Saint Augustine: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (Confessions)

K.A. Smith: "Human beings are not intellectual receptors or containers of ideas that define them. They are more kind of a creature that is oriented to or aimed at something ultimate"

The Ultimate!

Terry Eagleton: "The history of the modern age is among other things the search for a viceroy for God, reason, nature, God, culture, art, the sublime, the nation, the state, science, humanity, Being, Society, the Other, desire, the life force and personal relations: all of these have acted form time to time as forms of displaced divinity." (Page 44)

- Men tend to become subject to the Viceroy.
- "When man becomes the ultimate arbiter, he makes his god in his own image."
- Nietzsche's project to go beyond good and evil:
- Getting away the God of the Bible and retaining the morality of the Bible.

Ideas have consequences: In the Shade of the Qur'an or Fi Zilal al-Qur'an (Arabic: في ظلال القرآن) by Seyyid Qutb
Why Bother with WV?

- W.P. Alston: “It can be argued on the basis of facts concerning the nature of man and the conditions of human life that human beings have a deep-seated need to form some general picture of the total universe in which they live, in order to be able to relate their own fragmentary activities to the universe as a whole in a way meaningful to them, and that a life in which this is not carried through is a life impoverished in a most significant respect.”

G. K. Chesterton in Heretics: “But there are some people, nevertheless – and I am one of them – who think that the most practical and important thing about a man is still his view of the universe. We think that for a landlady considering a lodger, it is important to know his income, but still more important is to know his philosophy. We think that for a general about to fight an enemy, it is important to know the enemy’s philosophy. We think the question is not whether the theory of the cosmos affects matters, but whether, in the long run anything else affects them.”

The Role of an Apologist:

- The critical role of an apologist is to help engage others to the existence of their worldview and the implications of that view of reality “because people behave as they believe, their worldviews guide their thoughts, attitudes, values, interpretations, decisions, and actions.” (Kenneth Sample, A World of Difference)
James Sire - Worldview analysis will not solve the problem of pluralism, problems that threaten not just to divide us but to destroy us; it will not bring us together. BUT it will help us understand why we are both so similar and so different. Without this knowledge we are like a diver caught in the tentacles of an octopus. We chop off one tentacle that has us in its clutches, only to find ourselves in the grip of another. We never really understand the heart of our problem. Worldview analysis brings the large picture into focus. It illuminates the heart of the matter…

The Grand Puzzle

“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” – 1 Cor. 13:12

The Need to Explore WVs:

- Conflicting and Competing Narratives/Worldviews
- Contemporary Culture demands that we rethink:
  - Our approach to culture/ Cultural Analysis
  - Rethink our approach to Christian Discipleship & Formation
- Implications on our understanding of Being/Ontology (What sorts of being are we?)
- From Classical Approach to a Cultural Approach
The Two Tasks of WV:
- Self Analysis
- Analyzing Others

"An unexamined life is not worth living" - Socrates
Worldview enables us to know whether an examined life is worth living or not.

Multiple themes: (E. A. Hoebel)
- Existential Postulates: Which deal with the nature of reality, the organization of the universe, and the ends and purpose of human life.
- Normative Postulates: Which define the nature of good and evil, right and wrong.

Involves Three Levels (Formation):
- Worldview-Thinking, Worldview-Dialogue, and Worldview-Persuasion

A Biological Reality

Philosophers like the term and use it quite freely, but they use it in a manner quite different than social scientists, and even within the field of the social sciences, there are disagreements as to what constitutes the core components of worldview.

For instance, James Sire (a theologian-philosopher) who suggests that worldview is the product of seven basic questions that humanity asks about reality, but for social scientists these 7 questions are the product of a worldview rather than the core of a worldview.

Dallas Willard: “It is a biological reality, built into your usual actions and responses.”

Given this lack of agreement as to what constitutes the very essence of worldview it is not surprising that most discussions on the topic quickly move from what worldview is, to what it does, for it is in the “doing” aspect of worldview that we can observe and describe the consequences of worldview, and can indeed deduce what are the worldview assumptions that lie beneath the surface of people’s conscious minds.
Definition

**Charles Kraft**: “The totality of the culturally structured images and assumptions (including value and commitment or allegiance assumptions) in terms of which a people both perceive and respond to reality.”

**Paul Hiebert**: “The foundational cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions and frameworks a group of people makes about the nature of reality which they use to order their lives” (pp. 25-26).

“A worldview is one’s set of ABCs: affections, beliefs, and commitments. We come to the world with particular affections (in our hearts) that arise out of and also shape, various beliefs (in our heads)—both of which lead to certain commitments (which move our hands).”

In analogical terms, a worldview is perhaps not so much like a pair of eyeglasses but a pair of eyes (cf. Ryken, 8); not what we see through but what we see with.

As Lewis writes: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else” (C.S. Lewis, “Is Theology Poetry” in The Weight of Glory).

