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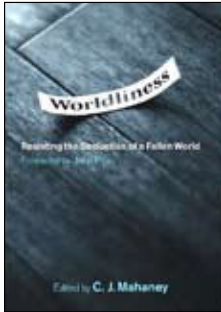
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| | |
|---|----|
| EDITORIAL | 1 |
| <i>D. A. Carson</i> | |
| MINORITY REPORT: The Second Most Important Book You Will Ever Read | 4 |
| <i>Carl Trueman</i> | |
| Salvation History, Chronology, and Crisis: A Problem with Inclusivist Theology of Religions, Part 1 of 2 | 7 |
| <i>Adam Sparks</i> | |
| “Work Out Your Salvation”: Conduct “Worthy of the Gospel” in a Communal Context | 19 |
| <i>Paul Hartog</i> | |
| The Longing of Love: Faith and Obedience in the Thought of Adolf Schlatter | 34 |
| <i>Dane C. Ortlund</i> | |
| The Ethnic Enemy—No Greek or Jew . . . Barbarian, Scythian: The Gospel and Ethnic Difference | 48 |
| <i>Keith Ferdinando</i> | |
| PASTORAL PENSÉES: Barack Obama: The Quandary of “Selective Invisibility” | 64 |
| <i>Bruce L. Fields</i> | |
| Book Reviews | 70 |



C. J. Mahaney, ed. *Worldliness: Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World*. With a foreword by John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. 191 pp. \$12.99.



C. J. Mahaney observes,

Some people try to define worldliness as living outside a specific set of rules or conservative standards. If you listen to music with a certain beat, dress in fashionable clothes, watch movies with a certain rating, or indulge in certain luxuries of modern society, surely you must be worldly.

Others, irritated and repulsed by rules that seem arbitrary, react to definitions of worldliness, assuming it's impossible to define. Or they think legalism will inevitably be the result, so we shouldn't even try (p. 29).

These two groups will react negatively to this book for different reasons. The former group will think that it is not strict enough (perhaps accusing it of libertinism), and the latter group will disparage it for so specifically “resisting” seductive “worldliness” (perhaps accusing it of legalism). The authors of this book wisely avoid and gently rebuke both of these extremes because they wrongly focus on externals. Its primary target audience is the latter group.

The book's five authors serve the church through Sovereign Grace Ministries (SGM): C. J. Mahaney is president of SGM; Craig Cabaniss is senior pastor of Grace Church in Frisco, Texas; Bob Kauflin is director of worship development for SGM and a pastor and worship leader at Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland; Dave Harvey oversees church planting and church care for SGM; and Jeff Purswell is dean of the Pastors College of SGM and a pastor at Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland. These authors are ideally equipped to address this subject because they model what is characteristic of SGM: humble, gospel-centered orthodoxy (accurate doctrine), orthopraxy (obedient living), and orthopathy (passionately engaged affections, i.e., loving God with one's entire being).

John Piper's foreword highlights the book's theme: “The gospel makes all the difference between whether you are merely conservative or whether you are conquering worldliness in the power of the Spirit for the glory of Christ” (p. 11). Every chapter climaxes by showing how the glorious gospel is central and essential to “resisting the seduction of a fallen world.”

Worldliness consists of six succinct chapters:

1. Mahaney challenges Christians to live as if 1 John 2:15–17 is really in their Bibles. He appeals to Demas' negative example (2 Tim 4:10), and warns, “Today, the greatest challenge facing American evangelicals is not persecution from the world, but seduction by the world” (p. 22). Worldliness “is a love for this fallen world,” which is “the organized system of human civilization that is actively hostile to God and alienated from God” (pp. 26–27). The root issue of worldliness is internal, not external (pp. 28–30).

The middle four chapters target specific hot issues (though I am surprised that it does not include an additional chapter on romance and guy-girl relationships by C. J. Mahaney or Josh Harris).

2. Media: Cabaniss focuses specifically on television and film media, although “the principles are relevant for evaluating all forms of media” (p. 39). “The risk [of legalism] doesn’t lie in having standards; it lies in our motivation. . . . [W]e can be legalistic about anything!” (p. 44). Cabaniss explains and pointedly applies Ephesians 5:1–14 to help Christians discern *if* they should view media, *what* media they should view, and *how* they should view it. Especially useful are his probing application questions regarding time, content, and one’s heart (pp. 57–59). Christians should view media proactively, accountably, and gratefully (pp. 60–67).

