glory and rubbish of the universe.” [Blaise Pascal]

“Christianity simply will not make sense to people who fail to understand and appreciate the Christian doctrine of sin.” [48]

“God has made us for Himself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.” [Augustine]

D. Conclusion

III. Chapter Three: How to Choose a Worldview

“If one system can provide plausible solutions to many problems, while another leaves too many questions unanswered, if one system tends less to skepticism and gives more meaning to life, if one worldview is consistent while others are self-contradictory, who can deny us, since we must choose, the right to choose the more promising first principle.” [Gordon C. Clark]

A. The Test of Reason

“By the test of reason I mean logic or, to be more specific, the law of noncontradiction.” [55]

1. The demand for logical consistency

- a. Skepticism is one of those worldviews that are self-referentially absurd
- b. A solipsist is someone who believes that he alone exists

B. The Test of Experience

1. Worldviews should be relevant to what we know about the world and ourselves

2. The Test of the Outer World

“One can repeat the words ‘all of this is only an illusion’ all one wants. The claims are contradicted by the test of the outer world.” [59]

3. The Test of the Inner World

- a. Worldviews need to fit what we know about ourselves
- b. Each person makes distinctions between right and wrong

Relativists act in disdain when they are wronged and act contrary to their profession.

c. C.S. Lewis quotes on pages 60-61

“History’s most famous syllogism begins with the major premise that ‘all men are mortal,’ provides a minor premise that is more specific (‘Socrates is a man’), and ends with a conclusion (‘Socrates is mortal’), the truth of which is already implicit in the premises. The validity of a deductive argument is a function of its form, not its content.” [64]

- d. Induction lacks logical certainty - but this kind of reasoning is unavoidable (cf. biblical exegesis, history and science)

e. Touchstone propositions

C. The Problem of Certainty

1. Nash and his acceptance of probability (Eg. the resurrection)
2. No worldview can rise above logical probability
3. We live our lives with much based on probability (Eg. that an elevator will work)

IV. Chapter Four: A Further Look at the Test of Reason

“During my visit to the Soviet Union . . . I presented a lecture on worldview thinking in general and upon the superiority of the Christian worldview in particular, to an audience of university graduates. After the presentation, an obviously upset young lady asked that we debate some of the points I had made. Later, when I met with her and a translator, she introduced herself as a philosophy instructor. While she was complimentary about many facets of my discussion, one thing troubled her greatly; that was the importance I had given to the laws of logic, an importance that surprised her.

I will let you in on a little secret. Whenever anyone accuses me of being a rationalist, of placing too much emphasis upon the laws of logic, I regard this as a compliment—no matter how the statement is meant by my critic.” [73]

“The word rationalist . . . has many meanings. In this context, I am a rationalist in the sense that I believe (a) that human beings can know things not derivable through sense experience; and (b) that the laws of logic apply to every level of being. Whenever we encounter a logical contradiction we can be certain that we are in the presence of error.” [73, fn]

The rejection of Christianity due to the false idea that Christianity is an enemy of reason. The laws of logic are essential to a Christian worldview. There is an issue with irrationality among professed Christians. Cf. page 74

A. IS RELIGION AGAINST LOGIC?

“God is utterly and forever beyond the reach of the logical intellect or of any intellectual comprehension, and that in consequence when we try to comprehend his nature intellectually, contradictions appear in our thinking.” [W.T. Stace in his 1955 article titled “Mysticism and Human Reason” cited on 74-75]

“My own belief is that all attempts to rationalize the paradox, to make it logically acceptable, are futile because the paradoxes of religion and mysticism are irresolvable by the human intellect. My view is that they never have been, they never can be, and they never will be resolved, or made logical. . . . When you say that God is incomprehensible, one thing you mean is just that these contradictions break out in our intellect and cannot be resolved, no matter how clever or how good a logician you may be.” [W.T. Stace, cited on 75]

B. IS RELIGION ABOVE LOGIC?

1. Thomas Torrence

Thomas Torrence (disciple of K. Barth) distinguishes between God’s logic and a lower logic for humans. He suggests that the laws of logic are tentative and mutable. But how can Torrence have

confidence in his own reasoning? Torrence's position reduces to skepticism (cf. Quote by Carl F.H. Henry, 77).

