

WHO IS ROY HOPE, AND WHY SHOULD WE CARE?  
DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

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*Introduction*

When I was first preparing to deliver this address,<sup>1</sup> I thought of speaking on “Creating a Christian Worldview in a Non-Christian World.” This is not a bad topic, and merits further consideration at another time. My final title, however, is “Who is Roy Hope, and Why Should We Care?” I decided on this title for a number of reasons. The first is that I wanted to personalize the presentation. I know that broad and general titles can sometimes seem distant and even boring. However, the topic of Christian worldview, as I hope to show if you are not convinced already, is anything but a boring subject, and is one that everyone, especially every Christian, should be thinking about most of the time. It encompasses what we might in another context describe as a Christian ethic or approach to how we should comport ourselves in the world in which we find ourselves. I will also show that Roy Hope, even if he was not thinking about a Christian worldview most of the time, was demonstrating a Christian worldview all of the time, and that is worth noting. The second reason I chose this title is that I wanted the title—as well as my talk—to be in keeping with the theme for our chapel services at McMaster Divinity College this year, “Stories and Parables—from Scripture and Life.” So I want to say something about the story

1. This paper was delivered on 27 October 2014 as the inaugural lecture by Stanley E. Porter as he became the holder of the Roy A. Hope Chair in Christian Worldview, at an induction service held in the Nathaniel H. Parker Chapel at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario.

of Roy Hope and his life, as a way of saying something, something that I hope will be meaningful and even, perhaps, a little provocative, about the topic of a Christian worldview and its importance. Although just knowing what a Christian worldview encompasses is important, having a Christian worldview is even more important, and understanding why a Christian worldview is important is most important of all.

### *The Life of Roy Hope*

I am sorry that a good friend of McMaster Divinity College, John Shaw, is not able to be with us as I deliver this lecture, because the story of Roy Hope and McMaster Divinity College is closely tied to the story of John Shaw and his involvement in and support of McMaster Divinity College. John was on the Board of Trustees of McMaster Divinity College when many of the events that I am about to relate took place, and he in fact is the source of most of my information regarding Roy Hope. What I am about to say about Roy Hope, and the fact that I am celebrating my receiving the Roy A. Hope Chair in Christian Worldview, is only possible because of John Shaw and his own Christian worldview. But that is a story for another day.

Roy Hope was born in 1924, and died on December 13, 2001, in the city of Toronto, at the age of 77. Roy never married, and when he died there was no city- or provincial-wide commemoration of his death. In fact, at his funeral, which I attended with the then current chair of the McMaster Divinity College Board of Trustees, Dr. Lois Crofoot, there was only a handful of people in attendance. These consisted of several personal friends, including John Shaw, several distant relatives, and a few other people besides Lois and me. This is a shame, because if others had recognized some of the important life choices that Roy had made, they perhaps would have wanted to come and pay their respects to the man now departed.

Roy was born in Toronto, grew up in the west end, and lived his entire life with his parents until they died, after which he continued to live on his own in Toronto's west end. John Shaw met Roy through Roy's father. John was an investment advisor

and began the family association as Roy's father's advisor, and then, after his father's passing, as Roy's own advisor.

Roy's father was a Baptist, and had attended the well-known Walmer Road Baptist Church, but Roy's mother was an Anglican. Roy often attended Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, but I suspect his sentiments were more with the Anglicans, as his funeral took place at All Saints Anglican in Toronto. Roy was educated at Victoria College of the University of Toronto, where he received his undergraduate degree, and then he attended Osgoode Hall, the law school of York University—although he never graduated. Instead of becoming a lawyer, Roy became a law clerk for the city of Toronto, where he spent his entire career, until he retired.

Roy was a very private individual and he definitely tended to keep to himself. He enjoyed traveling, which he did with his parents to the United States and Europe. He loved to take pictures of the places he visited. When he died, he left quantities of travel paraphernalia and box after box of slides from his travels.

