



Do You Really Understand “Worldview”?

Appendix B

by Dr. Greg Hall on November 26, 2016

“Worldview” is not a uniquely Christian term. It is more of a philosophical term and was first used by German philosophers. In German, the word is *weltanschung*. Generally, it refers to how we view reality and life. In order for the concept of worldview to have significance for us, it pays to see what scholars have said about it, and how they define it. Dr. James W. Sire, in *The Universe Next Door* gives this definition:

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.¹

Though not originally a “Christian” word, Christian philosophers and theologians have used the word to help Christians understand that Christian faith is intended to be a framework (built upon the authority of the Word of God), by which we build the correct way of thinking about the reality and core view of life intended by our Creator. Being a Christian is not a matter of having a compartment of life that is religious and others that are secular – with the false idea that such a position is non-religious. In fact, there are ultimately only two religions in the world – you either start with God’s Word or man’s word.

The Scripture teaches us there is a God who expects us to live the whole of our lives, not part, in correspondence to His truth and purpose for all of life, based on the foundational propositional truths of God’s Word.

For those interested in a very scholarly overview of the worldview discussion, you should have as a resource, *Worldview, the History of a Concept*, by Dr. David K. Naugle.² This book gives us a historical perspective on the various definitions offered by scholars including:

“Worldview” in a Christian perspective implies the objective existence of the trinitarian God whose essential character establishes the moral order of the universe and whose word, wisdom, and law define and govern all aspects of created existence.³

I have had the fortune of being part of the Centurions Program, a ministry of *Prison Fellowship* devoted to helping believers understand the significance of worldview thinking. Even though there are some areas of concern regarding Genesis, nonetheless, I agree with Chuck Colson when he defines worldview like this:

It is the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the “big picture” that directs our daily decisions and actions.⁴

The definition of “worldview” is the first step in understanding this important topic, but there is more to it than definition. It is important to understand the “content” of what goes into making a worldview.

In *The Universe Next Door*, Dr. Sire lists seven basic worldview questions.

If a worldview can be expressed in propositions, what might they be? Essentially, they are our essential, rock-bottom answers to the following seven questions:

1. *What is prime reality – the really real?* To this we might answer God, or the gods, or the material cosmos. Our answer here is the most fundamental. It sets the boundaries for the answers that can consistently be given to the other six questions.
2. *What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?* Here our answers point to whether we see the world as created or autonomous, as chaotic or orderly, as matter or spirit; or whether we emphasize our subjective, personal relationship to the world or its objectivity apart from us.
3. *What is a human being?* To this we might answer: a highly complex machine, a sleeping god, a person made in the image of God, a naked ape.
4. *What happens to a person at death?* Here we might reply: personal extinction, or transformation to a higher state, or reincarnation, or departure to a shadowy existence on “the other side.”
5. *Why is it possible to know anything at all?* Sample answers include the idea that we are made in the image of an all-knowing God or that consciousness and rationality developed under the contingencies of survival in a long process of evolution.
6. *How do we know what is right and wrong?* Again, perhaps we are made in the image of a God whose character is good, or right and wrong are determined by human choice alone or what feels good, or the notions simply developed under an impetus toward cultural or physical survival.
7. *What is the meaning of human history?* To this we might answer: to realize the purposes of God or the gods, to make a paradise on earth, to prepare a people for a life in community with a loving and holy God, and so forth.⁵

So how does a worldview get developed? Where does it come from? As I stated earlier, in an ultimate sense (as exhibited in Genesis 3 concerning the temptation), there are only two worldviews. Either one bases one’s thinking on the word of one who knows everything, who has always been there, who doesn’t tell any lies, and has revealed to us what we need to know, or one has to build one’s thinking on the fallible word of fallible man.

Now, we need to understand that there are many versions of these two ultimate worldviews. There are many that will compete for your attention. On what basis is one right? Aren’t they all simply a matter of choosing (this would default to the religion of humanism, as humans would be the ultimate authority on the subject)? And further to this, who is to say one has merit, and others do not? Aren’t they all equally valid (again, this would be more humanism)? But even so, these are questions with which we must contend. How will you answer?

