



**ATLANTA CENTER
for APOLOGETICS**

The Contender

Earnestly Contending For The Christian Faith

"... earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Apologetics and The Two Major Worldviews / Philosophies

(They Differ in the Concepts of Final Reality)

by *Eddie Bhawanie, Ph.D.*

Philosophy and religion deal with the same basic questions—though they give different answers and in different terms. When the philosophy of [a] worldview is unfolded, then the ideas of that worldview can be arranged in three ways. The *first* of them is in the area of *metaphysics*, dealing with ‘being.’ This is the area of what is—the problem of existence—the existence of God. Does God exist? The *second* is in the area of *morals*, and the problem (or *abnormality*) of man (man’s sin problem). There is the reality of human existence, and of man’s conscience. Man is personal, yet he is finite, so man is not a sufficient integration, or reference point for himself. The *third* area of this study is that of *epistemology*, dealing with the problem/ investigation of knowing. Man can *know* and *understand*, and can reason cognitively.

Philosophy and religion are universal in scope. No man or woman can live without a worldview; therefore, there is no man/woman who lives without a philosophy of life or worldview, or who lives without a religion. People from all philosophies embrace some kind of religion and live with it. Even the atheist, the skeptic, and the agnostic have a philosophy-religion-worldview, though they may deny it.

The concept of a worldview has been defined in various ways. Philosophers, W. Gray Phillips and William E. Brown in their book *Making Sense of Your World*, quoted Charles Kraft’s definition and highlighted the two elements of a worldview as “(i) a perspective of reality; and (ii) the resulting value system that forms the basis of lifestyle choices.”¹

Phillips and Brown continue to comment on worldviews [s] by commenting on philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff’s two-fold emphasis of a worldview: “A people’s worldview is (i) their way of thinking about life and the world, (ii) coupled with the values they set for themselves in the context of that way of thinking.” Biologist Richard Wright agrees. He describes a worldview as “(1) a comprehensive framework of beliefs that helps us to interpret what we see and experience and (2) also gives us direction in the choices that we make as we live out our days.”² A philosophical worldview is a view *of* the world, and a view *for* the world in how men and women live out their lives. What are some of the tenants and cardinal beliefs of the Christian worldview?

The Biblical – Christian worldview

Christianity begins with, and holds to the central reality of the objective existence of the infinite-personal, living God. (i) Christianity is Truth – (immutable, unchanging, unalterable Truth), and *holds* on to that Truth intellectually with substance and content. (ii) Christianity holds to a fixed, final point of what is right and wrong—rooted in divine revelation (iii) Christianity, holds to what is—objective, and final reality, rooted in the Person of God. (iv) Christianity holds that man is made in the image of God, The *Imago Dei*. Man’s gift of life, his mind, the dignity of his person-hood, his worth, and his intrinsic value, are all unbreakably linked to [his] Creator-God.

(v) Christianity holds to absolutes and gives the individual a universal standard by which to live and judge society, and the politics of the day. (To judge means: to think clearly and accurately, and to present an alternative to human immorality, depravity and injustice). (vi) The Christian worldview holds that this universe has: form, unity, beauty, order, and harmony, and that man has a personality—Man is personal, yet he is burdened with sin, shame, scorn, and guilt—with Christ as the only solution. (vii) Only Christianity has dealt – radically with human wickedness and depravity. Christianity tells people to *repent* and it promises forgiveness. Christianity has nothing to say to people who do not know they have done anything (wrong) to repent of, and who do not feel that they need forgiveness. Christianity is a religion, a way of life, a relationship, *a thing* of unspeakable comfort. But it does not begin in comfort; it begins in dismay!

(viii) Christianity holds to and gives a sufficient integration point –The Living God, with meaning: Someone, [something] big enough, and permanent enough on which to relate both our thinking and living.

Christianity holds to the inspiration of the Bible by the living God, the truth of creation, the virgin birth of Christ, His revelation of the living God, His life and miracles, His substitutionary death, His resurrection, His coming again—all these are rooted in the flow of history.



The Sovereignty Of God and Pelagian Thought *By Pennon Lockhart, Ph.D.*

The 'Sovereignty of God' has been understood in several different ways based on varied human responses to fundamental Biblical doctrine. With that in mind, I cannot assume that God's sovereignty is understood in the same way in every script in which it occurs. To lay the groundwork for our point of origin, we will start by clearly conveying what is meant by sovereignty in this article, followed by strict adherence to the established definition. This will be essential to intelligible discussion. When the term *pantokrator* is used in the New Testament Greek, the English translates this term as **omnipotent** as in Revelation 19:5-6 – "And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." The meaning conveyed refers to: **The One who holds sway over all things, the ruler of all, Almighty God, The Sovereign One.** This same concept is brought out in Isaiah 40:26 – "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is **strong in power**; not one faileth." We must understand the absolute sovereignty of God and the distinction between the Creator and the creature. God is the *Potter*, we are the *clay*. We shall, therefore, begin with the following definition.