Roy was also a collector. Not only did he collect travel memorabilia, but *National Geographic* magazines. When he died, he had a virtually complete run of *National Geographic* dating back to the 1930s, all neatly arranged on shelf after shelf in his basement. John was responsible for the disposal of Roy's house and possessions after his death, and John didn't know what to do with the *National Geographic* magazines. Roy had said that, when he died, he would like his neighbor to have his history books—another of his collections. The neighbor knew nothing about the *National Geographic* magazines, but when John asked whether he would like them too, he said "My wife will shoot me," but he gladly took every one of them and moved them box by box to his house across the street.

Roy was also a very astute investor. In fact, another of his collections was annual reports from the companies in which he invested. One day he had lunch with John, and reminded John that he had talked a lot about McMaster Divinity College and said that he would like to see the College. So John arranged for Roy to visit the College and have a tour. Roy said that he was

very impressed with the College, and that he would like to leave a substantial part of his estate to McMaster Divinity College.

I began my tenure as President of McMaster Divinity College in July 2001, and Roy died in December of 2001. I never had the chance to meet Roy Hope personally. However, we have all been the beneficiaries of Roy's generosity. When Roy died, he left the largest single bequest that McMaster Divinity College has ever received, and it is the bequest that, among other things, funds the Roy A. Hope Chair in Christian Worldview. The terms of his will express his concern for what is happening in society regarding Christianity, and he expresses the desire that a Christian worldview continue to be part of what we teach at McMaster Divinity College.

Roy Hope did not razzle-dazzle anyone with his great accomplishments on the sporting field. His father was a golfer, but Roy was his caddy. Roy did not become a high-powered public figure such as a major lawyer; he was only a law clerk. Roy did not stand up and elegantly and eloquently address huge congregations with his profound theological insights, but he was instead a rather shy man. In other words, probably very few who saw Roy realized the passion and concern that he had for what it meant to profess belief as a Christian, but more than that, to act as a Christian in whatever sphere of life to which he was called. Few knew that most of all he had a vision for ensuring that such a perspective on Christian life continued to be taught and exemplified in the years ahead, through his generous legacy.

Roy Hope did not simply talk about having a Christian worldview; he lived out, even in his death, what it meant to embody and display a Christian worldview.

#### *McMaster Divinity College and a Christian Worldview*

I turn now to the idea of what constitutes a Christian worldview, and how that fits within our lives here at McMaster Divinity College. I will do this in three stages.

*Explicit and Implicit Worldviews*

Before we are able to define a Christian worldview, we must have some idea of what a worldview is. There are two basic approaches to talking about a Christian worldview, the explicit and the implicit.

An explicit worldview is the kind of worldview that we typically find in books about worldview. In these books the discussion usually focuses around a number of major topics and what that person thinks about them. These topics include such things as “Who is God?” “What is humanity?” “What is the purpose of life?” “What is of lasting value?” “What should I do and how should I behave?” and so on.<sup>2</sup> In other words, these are explicit questions that are asked and answered in such treatments of the subject. These questions are indubitably important ones, and I think that it would probably do each one of us some good to consider them more often than we do, as a means of fine-tuning our own worldviews. Most treatments of worldview come up with reasonably similar answers to these questions, at least for the Christian who is pursuing a definition of a Christian worldview. Again, there is nothing inherently wrong in answering these questions within the bounds of Christian orthodoxy—that is where, I believe, they should be answered.

The problem with such an approach, if it is a problem, is that the explicit orientation has a tendency to three shortcomings. The first is that it limits the scope of what constitutes a Christian worldview by defining it in relation to a pre-decided number of considerations, some of them mentioned above. The second is that it is reductionistic, by equating a worldview with a small number of features or characteristics. The third is that it tends to bifurcate the characteristics of a Christian worldview from the practices of a Christian worldview.

I realize that there is a place for an explicit Christian worldview; however, I also think that there is a major place for an implicit Christian worldview.

2. As examples, see Sire, *Universe Next Door* or *Naming the Elephant*. For a different approach that is oriented to individual disciplines, see Downey and Porter, eds., *Christian Worldview*.