According to Dr. Ronald Nash, three major tests should be applied when evaluating worldviews. They are: the test of reason, the test of experience, and the test of practice.⁶

IF THERE IS NO GOD OF THE BIBLE, THERE IS NO BASIS FOR LOGIC IN THE FIRST PLACE.

The test of reason has to do with logic – and ultimately the only logical starting point is the infinite God of the Bible (who is the basis for the logic and its existence). In other words, if there is no God of the Bible, there is no basis for logic in the first place. Logic is predicated on the existence of the God of the Bible.

Regarding logic, students should know about the law of non-contradiction as fundamental to our ability to reason. It states: A cannot be B and non-B at the same time and in the same relationship. This is an important philosophic notion in the study of logic. Simply put, it means: two contradictory ideas cannot both be true. Where there is contradiction, one side or the other is in error. Not all ideas are equally valid. To employ the test of reason in worldview development is to determine, among competing ideas, which are reasonable and which might we believe to be true. Ultimately only one passes the test – the rest will exhibit logical fallacies. The only true worldview is that which begins with the infinite Creator God and His written revelation to man.

The test of reason alone is not enough upon which to build the content of a worldview. Dr. Nash says, “Worldviews must pass not only the test of reason; they must also satisfy the test of experience. Worldviews should be relevant to what we know about the world and ourselves.”⁷

Here is a truth that many students need to connect with: *Your experience counts*. Sure it is considered subjective, but your experiences in life matter because the knowledge it represents is valuable and pertinent to your life. I am not suggesting that your personal observations are in any sense the exclusive test for developing worldview, but rather is *coherence* as a whole, where all aspects of reality work together. If your personal experience is your *only* criteria for developing worldview you are greatly mistaken. I am simply saying that your experience does matter.

The test of practice is how we evaluate our worldview in the circumstances of daily life (i.e., consistency). It is about how we actually live in a practical, down-to-earth way, with the ideas we profess to be true. For example, in an evolutionary worldview, people are merely animals that have no basis in wearing clothes. Yet inconsistently, these evolutionists betray their worldview by wearing clothes that come from a literal Genesis 3. The question is this: can the ideas and concepts stand up as a real explanation for the way you experience your life, and do they have application beyond your own life?

The content of a biblical Christian worldview must also be well developed and be solidly built on the authority of Scripture. You need to know the basic time-honored truths of the scriptural history and doctrine that serve as a basis for Christian theism — a biblical understanding of the nature and character of God and the true history of the universe as revealed by Him in His Word. Here is a short list of the many aspects of Scripture that provide a foundation for our worldview:

- He (through His Son, Jesus) created the universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) because He is the sovereign God.
- Though He is transcendent and otherworldly, He is personal and immanent and longing to be involved in the lives of His creation.
- He has accomplished this through His Son Jesus who is God incarnate, Immanuel, God "with us."
- Jesus is the exact representation of God the Father.
- The Father has redeemed those who will believe in His Son as the atoning sacrifice for sin.
- God makes it possible to be connected with Him through His Holy Spirit who is God, "in us."
- His Spirit is our comforter and teacher and guide. He leads us into truth and is God's guarantee of His presence with us until the end of our lives.
- The Garden of Eden was real and our fore bearers made a decision of disobedience recorded in Genesis that affected the human family. Original sin is a reality.
- God gave the plan of redemption, the sacrifice of His Son, as the payment for the debt owed a Holy God for such an offense.

Beyond this, you need to have a command on why Christians believe the Bible to be God's Word to us. And you also need to know the evidence that confirms the fact His Word is trustworthy and true. You need to know how to answer the basic secular attacks of our day that cause people to doubt that God's Word is the true starting point for our worldview.

This is just an example to show you how your Christian worldview must start with the content we gain from the truths revealed in Scripture about God, His Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They are the building blocks upon which your worldview is built. To not understand them or to understand them wrongly is to build a faulty foundation. Christians must think clearly and scripturally about the basic tenets of theism if their worldview is to be biblical.

