



STATEMENT DP-321

## THE POSTMODERN CHALLENGE: Facing the Spirit of the Age

by Jim Leffel and Dennis McCallum

### Summary

"Openness" (without the restraint of reason) and "tolerance" that rejects all moral absolutes are the mandates of postmodern ideology. This thinking has dominated America's "politically correct" universities for over a decade. Moreover, postmodernism is gaining a clear and growing consensus in popular culture. Consequently, Christians today face unique challenges as we seek to communicate the gospel in a compelling way. In order to speak to the "it's true for me because I believe it" mentality, Christian communicators must understand and critique the foundations of postmodern relativism. We must also develop new and creative pre-evangelistic approaches to establish common ground with our secular culture.

We live in strange times. Until recently, Christianity was under fire at most universities because it was thought to be unscientific, and consequently, untrue. Today, Christianity is widely rejected merely because it *claims* to be true! Increasingly, academics regard anyone claiming to know any objective or universal truth as intolerant and arrogant.

### THE NEW SPIRITUAL CONSENSUS

What accounts for this bizarre and growing consensus? It's called *postmodernism*. According to certain enormously influential thinkers, truth is essentially political. Truth claims are *created* by "belief communities," not *discovered* by reason, observation, or revelation. Lynne Cheney, former chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities, recently reported to Congress that the academic community is experiencing a major ideological shift toward postmodernism.<sup>1</sup>

Postmodernism is more than a movement among intellectuals. It deeply affects the broader culture.<sup>2</sup> In fact, academic postmodernism has galvanized the latent relativism growing in American culture since the 60s, while giving it a respectability it never had before. The new postmodern outlook is now everybody's business. George Barna shows that over 80 percent of Americans today are basically relativistic, and the evangelical church is not far behind.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the church in North America is not answering postmodernists effectively, and we are losing ground so rapidly that many church leaders are ready to join the new postmodern consensus.

We must understand the thinking behind this growing consensus if we are to communicate effectively with our culture. We also need to understand it in order to protect our families and churches. In this article, we explain what postmodernism is and how it has affected people's religious views. Then we offer a strategy for reaching postmodern thinkers.

### ARROGANCE AND RELIGIOUS TRUTH

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271  
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

Not long ago, "Dear Abby" commented on religious disagreements. She printed a letter from one of her critics: "Your answer to the woman who complained that her relatives were always arguing with her about religion was ridiculous. You advised her to simply declare the subject off-limits. Are you suggesting that people talk about only trivial, meaningless subjects so as to avoid a potential controversy?...It is arrogant to tell people there are subjects they may not mention in your presence. You could have suggested she learn enough about her relatives' cult to show them the errors contained in its teaching."

Abby replied, "In my view, the height of arrogance is to attempt to show people the 'errors' in the religion of their choice."<sup>4</sup>

Abby's postmodern response typifies today's popular thinking about religious tolerance and faith commitments. Notice two key ideas implied in her comment. First, challenging another's religious truth claims is *arrogant*. Second, *personal choice* alone legitimizes spiritual commitments.

Why do so many today consider it arrogant to suggest that someone's religious beliefs might be wrong? By arrogant, most people mean *intolerant* — a term that has come to have a whole new meaning in recent years. Intolerance used to refer to bigotry or prejudice — that is, attacking people or excluding them because of who they are or what they think. In that sense, intolerance *is* offensive. But now, intolerance often means simply asserting some beliefs are true and others are false.

The recent movie *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* illustrates this point. In a conversation between an Amazonian Indian and a Christian missionary, the Indian says, "If the Lord made Indians the way they are, who are you people to make them different?" This is one of the defining sentiments of our day. Attempting to convert people is unacceptable because it implies standing in judgment over their "truth."

### **CAN TRUTH BE THE OBJECTIVE?**

At the heart of the issue is whether or not *objective truth* exists. Objective truth means truth that is independent of individual or cultural belief. When something is objectively true (like the existence of the moon), it's true for everyone regardless of whether they acknowledge it or not. Objectivity assumes we all live in one reality, even though we may experience it differently or have different beliefs about it. Those of us who believe in objective truth think that we have a common base from which to discuss what is true and what isn't, because we all live in the same real world.

