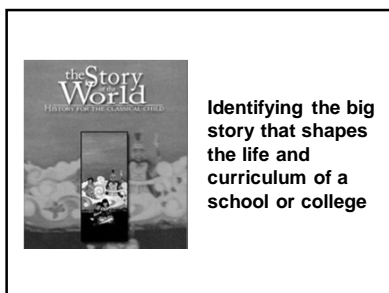
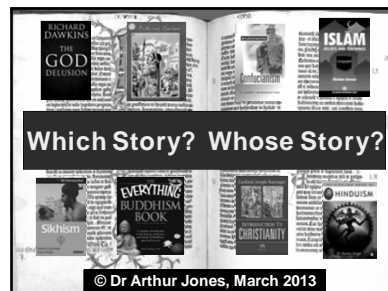




**Introduction to
Christian Education**

A set of three papers

Paper One



Setting the Scene

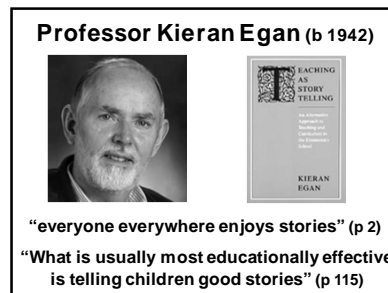
The Goal of Christian Education and Mission

- Life-long disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who disciple others
- Participants in the unfolding Christian story ...
- ... which centres in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

These big stories matter because:

- every aspect of school life is embedded in a big story,
- fundamentally they are faith stories (*worldview stories*),
- they have serious long-term consequences.

Stories



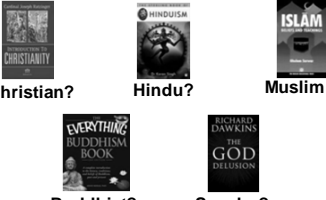
“Which worldview story is being taught and learnt in our school?”

In every subject our teaching will be reinforcing one worldview story and undermining others.

Students may soon forget our subject teaching, but they will absorb the story.

If the story is not identified for evaluation, they will have been *indoctrinated*.

So which story is being told?



Christian? Hindu? Muslim?

Buddhist? Secular?

What is ‘secular’?

Put simply, being secular is living *as if God does not exist and as if faith is not relevant to everyday life.*

The issue is not whether or not we *think* (‘believe’) God exists, but how we *live* – and *teach*.

Worldview stories are very difficult to recognise ...
... and even harder to replace ...



... but we have no option if we are serious about Christian education

‘Lateral Thinking’ Puzzles



Dualism

In the West people may live according to religion in private, but in public as secularists. But the public secularism undermines religious belief.

Dualism


In countries like Nepal people may also live according to religion in private, but in public as secularists. But the public secularism undermines religious belief.

The over-arching worldview story makes sense of life



Without that framework of meaning, education will fail.

The Christian story must be seen in the whole life of the community



If the community life makes the story – Gospel – believable, the work of the Christian teacher is much easier and more effective.

Telling Stories



Children will understand if we teach them through stories.

**What the Big Stories give us ...
... are worldviews**

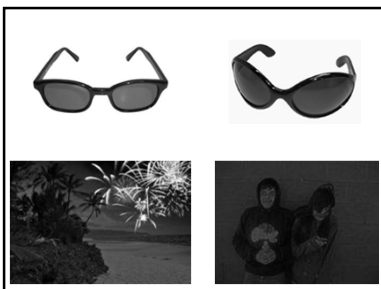
Worldviews ...

- ... are a person's, or community's 'faith' or 'religion'.
- ... are not academic or intellectual. They are common to everyone.
- ... without one we cannot think or act at all.

Worldviews ...



... are 'spectacles behind the eyes' – we look *through* them not *at* them.



Worldviews ...

- ... are not a matter of what we say we believe, or even what we think we believe.
- ... are revealed in how we actually live, and in how our society actually functions.

George MacDonald
(1824-1905)



"To hold a doctrine or an opinion with the intellect alone is not to believe it. A man's *real* belief is that which he lives by. ... What a man believes is the thing he does, not the thing he thinks." (*The Truth in Jesus*, 1885)


Teaching & Learning ... Unawares

Most Christian teachers teach and most learners learn without being aware that they are giving or receiving a worldview.

