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Worldview Glossary

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While the word "worldview" has become rather common in modern conversation, relatively few people really understand the implications of what the word means. Just looking at it, it seems that it ought to have a pretty simple meaning – one's view of the world, right?

Well, yes and no. It certainly does represent one's view of the world, but the depth of meaning of the word goes FAR beyond that simple understanding.

This glossary is not an attempt to give a full explanation of the concept of worldview. We have written scores of articles and produced many other resources to do that do that (check out <http://www.marketfaith.org/worldview-resources>). Hopefully what this glossary will do is to give you a better understanding of the content of those resources, as well as to help you going forward when you read other material about worldview.

One more note about the glossary. Typically, glossaries are put in alphabetical order. However, because of the purpose of this one, we have tried to put them in a logical order to keep related words together. We hope you also find this useful.

Apologetics

The art of defending one's beliefs. While most Christians associate apologetics specifically with defending the Christian faith, the word itself has more general application, as well. It can apply to attempts to justify any theory or religious doctrine using reasoned arguments.

Christian Apologetics

The art of defending the Christian faith using reasoned arguments.

Defensive Apologetics

The art of providing logical answers to questions about, and objections to, the Christian faith. This is the approach to providing logical arguments to support or defend the Christian faith that is commonly thought of when dealing with this topic.

Offensive Apologetics

The art of forcing those who are antagonistic toward the Christian faith to justify their own faith. Those who attack the Christian faith do so based on their own worldview beliefs. It is not unreasonable to require an attacker to give evidence that their faith is true before feeling obligated to justify one's own. In our material we refer to this as Incursion Apologetics.

Worldview

A worldview is the assumptions people hold about the nature of reality. Every person considers that the beliefs they hold at a worldview level represent reality (the way things actually exist). They also consider that every belief that sits outside of their worldview is fantasy; that is, it couldn't possibly be true. People's worldview is their perspective on life that makes the world around them seem to make sense. It is important to recognize, though, that whatever that perspective is, it cannot be proven using empirical (scientific) means. Worldview beliefs are assumed by people to be true based on their faith in the validity of their perspective. Additionally, unless a person has made the effort to actually study worldview concepts, worldview beliefs are generally

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held unconsciously as underlying assumptions.

Belief System

A belief system is defined as a religion, cult, or philosophy. These are the beliefs that people generally hold at a conscious level. Every belief system can be identified as belonging to a particular worldview category, and has the same "essential beliefs" (see definition below) as its worldview foundation.

Faith System

The term "faith system" is a broad term that includes both worldview systems and belief systems.

Biblical Worldview (or Christian Worldview)

A biblical worldview consists of the set of assumptions about the nature of reality that corresponds to what the Bible teaches.

Reality

Reality relates to the state of things as they actually exist. Normally you would think that the concept of reality would not be that difficult to grasp. After all, anything that is not real is fantasy, and everyone knows when something is a fantasy, right? Interestingly though, for many people, it is not nearly as easy to distinguish reality from fantasy as they think it ought to be. The problem in dealing with this has to do with the definitions we use to define reality – and different worldviews define it in different ways. To be sure, there is a way reality is actually structured, and it is not structured any other way. However, human beings have an amazing ability to imagine other ways to define it, and once they do, they will live "as if" their definition is true, even though it may be contrary to the way things actually exist.

The Faith Nature of Worldview Beliefs

A worldview is the assumptions people make about the nature of reality. Assumptions are beliefs that seem so obvious that they are not even questioned. As such, people believe their worldview assumptions based on faith. There is no way to devise empirical proofs for them. A worldview is expressed by how it answers the three "essential worldview questions" (see below), and those questions are not subject to empirical inquiry.

The Exclusive Nature of Worldview Beliefs

A worldview defines what a person considers to be reality. Correspondingly, everything that is outside of a person's worldview beliefs are understood to be fantasy. As such every worldview is exclusive by categorizing any contrary beliefs as false.

Worldview Essentials

Worldview essentials define the boundaries around a particular worldview. We are able to get at these beliefs by asking three specific questions and getting the answers to those questions based on the way a particular worldview answers them. (Note: These questions are referred to as "essential worldview questions," but can also be answered by any belief system, as each one of them is based on some particular worldview platform.) Each worldview answers the three worldview questions in its own unique way. Any answer that deviates is considered outside of that worldview. The three questions are:

1. What Is the Nature of Ultimate Reality? (Belief about God)
2. What Is a Human Being? (Belief about the nature of humanity)
3. What Is the Ultimate Human's Can Achieve in Life? (Belief about salvation)

Authority Source

Every faith system in existence has some means that it uses to justify its

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point of view. Whatever that is, it is its authority source. There are four authority source categories. In some way, all worldviews (and belief systems) depend on all four, but each one has one primary authority source.

1. Human Reason - Naturalism's primary authority source
2. Tradition - Animism's primary authority source
3. Human Experience - Far Eastern Thought's primary authority source
4. Revelation - Theism's primary authority source

Worldview Categories

There are four worldview categories. Each of these worldviews represents a unique way of understanding the structure of reality. Every religion, cult, and philosophy in existence is based on one of these four.

1. Theism - Theism is the belief that there exists a transcendent God who is the creator and sustainer of the natural universe.
2. Naturalism - Naturalism is the belief that the natural universe, operating by natural laws, is all that exists.
3. Far Eastern Thought - Far Eastern thought is the belief that ultimate reality consists of a transcendent, impersonal, and immaterial life force. The natural universe is seen to be an illusory expression of that life force.
4. Animism - Animism is the belief that there is a single ultimate reality, but that it is divided into two parts – material and spiritual. It asserts that the two parts are dependent upon

each other, and they interact in a symbiotic relationship.

Hybrids

Hybrid belief systems are an anomaly in that they are attempts to create a belief system using essential elements from two or more worldviews. Every hybrid belief system falls apart because of this, as every worldview belief contradicts the beliefs of every other worldview. As such, every hybrid belief system contains irreconcilable internal contradictions.

Non-Christian Theism

Theism is unique among the worldview categories in that it is the one that corresponds most closely to the way human beings experience reality. That said, every theistic belief system holds incompatibilities with every other theistic belief system. Each one has its own understanding of who God is and what He is like. It

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is only possible for one theistic belief system to be true. Christians firmly believe that the God revealed in the Bible is the only true God. Thus, in studying this topic, it is important to distinguish between Christian Theism and non-Christian Theism. Non-Christian Theism is represented by every theistic belief system that is not Christian. Non-Christian theistic belief systems include such beliefs as: Judaism, Islam, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses.