

Christian World View

The World View of the Non-Christian and its influence on the believer.

1. Scholasticism – middle ages to 17th century

In this world view the Bible was central. This meant that there was a belief in a creator and an order that was waiting to be discovered in the cosmos. There was a belief in science and a moral framework, however, it was often chained to a religious framework that was to do more with superstition than living faith. In this biblical framework there was a heaven, hell, eternal judgment and a beginning and end to the world.

2. Rationalism - 18th century to present day.

In the 18th century philosophers rejected revelation and exalted human reason. This led in the 19th century to liberal theology that applied reason to the Bible. It denied all the foundations of living faith. The miracles were merely myths. There are no angels, no heaven or hell, no return of Christ. The first rationalists were believers who believed that reason was the highest source of truth, not the Holy Spirit. Descartes (cogito ergo sum) believed in a God who made everything. Voltaire believed in some impersonal power that was divine but was a power not a person. He derided the Bible and his writings led the people of France to the French revolution, in which deity was denied and reason was exalted to divine status. The result was that within 3 years the streets of Paris flowed with rivers of blood and the reign of terror began.

3. Scientific Evolution.

This is the belief that there is no Creator, no beginning to the universe and no end, and therefore no judgment. By this man is a speck on the universe with no meaning to life or purpose. Moreover, life is now of no eternal value in itself, but has only value according to the quality of life. An unborn foetus is merely a collection of chemicals and damaged children should be aborted.

- Director of a Government abortion clinic said that there was no moral difference between abortion at 1 week and 40 weeks, or even one month after birth.
- Richard Dawkins asserts that there is no scientific difference between laboratory rats and a human foetus.
- Euthanasia is the belief that death is the end and there is nothing beyond it. Is there a fate worse than death?

4. Post modern age: reason and science not sufficient

a. Existentialism: this is the belief that we know what is right by our feelings and by experience.

- By this we create our own universe, our own heaven and hell. Life is what you make of it.
- In this system there are no absolutes: no moral right and wrong and no one has the right to preach, to authoritatively declare, to teach and inform. Sexual morality is blurred. Fornication is not a sin. Common behaviour is a guide to forming opinions.
- The basis of truth is now through consensus and discussion. No one has the truth! If it feels right do it.

b. Consumerism

Exaltation of self. Self realisation, which leads to putting me at the centre of Church life. Jesus is FOR ME.

- Church provides a service that I deserve and am paying for. Personal preferences are now legitimate reasons for joining or leaving a Church.
- Churches are governed by opinion polls not God. My needs are key not convictions. What happens? Aaron was pressured by the multitude to make a golden calf!
- Church must entertain me: quality of music and choirs are important.
- Time of services: Sat night service leaves me free to have a day out on Sunday.
- God must fit into my lifestyle.
- Children/grandchildren are elevated to be the focus of all attention. Their academic success is vital. This will breed insecurity in the children when they fail to be the best. India has a very high suicide rate among teenagers immediately after A level results come out.
- Comfort is the most important thing: nice cars, condo, weekends free, leisure activities and holidays.
- Songs of the Church are all me centred. About more and about me! Jacky Pullinger and Birmingham!
- Debt is acceptable.

- Divorce is acceptable.

WHY DO BELIEVERS GO TO CHURCH?

- Get good experience?
- Comforting preaching?
- Convenient times?
- Get blessed, built up?
- Social network?
- Employment?

Only one true reason!! = For God not for me!

- For His glory.
- To worship Him.
- To bless others.
- To serve and not be served.

c. **Pluralism**

Our view and emphasis is a legitimate expression of the community. This leads to the fracturing of society and the emphasis of my rights. It leads to break away Churches.

- Unity of the Church is less important than the needs of my set: youth Churches, 18s – 30s Churches 30s to 50s Churches etc....
- My brand of theology, music, young v old. Christianity teaches us to prefer one another.
- Every Church has a contribution: more and more tolerance of unbiblical emphases, Catholic, 7th day Adventist doctrine. Unity is now in charismatic songs but with no agreement on Bible teaching.
- Every religion has some measure of truth and leads to God. Paths up a mountain from different sides.

d. **Humanism**

This is the belief that man is basically good.