Can this be called 'Christian education'?

How the Big Stories Work

It is by reference to their culture's Big Story that people answer the Big Questions of life



(Paul Gauguin *Where Do We Come From*, 1897)

BIG STORY Questions

- What is ultimate reality?
- Where are we?
- Who are we?
- What are we here for?
- What's wrong?
- What's the remedy?
- Where are we going?
- What time is it in the story?
- How do we know all this?

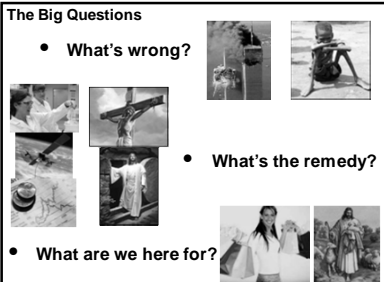
The Big Questions

- What is ultimately real?
- Where are we?
- Who are we?



The Big Questions

- What's wrong?
- What's the remedy?
- What are we here for?



The Big Questions

- Where are we going?
- What time is it in the story?
- How do we know all this?

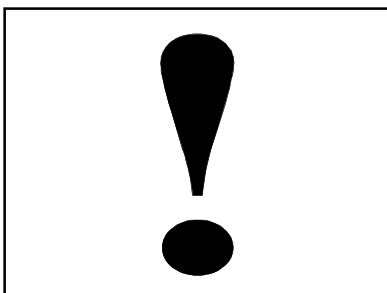


How Big Stories Work

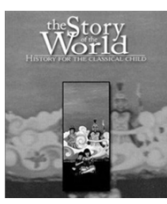
All we teach is like little stories that give our pupils answers to those big questions. Those answers are weaving for them a big worldview story.

Students may soon forget our subject teaching, but they will absorb the story.

If the story is not identified for evaluation, they will have been *indoctrinated*.



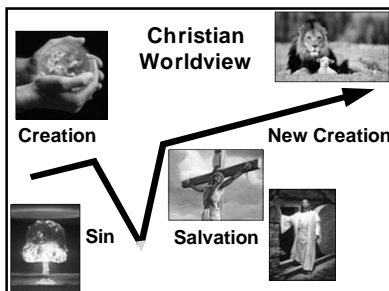
Two big stories compete in the Western world today



- Christian Story
- Western Secular Story

Christian Big Stories

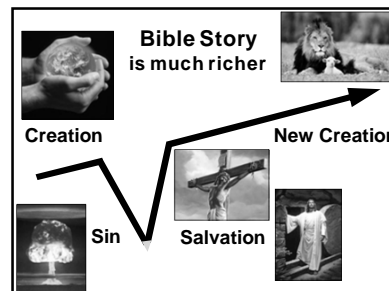




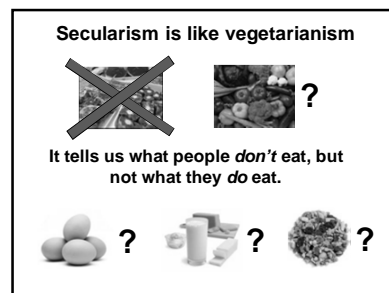
ChristianWorldview

“To look at the world through Scripture is, in fact, to look at the world through three lenses at the same time: as something created by God, twisted by sin, and being redeemed by the work of Christ. Remove any one of these lenses and the biblical worldview is distorted.”

(Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008:63)



What is Secularism?



Similarly secularism tells us what people *don't* believe, but not what they *do* believe.

What *kind* of secularist are they?