"If God really does have a logic all his own, then no criteria can exist that can possibly aid humans to distinguish between Yahweh and Satan." [78]

"If the law of contradiction is irrelevant in the sphere of transcendent ontology, then God and the not-God, the divine and the demonic, cannot be assuredly differentiated." [Carl F.H. Henry, cited on 78]

2. Herman Dooyeweerd

Herman Dooyeweerd follows the same basic course as Torrence on logic.

a. Dooyeweerd's theory of "the boundary"

"The doctrine of the Boundary is the most important way followers of Dooyeweerd emphasize the sovereignty and transcendence of God. All of God's creation, they say, is subject to various laws such as the laws of physics, the laws of biology, the laws of mathematics, the laws of thinking, the laws of economics, and so on. Because God is the Lawgiver, he himself is not subject to the laws that govern his creation. Law then constitutes a boundary between God and the creation. The laws that apply under the Boundary do not apply to God who is above all law.

Dooyeweerd's teaching seems innocuous enough until one realizes how the followers of Dooyeweerd apply the theory to human reason. In their hands, what could have been a helpful metaphor is interpreted in a way that entails a total and complete break between God's logic and human logic. For the followers of Dooyeweerd, the laws of logic, of valid inference, exist only on the human side of the Boundary. The result of this is the establishment of a gap or wall that Dooyeweerdians think exists between the mind of God and the human mind." [78]

Humans, therefore, can only reason on this side of the Boundary. No human reason can tell us what is on the other side of the Boundary.

"This kind of thinking, Plantinga wrote,

'begins in a pious and commendable concern for God's greatness and majesty and augustness; but it ends in agnosticism and incoherence. For if none of our apply to God, then there is nothing we can know or truly believe of him—not even what is affirmed in the creeds or revealed in the Scriptures. And if there is nothing we can know or truly believe of him, then, of course, we cannot know or truly believe that none of our concepts apply to him. The view . . . fatally ensnares in self-referential absurdity.'" [80]

A proposition must mean the same thing to man as it does to God. They must “coincide at a single point.” [80]

C. ANOTHER LOOK AT THE LAW OF NONCONTRADICTION

“If contradictory statements are true of the same subject at the same time, evidently all things will be the same thing. Socrates will be a ship, a house, as well as a man. . . . In fact, everything will be everything. Therefore everything will be the same thing. All differences among things will vanish and all will be one.” [Gordon Clark, cited on 82]

D. PROVING THE LAW OF NONCONTRADICTION

“Any argument offered as proof for the law of noncontradiction would of necessity have to assume the law as part of the proof. Hence, any direct proof of the law would end up being circular. It would beg the question.” [82]

E. THE NOTION OF SELF-REFERENTIAL ABSURDITY

1. The example of Logical Positivism and the Verification Principle

For Logical Positivists:

“Only two kinds of propositions can have meaning . . . those that are true because of the meaning of their constituent terms (called analytic statements) and those that are verifiable by sense experience (called synthetic statements).** Positivists delighted in showing, or so they thought, that theological, metaphysical, and ethical statements failed to meet with their criterion of meaningfulness. . . . This meant that statements like ‘God exists’ were neither true nor false; they were meaningless.” [85]

“As things turned out, the positivists’ criterion of meaning showed itself to be meaningless because it could be classified neither an analytic nor a synthetic statement.” [85]

**Analytic statements include tautologies. Nash gives the example: “Some spinsters are unmarried ladies” (which is necessarily true) and contradictions such as “Some spinsters are married ladies” (which is necessarily false). An example of a synthetic statement would be “Some spinsters drive American-made cars.”