- Christianity is an expression of my goodness. I do God a favour by believing in Him.

- Our virtuous projects become the centre: “Make poverty history” is typical new slogan of the humanist Church. We promote schools and hospitals and not the gospel.
- Man is not really bad and does not deserve hell. Man’s evil acts are a result of bad education or a deprived upbringing. Given the right circumstances man would be good. Neville Chamberlain during the first world war attended meetings of the Unitarian Church that believed in the goodness of man. He disarmed Britain and believed that Hitler would listen to reason. He died a broken man.

The World View of the Christian.

This view of the world is under constant attack from rationalism, scientific evolution, liberal theology etc...

1. The Bible is the key to revelation of the unseen world.

- The Bible is the foundation and source of information and can be relied upon for accurate information. The 20th/21st century has suffered a loss of direction - there is no compass. Christians have become open to new ideas which are held to be of equal value to the Bible, e.g. words from angels, dreams and visions. Christians no longer ask, “*Is it in the Bible?*” As in Jeremiah’s day, there is a tragic rise in false prophecies. Prophets are prophesying from their own imagination, not from the Lord. Prophets prophesy peace when there is no peace and ‘heal the hurt of the people slightly’ [Jeremiah 6:14].
- To major on the false is itself a tragic deception and derailment of many ministers. We must focus on God and on His Word, not on what is wrong around us. Nevertheless, while we seek to avoid unnecessary divisions, we do need to give a clear lead to God’s people. Christians desperately need a compass, and that compass is the Bible.
- ***WHY IS THE BIBLE SO IMPORTANT?***
Smith Wigglesworth said: ***“God’s Word is supernatural in origin, eternal in duration, inexpressible in valour, infinite in scope, regenerative in power, infallible in authority, universal in application, inspired in totality. Read it through; write it down; pray it in; work it out; pass it on. The Word of God changes a man until he becomes an epistle of God.”***
- God has revealed Himself through the Bible [Luke 16:31]. If people will not hear the Scriptures then miracles will not help them. The Bible is God’s Word spoken to God’s servants, and is the key to all we know about God.

In 1750 Voltaire said: "In 100 years the only remaining Bibles will be found in museums!"

One hundred years later, the British and Foreign Bible Society of Great Britain was producing and exporting record numbers of Bibles. They bought a house in Paris as a centre for their French distribution and filled it from the attic to the cellar with Bibles. The house they bought had been the former home of Voltaire

John Wesley said: "I want to know one thing – the way to heaven; how to land safely on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He has written it down in a book. O give me that Book! At any price give me the Book of God!"

- ***The Bible is Inspired by the Holy Spirit [2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21]***

Many have opposed the Bible by asserting that it is the work of human beings. However, there are 24,000 manuscripts which confirm that the Bible has come down through the generations with no changes. Among ancient documents there is none that comes anywhere near the massive weight of evidence for the accuracy of the Bible. Homer's Iliad is the nearest rival, and for that there are only 643 manuscripts, with major differences.

Here are a few quotes on the authority of the Bible:

Thomas Arnold (English Historian): *"I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

Sir Frederick Kenyon, Director of the British Museum: *"The last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us as they were written now has been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the New Testament may now be regarded as firmly established."*

Dr. Simon Greenleaf of Harvard University tried to refute the New Testament and the accounts of Jesus Christ. He became utterly convinced that they were true and accurate documents, and said: *"The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best established events of history according to the laws of legal evidence administered in the courts of justice."*

Werner von Braun, a top scientist working on the NASA space program, said: *"I never really became a scientist till I came to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and God."*

