Grace Theological Seminary

The Effect of the Postmodern Concept of Truth on the Stand of the Church Against Public Moral Issues

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ABSTRACT

The concept of absolute and transcendent truth is foundational for the church and necessary for its existence. This concept has been challenged, however, by the postmodern mindset is that there is no absolute, foundational, or overarching truth that is applicable to every person throughout all of time. To the postmodern, "truths" are fluid and relative, and are nothing more than constructs of a person's background, training, and community.

A rejection of transcendent truth necessitates a rejection of Scripture, which serves as the authoritative guide for the church. It is through Scripture that God reveals Himself and the truth that man needs to know. Deconstruction, which searches out apparent inconsistencies in speech or a text, further destroys confidence in the Bible. Deconstruction allows people to derive their own personal meanings from the text rather than seek to determine the authoritative intent of the authors. When personal and erroneous interpretations of the Bible are accepted as valid, the Scriptures no longer guide the church and the lives of Christians.

Since the church is based upon the authority of the Bible and this authority is questioned by rejection of absolute truth, the church itself has been weakened. Without a solid foundation, many Christians no longer take a firm stand on the moral issues that are discussed in the Bible. As a result, the influence of the church on the community has been destroyed. Three prevalent ramifications of this are the debates over creation (which gives man dignity), homosexuality, and abortion. Society in America today is willing to accept evolution, homosexuality, and abortion because it no longer recognizes the authority of the Word of God. Unfortunately, Christians are increasingly coming into agreement with society. Far worse, many Christians and Christian organizations are even offering support to these anti-biblical ideas.

The remedy for this unfortunate situation is for individual Christians to stand against the mentality of postmodernism and return to acceptance of truth and the authority of the Scriptures. Church leaders need to take charge by instructing their people about the nature of truth and the fact that God has revealed truth through the Scriptures. In churches, the Bible must be taught as fact rather than just stories or general concepts of how God has worked in history.

Christians also need to learn how to speak in language that postmoderns understand, but without validating their false beliefs. This may be best accomplished through non-verbal means such as emphasizing the biblical concept of community and living out fundamentally held beliefs. While those with a postmodern mindset may reject the existence of truth, they will inevitably come upon difficult times in their lives. During these times they need to know that Christians have a message that is based upon reality.

INTRODUCTION

The church of Jesus Christ in the United States today finds itself in a precarious situation. Many of the issues that have been accepted for centuries as areas of biblical concern have been hijacked by society and have therefore become known as "social issues." The most notable of these in the present day, abortion and the definition of marriage, are excellent examples of this shift. However, the blame cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of society. The church has not only allowed this, but encouraged it. While many Christians today are purposefully supporting the drift toward postmodernism, the journey has not always been so clear. It began not with the public acceptance of these sins, but with the gradual deterioration of the church's overall acceptance of the existence of truth and specifically with the question of the authority of the Bible. The remedy for this situation is to return individual Christians and the church as a whole to acceptance of authoritative truth and recognition of the authority of God's Word as it was originally intended by the authors.

THE QUESTION OF TRUTH

Assemblies of people are held together by a common interest. Citizens of a nation are bound by the land on which they live, golf club members are united by their interest in the game of golf, and co-workers are connected through a mutual investment in their company. The church, however, is a global collection of extremely diverse people of all cultures, skin color, interests, social status, and even eras. Its unity, then, is forged by something much greater than a simple half-hearted interest in religious tradition. It is based upon a common devotion to absolute transcendent truth that trivializes all differences—the truth of Jesus Christ who claimed to be "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6 NKJV). With this truth, the church has everything. Without this truth, it has nothing.

Because Jesus' final command to His followers before His ascension was to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19), evangelism should be the primary focus of the church. However, evangelism requires a firm commitment to truth. One who evangelizes attempts to sway the one being evangelized from an errant worldview toward one that is "truer to reality."[i] The question, then, is whether challenging a person's worldview through evangelism should "be rejected as an unwarranted, arbitrary and arrogant extrapolation from one's own limited and contingent perspective."[ii] If it is unwarranted for a Christian to attempt to sway others to his "version" of the truth, then the church has no purpose. Therefore, the acceptance of truth is essential not only for the stand the church takes against moral issues, but for its very existence.

