

CULTIVATING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

PART I: WHAT IS A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW?

1

WORLDVIEW DEFINED

- Britannica Dictionary: “the way someone thinks about the world”
- Merriam-Webster: “a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint”
- Wikipedia: “A worldview or world-view is the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing the whole of the individual's or society's knowledge and point of view.”

2

ORIGINS OF THE CONCEPT OF WORLDVIEW

Weltanschauung – Literally, “World” + “Perception” was first coined by Immanuel Kant in his 1790 work, *Critique of Judgment*:

“If the human mind is nonetheless to be able even to think the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of the noumenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our **intuition of the world**” [Weltanschauung].

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ELEMENTS OF A WORLDVIEW *

1. An explanation of the world. “Where do we come from?”
2. A futurology, answering the question “Where are we heading?”
3. Values, answers to ethical questions: “What should we do? What is good or evil?”
4. A praxeology, or methodology, or theory of action: “How should we attain our goals?”
5. An epistemology, or theory of knowledge: “What is true and false?”
6. An etiology. A constructed world-view should contain an account of its own “building blocks”, its origins and construction.

* As delineated by Belgian philosopher Leo Apostel

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DOES SCRIPTURE SPEAK OF WORLDVIEWS?

Colossians 2:8 – See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 – For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ

Ephesians 2:1-2 – And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

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THE BASIS FOR A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Romans 12:2 – Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

2 Peter 1:2-3 – Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

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Is a Christian Worldview the same thing
as a Biblical Worldview?

(Yes, but...)

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A BLEAK OUTLOOK (2021 GALLUP POLL)

- 69% of Americans identify as Christian – 24% No religion, 7% Jewish/Muslim/Buddhist
 - 22% of Americans are Catholic, 15% Mainline Protestant, 25% Evangelical Protestant
 - 36% of Americans describe themselves as born-again or evangelical
 - 47% of Americans are members of a church/synagogue
 - 29% of Americans attended a church/synagogue/mosque/temple in the past seven days

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A BLEAKER OUTLOOK (2022 LIGONIER POLL)

Percentage of US Evangelicals agreeing with the following statements:

- God accepts the worship of all religions including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam: 56%
- Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God: 43%
- God learns and adapts to different circumstances: 48%
- Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God: 65%
- Religious belief is a matter of personal opinion; it is not about objective truth: 38%
- Gender identity is a matter of choice: 37%
- The Bible is 100% accurate in all that it teaches: 95%

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HOW CAN WE CULTIVATE A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW?

Start with the correct presuppositions (that which is required as an antecedent in logic or fact – Merriam-Webster)

- God created the heavens and the earth – we live in a created world (Genesis 1:1)
- God has revealed Himself primarily in His written Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- God has revealed Himself secondarily in His creation (Romans 1:19-20, Psalm 19:1-2)
- We live in a fallen world that is subject to futility (Romans 8:20)
- God is the Source of all Truth (Isaiah 45:19, John 14:6)

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A WORKING DEFINITION (FROM J. MACARTHUR)

The Christian worldview sees and understands God the Creator and His creation-i.e., man and the world-primarily through the lens of God's special revelation, the Holy Scriptures, and secondarily through God's natural revelation in creation as interpreted by human reason and reconciled by and with Scripture, for the purpose of believing and behaving in accord with God's will and, thereby, glorifying God with one's mind and life, both now and in eternity.

At the heart of the matter, a Christian worldview contrasts with competing worldviews in that it: 1) recognizes that God is the unique source of all truth, and 2) relates all truth back to an understanding of God and His purposes for this life and the next.

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WHY CULTIVATE A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW?

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

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What's Your Worldview?

Selected Scriptures

Code: QA520

Weltanschauung.¹ What is it? Everyone has one. It colors the way all people interpret life. It triggers the decisions one makes, not to mention driving one's responses. It comes in many varieties. Philosophy, science, culture and/or religion generally make the dominant contributions to it. What is it? It is the personal worldview of each living individual.

What is a worldview? A worldview comprises one's collection of presuppositions, convictions and values from which a person tries to understand and make sense out of the world and life. "A worldview is a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality."² "A worldview is, first of all, an explanation and interpretation of the world and second, an application of this view to life."³

How does one form a worldview? Where does one begin? Every worldview starts with presuppositions-i.e., beliefs that one presumes to be true without supporting independent evidence from other sources or systems. Interpreting reality, in part or in whole, requires that one adopt an interpretative stance since there is no "neutral" thought in the universe. This becomes the foundation upon which one builds.

