

Postmodern World

✖ An Internet search of the term “postmodernism” will reveal, among many things, an advertisement from an online book distributor stating, “Millions of titles, new and used!” Obviously an enormous amount has been written on the topic. Webster defines “postmodernism” as: “Of, relating to, or being of an era after a modern one, or being any of various movements in reaction to modernism typically characterized by a return to traditional materials and forms, or being a theory that involves radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history, or language.”

The concept of postmodernism originally emerged as a reaction to what was considered the rather bland approach of the modern movement in architecture. Today the term is most commonly used to indicate an almost complete casting off of the values, goals and objectives of the generation(s) before us.

Postmodernism was intended to *recapture the positive values of the past* rather than be a declaration that we could navigate without the wisdom our predecessors had acquired on their journey before us. Whatever aspect of culture we might consider—architecture, the arts, medicine, philosophy, politics or Christianity—the positive attributes of postmodernism lie in its intent to uncover the treasure hidden beneath the surface of what may have become an irrelevant method, approach or strategy. Unfortunately, at its worst, postmodernism is merely a repackaged excuse for license and the abandonment of all restraint under the guise of newly accepted cultural mores.

Jesus might well be considered the ultimate postmodernist, as He stood to confront the Pharisees over what had become the conscious preference of their laws (recorded in the Talmud) above the Mosaic Law recorded in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). Jesus said to them: “‘Woe to you, scribes

and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone'" (Matt. 23:23, NKJV).

What is most challenging about the postmodern culture is the departure of some from any sound point of reference, or what the Bible refers to as "ancient landmarks." Proverbs minces no words in reminding us of the boundaries God has placed in the earth for good reason. "Do not remove the ancient landmark, nor enter the fields of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is mighty; He will plead their cause against you" (Prov. 23:10-11). The definition of marriage, for example, is being renegotiated, as though casting off any boundaries pertaining to it is our prerogative in this postmodern era. Little regard is given to the fact that God Himself clearly defined these boundaries in order to guide man through the ages.

This common symptom of postmodernism is an unfair reflection of its original intent. Regrettably, it has become yet one more way to disguise the tendency of human nature to rebel against its Creator, not understanding that His love for us has set parameters that are in our best interest.

Jesus evidenced a sense of genuine postmodernism when He answered an alleged expert in the Law of Moses who asked Him, "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Instead of catering to the expectations of those gathered, He reached back to pull forward the full intent of God's law as it was delivered through Moses, and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets'" (Matt. 22:36-40).

The present generation, inheritors of a world with the most negative prognosis in ages, must ask the question so well

articulated by the late Francis Schaeffer, “How should we then live?” The Bible’s timeless, definitive wisdom still appeals to the sensible, saying, “My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you” (Prov. 3:1-2).

Thankfully, today’s postmodern world cannot change God’s intent toward us. The question remains, Will we allow it to dislodge us from those ancient landmarks He has lovingly fixed to guide us safely to our intended destination?

Jeff Clark is president of Elim Bible Institute in Lima, New York. Go to [http://www.elim.edu](#) for enrollment information.