Roy Hope never—to my knowledge—wrote a book, or even an extended essay on what constituted a Christian worldview. Here is what he did have written in his will, however:

It is my belief that recent advances in scientific knowledge and communications have left a void in man's appreciation of his human nature and destiny and his relationship with our Maker. Christian faith is enriched by an intellectual appreciation of philosophy and the arts and of the Christian heritage which the Gospel has provided.

Can anyone doubt, at least from the recounting that I have offered, that he had a Christian worldview? How do we know this? We know this not by how he answered a particular finite set of questions with a limited range of answers, but by how he prioritized his life and lived it in a way that allowed us to see and witness his priorities and to evidence that they were consistent with Christian values.

There are two other cases in point that I would like to invoke regarding the value of an implicit Christian worldview.

The first is C. S. Lewis. No one would doubt that the converted Lewis was a Christian. It is hard to imagine anyone who could read Lewis's Christian apologetic writings and not see an explicit Christian worldview. For example, in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis creates an argument on the basis of Christian morality for a Christian perspective. He does this in a number of his works, where the Christian worldview is explicit in the text. I also doubt that there are many who would read his Christian fiction and not see a fairly explicit, although probably somewhat allegorical (his own protests aside), Christian worldview. Aslan is not just a big lion, but the lion who comes back from the dead to redeem wayward children from their horrible mistakes.

What about the rest of Lewis's writings? Despite how Lewis has been canonized as almost the thirteenth apostle, he has been much better regarded in academic circles from his own time to the present not as a Christian apologist but as a scholar of Medieval and Renaissance English literature (actually, he disputed that the Renaissance actually happened, so perhaps we should simply say he was a scholar of literature of the Medieval period, which he saw extending until roughly the eighteenth century).

We realize that we can discern Lewis's relatively explicit Christian worldview in his Christian writings, but what about in his English literary history and criticism? For those not familiar with Lewis's major literary writings, these include such enduring works as *The Allegory of Love*, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*, *The Personal Heresy* (with A. M. W. Tillyard), *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, *The Discarded Image*, *Studies in Words*, and *An Experiment in Criticism*, among others. I realize that these are not standard fare for most readers today, not even for many English literature majors.

I made a recent study of Lewis's literary-critical writings,<sup>3</sup> but not with a set of pre-formed questions in hand to see if Lewis's writings contained the words and concepts that I was looking for. Instead, I tried to figure out Lewis's worldview from these writings that were not, at least explicitly, works about a Christian worldview. I discovered, however, something quite profound in the course of this task. I discovered that Lewis was at least as Christian in his secular literary-critical writings as he was in his other writings; that Lewis spoke of and exemplified in these writings a distinctly Christian worldview. This worldview included such elements as what Lewis thought constituted reality and truth, and his concepts of God and his relationship to nature, humanity, the role of interpretation, and the importance of the Book. I do not have time to explicate each of these, except to say that these grow organically out of how Lewis constructs his literary-critical world as a reflection of his Christian worldview. As a result, he ends up addressing issues not usually found in a typical explicit exposition of a Christian worldview, because his perspective is embedded within his critical scholarship as a reflection of his vocational life.

The second case study is Jesus himself. I am reminded of the story of the young boy who went to Sunday School, and when he came home his parents asked him what he learned. The boy said that he did not remember exactly what he had learned, except that the answer to every question was "Jesus." There is something deeply and innately correct about this young boy's

3. See Porter, "C. S. Lewis's Worldview and His Literary Criticism."

observation. However, even Jesus himself did not use an explicit approach to his own worldview, but an implicit one.

We might take as an example the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). This Sermon has been highly problematic for interpretation. When I taught Matthew's Gospel one year, as we came to the Sermon on the Mount, I outlined about fifteen different views of how this passage could be interpreted. Does this surprise you? It did me. This is the longest of Jesus' discourses in the Synoptic Gospels, and it is seen by most interpreters as programmatic for Jesus' beliefs and teaching, and yet there are fifteen different interpretations of the passage, often focused upon how it is to be applied.

I discovered that one of the major problems in understanding the Sermon on the Mount is the distinction that I am making here between explicit and implicit Christian worldviews. Most interpreters of the Sermon on the Mount want to interpret it as an explicit exposition by Jesus, as if he were reading out his systematic theology point by point (as one of my theology teachers did in seminary). Within such a framework, we expect Jesus to handle all of the important topics—or at least all of the topics that we consider important—in a sequential order.