Postmodernism asserts that "truth is simply a contingent creation of language which expresses customs, emotions, and values embedded in a community's linguistic practices."[iii] In other words, truth, because it is associated with no underlying reality, can vary according to the culture and language in which it appears. Therefore, truth is relative and to claim that one truth is applicable to everyone is arrogant.[iv] Kaiser points out the "self-defeating" nature of relativism by showing that "if all knowledge is subjective and relative to the knower, then the assertion that all estimates of the meaning of events only results in subjective bias is likewise relative and subjective."[v] In other words, it takes a non-subjective and absolute statement to claim that statements of truth are subjective and non-absolute.

The existence of a fundamental truth that underlies everything is therefore of extreme importance to the church. If there is no truth, as the postmodern mindset claims, then the message of Jesus Christ cannot serve as the foundation of an organization that crosses cultural, geographic, and generational barriers. Herein lies the problem for the modern church in America. The postmodern mindset of society that has infiltrated the church questions the existence of a

universal transcendent truth. Although denial of authority in general and the authority of the Word of God in particular is not new (having existed since Satan's rebellion), this thought has become more widespread with the advent of postmodernism. The question must therefore be asked: does absolute truth exist?

Postmodernism does not present an explicit denial of the existence of all truth, but rather that there is an absolute truth that exists "independently of the knower."[vi] Truths are seen as fluid, being formed through such factors as background, culture, and training. A person's beliefs are a construct of his community rather than a deduction from what he is able to objectively observe in the world. James Smith goes so far as to claim that while "no particular ecclesial body is the dispenser of grace or the arbiter of salvation . . . there simply is no Christianity apart from the body of Christ, which is the church."[vii] Theology, therefore, is a "reflection on the faith commitment of the believing community"[viii] rather than observance of transcendent truth.

While there is safety in theologizing as a community rather than an individual, Christians must be careful not to be taken up by the latest "new and creative view."[ix] When the community follows an unscriptural theological fad, this fad must be rejected by the individual. Unfortunately, the social immoralities of the day are being increasingly accepted by the church. One by one, religious leaders are coming out in support of such issues as homosexuality and abortion. By acquiescing to social influence, these leaders have rejected their job of caring for the "flock of God" (1 Pet. 5:2). This comparison of church leaders to shepherds reveals that God's people need an informed and wise leader. If the shepherd gets lost, the sheep will follow.

A prominent theme of postmodernism is the rejection of metanarratives, or overarching explanations of how and why things exist. Carson points out the fallacy of this mindset by noting that "as soon as [postmodernism] makes an absolute claim that all truths are relative, it has

forged its own metanarrative."[x] Norman Geisler agrees, reasoning that "post-modern theology is self-defeating. It stands on the pinnacle of its own absolute and relativizes everything else."[xi]

This postmodern mindset has influenced the political leaders of the United States. For example, in a May 10, 2012 interview, President Barack Obama declared his support of gay marriage by stating that "over the course of several years, as I have talked to friends, and family, and neighbors, when I think about members of my own staff who are incredibly committed in monogamous relationships . . . I just concluded that for me personally, it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same sex couples should be able to get married." Furthermore, he cited his Christian faith as one of the motives for his new stance. Elevating the "Golden Rule" to the same level of importance as the sacrifice of Jesus, he said, "When we think about our faith, the thing at root that we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing himself on our behalf, but it's also the Golden Rule . . . treat others the way you'd want to be treated."[xii] On the other side of the aisle, his predecessor George W. Bush affirmed traditional marriage with the rationalization that "the union of a man and a woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith."[xiii] While his support of traditional marriage is commendable, the underlying premise is weak. After all, if the union of one man and one woman is to be honored as the only acceptable definition of marriage solely based on traditional acceptance, what will be the result when a revised definition becomes more acceptable? On this and other important topics, a higher authority must be consulted, yet it is this overarching authority that is rejected by postmodernism.