2. Determinism

Determinism, foundational to a naturalistic worldview, is self-refuting. According to J. R. Lucas, if what the determinist says is true,

“he says it merely as the result of his heredity and environment, and of nothing else. He does not hold his determinist views because they are true, but because he has such-and-such stimuli; that is, not because the structure of the universe is such-and-such but only because the configuration of only part of the universe, together with the structure of the determinist’s brain, is such as to produce that result. . . . Determinism, therefore, cannot be true, because if it was, we should not take the determinists, arguments as being really arguments, but as being only conditioned reflexes. Their statements should not be regarded as really claiming to be true, but only as seeking to cause us to respond in some way desired by them.” [86]

H. P. Owen agrees that

“determinism is self-stultifying. If my mental processes are totally determined, I am totally determined either to accept or to reject determinism. But if the sole reason for my believing or not believing X is that I am causally determined to believe it I have no ground for holding that my judgment is true or false.” [86]

J. P. Moreland:

“In sum, it is self-refuting to argue that one ought to choose physicalism because he should see that the evidence is good for physicalism. Physicalism cannot be offered as a rational theory because physicalism does away with the necessary preconditions for there to be such a thing as rationality. Physicalism usually denies intentionality [the capacity to have thoughts about other things] by reducing it to a physical relation of input/output, thereby denying that the mind is genuinely capable of having thoughts about the world. Physicalism denies the existence of propositions and nonphysical laws of logic and evidence which can be in minds and influence thinking. Physicalism denies the existence of a faculty capable of rational insight into these nonphysical laws and propositions, and it denies the existence of an enduring "I" which is present through the process of reflection. Finally, it denies the existence of a genuine agent who deliberates and chooses positions because they are rational, an act possible only if physical factors are not sufficient for determining future behavior. [87 - fn. J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 78]

F. EVIDENTIALISM

Not to be confused with the Christian apologetic approach.

“It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.” [W. K. Clifford, cited on 88]

The argument of the typical atheistic evidentialist:

1. It is irrational to accept theistic belief in the absence of sufficient evidence.
2. There is insufficient evidence to support belief in God.
3. Therefore, belief in God is irrational.

But where is the proof for this claim? It is self-defeating.

G. THE REJECTION OF EVIDENTIALISM

“Why should we think a theist must have evidence, or reason to think there *is* evidence, if he is not to be irrational! Why not suppose, instead, that he is entirely within his epistemic rights in believing in God’s existence even if he has no argument or evidence at all?” [Alvin Plantinga, cited on 90]

Nash notes that we believe in lots of things apart from evidence, such as the existence of other minds.

This does not mean that Christians deny that arguments exist, only that they are not necessary for faith to be rational.

V. Chapter Five: Christianity and the Test of Reason

Arguments made against Christian theism: Incarnation; Resurrection; etc. Also the belief by some skeptics that the very concept of God is incoherent.

A. The Deductive Problem of Evil

1. This argument used to have more teeth until philosophers like Plantinga defused it
2. The argument summarized:
 1. A good God would want to deliver the people he loves from evil, pain and suffering
 2. If God is all-knowing and omnipotent then he could deliver the people he loves from evil, pain and suffering
 3. Pain and evil exist, therefore, the God of the Bible does not.

This is an attempt to demonstrate that the existence of evil is logically inconsistent with one or more tenets of Christianity.

“It can be shown, not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another.” [J. L. Mackie, cited 95]

3. Six propositions

1. God exists
2. God is omnipotent
3. God is omniscient
4. God is omnibenevolent
5. God created the world
6. The world contains evil

Nothing in this list, however, explicitly contradicts another premise. However, critics maintained that a seventh proposition is implied, namely that the world does not contain evil (which would contradict proposition #6).

While critics attempted to introduce an additional proposition, they were unsuccessful because the concepts they introduced were not consistent with Christian theism, Eg. God can do anything. Christian theology maintains that there are some things that God cannot do, however.

“Finally, Plantinga suggested a procedure by which Christians could demonstrate the logical consistency of their set of beliefs. Once done; this meant that Christians no longer needed to live in fear that an ingenious critic might produce the dreaded proposition that would confute their faith

next week or next year. In formal logic, once the logical consistency of a set of propositions has been demonstrated, it then becomes impossible ever to, uncover an inconsistency in the set.