Instead, we have in the Sermon Jesus' implicit worldview, addressed for the occasion to a diverse crowd that had come from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and elsewhere in Judea, as well as his own disciples. He does not begin with God; he begins instead with blessing. Those who are favored by God are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, and the rest of us.

Jesus calls those who follow him, not to have an explicit worldview that they can articulate and specify—although there is nothing inherently wrong in this—but to be implicitly oriented in a particular way in relationship to Jesus. A Christian worldview is not a checklist of rights and wrongs of belief or behavior, but it is an attitude and a relationship, an orientation to life.

We all have a worldview. That much is a given. Some of us may be able to explicitly articulate that worldview. More important is that we, like Roy Hope, demonstrate an implicit Christian worldview in everything that we do or think.



*Sources of a Christian Worldview*

The second stage in thinking about a Christian worldview is to consider the sources of our Christian worldview. There are at least four major sources to draw upon in developing our Christian worldview: the Bible, history and tradition, reason, and experience.<sup>4</sup>

The first is the Bible. As I have already stated by means of the example of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the Bible does not present itself as a set of points regarding a Christian worldview. Some have thought of the book of Romans as a "compendium of the Christian religion," that is, a type of systematic theology. Others have noted that Romans does not discuss several crucial doctrines, at least, crucial to them. Romans is clearly not a systematic theology, but it is a living representation of Paul's divinely inspired directive discussion of the human condition and the solution to its problems. Paul writes to the Roman Christians from the standpoint of his unique Christian worldview, in the hopes that the Romans too will become Christians fashioned in their worldview in a way that not just follows Paul but pleases Jesus Christ.

The second source of a Christian worldview is history and tradition. The Christian church has had many fantastic high points and many disastrous low points. We must learn from those who have gone before us, not necessarily to imitate them but to benefit from their experience. We must learn from the vibrancy of the early church and those who wrestled with fundamental issues, the institutionalization of the Constantinian church, the scholasticism of the Medieval church in the west, and important church thinkers like Huss, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Arminius, Wesley, and others. All of these Christian thinkers in their various ways were attempting to codify in explicit form their implicit Christian worldview. This tradition includes not just theologians, but all of the various avenues of Christian expression, including the arts, other culture, and more intangible means of Christian expression. People in these fields too are expressing their Christian worldview, though in more expressive

4. See Porter, "Distinguishing a Christian Worldview," 83–91.

and less verbal ways. None of them was able then, and certainly cannot be seen now, to have formulated the final word on a Christian worldview—but we must continue to learn from them.

The third worldview source is reason. A Christian worldview is predicated upon our reflecting upon all of the data that we have and trying to make sense of it all for our current situation. Reason is a potentially tricky source of a Christian worldview, because we have the incredible power to deceive ourselves through our own reason into thinking that we have resolved issues in preemptive ways, when all that we have done is overlook other viewpoints. Nevertheless, reason stands as a gatekeeper to the process of formulating a Christian worldview as we sift the truths of Scripture and of our history and tradition.

The fourth source is experience. Christian experience is an important source of a Christian worldview, but it is only one of our sources, and not necessarily the ultimate or final one. Experience itself does not provide for us formulated answers to difficult questions but does provide input from how we have encountered the world in the past and present, so that we can use our reason to reflect upon it. We live now in a very experience-oriented culture—for Christians and non-Christians alike. I am even tempted to say that we live in a highly narcissistic culture, in which taking the “selfie” has become an accepted action and behavior. You will remember the story of Narcissus, who looked in his iPhone and saw himself and became so enamored of what he saw that he became transfixed, and he drowned in posting pictures of himself on Facebook. Experience is something we should learn from, not something that should cripple us.

These are the sources of a Christian worldview, sources to which all of us have access. However, more is needed than simply having access to them.

#### *Formulating a Christian Worldview*

We have discussed explicit and implicit worldviews, and the four sources of a Christian worldview. Now I would like to say something about formulating a Christian worldview.