Postmodernists deny this shared reality. Instead, they claim that different cultural groups live in different realities. To them, a people's reality is their *perception* or *interpretation* of the external world, and is not the world itself. Postmodernists claim we are really creating truth as we interpret. We are not discovering truth. According to postmodernists, a thing is true because I believe it, I do not believe it because it is true.<sup>5</sup>

As Christians, we accept the reality of both *subjective* and *objective* truth, and we believe we can discover both through a combination of our own reason and revelation. The Bible teaches we can come to know a love that transcends knowledge (Eph. 3:19), and that relationship with God goes beyond mere statements of fact about God. This is subjective or experiential truth. But the reality of subjective or experiential truth in no way rules out the reality of objective truth. Postmodernists, on the other hand, think *all* truth is subjective. On this, we can never agree.

The Bible's emphasis on historical revelation (1 Cor. 15:13-15), doctrinal propositions (Rom. 10:9), and natural revelation (1:18-20) presume that objective truth exists. This places Christians in direct opposition to postmodern thinking.

### **POSTMODERNISM MEANS THE DEATH OF TRUTH**

Today, higher education openly promotes cynicism about truth and reason.<sup>6</sup> Educators argue that every time people claim to be in possession of *the* truth (especially religious truth), they end up repressing those who don't agree. Today, it's more stylish to make no truth claims at all. How has this surprising outlook gained such wide acceptance

in history's most advanced civilization? To understand this, we need to look at how postmodernists conceive the past three hundred years of Western history.

Postmodernism abandons *modernism*, the humanist philosophy of the European Enlightenment. Enlightenment thinking began with French philosopher Rene Descartes's idea of the *autonomous man* — the one who starts from his own thought ("I think, therefore I am"). Beginning from himself, and explicitly excluding any need for God or revelation, Enlightenment man systematically builds his world view from reason alone.

Modernists assumed the mind is a "mirror of nature," meaning that our perceptions of reality actually correspond to the way the world is. From this presumption, modernists pursued their vision of *progress*, exalting technological achievement and mastery over nature. Expansion-minded capitalism, liberal democracy, and communism — all outgrowths of modernist thought — have sought to subjugate the earth to the Eurocentric outlook.

Modernism, however, planted the seeds of its own undoing. As modernists have conquered the globe in the name of progress, those they oppressed and marginalized have increasingly asked, "Progress toward what?" Postmodernists say modern rationalism and technological proliferation have brought us to the brink of disaster. The myth of "modern progress" ends up in a nightmare of violence, both for the people it marginalizes and for the earth itself. That's why so many people today are interested in primal cultures and world views that promote the unity of humanity *with* nature, rather than humankind standing *over* nature.

Postmodernists offer some good critiques of humanism, progress, and autonomous reason. More importantly, Enlightenment rationalists have never demonstrated that human reason can arrive at ultimate truths without divine revelation. As Christians, we have never accepted the modernist claim that technological advancement and human reason will solve all social problems.

Atheistic existentialist writers such as Nietzsche and Sartre prepared the way for contemporary postmodernism. They realized the modernist rejection of the transcendent was a costly proposition because it annihilated all standards of objective morality, human value, and truth.<sup>7</sup> Viewed in this way, postmodernism is the logical extension of modernist thought: it exposes autonomous human reason as a dead end.

While Christians should welcome much of postmodernism's critique of modernism, we see that their critique is based on equally dubious assumptions and will lead to disastrous conclusions. The rhetorical power of postmodern terms like "tolerance," "openness," and "inclusion" effectively disguises a more insidious objective — the destruction of all absolute truth claims. Postmodern openness to spirituality may seem like a positive step away from modernist naturalism, but this kind of spirituality is inherently anti-Christian because it considers the Christian message (like all world views) true only for those who accept it as such.<sup>8</sup>

## POSTMODERN ANTIHUMANISM

Rather than see humans as individual rational selves, as modernists held, postmodernists think of humans as extensions of culture. They deny the individual self altogether. Postmodern psychologist and social critic Kenneth Gergen says, "With the spread of postmodern consciousness, we see the demise of personal definition, reason, authority. . . . All intrinsic properties of the human being, along with moral worth and personal commitment, are lost from view."<sup>9</sup>