An Expanding Circle

**Worldview assumptions are not static and may undergo a process of change and even competition as a person or people seek to test their understandings of reality and the world they live in. As such an atheist may chose to espouse a particular worldview that supports atheism, but in a time of crisis call out to God for help which is an appeal that arises from an entirely different worldview assumption.**

**Walsh and Middleton**: “Worldviews are best understood as we see them incarnated, fleshed out in actual ways of life. They are not systems of thought, like theologies or philosophies. Rather they are perceptual frameworks.”
Essence of one’s worldview: a close connection between worldview and religion, and between worldview and knowledge systems.

Worldview is both a product and an antecedent to religion and systems of knowledge and can only be discerned through the careful inquiry into the underlying assumptions upon which these systems are built.

Is there a difference between a religion and a worldview?

A religion and a worldview are related but distinct. Every one has a worldview whether religious or not. Even atheists have a worldview but they would not call themselves religious. Varied religions like Buddhism and Islam can supply the presuppositions for worldviews, which will be fundamentally different.

The System of Knowledge:

Enterprise of Truth (Dallas Willard):

- “Truth does not accommodate belief; belief has to accommodate truth.”
- “No one has ever made a proposition true simply by believing it.”

The relevant question is not what you know or what you believe, rather what is that you long for/want/desire/love?

Rich Young ruler: Mark 10:17-27

Three dimensions of worldview which operate simultaneously in human experiences:

- Cognitive,
- Affective (Feelings and Attitudes), and
- Moral.
**Diachronic and Synchronic model**

- We not only understand how people view the structure of the world, but also understand how people look at the human history embedded in their grand narratives.

- Regarding diachronic characteristics, Hiebert states that, “Humans are storytellers.” Everyday knowledge is piecemeal and disconnected. To find meaning in life, people tell stories that give meaning to this world by showing us that it is a drama—a mystery, a romance, a tragedy, or a comedy” (p. 65).

- A combination of both synchronic and diachronic analyses is needed to study specific worldviews. In analyzing people’s worldview, a phenomenological description of their world may not be sufficient, there is also a need to develop “metacultural grids,” which facilitates a proper understanding and evaluation of different religions, and consequently helping us to gain insight of the religious longings of the human heart.
The core components of what constitutes a given worldview

**World View Universals**

- Cognitive Aspect
- Expressive Aspect

The basis for our perceptions/ conceptions including:
1. Systems of Categorizations
2. Wears of Categorization
3. Forms of Self
4. Concepts of Time
5. Concepts of Space

The basis for our perceptions/conceptions including:
1. Visual Expressions
2. Tactile Behaviors
3. Aural Expressions
Do we have a Biblical Worldview?

* "to say that there is no biblical worldview is to deny that there is an underlying unity to the biblical story"... it is also to say that conversion to Christ is essentially a change in behavior and rituals or of beliefs and attitudes" (pp. 265, 267).

* Worldview, as it is commonly used in Christian circles refers, not just to certain foundational assumptions, but includes the whole corpus of rationality, human thought, cognitive capabilities, knowledge systems, religious convictions and value systems.

* A Synoptic Christian Worldview: Taking all data into consideration.

The foundational elements of a Christian worldview (The Metanarrative)

* A Christian worldview, then, provides a thematic framework—viz., the four-fold doctrine of CFCG (Creation, Fall, redemption, glory)—through which to view the world and by which we live our lives.

* As Ryken puts it, the Christian worldview helps us
  * "gain God’s perspective on why any particular thing was made in the first place (Creation),
  * what has gone wrong with it (Fall),
  * how we can begin to find its recovery in Jesus Christ (Grace), and
  * what it will be like in the end (Glory)" (Ryken, 10).
Christian WV starts with the understanding that:

- Reality does not flex, it exists as it is regardless of what we believe about it.

What is reality?

- “Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn’t go away” – Philip K. Dick

When we understand reality in such manner, we also make a claim that there is something called **objective truth** and that there are answers to the question concerning reality.

The questions of enquiry:

- Origin (Questions about God, Universe and the Nature of Man)
- Meaning/ Purpose
- Morality/Ethics
- Destiny

Every religion attempts to answer these questions, but **how you answer determines the cornerstones of your worldview**:

- Theology-Cosmology/Cosmogeny-Anthropology-Metaphysics-
- Metaphysical Cosmology-Teleology-Epistemology-Axiology-
- Eschatology

These questions are not comprehensive, there are many more related questions, which could be asked.

“World religions differ fundamentally and are similar superficially, and not otherwise.” – Ravi Zacharias

Only in the Judeo-Christian worldview we find these four questions answered with corresponding **truthfulness** and with a coherence of a worldview.
William Halverson: At the center of every world view is what might be called the ‘touchstone proposition’ of that world view, a proposition that is held to be the fundamental truth about reality and serves as a criterion to determine which other proposition that is held to be the fundamental truth about reality and serves as a criterion for belief. If a given proposition $P$ is seen to be inconsistent with the touchstone proposition as one’s world view, then so long as one holds that world view proposition $P$ must be regarded as false. (See Halverson’s work, Concise Introduction to Philosophy (NY: Random House), 1976, p. 384, third edition).

How to evaluate basic beliefs?

- It is the fundamental basic beliefs that contribute to one’s WV
- E.g.: In India, particularly among Hindus the concept of purity and pollution define the moral order.
- Existence of different religions ONLY prove that there are different take on reality and not that there are different realities.
- They all make exclusive claims.