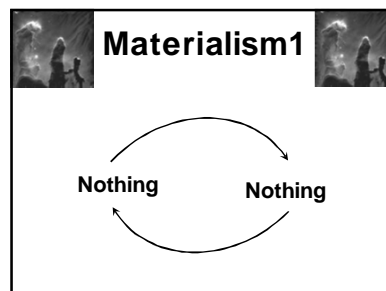
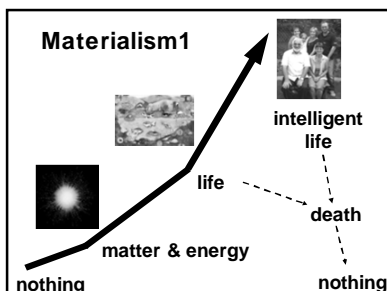
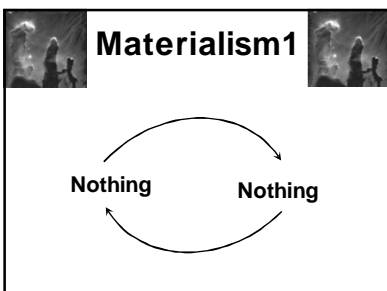
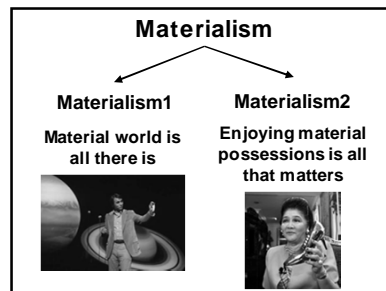
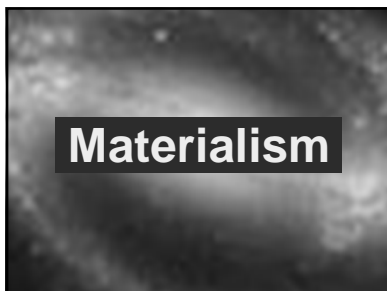
Of course, many claim that secularism is *neutral* – that it does not privilege any worldview, ideology, philosophy or religion.

This is a myth – there is no neutrality.

Even 'secular' science is embedded in a *worldview*.

That worldview is the expression of a *philosophical view of reality*.

The dominant philosophy today is ...






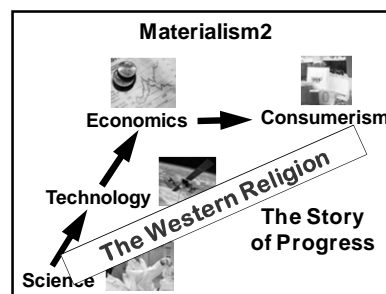
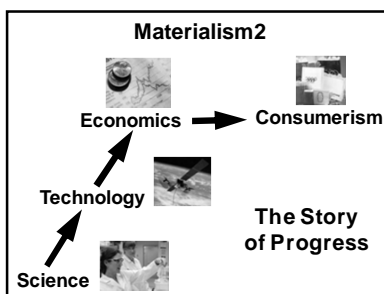
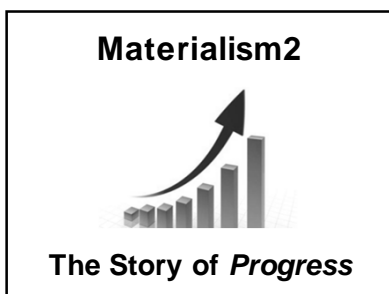
- Materialism1**
- *Material world* is all there is.
 - There are no *spirits, souls, angels, gods* or *God*.
 - There is no human *mind*, only brain matter.
 - There is no *intelligence, design* or *purpose* behind, or at work in the universe.

- Materialism1**
- There is no *moral order* in the universe.
 - There is no ultimate *meaning* to life.
 - There is no human *free will*.

Darwinism

Darwinism, for both its original author and its leading modern proponents, is *the* naturalistic theory of evolution



Conclusion

- The Situation**
- There is no worldview neutrality
 - We all absorb a big worldview story
 - The worldview story is learnt and nurtured through lots of little stories
 - The little stories transmit the big story to the next generation

- The Strategy**
- Identify and challenge the dominant secular worldview stories, evaluating their implications and consequences.
 - Identify all the little stories that reflect and nurture them.
 - Work to embed the Christian worldview in every aspect of the life of the school community.

- The Strategy**
- Ensure that all the little stories nurture the Christian story and transmit it to the next generation.
 - Throughout, we must explain to the students what we are doing and why it is important.
- It is a hard and difficult road. May God give us the strength and grace to reach the goal.

"Teaching Christianly ..."

... may well be the hardest job in the universe."
(John Van Dyk, 1997: 9)

Includes a photo of a man and a book cover titled "Letters to Lisa".

Which Story? Whose Story?

THE END

© Dr Arthur Jones, March 2013

A collage of book covers including "The God Delusion", "Everything in the Bible is True", and "Islam". A large black triangle with the words "THE END" is superimposed over the collage.