

***ABWE* Pastors' Consultation**

March 4-7, 2008

Ministry in a Postmodern Context:
Our Times and Culture - Understanding Postmodernism



Major Theological Issues 2005



1. The Openness of God
2. New Covenant Theology
3. The New Perspective of N. T. Wright Concerning Paul and Justification
4. The Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic
5. Post Foundational Theology
6. The Emergent Church

Major Theological Issues 2008



1. The New Perspective of N. T. Wright on Paul and Justification...
2. The Emergent Church...
3. Nature of the Atonement...
4. Epistemology: Certainty vs. Confidence/Assurance...
5. Universalism...
6. Interrelationship of these issues...

Man's Cultural Task



Have Dominion –

Subdue the Earth –

Placed in the Garden –

Theological Definition of Culture

Cumulative product of all of man's
normative activity in his:

Signification
Development
Expression

of God, Himself, Other Selves & World

It is historically constructed on man's past
activity for present use and expansion and is
directed toward future generational use.



Culture from Nimrod to Rome



1. The rise of the Assyrian Culture...
2. The Rise of the Egyptian Culture...
3. Babylonian Culture...
4. Medo-Persian Culture...
5. Greek Culture...
6. Roman Culture...

The Patristic Balance

4th to 17th Century

1. Transcendence takes precedence over immanence...
2. Grace takes precedence over nature...
3. Authority in the Scripture as interpreted by the church...
4. Reflected in the art, music, literature and architecture...



The Enlightenment: 17th to the Middle of the 20th Century



1. Immanence takes precedence over transcendence...
2. Light of reason dethroned the church as the source of authority...
3. Revolution in philosophy - Bacon, Descartes, Kant...
4. Revolution in science - Aristotle overturned, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton...

Modernity/Enlightenment



6. Age of critical evaluation
7. Modern nation-state organization
8. Age of individualism/autonomy
9. Age of Protestantism institutional religion
10. Age of capitalism/consumerism

The Church in Crisis



1. The Movement Inward - Evangelicalism is now one's personal experience...no longer any cognitive dissonance with our culture...sense of truth and character lost... theology banished to religious aspect of life...
2. Today's Heroes - the therapist, the CEO... therapeutic society... nervous search for true self...self-absorption..
3. Loss of Truth - shift from Theocentric to self-centered worship, psychologized preaching, pragmatism...

The Church's Cultural Captivity



1. Loss of eschatological urgency...
2. Framed in the normalcy of the present and not the coming kingdom...
3. Derives its status and forms of power from the world...
4. Seduced to turn the world into the kingdom that avoids the cross, conversion, good news!...

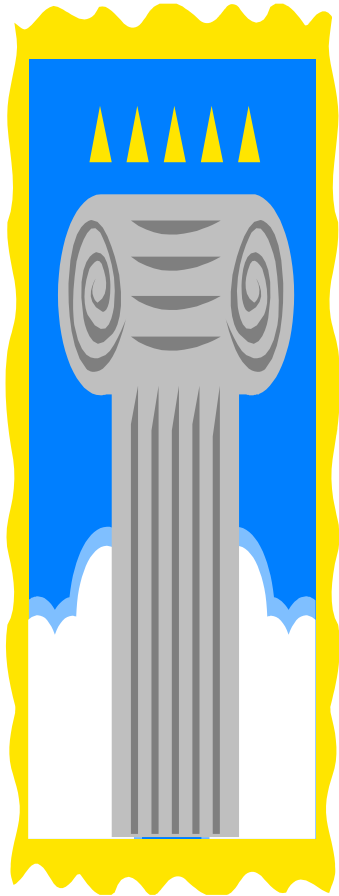
Postmodernism

Early 1960's to the Present

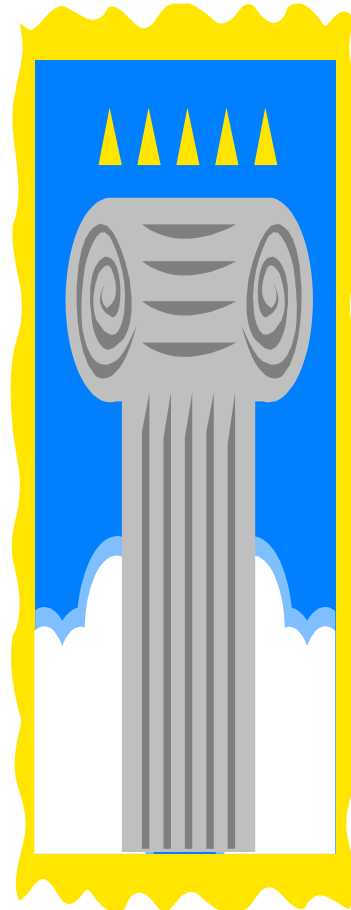


1. Universe Not Self-Contained *
2. No Basis for Morality and Values
3. Progress Not Inevitable *
4. No Basis for Truth *
5. Language of Public Debate Lost *
6. Meaning of Written Texts Lost
7. Limited Autonomy/Process

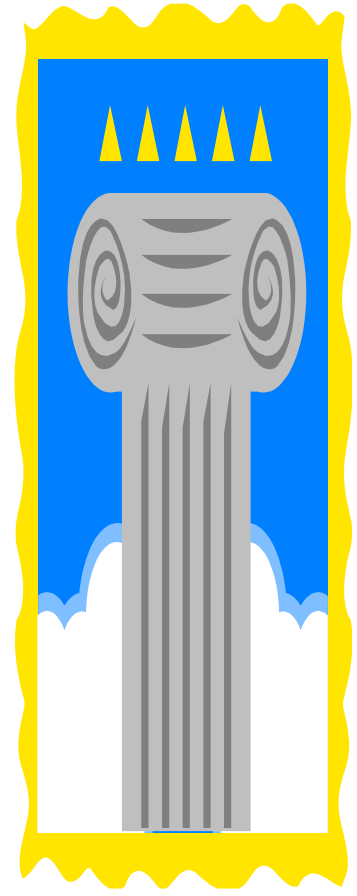
Postmodernism



Social Relativism



Pluralism



Suspicion of Truth

Characteristics of Postmodern Young People

1. Much more relational and communal and less cerebral and individual...
2. Attracted to mystery in worship and life...
3. Resistive of cognitive/moral authority...
4. Desire the whole person to be addressed including the aesthetic aspect...
5. Open to many interpretations and many viewpoints and wish for latitude to express their own...
6. Suspicious of universal solutions...
7. Enjoy the good life of consumerism and wealth while seeking its containment...



Deconstructionism

1. There are no absolutes or total solutions...
2. Any text (especially those that claim total solutions) must have contradictions...
3. Identifying the contradictions shows the text fallible and stops its oppressive power...
4. Deconstruction = spotting contradictions...
5. Examination of a text leads to identifying the contradictions – there is a plethora of meanings all of which are valid...
6. Everything is a text: whole world, people...



Reality and Simulation



1. An image reflects a basic reality...
2. An image masks and perverts a basic reality...
3. An image masks the absence of a basic reality...
4. An image bears no relation to any reality whatever. It is its own pure simulacrum...

Multiculturalism - Pluralism



1. Diversity - Tower of Babel to the final rebellion under the lawless man...
2. Tolerance - aspect of common grace that renders community/society possible...
3. Postmodern - rejection of standards to make truth judgments about culture, religion, values...

Post-modernity



1. Multiculturalism - new agenda, social pragmatism...
2. Globalization - every culture has its story...no overarching story to bind all the cultural stories together...
3. Mass Media - agenda of the media elites...
4. University - ensconced at all levels...
5. Political Arena - agenda for education...