If this mentality is dangerous in the political realm, it is mortal in the church. Christians have replaced "thus saith the Lord" with "thus saith my church" or "thus saith my friends." This has only gotten worse with the advent of social media which allows any uneducated and shallow

thinker to be considered a guru. If a thought can be boiled down into a cute or pithy phrase, it is deemed to be wise, or worse yet, biblical.

The Apostle Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that their faith "should not be in the wisdom of this age" (1 Cor. 2:5). The context was, of course, salvation. Paul did not want the Corinthians to base their acceptance of God on the eloquence or wisdom of a human messenger. The truth of the gospel is independent of human ingenuity or wisdom. This principle could also be extended, however, to other areas of the Scriptural authority. To reject biblical commands and principles in favor of what is socially acceptable is to reject the fundamental truth upon which the church is established.

Without absolute truth, the church is nothing more than a self-help organization or a social club. The true church, however, recognizes that God is the source of absolute truth and has revealed Himself to mankind specifically through the Scriptures and Jesus Christ.

John Oswalt points out that there are two paths to knowledge: personal experience or revelation.[xiv] Personal experience is notoriously untrustworthy, because experiences and the reactions to them change over time. Therefore, revelation is the only viable option. Revelation is important because "unless the authority for moral behavior lies beyond ourselves, wrong will rapidly become right, and right will become wrong."[xv] Therefore, it is the revelation of God through the Scriptures that the church must recognize as its highest authority.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

Much like a pilot needs to depend on his instruments when visibility is low, a stable reference point is necessary while flying in a "theological fog."[xvi] For the church, that reference point is the Scriptures, through which God specifically reveals Himself and His commands. To attack the authority of Scripture is to attack the foundation of the church.

One of the issues at the heart of postmodernism is deconstruction, which is interpretation of a text or language by allowing no direct relationship between a word and what it signifies. A deconstructive reading of a text therefore seeks to point out places where "the function of the text works against its apparent meaning, or against the history of its interpretation."[xvii] Consequently, a text or speech should not be understood in conjunction with its words or the intent of the author, but rather should be dismantled by searching out the inconsistencies present in what is being written or spoken. This results in "relocating the source of 'meaning' from the author to the text."[xviii]

Deconstruction is a result of the question that has been raised (most notably by Jacques Derrida) about whether or not language is able to adequately represent truth. To Derrida, a word is nothing more than a sign that "differs from what it means"[xix] and is unable to adequately express truth. Therefore, the author's intention is less important than what the reader sees in the text. Rather than viewing language or a text as "something we have to get through in order to recover the author's original intention,"[xx] it is to be viewed as the object of interpretation. The meaning of the text will then be interpreted differently by different people, depending on their own background, their presuppositions, and the context in which they encounter it.[xxi] Because each community reserves the right to define its own truth[xxii], a single written text can carry entirely different (and supposedly valid) meanings, depending upon who is doing the reading.

Deconstruction and postmodernity in general have greatly undermined the authority of the Scriptures. Rather than accepting the traditional view of the Bible as the source of propositional truths, postmodernism requires a "revisioned understanding of the *nature* of the Bible's authority."[xxiii] The nature of the Bible's authority is that it provides a "cognitive framework"[xxiv] that shapes the worldview of the believing community as opposed to

propositional and authoritative truths. Neo, one of the principal characters in Brian McLaren's semi-novel *A New Kind of Christian*, states that that 2 Timothy 3:16 merely points out that the Scripture is inspired and *useful*, rather than authoritative. Instead of serving as the propositional foundation for belief, it acts as a "family story to establish a framework for life and serves as one of many 'anchor points' for faith."[xxv] This mentality may be the reason that the percentage of people who have some type of active engagement with the Bible is now tied with those who are skeptical of it.[xxvi]

