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## ELEMENTS OF A CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW

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There is a logical relationship between the disciplines of apologetics, philosophy of religion and a Christian world view. From the perspective of formal philosophy, that is metaphysics and epistemology, there are common commitments among these three disciplines as to God, reality, values, etc. These philosophical commitments are similar for all who are trinitarian theists: Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant. There are also common elements in the development of each discipline as a system of thought, in terms of having a starting point, proceeding rationally, relating consistently to its own parts, etc.

This paper will explore the elements of a Christian world view, and examine the parallels between these elements and the elements of apologetics and philosophy of religion. The goal of this investigation is to be able better to define and defend the system of truth as we know it.

The specific objectives of a theistic world view are to:

- 1) clarify the biblical basis for developing a Christian thinking on many positions,
- 2) describe the centrality of faith for developing a Christian world perspective,
- 3) evaluate one's own convictions and values,
- 4) develop apologetics, culture, theology and ethics from a Christian perspective, and
- 5) do evangelism from within the context of a Christian world view.

The following definitions will help to clarify a world view vis a vis the other disciplines:

philosophy - metaphysics, epistemology, axiology

culture - family, society; ways of thinking and living in social contexts

ethics - principles for living consistently with God, self, and other people

apologetics - presenting a case for the faith in the context of controversy

world view - thinking consistently, from values (axiology) to issues of personal/social life

theology - systematized truth about God and man

The five primary elements of a Christian world view are:

- I. Starting Point and Methodology
- II. Core Values
- III. Culture and Ethics
- IV. Apologetics and Evangelism

## V. Theology

This paper will now look briefly at the first four of these elements, simple to discern a direction.

### I. Starting Point and Methodology

The starting point for developing a Christian world view is the philosophical commitments within a biblical system. These commitments are initiated as hypotheses from a philosophical perspective; but as convictions from a biblical perspective.

Of course, philosophically there are many positions which have been put forth as Christian over the centuries. The primary elements of a world view include the specific commitments of a particular metaphysics, epistemology and axiology. When these elements are developed the thinker will have articulated the foundation for a system of thought.

As a result of the investigation of a Christian philosophy I have personally drawn the following conclusions as to positions and value orientation as an example:

Metaphysics: Theistic Realism

Epistemology: Systematic Consistency

Axiology: Biblical Convictions (Values; see next section)

### II. Core Values

The various Christian perspectives on a world view may be seen by examining the unique elements of each approach. The foundational elements of starting point and cultural implications of five Christian perspectives are given below.

revelation tradition reason worship lifestyle

East. Orth. x x x

Roman Catholic x x x x

Lutheran x x x

Calvinist x x x

Anabaptist x x x

Assuming that all Christians base their thinking on revelation and the orthodox tradition, the elements which separate the perspectives have to do with their emphasis leading to *application*, namely whether they focus on reason, worship or lifestyle. Clearly, none of these is a wrong emphasis. The fundamental issue of differentiation must, therefore, be one of balance of emphases and specific formulation of doctrine within a biblically orthodox framework. This parallels the decision matrix of the early church far more than the more recent method of discrimination based solely on doctrine. Before this issue can be clarified it is necessary to examine further the core values (axiology) of the Christian position.

The core values of a Christian position (Scholes and Clinton, 1991) are:

1. The triune God of the Bible is real, and is due our love and worship

2. Jesus Christ is God, Savior, and Lord and has called us to love one another and to make disciples
3. Salvation is by God's grace alone, and becomes ours through faith
4. The Bible is God's authoritative revelation, and is to be obeyed

If we fail to hold doctrinally or pursue in practice any of these values, then the resulting doctrine or practice becomes something less than a valid Christian position.

These core values may easily include the methodological and experiential emphases of reason, worship and lifestyle. Is it obvious that any one of these emphases is superior or primary to another? It seems that all three are necessary. The lifestyle component needs to include practice of worship, prayer, Bible study, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, obedience, collective experience, ethics, evangelism, and apologetics.

### III. Culture and Ethics

The practice of a consistent world view in a specific historical setting and in a community will lead to a specific Christian ethic and culture, with applications to personal, family, social and political issues. Which ever world view is followed, specific ethical and moral application result from consistent thinking. Beginning with the Jerusalem council in AD 49 the church has allowed wide variation of cultural and ethical practice within a biblical framework.

### IV. Apologetics and Evangelism

Three elements form the foundation of a philosophy: a world view, an ethic, and a culture. These define how we understand and present the gospel and how we do apologetics.

Evangelism reflects our concern for the sanctity of life and the value of human beings before God. It is also based on our concept of the truth we find in Jesus Christ about how to be saved from sin, unto God and to find meaning and purpose in the world.

Apologetics is presenting the truth to those we are sharing the gospel with. It can also be a process of training Christian believers in the truths of the faith they have embraced or equipping them to share effectively with non-believers. The most consistent and fruitful method of apologetics which accomplishes both of these concerns is systematic consistency, adapted from Carnell and Lewis.