Postmodern anthropology is based on the idea that humans are "social constructs" or socially determined beings. Our outlooks and perceptions are all the result of our enculturation. Peter Berger explains what is called *sociology of knowledge* — the idea that all knowledge is the product of our culture and language:

A thought of any kind is grounded in society . . . The individual, then, derives his worldview socially in very much the same way that he derives his roles and his identity. In other words, his emotions and his self-interpretation like his actions are predefined for him by society, and so is his cognitive approach to the universe that surrounds him.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than conceiving the mind as a mirror of nature, postmodernists argue that we bend nature through the lens of culture and language.<sup>11</sup> This leads them to reject the possibility of discovering objective truth since each culture approaches reality differently, depending on its language, its particular needs, and its historical conditions. To know objectively we would have to transcend our cultural lens, and according to postmodernists, this is impossible.

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271  
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

In place of objective truth and what postmodernists call "metanarratives" (comprehensive world views), postmodernists point to "local narratives," or stories about reality that "work" for particular communities, but have no validity beyond that community. Indeed, postmodernists reject the whole language of truth and reality in favor of literary terms like *narrative* and *story*.<sup>12</sup> So-called reality is all about interpretation, not about what's true.<sup>13</sup>

Postmodernists hold that when modernists or religionists advance objective truth, they do violence by excluding other voices; that is, they regard other world views to be invalid. Thus the ideas of truth and reason marginalize the vulnerable by "scripting them out of the story." Truth claims, we are told, are merely tools to legitimize power. Michel Foucault writes, "We cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."<sup>14</sup> For postmodernists, truth claims are really mere propaganda intended to dismiss other views by calling them superstition or nonsense. That's why, in postmodern culture, the person to be feared is the one who believes he or she knows ultimate truth. The *dogmatist*, the *totalizer*, the *absolutist* is both naive and dangerous, not to mention arrogant.

Rather than dominating others with our "version of reality," postmodernists call us to accept all beliefs as equally valid. Instead of one truth, we have many truths. Openness without the restraint of reason along with tolerance without moral appraisal are the new postmodern mandates.

### PERSONAL BELIEFS DEFINE TRUTH

In postmodern culture, it's impossible to separate what people believe from who they are, because the act of believing something makes it true (for those who believe). Therefore, rejecting the *content* of faith means rejecting the *person* who constructed that truth. Truth now means personal preference and personal empowerment. It would be no more appropriate to question the validity of a person's belief than to critique his or her choice from a dinner menu. Striving together to discover truth through debate and spirited discussion is definitely out.

Consider current opinion about the religions of the world. Few people understand much about them. Yet most people believe they all teach pretty much the same thing. The real concern is finding spirituality that "fits." George Barna's research shows that "about four out of every ten adults strongly concurred that when Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and others pray to their god, all of those individuals are actually praying to the same god, but simply use different names for that deity. Only one out of every six adults strongly disagreed with this view."<sup>15</sup>

America today is a religious smorgasbord. The only question seems to be, "For what are you hungry?" And taste is more important than substance. That's why people are largely unmoved if we point out that their beliefs are hopelessly contradictory or irrational.

Most people "absorb" this postmodern outlook rather than think their way into it. An impressive majority of Americans believe that truth is relative.<sup>16</sup> Few, however, know *why* they think that way. Still fewer have any clue about how their beliefs relate to their own lives in a practical way. In general, people are more ideologically confused than they are deeply committed to their convictions. As a result, while we hear the rhetoric of openness to everything and tolerance for everyone, we rarely find anyone who really understands what this means. Relativism is just the socially appropriate attitude of the hour. Postmodern ideologues have successfully transformed ideology into popular *zeitgeist*.

Ironically, in an age of antidogmatism, this radical subjectivity leads to the dangerously arrogant inference that people can never be *wrong* about what they believe. If we are free from the constraints of rationality, nothing separates truth from self-delusion. Gergen's words are both candid and chilling: "Evaluation can only take place from within a perspective. . . . If in my view 'objective truth' is a misleading term, I can scarcely condemn a theory because it is objectively false."<sup>17</sup>

The age of antidogmatism ends up being the age of anti-intellectualism. Truth has been replaced, especially among many academics, by politically empowering narrative.<sup>18</sup> This kind of thinking is the foundation of revisionist history,<sup>19</sup> feminist critical method,<sup>20</sup> and many of the current formulations of multiculturalism.<sup>21</sup>