All that is required to prove our list of propositions is logically consistent (and thus forever immune to the possibility of being shown to be inconsistent) is to add a new proposition that is logically possible, which means simply that it does not describe a contradictory state of affairs. The new proposition must be consistent with the other propositions in the list, and, in conjunction with the other propositions, it must entail that evil exists in the world. The proposition that Plantinga proposed was the claim that *God creates a world that now contains evil and has a good reason for doing so.* [97]

1. God exists, is omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and created the world.
2. God created a world that now contains evil and had a good reason for doing so.
3. Therefore, the world contains evil.

B. The Incarnation

1. The Incarnation biblically defined
2. The issue stated

God has essential properties that are necessary. If He were to lose any of them He would cease to be God. “A being simply cannot be God if he lacks omnipotence, omniscience, and the like.” [100] But humanity lacks these qualities. We also exist contingently, not necessarily. Given these inconsistencies, how could any being be both God and man?

3. Thomas Morris

Morris summarizes the Problem:

“Jesus is claimed in the doctrine of the Incarnation to have been both fully human and fully divine. But it is logically impossible for a any being to exemplify at one and the same time both a property and it logical complement. Thus, recent critics have concluded, it is logically impossible for any one person to be both human and divine, to have all the attributes proper to deity and all those ingredient in human nature as well. The doctrine of the Incarnation on this view is an incoherent theological development of the early church which must be discarded by us in favor of some other way of conceptualizing the importance of Jesus for Christian faith. He could not possibly have been God Incarnate, a literally divine person in human nature.” [100-101]

4. Nash concludes (page 101):

“This is a serious difficulty. As we will see, developing an appropriate response to this challenge will require hard thinking about complex issues. But since the challenge is too serious to ignore, the task must be done.

In his lengthy, detailed, and technical book *The Logic of God Incarnate*, Morris has produced one of the better approaches to this problem. Fortunately, he has also presented his argument in more popular form in *The Asbury Theological Journal* article cited above. My own treatment will follow Morris's lead. I hope that many readers will examine Morris's more detailed presentation in his book.

According to Morris, we can work our way out of this problem if we first understand and then properly apply three major distinctions, namely,

1. The distinction between essential and nonessential properties.
2. The distinction between essential and common properties, and
3. The distinction between being fully human and merely human.”

5. Essential and Nonessential Properties

The word “property” refers to any feature or characteristic of something. Like a predicate nominative (the dog is a collie).

Properties are of two different types: 1) essential; 2) non-essential. Example: “a red circle.” Red is a non-essential property to the circle, which could be blue, or any color (or non-color). Roundness, however, is an essential property to a circle. There is no such thing as a square circle, for example.

As it relates to God, there are properties that are essential to His Being. To say that Jesus is God is to say that He possesses these essential properties (i.e. omnipotence; omniscience; eternity; etc.).

What are the essential properties of a human being, however? This is more difficult. Reasoning ability is one example.

“Where the critic goes wrong, I contend, is in his belief that such properties as *lacking omnipotence, lacking omniscience, lacking sinlessness* are also essential in some way to being a human being.” [103]

6. Essential and Common Properties

What Morris (above) calls “common properties” are often thought by the critics as being “essential properties.” This is what leads some to mistakenly think the Incarnation as being illogical.

Humans may have common properties that are not essential to being human. Example would be 10 fingers.

“Having made these points, Morris then explains the relevance of his two distinctions to the doctrine of the Incarnation:

It is certainly quite common for human beings to lack omnipotence, omniscience, necessary existence, and so on. I think any orthodox Christian will agree that, apart from Jesus, these are even universal features of human existence. Further, in the case of any of us who do exemplify the logical complements of these distinctively divine attributes, it may well be most reasonable to hold that they are in our case essential attributes. I, for example, could not possibly become omnipotent. As a creature, I am essentially limited in power. But why think this is true on account of human nature? Why think that any attributes incompatible with deity are elements of human nature, properties without which one could not be truly or fully human?

In other words, even if I and every other human person-other than Jesus is characterized by the complements of such divine properties as omnipotence and omniscience, where is the argument that shows that these limitations are somehow essential to my being human? Possibly, these limitations are only common human properties, not essential ones.” [104]

7. Being Fully Human and Being Merely Human

“The best place to begin this point is with Morris’s explanation. ‘An individual is fully human,’ he writes, ‘[in any case where] that individual has all essential human properties, all the properties composing basic human nature. An individual is merely human if he has all those properties plus some additional limitation properties as well, properties such as that of lacking omnipotence, that of lacking omniscience, and so on.’” [104]

a. Jesus was fully human without being fully human

This means that Jesus possesses all the properties essential to being human as well as those that are essential to deity. Jesus is not merely human, which means that he did not possess the limitations that are complements of the divine attributes.