Highlighting differences and contradictions

- “Attempts to reduce all religions to their lowest common denominator usually succeed only in distorting them. Homogenizing religions is a costly price to pay to eliminate religious diversity, for in the end the religions must sacrifice the very features that make them unique and appealing in the first place.” - Ken Samples (*Without a Doubt* - p. 164)
- “Contrast is the mother of clarity.” - Os Guinness
How do we evaluate a worldview?

- Criterion: Measuring truth claims against a standard of judgment
- Honest enquirers will ask themselves,
  - “Here is what I know of reality and of life. Now which belief system does the best job in making sense of all this?”
  - “How do the various religions respond to my existential questions?”

Invalid Criteria

- Instinct: “seems true to me”
- Feelings: Strong emotional appeal
- Wish Fulfillment: What one wants, regardless of reality
- Custom/Tradition: Accepting beliefs from parents/culture
- Popularity: Because the majority do
- Pragmatism: “because it works for me”
- Significance: Because it gives meaning to life

Three Tests/Trademark of Truth

- Trademark #1: Logical Consistency
  - Reality is observed to operate according to certain objective principles and laws.
  - One such law is the Law of Non-Contradiction
  - Reality in not a random set of logically coherent statements.

- Does it make sense? Logical consistency (Test of reason) The presence of a contradiction is always a sign of error. However, the test of logical consistency alone can never be the criterion by which we evaluate belief systems. As the absence of contradiction does not guarantee the presence of truth, so, the test of logic is only a negative test.
Trademark #2: Coherency
- We need to go further and see whether these statements cohere (interconnected).
- Wherever inconsistency and incoherency are observed error and fallacy are always present.
- Self-defeating beliefs
- Pluralism

Does it correspond to reality? (Test of experience) The belief system must not only pass the test of reason but it must also satisfy the test of experience. Is it relevant to what we know about the world and ourselves?

Trademark #3: Consistency with Reality (External Correspondence)
- How well does the WV account for the facts of the world around us?
- How well and how comprehensively does it explain the full scope of human experience and observation of the cosmos?

Is it livable? (Test of practice) It is one thing for a belief system to pass the theoretical tests of reason and experience and quite another to pass the practical test. Can the person who professes the belief system live consistently in harmony with the system he professes?

The Clash of WVs
- Atheism and Theism
- Pantheistic – Hinduism and Buddhism
- Monotheistic - Christianity and Islam

Three defining aspects:
- The Understanding of the Ultimate Reality
- The Understanding of the Human Condition
- The Understanding of the need for Salvation and Eternal Life
Three positions concerning religious truth:

- **Pluralism (Metaphysical).**
  - Key differentiation: Social Pluralism vs Metaphysical Pluralism:
  - “The acceptance of social pluralism (tolerance of diverse religious expression) does not logically imply the truth of metaphysical pluralism (that all religious truth claims are equally valid and simultaneously true).” **Ken Samples** (*Without a Doubt* - Page 162)

- Inclusivism, and
- Exclusivism (or particularism).

Evaluation of the possibilities:

- **Possibility #1 (Pluralism/Inclusivism)**
  - If all religions lead us to the **same finality**
  - And
  - We choose to believe that one of them is right
  - We lose nothing (Despite our ignorance, we will arrive at the same destination)

- **Possibility #2 (Exclusivism)**
  - Single spiritual path is valid
  - And
  - If we have chosen the wrong one
  - Then we are mislead to spiritual disaster

- **Possibility #3 (All spiritual paths are wrong)**
  - This claim is denied by the nature of our spiritual quest itself, which **demands a real fulfillment.** If all spiritual paths are wrong, our hunger for ultimate truth could not be justified and all religions would be nothing but human fantasy.
The Purpose: To dismantle the following claims:

1. In its core, all religions are the same.
   - Factually untrue
   - Here, the implicit assumption is that the distinctive teachings of the world's religions are unimportant

2. The essence of religion is common, all religions agree at least in being religious.
   - No one says what that essence is (common factors?)

3. The content of religious and moral teachings are similar (For example: the Sermon on the Mount, Buddha's Dhammapada, Lao-tzu's Tao-te-ching, Confucius' Analects, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Dialogues of Plato)
   - Yes, but this is ethics, not religion. The objector is assuming that the essence of religion is ethics. It is not. Everyone has an ethic, not everyone has a religion.

4. There are alternative paths to same transcendental finality. It is arrogant to say that there is only one way.
   - The unproved assumption of this very common mountain analogy is that the roads go up, not down; that man makes the roads, not God; that religion is man's search for God, not God's search for man.
   - C. S. Lewis says this sounds like "the mouse's search for the cat".
   - Christianity is not a system of man's search for God but a story of God's search for man.
5. God only expects us to be sincere!
   Subjective sincerity: Sincerely wrong

6. We should accept ignorance. We would never know which religion is the right one.
   You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.
   Christ is the way, the truth and the life

*Ephesians 4:17-21, NIV*

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.”

*Works Cited*


We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.