The effect that this diluted view of the Bible has on the church is devastating, because the Scriptures have been traditionally recognized by the church as the final authority for faith and practice. When this is taken away, the underpinnings of the church are removed. As noted by Carson, "the church cannot exist and flourish without unreservedly embracing the Bible."[xxvii] When each community (culture, church, family, or individual) is free to develop a unique interpretation of the biblical text, the authority of the Scriptures is instantly undermined. Rather than the Bible shaping the community, community shapes the Bible. This explains the growing acceptance by the church of issues that before were deemed immoral.

THE WEAKENED CHURCH IN REGARD TO SOCIAL MORAL ISSUES

The postmodern concept of truth and authority of the Scriptures has had a devastating impact on the church. When the Bible is no longer seen as the foundation upon which beliefs are built, the moral compass is shattered and the result is an open-ended "conversation" (a buzzword of the Emergent Church movement) in which people of all locations and generations contribute to an ongoing pursuit of theological development.[xxviii] Therefore, issues that Christians have generally accepted as sinful are in question. Practices such as gay marriage will soon be widely accepted and other topics will take their place in the forefront of theological thought.[xxix]

Just as people from two families playing a game together may experience disagreement because "this is the way *my* family plays the game," there will be unrest about how to navigate in a world of moral depravity when foundational truth is rejected. Without an external revelation of right and wrong from some recognized authority, the decision is left to the individuals or their respective communities. In this scenario, no one can claim he is right—just that "this is how *we* play the game."

The postmodern rejection of metanarratives stands in opposition to the historical belief of the church that God as the Creator has revealed Himself through the Scriptures and Jesus Christ. This belief affects Christians in at least two areas: the exclusivity of the gospel of Christ and the stand the church takes against public morality. Both of these take for granted the existence of right and wrong. While the first is the most important, the latter is the subject of this paper.

Although the survival of the church requires the existence of absolute truth, many Christians have concurred in word only. Although they may claim that the Word of God serves as the basis of absolute truth, they deny it in practice. When one reads the Bible in a deconstructive manner, the clarity on several issues becomes quite indistinct.

The creation debate

While the creation debate may not seem to be a moral issue, its repercussions extend into the moral arena. Christians who accept as literal the Bible's account of creation understand that God created man in His image for the purpose of glorifying Him. However, to the evolutionist, man is nothing more than an accident of nature and a product of chance. He therefore has no overarching purpose. If a person believes he is only slightly more evolved than an animal, he will often revert to acting like one. The result is a self-centered mentality that rejects authority. This "me-first" attitude leads to stealing, rioting, violence, and even murder. Life (one's own or that

of others) is insignificant, so there are no moral restraints regarding its termination.

A sobering example of the rejection of Scripture is the "Clergy Letter Project." The promoters of this project ask for religious leaders to sign a statement in rejection of a literal interpretation of the Scripture and in support of evolutionary teaching. To date this project has garnered almost 13,000 signatures.[xxx] These religious leaders are exhibiting deconstruction at its finest. While they accept some of God's Word as authoritative, those parts that seem to disagree with science are discarded. However, if a simple and common-sense reading of the first few chapters of the Bible is rejected, would not the rest also be under suspicion?

Another example is BioLogos, an organization located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that offers grants to projects that attempt to reconcile the biblical account of creation with science.[xxxi] Unfortunately, their efforts favor science over Scripture. Although the members of BioLogos accept the inspiration of the Bible, they reason that the creation account should be interpreted "through a figurative, allegorical, and/or theological lens."[xxxii]

The homosexual marriage debate

The undermining of the authority of the Scriptures is evidenced very clearly in the modern treatment of marriage. The fact that many religious leaders and churches even question the definition of marriage proves this point. Long before the conception of divorce, bigamy, homosexuality, or lesbianism, God defined marriage. Upon bringing the first man and first woman together, He declared that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). The first marriage constituted of one man and one woman. No more, no less. Since the giving of that straightforward declaration, however, the definition of marriage has become convoluted. By the time Jesus made His appearance on earth, divorce was rampant. When questioned about it, Jesus did not take into consideration

public opinion, tradition, or even the acquiescence of Moses. He hearkened all the way back to the first days of humanity and quoted His Father's intention that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh…therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:5-6). It is clear, then, that marriage consists in the union of one man and one woman for life. Any definition other than this poses an affront to Scripture and is based upon the opinions and pragmatism of man.

