

Why I Don't Have a Biblical Worldview (And You Shouldn't Either)

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I. What Is a Worldview?

A. Some definitions of worldviews

1. A worldview is the framework from which we view reality and make sense of life and the world.¹
2. A worldview is a set of beliefs and assumptions that a person uses when interpreting the world around him.²
3. 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) that 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.³
4. A person's worldview, whether it be Christian, humanist or whatever is a personal insight about meaning and reality. It is how a person interprets, through his or her own eyes, a personal belief about the world. A person's worldview tries to give reasons for how the facts of reality relate and tie together. The summation of these facts provides the big picture into which the daily events of a person's life should fit.⁴
5. A worldview is a way of looking at the world and one's place in the world. It is a perspective on reality.⁵

¹Focus on the Family: <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/christian-worldview/whats-a-christian-worldview/whats-a-worldview-anyway>, accessed 10/09/16.

² Christian Apologetics Research Ministry (CARM): <https://carm.org/dictionary-worldview>, accessed 10/09/16.

³ James Sire: <http://www.christianity.com/christian-life/worldview/what-is-a-worldview-11627153.html>, accessed 10/09/16.

⁴ Answers in Genesis (AiG): <https://answersingenesis.org/christianity/what-is-your-worldview/>, accessed 10/09/16.

⁵ Steve Cowan: <https://arcapologetics.org/culture/the-christian-worldview/>, accessed 10/09/16.

II. What Would Make a Worldview Biblical?

A. Is putting chocolate syrup on your vanilla ice cream "biblical"?

1. Is putting chocolate syrup on our vanilla ice cream consistent with or inconsistent with a view of reality that the Bible teaches (e.g., that God exists; that Jesus is the Son of God; that there is a heaven and a hell)?
2. Is putting chocolate syrup on our vanilla ice cream consistent with or inconsistent with a view of obligations that the Bible teaches?
3. the nature of being and the nature of doing

B. Thus,

1. If all one means by 'biblical worldview' that his views on reality are consistent with the Bible, then, of course, I am certainly in favor of my worldview being biblical.
2. Too often in my experience, however, this is not what I find in contemporary worldview conversation within evangelicalism.
3. It is this, that I should like to explore and examine.

III. What's Wrong with a Biblical Worldview?

A. What?

1. Isn't it impious to suggest that one's worldview is not biblical?
2. After all, isn't the Bible our "sole infallible and inerrant guide for faith and life?"

B. Before I look specifically at what this contemporary worldview conversation, there is one observation I should like to make.

C. In insisting upon a "biblical" worldview, there is a danger of being incoherent or self-defeating.

1. Depending upon how one ends up understanding exactly what a worldview is, how could one decide to make his worldview "biblical" without that decision already being affected by his worldview?
2. If one's worldview is "the framework from which [he views] reality" which determines how he "sees the world" and, further, what he takes to be true or false, then on what basis could he choose a "biblical" worldview?

- a. If he chooses a "biblical worldview" and the worldview on which he made that choice is itself "biblical" then he had a biblical worldview before he had a biblical worldview which is incoherent.
 - b. If he chooses a "biblical worldview" and the worldview on which he made the choice is itself not "biblical" then he is defeating the purpose for wanting to choose a "biblical" worldview in the first place.
- D. This illustrates the unavoidable and undeniable reality that some of our knowledge/beliefs are trans-worldview.
- 1. To be trans-worldview means that there are some aspects of reality that are undeniable, which is to say, we cannot fail to know them.
 - 2. To be trans-worldview means that there are some aspects of reality that are true in every worldview.

IV. Problems with a "Biblical" Worldview: The Glasses Illustration

- A. Summary of the problem with a "biblical" worldview.
- 1. Some apologists try to maintain that one's worldview must arise exclusively from the Bible alone.
 - 2. This position is defended by the apologetic methodology known as Presuppositionalism.⁶
 - 3. However, even some non-Presuppositionalists (e.g., Evidentialists and Classical Apologists) talk this way.
 - 4. My contention is that this is impossible as the following points will seek to argue.
- B. In world views discussions I've heard, the illustration of how glasses affect one's seeing is often used.