TAB: I’m wondering how these distinctions relate to the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

C. CONCLUSION

VI. Chapter Six: A Further Look at the Problem of Evil

A. The Inductive Problem of Evil

The inductive problem of evil has led critics from contending that Christianity must be false (as in the deductive problem where logic was said to be breached) to contending that Christianity is likely false.

Most defenses of the God vs. Evil issue center on one of two propositions: 1) God allows evil to make possible a greater good; 2) God allows evil to prevent a greater evil.

According to Plantinga,

“Very little of interest. Why suppose that if God *does* have a good reason for permitting evil, the theist would be the first to know? Perhaps God has a reason, but that reason is too complicated for us to understand. Or perhaps He has not revealed it for some other reason. The fact that the theist doesn't know why God permits evil is, perhaps, an interesting fact about the theist, but by itself it shows little or nothing relevant to the rationality of belief in God.” [108]

B. Other Less-Than-Satisfactory Explanations

Eg. Free will; orderly universe; “soul making.”

C. THE PROBLEM OF GRATUITOUS EVIL

1. Defined:

Gratuitous evil is senseless, mindless, meaningless evil.

2. Skeptics Argument

1. If God exists, then all evil has a justifying reason.
2. All evil does not have a justifying reason.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

While this argument is valid (conforms to the rules of logic) it is not true. No one apart from God can know whether God has a justifying reason, or what that reason is.

Further, the argument can be reversed: the one sure way to prove that gratuitous evil does in fact exist is by proving that God does not. This would be begging the question.

D. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND NON-CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEWS

1. Naturalism

“‘Good’ and ‘evil’ in a naturalistic universe cannot possibly refer to anything transcendent, anything that has standing outside of the natural order of things.” [114]

2. Pantheism

E. CONCLUSION

VII. CHAPTER SEVEN: NATURALISM

A. Touchstone Proposition of Naturalism

“Nothing exists outside the material, mechanical (that is, nonpurposeful), natural order.” [116]

Therefore, so-called miracles are natural events that have yet to be explained scientifically.

B. The C. S. Lewis book, “Miracles”

1. Nash quotes extensively from Lewis (cf. 117 ff.)

2. Deterministic universe

a. Nash’s “box” illustration

b. Closed vs. open systems

C. A Naturalist Believes the Following Propositions

1. Only Nature Exists

2. Nature has Always Existed

a. Nature does not depend on anything else for its existence

3. Nature is Characterized by Total Uniformity

a. Miracles are impossible

4. Nature is a Deterministic System

a. No such thing as “free will” (or free moral agency)

5. Nature is a Materialistic System

6. Nature is a Self-Explanatory System

D. Challenge the Naturalist’s Worldview

“It is simply not true that ‘Science’ somehow compels open-minded, intellectually superior people to become naturalists. There is no more ‘proof’ to support naturalism than that which supports

theism. It is important to help the naturalist recognize that in an important sense his choice of naturalism is a religious act, an act of the heart that relates to his ultimate concerns.” [120]

E. Important Elements of the Christian Worldview [121]

1. God Exists Outside the Box
2. God Created the Box
3. God Acts Causally Within the Box

F. THE CASE AGAINST NATURALISM

1. C. S. Lewis

“All that is required for naturalism to be false is the discovery of one thing that cannot be explained in the naturalistic way.” C. S. Lewis set up this line of argument:”

If necessities of thought force us to allow to any one thing any degree of independence from the Total System—if any one thing makes good a claim to be on its own, to be something more than an expression of the character of Nature as a whole—then we have abandoned Naturalism. For by Naturalism we mean the doctrine that only Nature—the whole interlocked system—exists. And if that were true, every thing and event would, if we knew enough, be explicable without remainder . . . as a necessary product of the system. [122]