The debate over the definition of marriage is prevalent in the church because the clear teaching of Scripture no longer holds authority for many Christians. For example, the stand of the Episcopal Church on the Bible is rather ambiguous. The official statement of the church recognizes that the Scriptures are inspired by God and contain "all things necessary for salvation."[xxxiii] However, conspicuously absent is any indication of how literally it should be interpreted or how authoritative it is. If it is not literal or authoritative, it can be deconstructed. This makes allowance for that which God forbids, and such is the case for homosexuality.

Although Paul denounces the sin of homosexuality while writing to the Romans that men "burned in their lust for one another" (Rom. 1:27), an increasing number of Christians approve of this practice. For example, in June of 2014, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted to change the definition of marriage in the Book of Order to a union between "two people" rather than a man and a woman.[xxxiv] In 1993, the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts adopted resolutions that blessed same-sex unions as well as ordination of homosexuals.[xxxv]

For the deconstructionist, the statements against homosexuality in the Scriptures contrast with the biblical commands to love. Therefore, the reader assumes the right to dismantle the Bible and develop his own view on the matter. That is how Caputo can reason that "were Jesus alive today and familiar with the pros and cons of the contemporary argument, his centeredness

on love would have brought him down on the side of the rights of what we today call the 'homosexual' difference."[xxxvi] In other words, Jesus would reject the teaching of Scripture in favor of a mutilated caricature of "love."

The abortion debate

Although a majority of Christians still oppose abortion[xxxvii], that this practice continues to increase shows that the church has been either ineffective or largely disinterested in combating it. While the arguments in support of abortion are often based on the notion of "the right to choose," for those who believe in the Bible as the Word of God, the issue goes much deeper. It is based upon the Scriptural teaching that man has been made in the image of God.

In true deconstructionist fashion of locating apparent inconsistencies in an argument, John Caputo asserts that if abortion is to be condemned, then one must also condemn capital punishment (which was instituted because man was made in the image of God[xxxviii]) and preemptive wars. Furthermore, the hypocrisy of anti-abortionists should be replaced with a willingness to open up their tax-paying pocketbooks to provide free prenatal care, insurance, day care, and increased funding for public schools.[xxxix] This, in Caputo's view, is the action Jesus would take. What Caputo seems to miss, however, is that a pregnant woman is not a helpless victim (except in the instance of rape). He indicates that "prosperous and educated people normally have the know-how and the resources to avoid unwanted pregnancies,"[xl] intimating that poor people do not understand how pregnancy begins. Not only is this without base in most cases, but it is an insult to the poor and downtrodden that Caputo is apparently trying to help. As a result, even his argument can be deconstructed. While in one instance he calls for love to the downtrodden, in the next he degrades their intellect. Thus it can be seen that there is no end to deconstruction. While Caputo attempts to deconstruct the Bible, a thinking person can

deconstruct Caputo. Therefore, the truth of abortion must be found in someplace outside of the "wisdom" offered by the likes of Caputo, and the Scriptures comprise the only possible source of this truth. The Scriptures regard human life as a mirror of the image of God and therefore it is to be held in high esteem.

THE REMEDY FOR THE CHURCH

Because the church has lost its passion to decry the social morals of society on account of its rejection of truth and the authority of the Bible, it is to these two areas that Christians must return. While it would be desirable for the church as a whole to restore its foundational acceptance of truth, there is little chance it will happen. The burden, then, is on the individual Christians who must be willing to boldly stand against the tide of postmodernism. While most church members may not be able to describe or define postmodernism, they often live unwittingly according to its principles, a phenomenon that Ronald Allen calls "folk postmodernism." [xli] Although they give verbal assent to the existence of truth, they live as though it does not exist.