⁶ Cornelius Van Til, the progenitor of American Presuppositionalism, says "The only 'proof' of the Christian position is that unless its truth is presupposed there is no possibility of 'proving' anything at all. The actual state of affairs as preached by Christianity is the necessary foundation of 'proof' itself." [Cornelius Van Til, "My Credo" in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 21]. Van Til's disciple and main defender was Greg L. Bahnsen. Bahnsen maintained, "The Christian must not only recognize [that every apologetic encounter is ultimately a conflict of worldviews or fundamental perspectives] for the purpose of developing and responding to arguments with an unbeliever, but also be aware that the particular claims which the apologist defends are understood within the context of the entire system of doctrine revealed by God in the Scriptures." [Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1998), 30, emphasis added]

1. The illustration shows how it is that a pair of glasses affects how one sees the world.
2. Normally, one does not see the glasses themselves, but rather he sees everything else through the glasses.
3. The glasses form a sort of grid or paradigm that determines our views and understanding of reality.
4. Thus, a world view is often described as a "way of seeing the world."
 - a. "In the simplest terms, a worldview may be defined as how one sees life and the world at large. In this manner it can be compared to a pair of glasses. How a person makes sense of the world depends upon that person's 'vision,' so to speak. The interpretive 'lens' helps people make sense of life and comprehend the world around them. Sometimes the lens brings clarity, and other times it can distort reality."⁷
 - b. "Jeff Baldwin, a fellow at the Texas-based Worldview Academy, says worldview 'is like an invisible pair of eyeglasses-glasses you put on to help you see reality clearly. If you choose the right pair of glasses, you can see everything vividly and can behave in sync with the real world. ... But if you choose the wrong pair of glasses, you may find yourself in a worse plight than the blind man - thinking you see clearly when in reality your vision is severely distorted.' ***To choose the 'right' glasses, you have to first understand and embrace the true worldview.***"⁸

See how the last statement is self-refuting?

- c. "A worldview functions in much the same way as a pair of glasses through which a person sees the world. This interpretive lens helps people make sense of life and comprehend the world around them. Worldviews also shape a person's understanding of his unique place on earth. Sometimes worldviews bring clarity, but at other times they distort reality."⁹

(1) Can you see the problem with this?

⁷ Reasons to Believe (RTB): <http://www.reasons.org/articles/what-in-the-world-is-a-worldview>, accessed 10/09/16.

⁸ Focus on the Family: <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/christian-worldview/whats-a-christian-worldview/whats-your-worldview>, accessed 10/14/16, emphasis added.

⁹ Enrichment Journal: http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200804/200804_000_glasses_of_truth.cfm, accessed 10/14/16.

- (2) How can you know whether your worldview distorts reality?
- (3) If your worldview is that through which you see the world, that would mean that your worldview is that through which you see your worldview.
- (4) But if that is so, then you wouldn't be able to know whether your view of your worldview is really distorting reality or whether it just seems like it is distorting reality because your worldview is making you think it is distorting reality.
- (5) At some point you would need to have some access to reality that is not itself a product of any worldview.

d. *The Glasses We Wear: Reflections on Christian Worldview*

"The glasses we wear change everything about us. . . Did you know that each one of us wears glasses? Even if you have 20/20 vision, you wear worldview glasses, a particular set of lenses through which you view the world and interpret life. ... The good news is, you can change your glasses. . . Using concise chapters, reflective poetry, and thoughtful study questions, Michael G. Garland invites you to see the world through a different set of glasses. While exploring the Christian perspective, *The Glasses We Wear* will challenge you to examine closely the lens through which you see God, the world, and yourself."¹⁰

C. I think the glasses illustration should be abandoned altogether since that is not the way glasses work in the real world.

1. One does not go to the optometrist or ophthalmologist to get pair of glasses in order to "see the world a certain way."
2. Your doctor does not ask you

"How would like to see the world?"

"Would you like to see the world rose colored?"

"How about seeing everything twice as big as it really is?"

¹⁰ From the book description on Amazon® https://www.amazon.com/Glasses-Wear-Reflections-Christian-Worldview/dp/1505303559/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1476652615&sr=8-1&keywords=the+glasses+we+wear, accessed 10/16/16.

