

Holmes, Arthur F. *Contours of a World View*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983. ix + 240 pp. Paperback, \$8.95.

Contours of a World View is the first volume in a ten-volume series entitled "Studies in a Christian World View." Under the general editorship of Carl F. H. Henry, the series is being sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies. Holmes, chairman of the philosophy department of Wheaton College, has presented an overview of what he believes it means "to think Christianly today" (p. viii). His volume provides the philosophical framework for the nine subsequent works, in which a spectrum of scholars will explore the relationship between Christianity and contemporary philosophy, psychology, economics, natural science, the Eastern religions, the arts, history, contemporary God-concepts, and literature. This series, to my knowledge, will be the most extensive unified treatment by evangelicals of the interface between Christianity and the larger culture. As such, it has the potential of being a significant influence in helping Christians think of "secular" subjects in Christian terms.

Holmes, who is convinced "that the most persuasive case for Christianity lies in the overall coherence and human relevance of its world view," highlights the importance of world views and "sketches in broad strokes the overall contours of a distinctively Christian world view in relationship both to the history of ideas and to the contemporary mind" (p. viii). He uses the insights of philosophy as well as theology to develop a Christian view of things as an alternative to the prevalent naturalistic humanism of our day. While recognizing that there are many contemporary alternatives to theism besides naturalistic humanism, Holmes has delimited himself to this alternative, since his purpose is not to be comprehensive, but to set forth a Christian world view in contrast to representative forms of contemporary humanism and to "point directions for further inquiry" (p. ix).

The results of such a methodology, he suggests, will not be formal proof, but a proposal regarding the shape of Christian thought and "an invitation to pursue its implications further because of the intellectual credibility and the human appeal of its claims (p. ix). Part of Holmes's purpose is to help Christian thinkers better understand the role of presuppositions. Accordingly, he claims, it is important that Christians be able to ferret out the influence of non-Christian assumptions and to supply distinctively Christian presuppositions in their place.

Contours is divided into three parts. Part I is the most important, since it not only sets the stage for the balance of the book, but also provides the essential framework for the other nine volumes in the series. In chap. 1, Holmes points out that a world view is a basic human need, since it unifies thought and life, defines the good life, provides hope and mean-

ing, and is a guide to both thought and action. Chap. 2 explores the general nature of humanism and, more specifically, the attributes of four modes of naturalistic humanism that are major shapers of world views in contemporary culture—scientific humanism, romanticist humanism, existentialist humanism, and Marxist humanism. This exposition is followed by a discussion of values. Holmes then points beyond secularism to the potential of Christian theism, with its emphasis on creation and persons, to develop a Christian humanism that has “another basis for values, another conception of social institutions, and so on” (p. 30). The third chapter identifies the variables that shape a world view; discusses the relative contributions of theology, philosophy, and science to the building of a world view; and points to issues important in the justification of world-view beliefs.

Part II examines the major themes of a Christian world view in historical perspective and contrasts the Christian position with its naturalistic alternatives. The themes treated include God and creation, persons in contemporary and Christian perspective, truth and knowledge, a theistic basis for values, and society and history. Holmes’s belief that “the first and overarching theme of a Christian world view is the God-creation distinction and relationship” is the foremost postulate of each discussion. “We think,” claims Holmes, “about everything within that framework and live in every sphere of life in relation to the God who acts” (p. 92).

Part III applies the implications of a Christian world view to four types of cultural activity—human creativity, science and technology, work, and play. It thus attempts to bridge the gap between abstract thought and daily life.

Holmes has treated a most important topic for twentieth-century Christians who are enveloped in secular culture. To a large extent, he has succeeded in his task. His general approach is quite helpful, even though his writing tends to be a bit murky at times.

His book provides a useful guide to presuppositional analysis, which is even more interesting if the philosophical and theological presuppositions of Holmes himself are examined as one reads the book. His discussion of a Christian view of society, for example, is firmly rooted in the Calvinistic approach to the redemption of culture. To me, this merely highlights the existence of the variation of world views within the evangelical community, and, more importantly, the necessity of reading everything with one eye on presuppositions—a point upon which Holmes would agree. In the final analysis, *Contours of a World View* is a thoughtful proposal and a stimulating invitation to think Christianly about every aspect of contemporary life.