It is tempting for Christians to promptly close their ears to the discussion of truth and postmodernism, thinking that the subject is better left for the academia. However, questioning truth and the authority of the Bible does not just take place in theological classrooms or pulpits. It occurs every time a Christian's actions differ from what he professes to believe. Carson acknowledges the "logical inconsistencies" of the postmodern mindset of the "baby busters" (those born between 1960 and 1975). Here is his dilemma: "How many times have I tried to explain to a university-age young person who has made some profession of faith that it is fundamentally inconsistent to claim to know and love the God of the Bible, while cohabiting with someone?"[xlii] While Christians give verbal acknowledgement to the authority of the Bible,

their actions betray a bifurcation between professed and actual belief. To remedy this situation, Christians need to return to a wholehearted acceptance of the existence of truth and also the Scriptures in which this truth is revealed.

Return to acceptance of truth

Charles Colson points out that "today we can no longer simply defend our faith as the Truth; we must first defend the very concept of transcendent, universal truth."[xliii] The spread of the Christian worldview will be impeded if the concept of absolute truth is denied. Unfortunately, even Christians are susceptible to a denial of truth, largely due to the influence of the media.[xliv] Hours are spent unconsciously absorbing the worldview portrayed through the "mindless medium" [xlv] of television, specifically through movies, game shows, and sitcoms. Even the nightly "news" is characterized by bias. The choosing of stories and images to share and the phrasing of the headlines and reporters' speeches all contribute to the brainwashing of the public. This is especially influential for young people who are highly impressionable and spend hours watching television. The Internet has also become a popular tool of the media. People of all ages, backgrounds, and education can produce a "blog" or a Facebook status to share their own version of the "truth," and gullible readers rarely question their premises. The acceptance of sound bites and pithy slogans has made it easier for people to accept anyone's view as the "truth" without either party actually engaging in the labor of thinking. Therefore, Christians must actively take a stand on the existence of absolute truth that transcends human opinion.

While it is impractical (and unadvisable) for Christians to completely remove media from their lives, they must recognize its danger and defend themselves against it. This can be accomplished by understanding that the media both intentionally and unintentionally

promulgates a specific worldview and by ensuring that the prominent worldview to which they submit themselves comes from Scripture.

Return to the Scriptures as the source of truth

Not only do Christians need to return to an acceptance of absolute truth, but they must recognize Scripture as the means by which God disclosed this truth to humanity. According to Daane, "the wide-scale breakdown of morality in our time is a demonstration in our national life that the law cannot be fulfilled apart from the grace of the gospel."[xlvi] Most laws are founded upon biblical principles, so the Bible must be again recognized as the source of authority.

The responsibility for a renewed elevation of Scripture lies primarily with church leaders who, as keepers of the flock of God, must take the initiative in returning to the foundational truth of Scripture. Aside from the media bias, many young people are taught "facts" in school which differ from the "stories" they hear in church. Therefore, church leaders need to state biblical accounts as the facts that they are[xlvii] and not shy away from the apparent discrepancies between the Bible and science. For this to happen, pastors and other teachers in the church need to learn more about the correlation between science and the Bible. Several ministries are available that help people "make a link between their faith and fact."[xlviii]

Learn to speak to postmoderns

The church needs to learn how to speak to postmoderns if it is to reach them with the truth. Simply declaring that "the Bible says" will be insufficient. While the truths of Scripture are unchangeable, the methods that share these truths need occasional modification.[xlix]

When the apostle Paul encountered the Greek philosophers in Athens, he introduced God by a means they could understand. Using their altar dedicated to an "unknown God" (Acts 17:23) as a starting point, he proceeded to preach about a God the locals did not know. Some may argue

that Paul affirmed truth in Greek polytheism by using its artifacts to explain the real God. However, rather than validating their false beliefs, he disclosed their error.[1] The one true God "does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24) and therefore was much greater than the Greek gods. Paul simply used something they understood as a means to declare the truth.