“With a little effort, we can quickly see that no thoughtful naturalist can ignore at least one thing. Lewis explains:”

All possible knowledge . . . depends on the validity of reasoning. If the feeling of certainty which we express by words like *must be* and *therefore* and *since* is a real perception of how things outside our own minds really "must" be, well and good. But if this certainty is merely a feeling in our minds and not a genuine insight into realities beyond them—if it merely represents the ways our minds happen to work—then we have no knowledge. Unless human reasoning is valid no science can be true. [123]

“The human mind, as we know, has the power to grasp contingent truth, that is, whatever is the case. But the human mind also has the power to grasp necessary connections, that is, what must be the case. This latter power, the ability to grasp necessary connections, is the essential feature of human reasoning. If it is true that all men are mortal and if it is true that Socrates is a man, then it must be true that Socrates is mortal.”

“Naturalists must appeal to this kind of necessary connection in their arguments for naturalism; indeed, in their reasoning about everything. But can naturalists account for this essential element of the reasoning process that they utilize in their arguments for their own position? Lewis thinks

not. As Lewis sees it, naturalism ‘discredits our processes of reasoning or at least reduces their credit to such a humble level that it can no longer support Naturalism itself.’ Lewis argues:

It follows that no account of the universe [including naturalism] can be true unless that account leaves it possible for our thinking to be a real insight. A theory which explained everything else in the whole universe but which made it impossible to believe that our thinking was valid, would be utterly out of court. For that theory would itself have been reached by thinking, and if thinking is not valid that theory would, of course, be itself demolished. It would have destroyed its own credentials. It would be an argument which proved that no argument was sound—a proof that there are no such things as proofs—which is nonsense. [123-124]

“Lewis is careful to point out that his argument is not grounded on the claim that naturalism affirms every human judgment (like every event in the universe) has a cause. He knows that even though my belief about a matter may be caused by nonrational factors, my belief may still be true. In the argument before us, Lewis is talking about something else, namely, the logical connection between a belief and the ground of that belief. It is one thing for a belief to have a nonrational cause; it is something else for a belief to have a reason or ground. The ravings of a madman may have a cause but lack any justifying ground. The reasoning of a philosopher may also have a cause but possess a justifying ground. What naturalism does, according to Lewis, is sever what should be unseverable, the link between conclusions and the grounds or reasons for those conclusions. As Lewis says, ‘Unless our conclusion is the logical consequent from a ground it will be worthless [as an example of a *reasoned* conclusion] and could be true only by a fluke.’ Therefore, naturalism ‘offers what professes to be a full account of our mental behaviour; but this account on inspection, leaves no room for the acts of knowing or insight on which the whole value of our thinking, as a means to truth, depends.’ In naturalism, Lewis continues,

acts of reasoning are not interlocked with the total interlocking system of Nature as all its other items are interlocked with one another. They are connected with it in a different way; as the understanding of a machine is certainly connected with the machine but not in the way the parts of the machine are connected with each other. The knowledge of a thing is not one of the thing's parts. In this sense something beyond Nature operates whenever we reason.

“In this last paragraph, the thrust of Lewis's argument against naturalism becomes clear. By definition, naturalism excludes the possible existence of anything beyond nature, outside the box. But the process of reasoning *requires* something that exceeds the bounds of nature. Of course, the same situation applies in the case of moral reasoning; the laws that govern morality must also exist outside the box.

“One of of naturalism's major problems is explaining how mindless forces give rise to minds, knowledge, sound reasoning, and moral principles that really do report how human beings ought to behave. Not surprisingly, every naturalist wants the rest of us to think that *his* worldview, his naturalism, is a product of *his* sound reasoning.

All things considered, it's hard to see why naturalism is not self-referentially absurd. Before any person can justify his or her acceptance of naturalism on rational grounds, it is first necessary for that person to reject a cardinal tenet of the naturalist position. In other words, the only way a person can provide rational grounds for believing in naturalism is first to cease being a naturalist. [124-25]

2. Morality and logic

Naturalists have contended that they can be moral without a belief in God. The question is, what is the grounds for their morality?