Sovereignty: The ability to exercise supreme, permanent authority; Self-governing; independent; having supreme power; of superlative strength and efficacy; unmitigated; with no limit to omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

It is important to the Christian worldview that God directs all things, or, as we read in *Ephesians 1:11* "[God] works all things after the counsel of His own will." Things are the way they are and what they are because God made them that way.

Around the 4th century A.D., a controversy began when the British monk, Pelagius, opposed Augustine's notion that a divine gift (grace) is necessary to perform what God commands. Pelagius recoiled at the idea since he and his followers believed that responsibility always implies ability. If man has the moral responsibility to obey the law of God, he must also have the moral ability to do it. Adolph Harnack summarizes Pelagian thought in this way:

"Nature, free-will, virtue and law, these strictly defined and made independent of the notion of God - were the catch-words of Pelagianism: self-acquired virtue is the supreme good which is followed by reward. Religion and morality lie in the sphere of the free spirit; they are at any moment by man's own effort."

In all its subtle forms, today's Humanism recapitulates the unfinished Pelagian thought forms against the sovereignty of God. Although Pelagius was condemned as a heretic by Rome, his modified philosophy, Semi-Pelagianism was also condemned by the Council of Orange in 529. The basic assumptions of this view have persisted throughout church history to

reappear in different modes as Humanism, Arminianism, and modern Liberalism. The modern church is held captive by it as they, in practice, worship a god whose power is limited by man.

Our strict definition of God's sovereignty included the attributes of omniscience and omnipotent control. The fact that God's knowledge is eternal is shown in Isaiah 46:10 – "*Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*" Dr. Gordon H. Clark asserts, "If God is indeed as the Bible describes Him, with eternal self-knowledge by which He creates and controls every particular in the world, obviously God's knowledge depends on Himself and not on created things." The modern church often confuses salvation with religious enthusiasm as we organize for the increase of members in the pews with little demand for living out the Word of God in daily life. The liberal message is to become healthy, wealthy, prosperous, and happy, this side of eternity.

At the heart of Pelagian thought is the doctrine of original sin, particularly with respect to the question of the extent to which the will of fallen man is "free." This is modern Humanism which rejects deference to God's intervening in human affairs and His sovereign control of life. Humanism is considered an ethical process, not a dogma about the existence or otherwise of gods.

My basic position maintains that the creature does not offer rebuttal to the Creator God of Scripture. His Word has supreme authority. And it cannot be disproved by something else of greater authority as attested in Isaiah 43:10-11– "*Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am He: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Savior.*" God's Word, like Himself, is supremely authoritative and self-attesting. As far as conventional wisdom is concerned, the Biblical doctrine of Scripture is implausible and no other doctrine of revelation is conceivable. Pelagius categorically denied many doctrines of Scripture and variant aberrations of his philosophies are now manifested in sundry forms of religion (*Medieval Catholicism, Renaissance Humanism, Socinianism, Arminianism, Modern Liberalism, etc.*) that subscribes to the view that life is centered on *man*. Some Christians are afraid to boldly embrace the Scriptures as written and attempt to avoid areas that they perceive as controversial or unlike their narrow concept of God. We must remember – "*all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*" (*Daniel 4:35*) He is both the Omnipotent Creator and Merciful Redeemer who made the earth by His power, and established the world by His wisdom.

(Extended version under website articles)

Update from Liberia, West Africa and Kannur, India

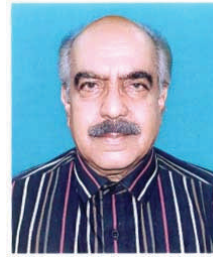


How are the church and the ACA doing? My hip is still in place. I sometimes feel pain, numbness or tinkling in my leg after a long walk. I hope everything is fine in the Lord. The work is fine. I just finished my Evangelism course with an exam. I will start teaching Math 101 on the 23rd of

March. Yes, missionaries are "Jacks of all trades and masters of none." We are low on staff so I am trying to remember my high school Algebra and Geometry. We will only have one week break between the semester. The reason is because we started late. We will also use the one week break as a Spiritual Emphasis Week. I am very busy also as Dean of Admissions. I will be administering ABC University entrance exam at nine different locations all over the country. We will begin this Saturday, March 14, in our city of Yekepa. I need your prayers for traveling mercies. Some of the places are tribal enemies territories. But, we are going in the might name of Jesus Christ who has broken down all barriers. We have begun making bricks for a six-classroom building for our church. This building will be used for Sunday School and day School. I am pouring all my support and resources into this work before the heavy rain comes.