I would ask, "Do you have any glasses that make people seem to have more hair?"

3. But this is exactly how some of these thinkers make it sound.
 - a. They think how one sees the world is a matter of choice.
 - b. This seems to imply that looking at the world "Christianly" is just another way to see the world.
 - (1) This view is sometimes called perspectivalism.
 - (2) It is also a form of what is known as Wittgensteinian forms of life.
 - (a) Each person has a "form of life" or a way of understanding the world.
 - (b) No one form of life is any more "right" than any other form of life.
 - (c) Science is a particular form of life that is no better or worse at getting at "reality."
 - (d) Religion is another form of life that is no better or worse at getting at "reality."
 - (e) e.g., Stephen Jay Gould
4. As I said, there are problems with this "seeing-the-world-as" or "perspectival" way of framing the issue.
 - a. First, how can one choose a world view without being affected by his own world view in making the choice?
 - (1) Is my choosing a world view merely a product of my own prior world view?
 - (2) This is self-refuting and futile.
 - b. Second, we actually want something more than what this understanding of a worldview is able to give us.
 - (1) Instead of seeing the world a certain way (as the glasses illustration would suggest) we want to **SEE THE WORLD THE WAY THAT IT REALLY IS.**
 - (2) **It cannot fail to be the case that in some respects, we are able to know reality directly.**

- c. **We need to make sure that people understand what we mean by *the Christian worldview* (if we insist on using the term worldview.**

V. Problems with a "Biblical" Worldview: "Outside" Ideas

- A. Ken Ham insists that "All versions of the gap theory impose outside ideas on Scripture and thus open the door for further compromise."¹¹
- B. Ham seems to be saying that by virtue of a theory utilizing "outside ideas," that theory is a compromise.
- C. In a panel debate on the Trinity Broadcast Network with Old Earth creationist Hugh Ross, Ken Ham said "Shouldn't you take outside ideas and reinterpret [the Bible]? No, you can't do that."
- D. But consider Joshua commanding the Sun to stand still in Joshua 10.

"Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: 'Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.' So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies." Joshua 10:12-13 NKJV

cf. Gallileo and Bellermine

VI. Problems with a "Biblical" Worldview: Hermeneutics

"We must get our hermeneutics (principles of biblical interpretation and understanding) from the Bible otherwise we're lost in relativism!" (caller to radio talk show)

VII. Problems with a "Biblical" Worldview: Philosophy and the Nature of God

This is a troublesome conception of Christian philosophy. ... The philosopher is placed in the privileged position of laying down for the exegete how the Bible may and may not be used, how its teaching must be broadly conceived, and what the Bible can and cannot say. ... Philosophy is thereby rendered rationally autonomous¹²

- A. Dake Annotated Reference Bible

¹¹ <<http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c003.html>> (accessed 08/10/12)

¹² Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1998), 50.

B. Gen. 3 (walking in the garden)

C. Rom. 1:20

1. General Revelation

- a. the fall (cf. Aristotle's unable to explain why people do what's against their own good)
- b. the Gospel
- c. the Second Coming
- d. the Trinity

2. Special Revelation

- a. principles of hermeneutics
- b. existence of God
- c. attributes of God

D. God Fading Away

MY RESPONSE

I. If it is not biblical, then what should a worldview be?

II. On "Building" a Worldview

A. Empiricism: One's views and beliefs must begin with our direct encounter with reality.

- 1. Our initial, direct encounter with reality is through our senses.
- 2. Seeing Is Believing?
 - a. Modern empiricism vs. Classical Empiricism
 - b. Can seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling give us logic, morality, metaphysics, and God?
 - c. Aristotle and Aquinas certainly thought so.
 - d. Take my class next week to learn how they did it!
 - e. We have unwittingly surrendered much of our weapons to the "scientist" of how our senses tell us truth about reality

- f. See how many times in the Bible God appealed to what we can see, hear, touch, etc, to prove that He is the true God and that Jesus rose from the dead.

B. Truth and Logic

1. Theories of truth (how truth is defined) vs. tests for truth (how truth is discovered)

C. Function vs. Essence

1. Human beings
2. Religion

D. Faith and Reason: Authority and Demonstration

E. The Bible