The Worldview of Naturalism

Contrary to the Christian worldview is the worldview of naturalism (which is an essential tenant in similar worldviews like humanism, materialism, and atheism). Keep in mind that when a person mixes naturalistic thinking with God's Word, their starting point really is man's word. Once fallibility is introduced to one's starting point — then that starting point is man's word, even if it is mixed with God's revelation. As was said earlier, there are ultimately only two worldviews.

The thinking behind naturalism goes something like this: the world and universe as you see it is all there is. There is no God, no Creator, no one to whom humans give an account of their lives. The naturalist believes death marks the end of life in this world with no prospect of life beyond in any form. For the naturalist, the universe is a closed system and therefore there is no need for humans to seek the involvement of a transcendent being.

NATURALISM IS A WORLDVIEW THAT ASSUMES IT HAS SUCCEEDED AT GETTING GOD OUT OF THE PICTURE IN EVERY AREA OF LIFE.

Naturalism is a worldview that assumes it has succeeded at getting God out of the picture in every area of life. It is also intent in getting the biblical God and His written revelation out of our educational process. In large measure, it has been successful due to an often subtle influence as well as an overt and militant influence. The naturalistic worldview is the basis for the development of the public education curriculum of our schools. As Ben Stein so aptly put it in a movie,⁸ God has been “expelled.”

I think for the most part that this is a subtle fact among educators today. I don’t think that most of them are even aware that they are part of the naturalist indoctrination. Try asking this question of your public school leadership: “What is the worldview or educational philosophy behind the curriculum of your school?” They will probably find it hard if not impossible to answer. If probed, they may think that Judeo-Christian principles are at the core of our public education system curriculum. Many are committed to the “Character Counts” movement, which borrows certain Christian values, but is completely mute on the source of those values.

I honestly think that many educators would be greatly concerned if they were aware of the naturalistic presuppositions beneath their work. One of the problems is that they have been convinced that including God and His Word (the Bible) is religion, but eliminating them results in a neutral position. They don’t understand there is no neutral position. One is either “for Christ or against.” What they perceive wrongly as a neutral position is in reality an anti-God position — it is a religious position — the religion of naturalism/ atheism. We have much work to be done in pointing this out to the Church, let alone the secular world.

The naturalistic worldview holds steadfastly to the idea of evolution and millions of years as “the” explanation of the origin of life. The two are virtually inseparable in the Western mind. If there is no God, and if the physical reality is all there is, then life must have come into being by itself . . . somehow. That’s where evolution (which needs millions of years to even be postulated) comes in. What is “evolution”? Dr. Michael Behe, who is basically a theistic evolutionist but is against pure naturalism, in *Darwin’s Black Box*, defines it this way:

Evolution is a flexible word. It can be used by one person to mean something as simple as change over time, or by another person to mean the descent of all life forms from a common ancestor, leaving the mechanism of change unspecified. In its full-throated, biological sense, however, evolution means a process whereby life arose from non-living matter and subsequently developed entirely by natural means. That is the sense that Darwin gave the word, and the meaning that it holds in the scientific community.⁹

Why Naturalism Survives

Despite massive amounts of scientific and philosophical arguments against it, the worldview of naturalism and the idea of evolution persist. Today there is a huge cloud of doubt hanging over the science of evolution. As Christians, we must pursue this information and honestly explore and openly criticize it when we see it for what it is.

It is all part of defending what we believe and know to be true. Disclosing such faulty ideas helps us make the case for the authenticity of the biblical account of the origin of life (2 Cor. 10:4–5). Evolution and naturalism as a belief about the origin and development of life is being shown by scientists to be no explanation for the origin of life at all. How then do we account for its persistence as the *only* explanation for the origin and diversification of life in the textbooks our students must read in our public schools?

The first reason is that those promoting evolution and naturalism are in control. They currently control the debate on the issues and they control what goes into textbooks. They do not include any other explanations for life because they don’t want to. This intellectual dishonesty has been enabled by those of us who believe in God and creation, as we have abdicated our responsibility long ago for intellectual rigor on the major issues of our times. Basically, we walked away; they took over, and now we find it a stronghold in the educational process that is very hard to deal with. Also, many of us have succumbed to the false idea of neutrality, and thus backed off on defending the Christian position — only to allow these secularists to now be able to impose their religion on the education system and thus generations of our kids.

