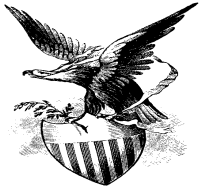


Light Brings Salt

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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



What's a Worldview?

This article is from the Summit Ministries Newsletter.

"What's your worldview?" Try that question on a friend sometime. What do you think would be the typical response? A blank stare? A forty-five minute monologue?

If you asked the average person about their philosophy of life, you would probably get some sort of answer, even if it turned out to be a little sketchy. While many people may not be sure what they believe, they would admit to some set of ultimate beliefs and values. This set of beliefs, or worldview, is the basis for one's whole approach to life. And while everybody has a worldview, most would have a tough time defending what they hold to be true.

The reason it is difficult for many of us to discuss our worldview is because our generation has lost the art of thinking deeply about *why* we believe what we believe. During the past fifty years in the United States, our educational system has not directed students to contemplate the meaning of life as much as it has sought to instill certain practical skills. This has led to what Allan Bloom describes as the closing of the American mind. Ron Nash has taken that idea to the next logical step, suggesting that there has been a concurrent closing of the American heart as well. With closed minds and hearts, Americans are not accustomed to thinking seriously about the meaning of life.

Yet, because actions are based on beliefs, we have to start with some basic assumptions

about our place in the world. So the question comes back to "What's your worldview?" To answer that question we must define what we mean by the term "worldview."

How Should a Worldview be Defined?

While there are various ways of "slicing the worldview pie" (depending on whom you read), we at the Summit divide a worldview into the following ten disciplines which answer life's key questions: At some point, everyone asks the question, "What about God?" (theology). Also, we are curious about the nature of reality and how we know what is true (the questions philosophy seeks to answer). We have questions about life's origins (biology), ourselves (psychology) and how we make moral choices (the study of ethics). We question how society ought to be structured (sociology), how to solve legal issues (law), what government should look like (politics), how to make and spend money (economics), and where we have come from (history).

Combining these ten disciplines provides a comprehensive framework of life—a total worldview. The Western educational enterprise is structured around these disciplines, with universities offering courses in each discipline to explore the answers to these vital questions. Dividing a worldview into these ten disciplines corresponds with how we approach life's important issues.

The Worldview Tree

Also, dividing a worldview into these ten areas helps people see the inter-relationship between the various disciplines. An illustration may help. Visualize a fruit tree supported by a large root system spreading

out underground. The tree draws nourishment from its roots and produces fruit at the end of the branches. In other words, the fruit is connected to the root. In a similar way, a worldview works as an organic whole, with the fruit (outward behavior) flowing naturally from the root (inner beliefs).

The root system of every worldview is composed of the twin disciplines of theology and philosophy. Together, these form one's religious assumptions about God, reality, and knowledge. From these roots flow implications for each of the other eight disciplines, which are the branches of the tree. At the end of these branches is the fruit of that discipline.

An Example of Worldview Thinking from the Founding Fathers

For an example of how the "worldview tree" reveals the organic unity of a worldview, think about the founding of The United States of America. Our nation was instituted in 1789 as a Constitutional Republic. The founders of this republic designed three separate branches of government to "check and balance" the power of those who govern (worldview discipline: politics).

This political fruit flowed out of the founding fathers' perspective of human nature, believing that mankind is basically sinful and thus would use political power for selfish ends instead of the good of the people (worldview discipline: psychology). Likewise, the founder's psychology was in turn rooted in their understanding about the existence and nature of God—God created man but man fell into sin (worldview disciplines: biology and theology).

The founders were thinking within a worldview rooted in Biblical Christianity, resulting in a system of government that, while not perfect, has allowed the greatest amount of liberty and prosperity for the greatest number of people of any other political arrangement.

On the one hand, we can separate the *institution* of the church from the *institution*

of the state. But it is impossible to separate religious *ideas* from political *ideas*. To do that would be like severing a limb from the tree and expecting it to bear fruit. Fruit does not pop out of thin air. It is always connected to the branch which draws nourishment from the roots. Likewise, political ideas come from prior assumptions about human nature which themselves are rooted in religious suppositions concerning God.

The fruit always develops from the root. And this holds true for *every* other discipline of study as well.

Global Warming a 'Joke' in Five Years

A climate expert in New Zealand has added his voice to those downplaying the threat of global warming, calling it a "myth."

Meteorologist Augie Auer, speaking at a meeting of farmers, said: "We're all going to survive this. It's all going to be a joke in five years. It's time to attack the myth of global warming."

Auer said man's contribution to the greenhouse gases was so small that we couldn't change the climate if we tried, and water vapor was responsible for 95 percent of the greenhouse effect, according to a report in the Timaru Herald.

He asserted that carbon dioxide accounts for only 3.6 percent of the greenhouse effect. Furthermore, man's activities can be blamed for only 3.2 percent of that — meaning that only about 0.12 percent of the greenhouse effect results from man's activities.

"That ought to be the end of the argument, there and then," Auer declared.

Instead, he said, the campaign warning of manmade global warming has "become a witch hunt."