Nash cites the old British philosopher Hastings Rashdall:

“We say the Moral Law has a real existence, that there is such a thing as an absolute [i.e. objective] Morality, that there is something absolutely true or false in ethical judgments, whether we or any number of human beings at any given time actually think so or not. . . . We must therefore face the question where such an ideal exists, and what manner of existence we are to attribute to it.” [126]

Rashdall rejects the contention that such an ideal can exist completely or terminally in any single or corporate human mind. This is also true for logic or mathematics. The belief in God is the logical presupposition of an absolute, a transcendent Mind.

3. Guilt and the conscience

Guilt is the moral/spiritual equivalent to physical pain. In the naturalist worldview guilt can be little more than an illusion or psychic disorder.

4. The test of practice

Can naturalists live out their assumptions? What kind of life would it be for them to consistently live out their deterministic causal worldview? Why promote a decent life or condemn atrocities such as those that occurred in Nazi Germany? Naturalists cheat and borrow from the biblical worldview.

G. CONCLUSION

VIII. CHAPTER EIGHT: THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

A. A POSSIBLE STARTING POINT

B. THE ROLE OF BELIEFS IN NEW AGE THOUGHT

C. AN ASSORTMENT OF NEW AGE BELIEFS

1. Reincarnation and Karma
2. Universal Energy or Power
3. Higher Consciousness
4. God
 - a. Pantheism

D. THE NEW AGE WORLDVIEW

1. Comparison of beliefs chart

E. NEW AGE AND THE TEST OF REASON

F. NEW AGE AND THE TEST OF EXPERIENCE

G. NEW AGE AND THE TEST OF PRACTICE

H. CONCLUSION

IX. The Incarnation and the Resurrection

A. THE INCARNATION

1. Alternatives to Christian belief

a. Jesus was simply human, a good man

(A) Jesus was simply a good human being

(B) Jesus was God Incarnate

(A) makes no sense. The fallacy of (A) establishes the truth of (B).

John Stott records the number of times that Jesus claimed to be God. According to those claims, Stott writes:

to know him was to know God;

to see him was to see God;

to believe in him was to believe in God;

to receive him was to receive God;

to hate him was to hate God;

to honor him was to honor God. [John Stott, *Basic Christianity*]

On page 150, Nash gives the illustration of the absurdity of believing that Jesus was "just a good man" as so many have said (I have taken a parallel account from Nash's book, *Faith and Reason*):

"What should be obvious at this point is that someone who is just a good human being does not say things like this. Imagine that you are the parent of two or three children who have become fascinated with the new neighbor down the street. Even though he's a carpenter, let's say, he seems remarkably literate. Even more, he is clearly a special human being. You and your spouse admire his character. His love for other human beings is manifested in everything he does. You and your spouse often express the wish that nothing would please you more than that your children grow up to be just like this neighbor. But then suppose one day your children come home after spending an hour or two with the carpenter and tell you some of the things he told them that day. Suppose they tell you that the carpenter said that he existed before Abraham, that he and God are equal, and that at the end of the world he would come on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory, to judge the nations for their sins. Under such circumstances, I wonder if you would continue to want your children to grow up to be just like this neighbor. [Faith and Reason, 263]

Jesus also forgave sins committed against other people. In other words, Jesus forgave people who sinned against other people, demonstrating that sins against others were violations of His law (and that he had ultimate authority to forgive). Cf. C. S. Lewis quotes on 151, 152. Jesus' claim to be God was no "small mistake."

B. THE RESURRECTION

1. Answers to alternate theories

- a. Jesus was truly dead
- b. The disciples were in a state of fear after the crucifixion
- c. Jesus was buried in a new tomb hewn out of rock
- d. Jesus was alive and the tomb empty
- e. Eyewitnesses of the resurrection were transformed

C. CONCLUSION

“But the naturalist cannot prove the scientific impossibility of miracles, any more than he can prove the truth of naturalism.” [163]

X. Chapter Ten: Winning the Battle in the World of Ideas

“Belief in God is genuinely coherent with all we know about ourselves and our universe. It contradicts no known facts and it makes sense of many things that would otherwise be inexplicable.” [C. Stephen Evens, cited 164]