THE REAL BATTLE ABOUT EVOLUTION IS NOT ONE OF OPERATIONAL SCIENCE, BUT OF PHILOSOPHY.

The second reason evolution persists is because it is absolutely necessary for the philosophical worldview of naturalism. The real battle about evolution is not one of operational science, but of philosophy. The belief in evolution as an explanation for the origin

of all life on earth is religious — it is man's attempt to explain life without God. The religion of naturalism (or atheism) that is being taught to generations of students is the philosophy that attempts to totally remove God from the picture. For the naturalist, there is no God, no supernatural, and no life beyond death. That is their philosophical starting point — one, they are not prepared to question, regardless of the evidence that conflicts with it.

As Dr. Carl Sagan said, "The Cosmos is all there ever was or ever will be."¹⁰ This is the naturalistic mantra. And it becomes very circular in its reasoning. People believe in evolution because of the naturalist worldview (naturalism is the focal point for their starting point but in reality, man being the ultimate authority is the underlying starting point). But the same people who believe in the naturalist worldview say they do so because of evolution. In reality, because they won't question their naturalistic starting point, they won't question evolution. See the problem? Why is this important? Why should anyone care?

1. The growing issues of concern in our culture have as their foundational cause the transition from a Christian worldview to principles now based on naturalism. The question about life's origin is used to justify this wrong foundation. Lose the battle here and you have lost that battle in its entirety.
2. The philosophical assumptions of those who teach your children have the power, if left unchecked, to determine their destiny. This might scare you. It should. Those who control the textbooks and curriculum of our public education system have capitulated to naturalistic thinking and God has been removed, and we are paying the price.

Currently, we are losing the battle. By and large, we send our children away each morning to public schools, or have sent them to secular colleges or universities, to be inculcated with the subtle but pervasive ideas about naturalism and any other number of godless philosophies.

Lately, however, the subtlety of those who promote naturalism as the philosophy behind public education has been replaced by militancy — and our students and parents are increasingly feeling it. The goal of the current educational philosophy is certainly not neutral as is claimed (Matt. 12:30). We can see that more clearly as this militancy emerges. The new goal is to convince students that there is no such thing as transcendent or supernatural truths. The *only* source of truth is man, and God doesn't exist.

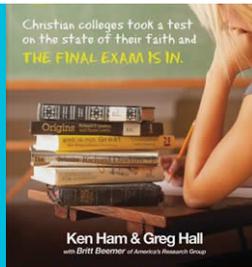
Of course, students are told that "science" confirms this naturalistic position. However, students are not being taught the distinction between historical science (beliefs about the past) and operational science (knowledge based on observation/repeatability/experimentation that builds technology). Students have been led to believe that if they don't believe in naturalism, they are giving up the science that built our technology. Sadly, this brainwashing in false ideas has had a devastating effect on these students. They, in essence, have been thoroughly indoctrinated in a secular worldview and convinced that this is a neutral position that is supported by unbiased scientists who are merely seeking the truth.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THEM AND HELPING THEM UNDERSTAND THE TRUE NATURE OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN CHRIST IS A CRUCIAL STARTING POINT.

By systematically training our children from a biblical starting point, we can instill in them the necessary components of a biblical worldview. We must also consider that none of these arguments matter if our children are not followers of Christ. Preaching the gospel to them and helping them understand the true nature of repentance and faith in Christ is a crucial starting point. As we teach them apologetics and help them learn how to study the Bible to feed their own souls, we will be fostering a faith that will withstand the attacks from the world. We can help them understand the philosophies that have set themselves up against Christ and that through the empowering of the Holy Spirit they can fight these battles. Firmly grounding their worldview in Scripture offers them great hope and assurance that they can conquer the challenges from the world.

Already Compromised





Christian colleges took a test on the state of their faith and the final exam is in.

Footnotes

1. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 4th Edition, 2004), p. 17.
2. David K. Naugle, *Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
4. Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999), p. 14.
5. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, p. 20.
6. Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 55.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
8. *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* is a 2008 documentary film, directed by Nathan Frankowski and hosted by Ben Stein.
9. Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2006).
10. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 4.

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