One way that the church can speak to postmoderns is by reinstating an emphasis on community. While salvation is an individual matter, postmoderns need to witness Christians getting alone with one another and agreeing doctrinally. Aside from the fact that the early church members saw themselves as a tight-knit assembly, living in community "places meaning on relationships that provide rich opportunities for sharing and demonstrating the gospel."[li]

Additionally, Christians also should live out what they believe. Postmoderns, regardless of their disdain for absolute truth, will come searching for something with meaning when they experience the difficulties of life. If Christians separate their theology from practice, they will have nothing of substance to offer. Theology that works, in the mind of the pragmatic postmodern, may be based upon truth after all.

CONCLUSION

The moral degradation of society is closely linked to the rejection of truth by the church. Although many Christians verbally assent to the existence of truth and the inspired Scriptures as its source, their daily lives betray their true beliefs. Therefore, they will not only refuse to fight against moral degradation, but will often support it. If determination of right and wrong is dependent upon national trends or personal feelings, then there is no basis upon which to condemn immorality. The remedy is for individuals Christians to return to the roots of the church—an undying allegiance to truth and the authority of the Scriptures.

NOTES

[i] Knut Alfsvåg, "Postmodern Epistemology and the Mission of the Church," *Mission Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 54.

[ii] Ibid., 55.

[iii] J P. Moreland, "Truth, Contemporary Philosophy, and the Postmodern Turn," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 80.

[iv] David Couchman, "Facing the Challenge of Our Times: Equipping Christians to Respond Biblically and Effectively to Postmodernism," *Evangel* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 2002): 74.

[v] Walter C. Jr. Kaiser, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 110.

[vi] Erickson, Millard J., "On Flying in Theological Fog," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 340.

[vii] James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2006), 30.

[viii] Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 87. See also Grenz, Stanley J. and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, page 231.

[ix] Erickson, Millard J., "On Flying in Theological Fog," 341.

[x] D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 147.

[xi] Norm Geisler, "The Emergent Church: Theological Postmodernism," March 2012, accessed November 14, 2014, http://www.normgeisler.com/articles/EmergentChurchMovement/2012-TheEmergentChurch-TheologicalPostmodernism.htm.

[xii] ABC News, "Robin Roberts Interview With President Obama," last modified May 10, 2012, http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/transcript-robin-roberts-abc-news-interview-president-obama/story?id=16316043 (Accessed November 12, 2014).

[xiii] George Bush, "Transcript of Bush Statement," last modified February 24, 2004, http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/02/24/elec04.prez.bush.transcript/index.html (Accessed November 12, 2014).

[xiv] John N. Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 120.

[xv] Ibid., 121.

[xvi] Erickson, Millard J., "On Flying in Theological Fog," 323.

[xvii] Gary Aylesworth, "Postmodernism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2013., 2013, accessed November 20, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/postmodernism/.

[xviii] Caryn Broitman, "Deconstruction and the Bible," *Reconstructionist* 61, no. 2 (September 1, 1996): 15.

[xix] Alfsvåg, "Postmodern Epistemology and the Mission of the Church," 56.

[xx] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*, 37.

[xxi] Ibid., 40.

[xxii] James Smith, in *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism*, pages 40-42, gives an interesting example of the deconstructionist mindset. He describes the scene from the Disney movie *The Little Mermaid* in which Ariel uses a fork, which she knows as a *dinglehopper*, as a brush. Smith seems to accept her interpretation of a fork as her truth. However, even the Disney animators would not accept this. Her unmannerly antics received looks of dismay from her hosts. While it could be asserted that these real people merely had a different interpretation of a fork, they were familiar with the purpose for which it was made. Ariel, who was born and raised in the sea, did not. Her interpretation was wrong and the burden was on her to learn to correctly interpret her surroundings.

