

The way we see the world

David Thompson

A worldview can be compared to a pair of glasses—when you put on different glasses of different strengths, you get a different view of the world each time.

“My courses were very difficult for me at first,” explained the college student to the pastor, “but things have gotten better now.”

When the pastor asked for more details, the student explained that she was being taught a definition of the family contrary to what she had learned at home and in church. But then she was administered an assessment in one her courses. It came back stating that she needed to be more “tolerant” and “respectful” of views other than her own. Assuming that this assessment was developed by professionals with no agenda, she concluded she should comply. And she did. That’s why things had gotten better. What she did not realize was that she was buying into the worldview known as postmodernism.* Even more disturbing and hidden from her was that her Christian faith was being undermined.

What is a worldview? It is closely related to the term “philosophy,” or even “religion.” A worldview can be compared to a pair of glasses—when you put on different glasses of different strengths, you get a different view of the world each time. The worldview a person “puts on” gives him a certain perspective. It determines how one thinks, what he believes about nature, how he views issues like abortion, what he thinks about the supernatural, whether or not truth can be known, who Jesus of Nazareth is (or was), where truth comes from, what man’s nature is like.

In short, a worldview determines how one sees every aspect of life. Thus, there is a biblical or confessional Lutheran worldview. Putting on biblical or Lutheran “glasses,” and keeping them on, would give a truly objective and truthful view of life. Here are some examples of how the biblical worldview differs from others.

Marriage

The Christian worldview sees marriage as a divine institution between a man and a woman that is to last until death parts them.

The postmodern worldview says marriage is a creation of culture, not God, so no definition of marriage (like the Christian one) is superior to any other (like same-sex marriages). All marriage arrangements, therefore, need to be respected.

These two worldviews also differ on the sanctity of marriage—Christianity claims marriage has real transcendent value since it is a creation of God. Postmodernism recognizes no such value.

The person of Christ

The biblical worldview confesses Jesus to be true God and true man.

The Islamic worldview says he was a prophet, but nothing more than a man. Postmodernism would say that all views of Christ are equally valid since truth is culturally determined.

Nature

The confessional Lutheran worldview sees man below God and yet above nature (Psalm 8). Pantheism, popular in radical environmentalism, blurs God, man, and nature together, thus making trees and animals our “brothers” and all equally divine. The evolutionary worldview, on the other hand, claims all that exists can be explained without reference to God, making nothing sacred. In both pantheism and evolution, man is no more valuable than grass.

Sin and salvation

Christianity views man as totally depraved, incapable of anything good, and redeemable only by an act of God from outside of man—the all-sufficient work of Christ. All other worldviews fall short of this understanding of man and God’s real solution.

The worldviews of Catholicism and evangelicalism see man capable of some good (earning grace, making the right decision, choosing Christ). Thus man’s work obscures the work of Christ; justification is no longer central.

According to the pantheistic worldview, sin is not something committed against a real God who is above nature (like teaching or living contrary to God’s Word), nor is it seen as an act done against man (like hating, abortion, adultery, etc.). Rather, sin is viewed as an act against nature—cutting down trees, building new subdivisions, and drilling for oil in the Alaskan wilderness. Man must fear, love, and trust in nature above all things, for nature is God.

Postmodernism merely regards sin as something constructed by society—each culture defines sin for itself.

Essential truths about false worldviews

Here are some essential truths to keep in mind about false worldviews. First, they are always deceptive. They sound good, beneficial, and even necessary. They may even promote many legitimate truths or causes that Christians can agree with to some degree—concern for the environment, world peace, use of scientific inquiry, respect for others, etc.

But in all these worldviews there is always something lurking below the surface. A false worldview's legitimate aspects should never be used to justify the worldview as a whole or overlook its false teachings.

Second, even if false worldviews do not directly undermine the essential teachings of Christian salvation, they always contradict at least some biblical truth or fact. The bottom line is that the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible is undermined and the foundation has been laid to doubt and room made to deny other truths of the Bible, including the central, all-pervasive biblical teaching of salvation by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. In other words, adopting a false worldview can easily become a slippery slope.

Finally, it's a battle to constantly keep the biblical worldview "glasses" on. Satan and the world are encouraging us to try on—and keep on—other "glasses" that distort the truth.

Scripture directs the Christian that no one take him "captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

The Christian Church must not only believe and confess what is true, but also reject what is false, like deceptive worldviews. However, the Church cannot uphold the one and avoid the other without a clear understanding of both. For that reason the Church must always remain vigilant and pray for wisdom in order that it will be able to discern what is of Christ and what are the empty and deceitful worldviews of Satan.

David Thompson is executive director of Schwan Retreat & Conference Center (ELS), Trego, Wisconsin.

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