From what I have already said, I hope that it is clear that I am acutely aware that we all have a worldview, but that what we

need to have is a Christian worldview, one that is fully informed by the Bible, tradition and history, reason, and experience. It may sound strange to say this, but I am also advocating an implicit Christian worldview.

Don't misunderstand me. I think that it is important for us to be able to articulate our Christian worldviews when it is necessary, but I wish to avoid the problem of us being people who can mouth the defining points of a Christian worldview but who have not deeply embedded them within our hearts so that they permeate our entire beings. I think that this is what is needed in our individual lives more than anything else—the implicit permeation of the Word of God, filtered through our Christian past, benefiting from our experience, and reasonably evaluated and articulated.

From my description, you can see that this is not something that can be done by someone else for another. It is not something that you can gain simply by reading a book or taking a course—much as we would wish this to be the case. This is not something that can be done quickly and simply. This is something that requires a life of being transformed into the very image of Christ through the everyday experiences of walking and communing with him and with fellow followers of Christ.

We can look to all of our sources for help in this task. Phil 2:6–11 demonstrates for us Jesus' humility that provides an example for his followers—in that even though he was with God he did not consider his position one to be grabbed onto but to be let go of, to the point of his death on the cross. This was the only way that he could be exalted.

Tradition and history show us that those who have exalted themselves before others and God have created false idols of themselves. Even the Roman emperors in all their greatness and power were like the shattered visage in Shelley's poem, "Ozymandias":

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said:—Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains: round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Reason and experience provide the balance necessary for a Christian worldview that is not simply proof-texting or a relic of the past.

### *Conclusion*

Let me conclude by saying a few words about how I see a Christian worldview being exemplified at McMaster Divinity College. After all, I am now the holder of the Roy A. Hope Chair in Christian Worldview, and Roy Hope desired that a Christian worldview would be a part of what we do here at McMaster Divinity College.

There are obviously the overt and public signs—this lecture being one of them. At times, I think that it is necessary for us to take time to think about what it means to have a Christian worldview. That is what I have tried to do in this lecture—to prompt some thinking about what we mean by saying that we have a Christian worldview.

There is much more that we can do however. In fact, you may not realize it, but we are already doing many things that reflect the Christian worldview of McMaster Divinity College. Our Knowing, Being, and Doing paradigm is a triad that reflects a Christian educational paradigm that, I think, would have been close to Roy Hope's heart. We know in order to become so that we might do—all ordered around our knowledge of God, or rather of his knowing us and calling us to be his witnesses, his testimonies through our words and deeds, to his reality as displayed through us.

There are also less formal ways in which a Christian worldview is manifested—or at least that it should be. We are a very diverse community. We are diverse ethnically, nationally, denominationally, socio-economically, educationally, and by gender. When we look at such a diverse group, we must wonder what it is that can possibly create such a strong sense of Christian community, unless it is that we in some way share a common Christian perspective on life. Despite our many differences—and there are many differences to welcome and embrace—we are unified in far more fundamental ways, that is, we share a fundamentally similar Christian worldview. We perhaps have not articulated this worldview to ourselves, and probably not to others, but have it and share it we do.

The purpose of this lecture has been to say a few things in the light of my now holding the Roy A. Hope Chair in Christian Worldview and how I see the importance and function of this chair. I now call on all of us, my colleagues, students, faculty, and staff alike (and now readers), to embody what Roy Hope called for in his challenge to ensure that a Christian worldview was represented at McMaster Divinity College. He could not do it alone—although I think that he in many ways demonstrated an understated selflessness from which we all can benefit—and I certainly cannot do it nor would I want to without your coming alongside of me.

I asked at the beginning: Who is Roy Hope and Why Should We Care? I hope that you now have an idea of the answer to that question. Roy Hope set an excellent example of the kind of unheralded Christian dedication and stewardship that has enabled the establishment of this chair. It is now up to me and you—all of us—to see not only that his vision is realized, but that our shared and common bond in Jesus Christ is demonstrated in all that we both believe and, more importantly, do here at McMaster Divinity College.

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