

Confronting Postmodern Culture with the Gospel

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1789-Bastille ->		<- 1989-Berlin
Pre-modernism	Modernism	Post-modernism
<p>Authority: church</p> <p>"I believe that I might understand" -Anselm</p>	<p>Authority: science, rationalism</p> <p>"I believe what I understand"</p>	<p>Authority: self, individualism</p> <p>"I believe when I understand it helps me"</p>

Parochialism –relating to a local church or parish; having a limited or narrow outlook or scope

Progressivism –favoring and promoting innovations without regard to authoritative tradition

Pagitt describes Solomon’s Porch as “*post-evangelical, post-liberal, post-industrialized, and for that matter post-Protestant.*”

His understand of the church, he said, issued from a “deep sense, which has actually grown deeper since, that [he] needed to move into a Christianity that somehow fit better with the world [he] lived in, not an expression reconstituted for another time.”

- Emerging churches – new forms of churches developing in our contemporary context
- “emergents” – adherents of the renewal and reconfiguration of churches
- Emergent – The organizational community of emergents and emerging churches, sometimes called the “Emergent Village”

A leading teacher in the Emergent Village, Leron Shults is crystal clear: “Emergents are interested in indeed, almost obsessed with -challenging old forms of church structuration and finding new forms of following the way of Jesus Christ in the late-modern culture. They aim to become communities in which people feel welcomed to express their concerns about traditional theological positions and encouraged to

explore new ways of formulating their faith without condemnation or the threat of exclusion.

As Tony Jones points out in his chapter 'The Theology, Stupid,' emergents 'believe that theology is local, conversational, and temporary. To be faithful to the theological giants of the past, emergents endeavor to continue their theological dialogue.'"

He goes on to say, "One sense in which emergents are interested in reforming ecclesiology, therefore, is their willingness to deconstruct old formulations of the nature of 'the church' in order to *reconstruct* new ways of thinking about and practicing communion among followers. . . Emergents are more concerned to develop (and always be developing) a *reformativ*e ecclesiology."

Obsessed indeed. Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk who, ironically, is highly admired by emergents, once opined, "In history a keen ecclesiological interest has, almost without exception, been a sign of spiritual decadence." He argued that the key concept that should drive missions is not *church* but *shalom*. But Jesus said, "I will build my church." Mere men clearly do not have the prerogative to redefine, re-imagine, re-construct, re-structure and replace the church.

Avoiding the extremes of progressivism and parochialism

Tradition and Traditionalism - *Tradition* is the living faith of godly progenitors, passed on from generation to generation. *Traditionalism* is the dead faith of living Christian leaders attempting to hold on to power ~ Bill Hull.

"Traditionalism militates against doing God's will. In hundreds of ways local church leaders manifest it and unknowingly hinder the work of God. The Church fathers try to keep the Wednesday-night meeting alive by fighting small-group ministry. They resist innovative worship styles, new qualifications for leaders, constitutional re-writes, because they threaten the safe and familiar. As a result, they hinder progress and create an atmosphere of conflict. The 'founding fathers' of a particular church find themselves fighting to the death over un-important issues. Many times they forget the reason for the battle, and the conflict takes on a life of its own. Too often, the entire church dons full mountain-climbing gear to ascend anthills." - Bill Hull

On the other hand, progressivism is shaking the foundations of the church by disregarding the Apostle Paul's explicit command to "stand firm and *hold the traditions* that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by letter" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). The effort to be creative in worship and the restructuring of church in ways that are not according to "the traditions" is blatant heresy. Fred Moritz notes, "The traditions which they were to hold were not manmade, but rather they were Paul's inscripturated writings. He told them to hold to what they had been taught in the Word of God. In the light of that greater context, they were to 'withdraw . . . from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received us of us' (II Thess. 3:6). The church was also commanded to separate from those who 'obey not our word by epistle' (II Thess. 3:14).

