

# **WORLDVIEWS IN CONFLICT - Part 2**

**26 March 2017**

The first talk in this series (Part 1) was an introduction to worldviews from a Christian perspective. I ended off by saying that I would pick up on expanding a bit on what a Biblical Christian Worldview is and then contrast it with other prevailing worldviews so that we gain an awareness and an understanding of what we are up against in our daily lives. Hopefully this will help to strengthen our own biblical Christian worldview even further.

So, here is a reminder of what a worldview is: A worldview is a body of belief that will drive the way we behave in the world - it is a framework of principles and values through which we interpret the world. Our worldview is the product of all the information, ideas, and experiences we absorb to form the values, morals, and beliefs that we possess. While most people never think about their worldview on a conscious level, everyone

has one. Our moment-to-moment decisions are shaped by the worldview we have adopted and adapted over the course of time, often without realising that we are dependent upon such a framework for decision making. Whenever we make a decision, we unconsciously run it through a mental and emotional filter that allows us to make choices consistent with what we believe to be true, significant, and appropriate.

And a **biblical Christian worldview** can be described in the words of George Barna, the Christian researcher: “A biblical worldview is thinking like Jesus. It is a way of making our faith practical to every situation we face each day. A biblical worldview is a way of dealing with the world such that we act like Jesus twenty-four hours a day because we think like Jesus.”

Against this backdrop I will very briefly, describe the most prevalent worldviews of our time.

Some of the prevailing worldviews are:

- Deism
- Naturalism
- Nihilism
- Existentialism
- Postmodernism
- Pantheism
- New Age

### **Deism: The Absent God**

Deists believe that God exists and created the universe, but that He has since abandoned the world to run its course. God is not in relationship with people, nor does He exert power and authority over the human condition and experience. In other words, He does not really love either His people or the world He created. It continues to operate without Him because the universe is a giant, complex machine that was well-designed and is self-maintaining. Miracles do not exist in this creation because there is no miracle maker present to intrude in the life of the created things. In the end, people determine

their own destiny because they have been enabled to do so in the absence of the Creator. In this view, there is no sin and there is no evil. Consequently, whatever happens is the way things are supposed to be and the way reality is meant to unfold; therefore, whatever is, is right.

## **Naturalism: What You See Is What You Get**

Naturalists contend that God does not exist, in fact nothing exists beyond the natural world. There was no Creator of the cosmos, and there are no interventions such as miracles or divine direction: Matter and the universe have just always existed.

Everything is essentially a unified machine, with people as elements in that machine that evolved from the existing matter. Whatever value exists in that world is thus a human invention.

## **Nihilism: Denial of Existence**

This worldview suggests that nothing, including God, actually exists and life and the

world have no meaning or purpose. Matter is all that exists, everything happens by chance, and there is no divine power that intervenes from outside the system. Nihilists believe there are no true morals.

### **Existentialism: Meaningless Reality**

This view contends that life has no ultimate meaning; each person must determine the meaning that he or she wishes to assign to life and then gain fulfillment through that pursuit. They emphasise individual existence, freedom and choice. They define their own meaning in life. Because our actions reflect our choices, they are right, by definition. Goodness is living in ways that make life comfortable and fulfilling.

### **Postmodernism: Hyper-Individualism**

This worldview is possibly the most pervasive and influential one today, especially in the western world. It contends that there is no traditional grand story that explains life and reality—and this denial of a traditional worldview is, in essence, the heart

of the postmodernist view. A postmodernist may choose to believe in God if he wishes to do so but cannot compel anyone else to do so. This is a subtle way that satan undermines and prevents evangelism of the lost.

It is a worldview of self. Desire, emotion, and personal experience become the hallmarks of determining right and wrong - whatever feels good and right is good and right. There is a worldview that promotes hyper-tolerance as one of the highest virtues. This leads to so-called religious tolerance that encourages inter-faith collaboration. This only confuses everyone and it clouds the distinction between what is Christian and what is not. The postmodern approach rejects structure, order, societal norms or anything they perceive as being imposed by others - they are basically non-conformists.

Culturally, postmodernism supports anarchy —moral, political, emotional, and spiritual— as a true and complete expression of self. In the midst of such a society, the highest goal of an individual is comfortable survival

and self-satisfaction. Feelings replace reason, experience replaces logic, and contradictions replace consistency.