[xxiii] Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century*, 88.

[xxiv] Ibid.

[xxv] Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 52–54.

[xxvi] "The State of the Bible: 6 Trends for 2014 - Barna Group," accessed December 1, 2014, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/664-the-state-of-the-bible-6-trends-for-2014#.VHzSdWc9iSo.

[xxvii] Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, 151.

[xxviii] Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 112.

[xxix] Tony Jones, in *The New Christians*, page 116, offers what seems to be a half-serious, half-humorous prediction that issues such as genetic manipulation, colonization of the moon, or

allowing clones to become pastors will take the place of gay marriage in the public debate. Unfortunately, Jones overlooks the fact that marriage is strictly defined in the Bible and homosexuality is condemned. The problem with Jones' premise is that he throws all social issues into one basket (as the church has admittedly done throughout the centuries). That is why it is important to view the Bible as foundational for all belief. When the Scriptures speak to a matter, the church must speak on it. When the Scriptures are silent on a matter (even in principle), the issue can be up for debate. It is interesting, however, that in his book *Adventures in Missing the Point*, co-written with Brian McLaren, he affirms that homosexual behavior is indeed wrong (176-188).

[xxx] "The Clergy Letter Project," accessed November 14, 2014, http://www.theclergyletterproject.org/Christian_Clergy/ChrClergyLtr.htm.

[xxxi] Daniel James Devine, "Interpretive Dance," *World* 29, no. 24 (November 29, 2014): 34–39.

[xxxii] "What Factors Should Be Considered in Determining How to Approach a Passage of Scripture?" *BioLogos*, accessed December 4, 2014, http://biologos.org/questions/interpreting-scripture.

[xxxiii] Episcopal Church Library, "The Bible," *Episcopal Church Library*, accessed December 3, 2014, http://library.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/bible.

[xxxiv] Jaweed Kaleem, "Presbyterian Church Votes To Allow Gay Marriages," *Huffington Post*, last modified June 19, 2014, accessed December 3, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/19/presbyterian-church-gay-marriage_n_5512756.html.

[xxxv] Episcopal Church, "November 6," *Episcopal Church*, accessed December 3, 2014, http://www.episcopalchurch.org/content/november-6-0.

[xxxvi] John D. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church*, ed. James K.A. Smith, The Church and Postmodern Culture (BakerAcademic, 2007), 109.

[xxxvii] "New Barna Study Explores Currrent Views on Abortion," *Barna Group*, last modified June 14, 2010, accessed December 15, 2014, https://www.barna.org/culture-articles/394-new-barna-study-explores-current-views-on-abortion-.

[xxxviii] See Genesis 9:6.

[xxxix] Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church*, 113–114.

[xl] Ibid., 113.

[xli] Allen, Ronald, "Preaching in Postmodernism." In William P. Brown and John T. Carroll,

"The Church and Postmodernity," *Interpretation* 55, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 34.

xlii Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, 45.

xliii Charles W Colson, "Postmodern Power Grab□: The PC Wars Are Not Just Campus Silliness. They Are Reflections of a Battle over Fundamental Principles of Truth and Morality," *Christianity Today* 38, no. 7 (June 20, 1994): 80.

xliv Couchman, "Facing the Challenge of Our Times," 75.

xlv Coleen Cook, *All That Glitters: A News-Person Explores the World of Television* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 107.

xlvi James Daane, "Morality USA," *Reformed Journal* 13, no. 9 (November 1, 1963): 4.

xlvii Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 150.

xlviii Ibid., 152.

xlix Larry J. McKinney, "Postmodernism: Ministry Implications for Church and Educational Leaders," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 148.

l Charles W Colson and Anne Morse, "Emerging Confusion: Jesus Is the Truth Whether We Experience Him or Not," *Christianity Today* 50, no. 6 (June 1, 2006): 72.

li McKinney, "Postmodernism," 151.

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