What are the presuppositions of a Christian worldview that is solidly rooted and grounded in Scripture? Carl F. H. Henry, an important Christian thinker in the last half of the twentieth century, answers the question very simply: "...evangelical theology dares harbor one and only one presupposition: the living and personal God intelligibly known in his revelation."⁴ Without equivocation, Dr. Henry forthrightly and clearly believes [believed] that "Our theological systems are not infallible, but God's propositional revelation is."⁵ Ronald Nash approaches the question in a similar manner: "Human beings and the universe in which they reside are the creation of God who has revealed himself in Scripture."⁶

What is the Christian worldview?⁷ The following definition is offered as a working model:

The Christian worldview sees and understands God the Creator and His creation-i.e., man and the world-primarily through the lens of God's special revelation, the Holy Scriptures, and secondarily through God's natural revelation in creation as interpreted by human reason and reconciled by and with Scripture, for the purpose of believing and behaving in accord with God's will and, thereby, glorifying God with one's mind and life, both now and in eternity.

What essentially distinguishes the Christian worldview from other worldviews? At the heart of the matter, a Christian worldview contrasts with competing worldviews in that it: 1) recognizes that God is the unique source of all truth, and 2) relates all truth back to an understanding of God and His purposes for this life and the next. Arthur Holmes superbly summarizes the unique implications of a Christian worldview when relating absolute truth to God.

1. To say that truth is absolute rather than relative means that it is unchanging and universally the same.
2. Truth is absolute not in or of itself but because it derives ultimately from the one, eternal God. It is grounded in his “metaphysical objectivity,” and that of his creation.
3. Absolute propositional truth, therefore, depends on the absolute personal truth (or fidelity) of God, who can be trusted in all he does and says.⁸

Are there any common misperceptions about the Christian worldview, especially by Christians? There are at least two mistaken notions. The first is that a Christian view of the world and life will differ on all points from other worldviews. While this is not always true (e.g., all worldviews accept the law of gravity), the Christian worldview will differ and will be unique on the most important points, especially as they relate to the character of God, the nature and value of Scripture, and the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The second is that the Bible contains all that we need to know. Common sense should put this misdirected thought out of business. However, it is true that the Bible alone contains all that Christians need to know about their spiritual life and godliness through a knowledge of the one true God, which is the highest and most important level of knowledge (2 Peter 1:2-4). Also, while it does not exhaustively address every field, when Scripture speaks in any subject area, it speaks authoritatively.

A Christian worldview provides a framework by which 1) to understand the world and all of its reality from God's perspective and 2) to order one's life accordingly to God's will.

What should be the ultimate goal of embracing the Christian worldview? Why is the Christian worldview worth recovering? Listen to Jeremiah, who passes along God's direct answer.

Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD. Jeremiah 9:23-24

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Footnotes

1. The German word translated “worldview.” Back
2. Nash, Ronald H., *Faith and Reason*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, p. 24, 1988. Back
3. Phillips, W. Gary, and Brown, Williams E., *Making Sense of Your World from a Biblical Viewpoint*, Moody Press, Chicago, p. 29, 1991. Back
4. Henry, Carl F. H., *God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. 1, *God Who Speaks and Shows*, Word, Waco, Texas, p. 212, 1976. Back
5. Henry, Carl, F. H., *Fortunes of the Christian World View*, Trinity Journal 19:168, 1998. Back
6. Nash, p. 47. He gives the same answer in *Worldviews in Conflict*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, p. 52, 1992. Back

7. For a brief history of the Christian worldview in general and the recent spiritual climate in America, see Henry, Fortunes, 163-176 and The vagrancy of the American spirit, *Faculty Dialogue* 22 (Fall 1994):5-18. Historically speaking, James Orr is generally credited as the first modern theologian to organize Christian thought around the core idea of "worldview," in *The Christian View of God and the World* A. Elliot, Edinburgh, 1893; reprint, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948. [Back](#)

8. Homes, Arthur F., *All Truth Is God's Truth*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, p. 37, 1977. [Back](#)

9. This suggestive list has been adapted from Sire, James, *Discipleship of the Mind*, IVP, Downers Grove, Illinois, pp. 30-31, 1990 and *The Universe Next Door*, 2nd ed., IVP, Downers Grove, Illinois, p. 18, 1968. [Back](#)

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