## **Pantheism: Impersonal Divinity**

Drawn largely from Eastern religions and philosophy, pantheism comes in various forms and flavors: Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, Transcendental Meditation, and others.

Pantheism asserts that everyone is god, everything is god and god is everyone and everything. However, in this view, god is an abstract, impersonal concept; god is a grand unity of the universe rather than a spiritual being who is holy, powerful, loving, and creative. A pantheist lives to reach a state of oneness with the universe, recognizing that everything around him is also part of that oneness, and thus every element in creation has some dimension of god within it.

Pantheism believes that people become reincarnated, but your next life is a result of your past experiences and efforts; it is a reflection of the “karma” (your present condition) you created.

## **New Age: Philosophical Syncretism**

This view is based largely on Eastern mysticism but also encompasses other traditions. In New Age thinking, there is no transcendent god and no evil power to oppose a divine power or humanity. The individual is held up as the ultimate authority and is viewed as being already divine. They also believe we can transcend the limitations of time, space, morality, and immortality, and therefore people can constantly evolve to a higher level of consciousness through a series of personal, mystical experiences. En route they may have contact with ancient beings as well as encounter any number of other spiritual beings of varied power, personality, and purpose. The New Age view is quite animistic in nature in that on a daily basis, life is worth living because we can enjoy a multiplicity of experiences, all of which are private and thus do not need to be shared, but which may be personally satisfying and exciting and no-one else can criticise or deny them as being valid. New Agers are prone to describing out-of-body

experiences, revelations through meditation, preincarnation and reincarnation, and amazing visions of the past and future. Morality and truth are always relative and changing because there is no standardized, objective reality—it is whatever we see, touch, feel, believe, or imagine exists because we recognize it as valid and existing. The consequence is an endless pursuit of individual sensuality, joy, and self-satisfaction. In short this is what Christians would view as moral anarchy.

So that is the briefest of descriptions of various prevailing worldviews.

Let's take a practical example of how worldviews shape behavior, and we will use 5 of these worldviews that we've just looked at contrasted against a Christian worldview: I'll start with a question and we will look at the answer from the perspective of each of the different worldviews starting first with the Biblical Christian Worldview.

Can I, a married man, have an inappropriate physical and intimate relationship with a

beautiful woman who is married to another man?

The **Biblical Christian worldview** would prevent me from even fantasizing about such behavior. God, who made me and for whom I live, has commanded that I respect a woman as more than an object of personal desire; that I respect her responsibility to her husband; that I have a physical intimate relationship only with the woman I married and, in God's eyes, with whom I became one; and that I should not grieve God or insult my wife by entertaining fantasies of intimate interludes with someone other than my wife.

A **naturalist** would encourage the adulterous act since it reflects the fulfillment of my personal desires, which is the ultimate aim of my life.

A **nihilist** would contend it doesn't really matter since adulterous relations are just another meaningless act that has no value and cannot be prohibited on any moral, logical, or spiritual grounds.

An **existentialist** would allow the relationship as long as it provides personal value and was not assumed to provide any kind of permanent fulfillment or higher meaning.

A **postmodernist** would say okay because the liaison is an expression of individuality and is done with good intent. As long as the adulterous act is based on mutual acceptance and perpetuates my ability to survive with comfort and good feelings, it is a reasonable and commendable endeavor.

**New Age** proponents would passionately pursue such behavior because it reflects the existence that we have imagined and desired and is therefore good and may enable us to reach another plateau of consciousness.

Out of all of those worldviews only a **biblical worldview** protects people from themselves —and does so on the basis of alignment with biblical truth.

Developing a strong Bible-based foundation from which to think and act is the only reliable safeguard against the complete demise of our culture; against the loss of

meaning and purpose in life; and against the rejection of all that God holds dear and significant.

All other worldviews embrace life as a relatively meaningless, no-win existence in which there is no grand purpose or meaning, no transcendent deity who created us and loves us enough to give us guidelines for healthy and significant lives, and who has even greater experiences awaiting His faithful creatures in the future.

Only an intentional process designed to develop, integrate, and apply a biblical life lens can protect us from the savage mental and spiritual assault that occurs around us every day. The failure to grasp and live out a biblical worldview can only result in a lifestyle that contradicts God's perfect and eternal moral and spiritual code that was designed to foster our relationship with Him, each other, and the world He entrusted to us.

In Part 3 we will explore how to develop a truly biblical Christian worldview.

