

The Major Contours of the Christian Worldview

I. Introduction:

- A. General Definition of a Worldview: A worldview is a philosophy of life. An ideology. A *weltanschauung* (the German). It is an attempt to explain life's most basic questions. A religion is likewise, a worldview. Any distinct culture is the embodiment of a worldview.
- B. Specific Definition: *It is a system of beliefs; it is what we really believe about the world (universe) and ourselves and how we fit into the scheme of things, and it is these beliefs which influence our thought and action.*
- C. Illustration of Worldview: A worldview can be likened to a pair of glasses through which one views the world. It is important to have the right prescription or one will have a distorted view of reality!

Think of a worldview as the picture (the boxtop) that goes along with a jigsaw puzzle. The pieces of the puzzle are life as you find it. A worldview helps you arrange the pieces in some meaningful order.

Everyone has a worldview (even TV commentators, journalists, and politicians). A person may not be adept at articulating or defending their worldview; they may not even be able to explain how they received it. *No one is neutral.*

II. The Source of a Worldview

The most basic way a person acquires a worldview is through the group or culture he or she is born in. Other things that contribute are: experience, reason, and revelation and faith. For the Christian, revelation or the Bible is the ultimate authority. *All* worldviews begin with a primary assumption(s) that based on faith.

III. The Basic Beliefs (Contours) of a Christian Worldview

The Christian worldview is similar to a doctrinal statement but is much more general. It is derived from a systematic study of Scripture. Another name for a full-blown Christian worldview is a systematic theology. Here are some of the basics of a Christian worldview based on the Bible as the ultimate authority.

- A. An, infinite, eternal triune God exists. He is personal, transcendent, immanent, sovereign and good. This God has revealed Himself propositionally in space and time. Each word used here is important and essential (but certainly not exhaustive).

- B. God created the cosmos (all that is) *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) to operate with a uniformity of natural causes in an open system. The *uniformity of natural causes* makes science possible. *An open system* makes miracles possible.
- C. Human beings were created in the image of God in order to commune with God and to rule for God. They therefore, possess attributes analogous to God's own, i.e., personality, self-transcendence, intelligence, morality, gregariousness and creativity.
- D. The state of the creation and man as they now are, are not as they were originally created. Man and the cosmos are deeply affected by the Fall and in need of redemption.
- E. For each person death is either the gate to life with God and His people or the gate to eternal separation from the only One who can ultimately fulfill human aspirations.
- F. Redemption is provided by God for the elect and ultimately will affect the whole cosmos. When a person is redeemed he is reinstated as God's theocratic representative on earth in the sense that he is God's ambassador (II Cor. 5:20).
- G. When God saves us He saves us *from* Himself (His wrath); He is a Holy god. He also saves us *by* Himself and *for* Himself.
- H. Ethics (how we should live) is transcendent and is based on the character of God as good (holy and loving). Because this is true, moral absolutes exist. If God does not exist, then neither does right and wrong, only personal preference.
- I. History is purposeful (teleological), a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's plan. History is literally *His story*.

IV. Why Should Contemporary Christians be Concerned about Worldview Issues?

Because we live in world that has been shrunk by modern travel and communications opposing worldviews are in collision as never before. There is no longer a consensus in Western Civilization that the Christian worldview mirrors reality. Worldviews of Postmodernism, Islam, and Marxism are striving for ascendancy. Here's how the great New Testament Scholar describes the struggle:

The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of all connection with Christianity. Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but also all of human thought. The Christian, therefore, cannot be indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavour. It must all be brought into some relation to the gospel. It must be studied either in order to be demonstrated as false, or else in order to be made useful in advancing the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom must be advanced not merely, extensively, but also intensively. The church must seek to conquer

not merely every man for Christ, but also the whole of man. J. Gresham Machen

Some Basic Resources:

Of the books listed below I recommend the books by Grenz, Sire, and Lewis for initial reading and for Study groups. The others are more technical. I also recommend reading CIM Briefing Outlines #6 (Atheism), #33 (Worldviews and You), #35 (Developing a Christian Mind), #45 (Defending the Christian Worldview), and #60 (The Triune God).

Bertrand, J. Mark. *(Re)-Thinking Worldview*

Blamires, Harry. *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?*

Brown, William E. & Phillips, W. Gary. *Making Sense of Your World.*

Clark, Gordon H. *A Christian View of Men and Things.*

Cosgrove, Mark P. *Faith, Learning, and the Christian Worldview.*

Colson, Charles, and, Pearcey, Nancy. *How Now Shall We Live?*

Dockery, David S. and, Thornbury, Gregory Alan. Editors. *Shaping A Christian Worldview.*

Geisler, Norman L. & Watkins, William D. *Worlds Apart.*

Grenz, Stanley J. *What Christians Really Believe & Why.*

Holmes, Arthur F. *Contours of a World View.*

Holmes, Arthur. Ed. *The Making of a Christian Mind.*

Jordan, James B. *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World.*

Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity.*

Naugle, David K. *Worldview: The History of a Concept.*

Nash, Ronald H. *World-Views in Conflict.*

Noebel, David A. *Understanding the Times.* 891 Pages!

Ryken, Philip Graham. *What is the Christian Worldview?*

Schaeffer, Francis A. *A Christian Manifesto*

Sire, James W. *Beginning with God.*

Sire, James W. *The Universe Next Door.*

Schlossberg, Herbert, and Olasky, Marvin. *Turning Point: A Christian World View Declaration.*

Sproul, R.C. *Lifeviews.*