

The Reality of an Evangelical Worldview

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When a person becomes a Christian, many things change including their perception, perspectives and response to the world. The things that once charmed them suddenly lose their grip upon them. They instead pick up new habits, tastes and desires. Their longing becomes that of Christ, and him alone where previously the self may have been at the centre.

However, there is an increasing number of people disputing these claims and instead assert that the Christian may not necessarily fit into that 'box' or frame that has just been described above. This school of thought claims that individual reactions and responses depend on hind orientation, socialization and upbringing. These, they claim, shapes ones' world view which even the Christian faith cannot erase or substitute. It may further be said the underlying world view explains why people react the way they do in given contexts, say an African stepping foot for the first time in the heart of London or vice versa. And so, we are at cross roads, who is right, the scriptures, their interpretation or the psychologist?

In this paper, we take the one view and comment on it. Our interest is whether a Biblical world view actually exists or not. Can we know that epistemologically and metaphysically whether such a world view exists? In the process, we refer to some recent thoughts on this matter from a Biblical point of view. Further, we may ask, does one's world view matter or affect their attitudes and achievements in life. Though we may not delve deeply in the latter consideration, we make passing comments. Obviously, the matters we are interacting with are Philosophical in nature and origin. Thus, according to and in agreement with Poythress (2014), Ethics, Epistemology and Metaphysics continuously interact as a result.

World View

When we talk about world view, we are basically referring to the foundations and premises that inform, undergird or affect the person's perceptions, desires and reactions. The Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion defines world view as being derived from two German words '*Weltan*' (world) and '*schauungen*' (view) which

denotes or carries the idea of perception, framework of reference, beliefs through which an individual interprets or interacts with the world. Thus, it is the sum total of underlying structures that dictate or influence the persons perceptions or attitudes to what they encounter around them. In short that is their reaction or response to what is. What one has considered as good, acceptable correct or allowable arises from what is inherently in them. What has been dubbed as "*normal*" and good will be what one carries around as such, reacting in various ways once they encounter something that is not familiar or classified as correct. Basically, the hind programming, baggage, hind orientation and exposure is what will be dubbed normative. Further, when one is in a context that perceives certain practices, customs, things or ideas in a particular way, whether positively or not, they eventually tend to adapt those views thereby internalising them as values which then informs culture, customs and practices. This partly explains why world views differ. What has just been described is from a sociological and psychological view that many atheistic people hold or affirm. Clearly and evidently, this kind of reasoning resonates with the naturalistic, rationalistic and evolutionary approach to life. Further, it may be said that this kind of reasoning explains why not two people are exactly the same, worse if they have been raised in different contexts and cultures. With the advent of Postmodernism, which itself is a strong driver of modern thinking, whether in Academia or public life (Craig 1994), absolutist views are increasingly giving way to relativity. What may be right, correct or true to you may not necessarily be my cup of coffee and you need to give me some space.

But then, there is another view that asserts that while hind orientation is responsible for the formation of our initial world view, perceptions and vales, a person that converts to the Christian faith experiences an inward transformation dubbed as regeneration where the inner being is radically made alive to spiritual realities that they previously had casual acquaintance with but no real living connection. This transformation is so real and thorough affecting the will, mind and attitude of a person. The person essentially remains the same in the faculties of the mind and outward appearance but the inner being has been altered by the Spirit of God. The social scientist may call this a subjective experience that defies testing or verification but the subject can attest to a real inward change. The evidences abound including the alteration of tastes, ethical perspective, metaphysical and epistemical views. The vices that once appeared trivial and at times normal practice or socially acceptable suddenly begins to be viewed in a new light. The Person begins to ask pertinent questions such as: Is this right? Does it please God? To whose glory will this be and so on. Before long, the practices begin to change and people around notice the changes. This obviously generates problems for them in some contexts because the subject seems to be operating by a different rule book. Further, as the person grows, their pulse and heart beat increasingly inclines towards what God would desire. This is the basic foundation of an evangelical world view. The radical changes that take place from the inside out are not from social action or education let alone exposure but

by some divine intervention far beyond making several pronouncements or claims.

The two views posited above kind of give two broad categories of world views that host several sub world views including atheism, pantheism, animism, materialism among others. This paper does not delve into those specifics but aims to address questions around the reality of an evangelical or Biblical world view, whether it exist or not. Is it imaginary, imposed or not.

From the outset, it must be stated that everyone, regardless of race, status, creed or learning has some form of world view. This world view is often betrayed when particular moments come to the fore such as crisis moments. In those times, one's core world views come to the fore. If one is an animist for instance, when a tragic even occurs in their lives, they instinctively attribute it to some supernatural ancestral cause. What results are ritualistic activities of ancestral appeasement of some sort. Alternatively, if one is a naturalist, they try to explain away things believing that random happenings can happen to anyone at any time. Still another will attribute everything to a supreme being as the source and cause of all things. Such believe in fate. The point is, all have a world view of sorts but what differs is what the slant is and what undergirds it.