Dan Kimball...church is ...as a body of people sent on a mission who gather in community for worship, encouragement, and teaching from the Word that supplements what they are feeding themselves throughout the week

Missional in Crete

- Body of people (elders, older men, younger men, older women, younger women)
- Sent on a mission (to adorn the Gospel of God)
- Led by a missionary (Titus)
- In a culture (liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons)
- to be missional
- fleshing out the *missio dei*

The **Crisis** of Culture
The **Church** in Culture
The **Contest** with Culture

I. The crisis of culture - anti-God

A. The Analysis of Culture (Titus 1:10-16) - we should not hesitate to use all the resources available to understand our "field"

B. The Assessment of Culture

- "always liars" - they live as if they have no accountability
- "evil beasts" - they live as if they have not eternity.
- "gluttons" - they live as if they have not responsibility

C. The "Apostles" of the Culture – unlike Paul who is a slave of God with a heavenly message, these men are the product of their culture.

- They are insubordinate
- They are empty talkers. Ambiguity is their *modus operandi*
- They are deceivers.

"There is a strong tendency to take what we see in the Bible and allow it to trump the validity of what we hear in history and in one another" (218, doug pagitt).

"Should we not find a more integrated a honored place for the testimony of our people? This testimony can certainly move beyond the simple conversion stories that have become trite and over-used in some traditions. This testimony can and should be offered in narratives as complex as the Bible itself. It can and should be listened to with the same sense of respect and reverence as the Bible itself" (218, doug pagitt)

2 Timothy 4:3-4

- The Subtraction of Doctrine - "they will not endure sound doctrine"
- The Sensationalization of Ministry - "wanting their ears to be tickled"
- The Standard for Teaching - "their desires"

II. The Church in Culture

A. The Classification of the people teaches us that every responsible adult is part of this mission

B. The Commission is to adorn the message of the Gospel of God by godly living and good works! It magnifies God's amazing grace!

C. The Contest with Culture

1. The application of ourselves to the will

- Paul was a *doulos* of God (1:1). "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel" (Rm. 1:1)
 - He was slave of God.
 - He was a sent one.
 - He was separated to the Gospel.
 - Are we who have less authority than the apostle too qualified any *less* of a slave, any *less* separated to the Gospel?
2. The affirmation of the Works
- Good works with in the context of our culture affirm the the message of God.
 - Good works are usually markedly distinct from the *nature* of our culture.
3. the appointment of workers
- These men had to be counter-cultural
 - These men had to be committed to truth
 - These men had to be confrontational
4. the appropriation of words
- In contrast to empty talkers we are committed to words with meaning.
 - In contrast to ambiguity we are committed to clarity
 - "Our gospel came to you not just in words, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction" (1 Thess. 1:5).

But we must not forget the obvious: This message that came with poignant persuasive influence, enjoyed the positive influence of the Holy Spirit, and so positively impacted lives that hearers turned from idols to serve the living God **was packaged in words!** Words, as my professor of preaching said, are the "stuff of our craft." Words by definition imply definition. Words facilitate clarity, channel thoughts, and inform minds. Words are the weaponry of the preacher's arsenal. We have laid aside the sword and we have picked up words. "Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these (Ecc. 12:-12). Words mean something.

(words though can be manipulated—example—Brian McLaren)

"a missional, evangelical, post/protestant, liberal/conservative, mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamentalist/calvinist, anabaptist/anglican, methodist, catholic, green, incarnational, depressed-yet-hopeful, emergent, unfinished Christian"

—subtitle to Brian McLaren's book

technique of meaning manipulation

- Re-definition of words and terms
- Reductionism - finding the lowest common denominator

Titus and the Christians in Crete were to be an informed, *talking* church! (Notice all the activities in Titus that require/necessitate/assume the employment of words!)

"... only one means and only one method of treatment available, and that is teaching by word of mouth. . . . Words are urgently needed, not only for the safety of the Church's members, but to meet the attacks of outsiders as well." —Chrysostom

III. The contest with Culture

- A. The Application of Ourselves to the Will of God
- B. The Affirmation of Works
- C. The Appointment of Workers
- D. The Appropriation of Words