In the postmodern climate of openness and tolerance, beliefs become barriers against genuine dialogue about spiritual and moral truth. For example, political correctness advocates, such as Stanley Fish, have argued that since all speech is a political power play, ideas must be monitored and managed, not rationally and constructively

engaged.<sup>22</sup> Such controlling attitudes lead even liberal academics like Harvard's Alan Dershowitz to claim that a new McCarthyism pervades intellectual life today.<sup>23</sup>

History offers a warning that such antirational dogmatism can exact a high price. Indeed, a daunting historical and philosophical link exists between postmodern "constructivism" and fascism. Both reject objective truth; both assert that there is no essential human nature or inherent human rights; both celebrate the substitution of power for truth. Interestingly, major contributors to the development of postmodern ideology, such as Martin Heidegger and Paul de Mann, were deeply committed fascists.<sup>24</sup>

Postmodern subjectivism also inhibits a deep commitment to one's own beliefs. Since faith is rooted in the practical matters of personal taste and experience, people tend to adopt and abandon beliefs according to the demands of the moment. After all, when truth is a human creation rather than something independent of ourselves, we may casually move on to some new "truth" whenever it suits us. How tragic it is when friends tell us, "I tried Christianity for a while, but it just didn't work for me."

## CROSSCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Today evangelical Christians stand at a greater distance from those with whom we communicate than we did just 20 years ago. At that time, even those who rejected Christianity were prepared to discuss whether the evidence for Christianity's truth was adequate. Today, this is much less frequently the case. Before we can broach the question of whether the Christian gospel is true, we have to establish that such a thing as truth exists.

To bridge the gap between ourselves and postmodern thinkers, we need to introduce additional steps in the communication process. Communicating with postmodern culture is not *impossible*; it's just *more difficult*.

Suppose a villager in another land engaged you in a conversation about how to fend off the forest worm-demons, who are boring holes in people's teeth. At some point, you would probably interrupt that villager. "Excuse me," you would say with your hand raised. "We have a problem here. I can't share my views about how to fend off these demons because I don't believe they exist!"

The gap between the villager's starting point and your starting point is too great for you to discuss demon countermeasures. This is why success in crosscultural communication requires more patience and care in approaching each discussion. Crosscultural missionaries may spend years learning the language and culture of those to whom they minister. Meanwhile, careless communicators are rarely successful in a crosscultural context, and they menace the ministry of other Christians as they blithely offend people in the name of Christ. Similarly, if we are to be successful communicators with postmodern people, including our own children and their friends, we will have to understand the postmodern outlook.

## THE ANTIRATIONAL REACTION

We don't agree with some evangelical leaders who have suggested that truth-oriented or rational witnessing won't work in the postmodern era. It has to work. If we argue that a truth-oriented gospel won't win people today, we are really arguing that people can't be won at all. Whatever "gospel" to which we win people without truth is certainly not the Christian gospel. Our message is unique, not because it leads to the most far-out spiritual experience, but because it is *true*. Paul ministered in a comparably nonrationalistic culture, but he didn't hesitate to "persuade" people (2 Cor. 5:11. See also Acts 17:2-4).

We dare not join the rush to dispense with reason and so-called "left-brain" arguments. The day we dispense with reason is the same day we dispense with truth. After all, if one proposition can be true, and its opposite is also true, what is a lie? God's truth doesn't depend on our thoughts. It is true regardless of what we think. But this sort of truth, *objective* truth, cannot exist apart from rational categories.

Of course, we are not suggesting that Christians merely offer objective truth while witnessing. We believe that relationship is more important than ever in a postmodern world. Demonstrating Christian love, Christlike lives, and experiencing the power of God are extremely important today, but these should *supplement* and *illustrate* the truth

of the gospel, not *replace* it.

## THAWING OUT POSTMODERN DOGMATISM

At Xenos Fellowship, we too have been struggling with the riddle of dialogue with postmodern culture. We have had some success and can suggest some promising directions for Christians to explore.

First, we find that Socratic or dialogue-based pre-evangelism is good for undermining the formulas that paralyze people's minds and prevent them from comprehending God's truth. Dialogue — specifically raising questions — is more palatable to postmodern hearers than authoritative declarations. Later, when they are more able to hear and think, we need to call them to moral and intellectual accountability to God. But again, we need extra steps before we reach that point.