As for whether an evangelical world view exists, people are divided. Some reject the idea of an Evangelical or Biblical world view as explained from the idea that the Biblical metanarrative should shape the way people think or behave. They argue that God interacts with His people in different ways and thus the situations may not be the same. What happened in the Old Testament times may not have a direct bearing on our lives today because God was dealing with the remote people in a particular context way back in the past in the land of Palestine. Thus, it is absurd to impose ideas from that far flung by gone era. Equally, the same thought runs through the New Testament era. This school of thought argues that what happened in the Hellenistic context cannot be 'cut and pasted' to the present era. For instance, what Paul instructs in Romans 13 about people submitting to Authorities regardless may not hold in the democratic dispensation of the 21st Century. To remain silent would be to allow all sorts of injustices to pass unchallenged. The religious person then must act as the 'times and existing laws' demand. This kind of thinking sits well with the post modernistic kind of thinking that has now taken centre stage in the world.

But then when one meticulously reads scripture, it suggests that a Christian is a transformed person that needs to continuously grow. They are born again into a spiritual family in regeneration and then must now begin to feed on pure spiritual milk so that in time they conform and become more like Christ. Right across scripture, the idea of internalising God's word and letting it shape and affect how one thinks or acts is evident. For instance, Joshua is told to meticulously read the word, meditate on it and never depart from it. Next, we see in Deuteronomy six, the Israelites are instructed to ponder upon the word, let it soak in and always put

it before them. In Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 7 & Neh. 8), the word has such a special place as in the Psalms where the word of God is said to have a very special place, much sweeter than honey. The child of God is to yearn for the word of God and feed on every word of His. As we come to the New Testament, Jesus echoes the importance of the word as does the Apostle Paul when he mentions the need for the word of God to dwell in believers richly with its attendant effects-singing, melody, gladness and praise to God. So there is a whole host of scriptures to support the idea that the word of God, the scriptures are to be internalised for a good purpose, so that the person has a mind-set that is premised on the word of God.

Further, it may be argued that it is not enough just to have the correct facts and know all the technical bits written in the Biblical Meta narrative, this word must lead to some thing. The first is that it should lead to God, nourish the inner being, transform or edify the person leading to an inward disposition that is God like. The person never becomes divine at all but they do begin to view and 'think the thoughts of God after Him' as some writers have asserted. Although people may not become completely saturated by God, they will relish God's word and thus interpret the world in a manner worthy of God. Further, this word ingestion should lead to information, transformation and supplanting of the aspects of an earlier world view if it is not in conformity with God's word. We need to tread carefully here lest we are misunderstood to advocate for or suggest brain washing, indoctrinating or rubbishing ones' culture, not at all. What we do mean to say is that the Biblical metanarrative now begins to inform decision making by asking key questions, and in some cases altering values leading to an evangelical world view. Does this mean that a person needs more than saving faith to be a child of God? Not at all. What then do we mean? It means that after regeneration, a person begins to grow in Christ by synergistically growing in their new found faith. A key passage that supports the idea of an evangelical world view is found in Romans 12:1-3. The passage explicitly posits the idea that converted people need to be further transformed in sanctification. They are not to remain the same but make every effort to change God-ward, submitting to His will in hearty obedience and gratitude. Further, they are to view the whole of life as worship to God discarding the false dichotomies of "Spiritual" and "secular" that often bugs many people. They are to work as unto the Lord and view things in the Biblical Metanarrative prism or lenses. This transformed inward disposition has off shoots of a sober reflections.

As earlier stated, one school asserts that one's world view emerges from and set by hind socialization alone while another asserts that Socialization and inward transformation is what counts. Each pundit has string views. In the ensuing parts of this paper, we [shall explore some of these].

In a treatise written by Rev Robert Evans, we encounter the big questions that relate to world view from a philosophical point of view or its implications. The said

paper or document has twenty chapters which define and trace the various world views on offer.

Evans first gives an introductory outline stating that the book was written over a three-year period ending in 1993. In that time, the author summarized all his many years of experience in pastoral and academic environments and offers his views for consideration. Since the world's views has been changing over the years, Robert traces the developments and implications of a relative post-modern culture as affects the way people look at the world. In other words, this book is about epistemological views as held and practiced by different actors upon the world stage. Albert Einstein is noted as one of the architects of relativity both from his theory in Physics as well as it applies to the world at large. Simply stated, Einstein's view suggests that nothing is fixed but in constant flux and as such no absolutes must be accepted as cast in concrete. His ideas were later picked up and advanced by names like Michael Polanyi and Thomas Kuhn among others.

The Rev later proves that in fact there is such a thing as an evangelical world view contrary to what many may believe. He shows that although true science demands empirical evidence to determine the truthfulness of something, not everything falls into that category. The empirical approach demands that experiments and observations be repeatable so that conclusions can be drawn there from which may not apply in all cases. His contention is that in as much as the empirical or indeed any other approach may be good, legitimate and correct, there is room to consider an evangelical world view that begins from a presupposition from the written word of God and then goes out to interpret the world. What is at issue here is the varied approaches not the facts themselves. There is therefore need to take cognizance that the world has different systems of interpreting the world, let alone facts. This should not inhibit any one from going ahead with their approach, though they should give due credence to other approaches to determining truth.