- Sir William M. Ramsay (1851-1939) was born in the lap of luxury and was raised as a non-believer by his atheist parents. He graduated from Oxford University with a PhD and became a professor at Aberdeen University. Determined to undermine the historical accuracy of the Bible, he studied archaeology with the aim of disproving the biblical account, in particular the book of Acts. After 25 years of work, Ramsay was awestruck by the accuracy of the book of Acts. In his quest to refute the Bible, he discovered many facts which confirmed its accuracy. He had to concede that Luke's

account was exact even in the smallest detail. Far from attacking the biblical account, Ramsay produced a book, *St. Paul, the Traveller and Roman Citizen*, which supported it. Eventually, William Ramsay shook the intellectual world by converting to Christianity. Ironically, this man who set out to refute the Bible, found himself accepting it as God's Word because of his explorations and discoveries. For his many books contributing to biblical knowledge, he was also knighted.

2. There is a beginning to the world: Creation.

- This means that man is of inestimable value and each person has a reason to be alive.
- The evidence of the natural world: order in every part, the finger prints of a Creator.

3. Man is a fallen creature and has a totally sinful state that cannot improve itself but needs salvation.

The human heart is evil and incapable of self improvement without the aid of God. There is a darkness and a need for God's power to illuminate the darkened state of mankind. The evil of mankind is far worse than we may think, but left to himself man will devise endless evils that will distort the human life, and cause untold damage to others. Is there a good man? Is there a good nation in the world? Yes but by the grace of God not by the virtue of the human will. The question is not "Why is there so much evil in the world?" but rather "Why is there so much good?"

4. God has intervened through His Son in the incarnation, the cross and the Resurrection from the dead.

The revelation facts of the Bible are not a rational deduction but are rational because of the presence of supernatural prophecies. The cross is the answer for the nations not programs to help mankind. Christians will always be involved in good works to help the poor and suffering but these must not be allowed to displace our faith in the cross.

5. There is an end to the world with Judgment, heaven and hell.

Judgment: the moment when every human being will be raised from the dead, and will answer for their deeds.

Heaven: the place of the restoration of man to a sinless state and perfect fellowship with God.

Hell: the place of eternal punishment. Humanists and humanist Christians have great difficulty with this concept. What does the Bible really teach about hell.

Robert Browning: “There may be a heaven but there has to be a hell.”

Medieval tradition: Not entirely true, and with some embellishments that hell is ruled by demons not God, that Satan and demons have pitch forks and horns etc...

Implications of no hell:

1. Judgment is now the temporal responsibility of man not God. Heaven and hell are not divine impositions but personal choices.
2. There is no accountability. Men do not fear the after life, but rather the manner of dying and the appreciation of the quality of life. Euthanasia is increasingly advocated, because quality of the present life is all that matters.

Objections to hell:

1. Emotional: how could I enjoy heaven if there is a hell?
2. Moral: punishment is old fashioned, hell must reform and improve i.e. purgatory not hell.
3. Intellectual: we have come too far on the evolutionary ladder of intellectual development and we no longer need such scary language.
4. Hell is incompatible with God’s love.
5. Hell is incompatible with God’s justice

Alternatives.

1. Universalism, which has various branches, one that all men have already been saved, and just need to hear about it thro the gospel. Another theory proposes that hell will produce repentance and then salvation. This is the favourite of the liberal scholars.
2. Annihilationism. This is the belief that all sinners will be destroyed and cease to exist. Some believe this happens at death, others that it happens in the lake of fire. The belief is that eternal life is the gift of God and that not all live for ever.

Jesus teaching on Hell:

1. It is physical pain, the pain of an eternal flame.
2. It is mental anguish, weeping and gnashing of teeth.
3. Social desolation (Luke 16 – the rich man was cut off from friendship).
4. Eternal separation from God, the second permanent death. God will not be felt or worshipped.
5. Hell will be peopled by demons and Satan (Mat 25:41). Jesus said it was a cursed state.

Conclusion:

Christians must beware of being drawn away from the revealed Bible facts to areas of fruitless speculation that water down the message of the Bible. Trendy philosophies come and go, but the word of God abides forever.