

Bearing Faithful Witness - Resources

Exploring what it means to become a community that responds to "our people" by living and communicating a good news story.

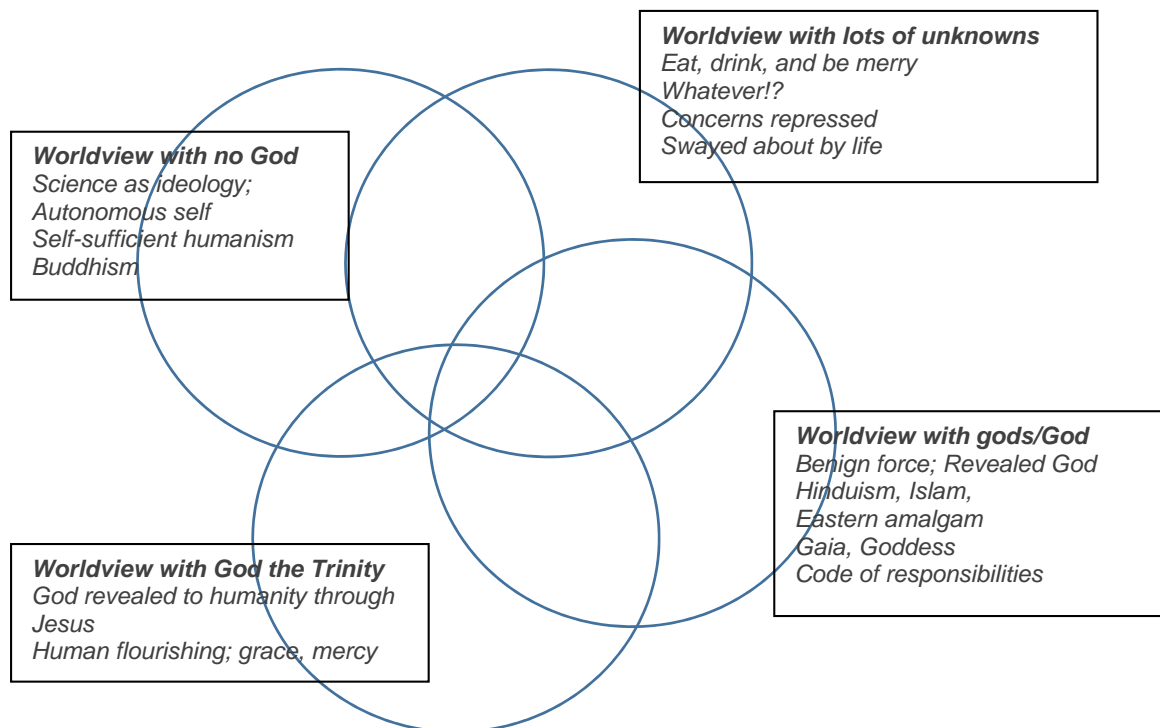
RESOURCE #12

Plausibility Structures

Everything that we believe is filtered through our plausibility structures — belief-forming apparatus that acts as a gatekeeper, letting in evidence that is matched against what we already consider to be possible. Plausibility structures filter out claims that we believe cannot be reasonable or potentially true. They don't necessarily tell us if a claim is true, only that the truth of the claim appears plausible enough for us to accept and that we are not wholly unwarranted in thinking it could be true. Whether we are gullible or skeptical, the beliefs we accumulate are those that have been filtered through plausibility structures at the individual and cultural level. These eventually form our worldview, which itself becomes a broad strainer that filters out beliefs that we won't even consider to be possibly true.

For example, if I were to find a box of cookies in my kitchen cabinet I would assume that my wife had bought them at the store and placed them there herself. If someone were to argue that tree-dwelling elves baked the cookies, packaged them for their corporate employer, and stashed them in my pantry, I would have a difficult time believing their claim; the existence of unionized tree-dwelling elves is simply not a part of my plausibility structure. (Joe Carter)

"Conversion cannot be a matter of being 'convinced' of the truth, credibility or utility of Christian claims within a non-Christian plausibility structure." [Bryan Stone, 2007: 269]



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Religion: Situating our Canadian Context