Evans further argues that many players have contributed to this world view philosophical approaches which should be guided by either the word of God or one's pure rationality. One such person is Albert Schweitzer who wrote a book called "The decay and restoration of Civilization" in which introduces a whole new way of thinking and doing things. For those that assumed that their way of doing or looking at things was the only way, soon encounter many other philosophers that question or suggest other ways of looking at things. Having stated the above, the value of philosophy is stated. It is to be sadly noted that very few saints engage in or let alone value philosophy for what it truly is. The reasons for this are many but one of them is because many view it as unimportant and for those that do not believe in God. Historically, people like Aristotle, Socrates and others have been hailed as people with either confused or anti-Christian views according to the saint. That said, Philosophy does in fact have a place in the Christian world because it helps the saints to think through issues more critically

and also enables them to engage people with other perceptions and approaches to life. In its essential nature, epistemology deals with questions related to world view and what is to be regarded true or untrue. Thus, if the Christian has an intelligent grasp of philosophy, they can then engage people (atheists, agnostics etc.) through sound arguments. Although not all philosophical arguments lead to or point to God, the Christian must have the intellectual capacity and stamina to argue from different premises which includes the teleological, rational or ontological angles. That said, philosophy does have inherent dangers too which the saint does well to take note and handle extremely well. One obvious danger is the difficulty related to retaining a delicate balance. While some saints like Augustine, Justin Martyr and to some extent, John Calvin profitably engaged in philosophical arguments in arriving at their conclusions, some others are stumbled by it and consider it worthless. This latter group (include, Barth, Martin Luther, Tertullian, Martyn Lloyd-Jones etc.) points to the work of Thomas Aquinas as a prime example of how futile philosophy can be. But then this is a blanket statement and an over generalisation. We may further say that things are too vast and wide today that it is virtually impossible to know or read everything even in a given “narrow” area.

It is important to note that what science and philosophy considers to be reasonable and correct will change with time as further light becomes available. They are in constant flux, unlike the firm written word of God from which stand point the Christian views the world. Three outcomes result from engaging in Philosophical thinking: 1. The Christian is able to engage in intelligent apologetics proving that God is and should be believed on by everyone. 2. The Christian’s scope and perspective is broadened so that understanding of many issues can be teased out as well as integrated into their thinking and 3. Philosophy will guide one’s thinking as they test various options. The thinking will therefore not be narrow but broad.

Having shown that the Christian must engage in philosophical thinking, the current thought climate demands that the Christian reads the writing on the wall and correctly reposition themselves. This calls for much study, introspective and retrospective thinking and a determination to “Think outside the box” and yet remain as Biblical as ever possible. Francis A Schaeffer, a student of Van Til, blazed the way towards philosophical thinking after a realisation the thinking of the times was constantly changing. His remote Swiss Alps camp has been noted to have had a lasting impression on many people from a philosophical perspective. It is reported many met the saviour after a trip to the L’arbrie. Essentially, philosophers of Schaeffer’s kind and calibre argue that people have presuppositions from which they operate and if we could know those and argue logically from the word of God, they could possibly won over, trusting God the Spirit to effect the work of regeneration. The presuppositional approach demonstrates that modern philosophy has at least two effects on people: It removes Christ from life and secondly leads to wrong interpretation of reality, hence the need to rightly train the saint. The post-modern approach to things is in

some sense “suspended” without any roots as it truncates the past from present reality. Furthermore, current philosophy denies the existence of God or even the supernatural. This then explains why some have concluded that miracles are impossible and inspiration a figment of imagination of the religious.

The author therefore explores different approaches to philosophy giving case studies and examples as he goes along. For theistic examples, he cites the case of George Mueller, the great man of faith under whose superintendence over 2,000 orphans were daily fed for many years based on a simple principle of faith. This cannot be explained by even modern sceptics. In concluding the work, the writer zeroes in on the human nature from an evangelical perspective, devotion to God, the Christian approach to transforming the world and caps it with revival as a powerful booster to changing the world view even today. With God on our side, everything is certainly possible.

So how may we summarise this work? Simply by noting the following points:

1. There are rapid and consistent changes of world views over time. Nothing remains the same and in constant flux.
2. We cannot be masters of everything because knowledge and information avalanche exponentially increases daily. We are however to responsibly do our part.
3. Some of the sources cited by Evans may be old and because the book was written over a long period of time. They are however still relevant and helpful.
4. These world views influence people’s thinking and practices.
5. Some Christians flatly oppose the philosophical approach to engaging the world or even looking at the world. There is however an evangelical world view based on certain presuppositions.
6. There is an urgent need to develop an alternative and comprehensive world view that Christians can relate to.
7. God can change entire nations and cultures even today. Let us trust Him even as we do our part. It is not in our eloquence or intelligence but the Spirit of God who makes alive. He has done it before in history and evidence abounds. He can do it again.

Oh that we might have showers of blessings and an exponential increase in Christian Philosophers!

References

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