

MSM Columnist: Evangelicals Are Pushing Fake News

When a college history professor who is a contributing columnist to *The New York Times* writes an article critical of evangelical Christianity, and cites Rachel Held Evans as a credible source on the subject in her opening sentence, what could possibly go wrong?

Facetiousness aside, the latest attack on Christianity from the liberal mainstream media is perhaps one of its most vile, and further demonstrates why there is such a disconnect today. It should also serve as a clarion call that American Christians must begin praying for the members of the media, as well as those who are teaching our younger generations in institutions of higher learning.

Molly Worthen, author of the book *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*, in an article titled “The Evangelical Roots of Our Post-Truth Society,” suggested that Christianity is putting out “fake news.” The assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill wrote, in part:

Conservative evangelicals are not the only ones who think that an authority trusted by the other side is probably lying. But they believe that their own authority—the inerrant Bible—is both supernatural and scientifically sound, and this conviction gives that natural human aversion to unwelcome facts a special power on the right. This religious tradition of fact denial long predates the rise of the culture wars, social media or President Trump, but it has provoked deep conflict among evangelicals themselves.

That innocuous phrase—“biblical worldview” or “Christian worldview”—is everywhere in the evangelical world. The radio

show founded by Chuck Colson, "BreakPoint," helps listeners "get informed and equipped to live out the Christian worldview." Focus on the Family devotes a webpage to the implications of a worldview "based on the infallible Word of God." Betsy DeVos' supporters praised her as a "committed Christian living out a biblical worldview."

The phrase is not as straightforward as it seems. Ever since the scientific revolution, two compulsions have guided conservative Protestant intellectual life: the impulse to defend the Bible as a reliable scientific authority and the impulse to place the Bible beyond the claims of science entirely.

The first impulse blossomed into the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Scripture became the irrefutable guide to everything from the meaning of fossils to the interpretation of archaeological findings in the Middle East, a "storehouse of facts," as the 19th-century theologian Charles Hodge put it.

The second impulse, the one that rejects scientists' standing to challenge the Bible, evolved by the early 20th century into a school of thought called presuppositionalism. The term is a mouthful, but the idea is simple: We all have presuppositions that frame our understanding of the world. Cornelius Van Til, a theologian who promoted this idea, rejected the premise that all humans have access to objective reality. "We really do not grant that you see any fact in any dimension of life truly," he wrote in a pamphlet aimed at non-Christians.

If this sounds like a forerunner of modern cultural relativism, in a way it is—with the caveat that one worldview, the one based on faith in an inerrant Bible, does have a claim on universal truth, and everyone else is a myopic relativist.

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