Thank you for all your support and your prayers. It is amazing how our Lord brought us together to serve Him. Love you all dearly in Christ.

Bro. Peter Siaway



We had a great Christmas with the Kannur Bible Club that consists of nineteen 7 to 17 year olds with English as a medium of teaching. We are working on improving their English grammar since I was an English Teacher for 6 years in Mombasa, Kenya and for about 6 yrs in Atlanta (3 yrs in country for the Russians and

3 yrs in Spanish churches including Mexico to preach on numerous occasions). I like to get myself involved at least 3 times a week and a couple of hours teaching each time. The Lord has touched your heart for these kids, and I thank the ACA whole-heartedly for your support. I am planning and praying about establishing Bible clubs in nearby towns. Please pray for us concerning this ministry. Please pass my love and regards to everyone in your church.



THE 'ISMS'

- Humanism
- Atheism
- Agnosticism
- Materialism
- Pluralism
- Rationalism
- Mysticism
- Deism
- Pantheism
- Marxism-
- Stalinism
- Existentialism
- Nihilism
- Catholic -
- Scholasticism
- Fideism
- Paganism
- Theism

Pantheism

Pantheism attempts to provide a comprehensive, all-embracing philosophy that stresses God's distinction from the real world and believes that God is the world. In pantheism the Universe, or nature, and God are equivalent.

There are several kinds of pantheism. There is **absolute pantheism** which identifies only one being in the universe and designates all else as non-being. There is **emanational pantheism** that embraces the belief that everything flows from God the way "a flower unfolds from a seed." There is **developmental pantheism** where God unfolds in an evolutionary or historical way. Other pantheisms are **modal** where finite things are considered modes or moments in one infinite substance and there are **multilevel pantheisms** that are found in various forms of Hinduism.

Since space will not permit a detailed evaluation of the various kinds of pantheism, we will note significant points in some of the representative types mentioned above.

1. A basic characteristic of pantheistic approaches to God is that God is understood by mystical intuition that goes beyond the law of non-contradiction.
2. God is beyond being and rational knowing.
3. The central pantheistic conception of God is the absolute unity and transcendence of God.

4. Creation is *ex Deo*, out of God. Creation from nothing, *ex nihilo*, is meaningless to Pantheistic thought.
5. Both creation and evil flow necessarily from God. Pantheism asserts that God is not personal and creation is not a free choice. It flows from God with necessity.
6. In the highest and absolute sense God is neither personal nor conscious. God is not a He but an It.
7. The universe is ultimately One, not many. That is, unity is the basic reality from which multiplicity flows, not the reverse. The one central point of reality is in the only Being or One—God.

The most fundamental criticism of a strictly pantheistic worldview is that it is actually unaffirmable by man, for no finite individual reality exists as an entity really different from God or the absolute. Pantheism's stress on the unknowability of God is self-defeating. In essence, a strict pantheist must affirm, "**God is but I am not.**" But this is self-defeating, since one must exist in order to affirm that he does not exist.

Finally, Pantheism tends to emphasize the idea that God is better understood as an abstract principle representing natural law and existence than the God of Scripture who created (*bara*) the heavens and the earth by the power of His Word. "**And God said... and it was so.**" (Genesis 1:9, 11, 24)

By Pennon Lockhart, Ph.D.

Our Vision Statement

To defend the ultimate truth-claims of Biblical Christianity as eternally binding on all mankind and to present these claims to our contemporary culture with intellectual excellence through our life and work.

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"Christians should see their Faith as a Total World-and Life-view: A Christian Approach to Culture" "In Man's Search for Meaning and Purpose in Life—It's the Christian Answer or, Nothing!" Every 1st and 3rd **Saturday** of each month at the AUBS Counseling Center, from 9:30 A.M. -- 12:30 P.M. (Taught by Dr. Eddie Bhawanie — bhawanie@atlantacenterforapologetics.org — call 770-833-2696)

"Understanding the Christian Worldview and Thought-forms—as Rooted in the Flow of Biblical History" Location: The Tabernacle [off I-285E, Exit 43], 1580 Agape Way, Decatur, GA 30035; Phone 404.284.5683, 770.833.2696; Time: 7:30 P.M., **Wednesdays** (Classes taught by Dr. Eddie Bhawanie — He may be contacted at bhawanie@atlantacenterforapologetics.org — call 770-833-2696)

Weekly Bible Class on "The Book of Romans" will resume at Greenforest Community Baptist Church, 3250 Rainbow Dr., Decatur, GA., starting July 8, 2009; Main Bldg. Cornerstone Room; 7:30pm. (Contact Dr. Pennon Lockhart, — aubs.lockhartp@comcast.net or 770-996-5810) Copyright © 2007 Atlanta Center for Apologetics, Inc. All rights reserved.

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