3. Music: Kauflin argues that music is God’s idea and that “no single genre of music is better than the rest in every way” (p. 70). Music profoundly affects us to various degrees depending on learned musical principles, attentiveness, volume, familiarity, background, and associations (pp. 72–73). Music conveys content (lyrics), context (the places, events, and people we connect with certain music), and culture (the values we connect with certain music) (pp. 73–81). Kauflin refuses to “suggest a list of artists or music styles that every Christian should either pursue or avoid” because it “doesn’t exist” and would not be helpful: “What’s appropriate for one person to listen to might be sin for someone else because of the differing associations we make” (pp. 80–81). Instead, he asks whether one’s music leads one to love Jesus more and value an eternal perspective (p. 81). He concludes with two practical sections: four signs that one is compromising in music listening and nine ways to use music to glorify God (pp. 81–89).

4. Stuff: Harvey begins with the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13–21) to illustrate materialism, which “is fundamentally a focus on and a trust in what we can touch and possess. . . . We have an inescapable tendency to link who we are with what we have. . . . [C]oveting is *desiring stuff too much* or *desiring too much stuff*. It’s replacing our delight in God with joy in stuff” (pp. 93–95, italics in the original). Four “covetous chains” enslave one to the world, namely, the lies that stuff makes one happy, important, secure, and rich (pp. 99–107). Harvey suggests six ways that Christians should guard against the idolatry of covetousness (pp. 107–14).

5. Clothes: Mahaney’s target audience is women, and he begins by describing the attitude and appearance of the modest woman (pp. 119–25). “Modesty means propriety. It means avoiding clothes and adornment that are extravagant or sexually enticing. Modesty is humility expressed in dress” (p. 120). He explains how men struggle to maintain pure thoughts around immodest women and directly challenges fathers to lead their wives and daughters to be modest (pp. 125–33). The two appendixes are related to women’s dress: “Modesty Heart Check” and “Considering Modesty on Your Wedding Day” (pp. 173–79).

6. Purswell closes the volume with a chapter provocatively titled “How to Love the World.” By this point in the book, the reader may feel like Christianity is a bunch of prohibitions. Purswell gives a holistic view of the Christian life, explaining the Bible’s storyline and how Christians should enjoy, engage, and evangelize the world at this stage in redemptive history.

The book concludes with fifty-three thoughtful discussion questions targeting three areas: one’s mind, heart, and life (pp. 180–87).

Worldliness is written in a way that will serve pastors and lay people, adults and teenagers. The authors use a colorful, conversational tone complete with incomplete sentences. Like this. So I suppose that even its style is as up-to-date as its many references to iPods, DVDs, satellite radio, and the Internet. *Worldliness* is a sensitive, practical, specific, relevant, pastoral, accessible, engaging, humorous, concise, clear, refreshing, wise, grace-motivated, biblical book—ideal for pastors to recommend to their flocks

and for small groups to study. It skillfully addresses controversial external issues by focusing on their root heart issues and then showing how the gospel is functionally central to every square inch of the Christian life.

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Robert L. Reymond, *Faith's Reasons for Believing: An Apologetic Antidote to Mindless Christianity (and to Thoughtless Atheism)*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2008. 480 pp. £11.99/\$19.99.



Question: What do you get if you cross Gordon Clark's apologetic with Cornelius Van Til's apologetic and sprinkle it liberally (so to speak) with J. Gresham Machen's historical evidences? Answer: Something like the case for the Christian faith recommended by Robert Reymond in *Faith's Reasons for Believing*.

The subtitle gives a fair impression of its purpose and tone: 'An Apologetic Antidote to Mindless Christianity (and to Thoughtless Atheism)'. Reymond's goal is to counter not only the attacks of 'militant atheists' like Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris, but also the 'mindless Christianity' of believers who are unable or unwilling to offer any *reasons* for the faith they profess.

The book is adapted from lecture material originally prepared for a seminary course in apologetics and is therefore pitched at that level. Reymond identifies himself with the Reformed presuppositionalist school of apologetics, and the title of the book is designed to reflect that approach. According to this view, our method in apologetics should not be to start from a position of non-faith (i.e., doubt or suspension of belief) and then to use our reasoning, fuelled with empirical data, to construct a position of faith. Rather, we should unashamedly start from the position of the faith we already profess, and reasoning in a manner consistent with that faith, we should explain why it makes good sense to believe as we do.

The opening chapter defines Christian apologetics, reviews its biblical basis, introduces some of the major issues in apologetic method, and summarizes four different 'apologetic systems' (evidentialism, presuppositionalism, experientialism, and autonomous humanism). A passionate defense of Christian theology as an intellectual discipline follows in chapter 2, where Reymond gives five compelling reasons for Christians to engage in theology.

The third chapter is the most important of the book, given Reymond's view of the starting point and foundation for defending the faith. His argument for the inspiration of Scripture closely follows that of Gordon Clark and boils down to this: the Bible claims to be God's Word, and no one has proven its claim to be false; therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the Bible is God's Word.

In the following four chapters, Reymond defends the historicity of the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ, the virgin birth, biblical miracles (particularly those of Jesus) and the supernatural