Next, we need a *strategy* intended to move postmodern thinkers to the point where traditional pleas and arguments will finally take effect. We use questions (1) to discover and understand people's presuppositions, and clarify those presuppositions in their own minds; (2) to move our hearers carefully to the point of tension created by the internal contradictions inherent in the postmodern outlook; and (3) to help them realize the problems with their existing view, thus creating a new receptiveness. Then comes the time to supply the Christian alternative.

## DISCOVERING PRESUPPOSITIONS

When talking to members of postmodern culture, we find that few fully comprehend the bases for their views. Therefore, we aim to help them understand their own views, along with some of the problems inherent in those views.

We like to gather groups of Christians together with their non-Christian friends in a home for a "Conversation and Cuisine event" (dinner party-discussion group). We assure guests in advance that all views are welcome, and that this is not a church meeting, where they have to give a "right" answer. After dinner, the discussion topic might be, "To Judge or Not to Judge." The discussion facilitator presents situations involving different types of judgments, and the group discusses whether they would feel comfortable making a judgment in those situations.

1. Your white workmate is helping an African-American workmate to unravel a problem in the computer database. You overhear the white worker in his frustration call the African American a dumb N\_\_\_\_. She looks up with hurt on her face. You denounce the white worker for being prejudiced and for hurting her feelings.
2. Your other friend at work announces she is getting divorced. She has fallen in love with another man, and although she has two children, she has told her husband she cannot continue to live a lie. Her husband and children are crushed, but she feels she must be true to herself. You charge her with selfishness, lack of loyalty, and willingness to hurt others' feelings.

For example:

Most postmodern-influenced thinkers will be more willing to approve passing judgment in scenario no. 1 than in scenario no. 2. Why? Both judgments involve someone hurting the feelings of another. While people might raise several valid points (such as the fact that we don't know what the adulterer's husband was like), the main effect of the pairing is to create confusion.

At this point, the facilitator raises an interesting question: "How would people have answered these same questions 30 years ago?" Most agree that people would have made the judgment on the bottom (no. 2) without hesitation two or three decades ago. At the same time, though people might have resented the racial epithet on the left (no. 1) 30 years ago, they may have concluded that "sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me." Today, most secular people believe that the crime in no. 1 is morally far worse than that in no. 2, if indeed no. 2 represents anything wrong at all — just the reverse of what the same crowd would have concluded 30 years before.

Why the difference between today and 30 years ago? Postmodern thinkers invariably respond that judgments have changed because morality is not objective, but a product of cultural paradigms. Now we pose a very important question: So are we suggesting that using the "N" word was o.k. 30 years ago? Or was it wrong, but they just *thought* it was o.k.?

This question causes postmodern thinkers to be confused. If they say it was really all right to call someone by this name at one time, they are condoning the racism of the past. But if they say people only thought it was all right, they are suggesting that a universal standard of right and wrong exists. Either position contradicts central postmodern assumptions.

By struggling with these internal contradictions in an accepting atmosphere, postmodern-influenced people realize they *are* willing to judge, but their own unspoken rules governing judgment perplex them. Modernists — those who are agnostic or atheistic and who trust rationality — have problems here as well. They have no more solid basis for moral judgments than postmodernists, and neither can they explain why they hold to moral views now or in the past. Underlying the whole question is the obvious need for moral authority.

### MOVING HEARERS INTO TENSION

Of course, we don't want to merely leave people confused. We create confusion in order to *break down the dogmatism of postmodern thinking*. When we can't answer questions about our own view, it suggests that our ready-made formulas are inadequate, and something more is needed.

3. You visit an African tribe during their female circumcision ritual and behold a teenage girl receiving a clitorrectomy. When you complain to your tour guide, he points out your Eurocentric values are interfering with your judgment.

The same group discussing judgment later introduces another scenario:

This scenario raises more complicated contradictions for the postmodern thinker. Female circumcision is a manifestation of misogyny and male control over women. The procedure guarantees that women will never experience orgasm, and, therefore, will take no pleasure from sex. In the words of one African apologist, the practice "frees women from their bondage to lust to find their true identity as mothers." The girls have little or no say in whether they receive the procedure. Viewed objectively, this practice is a savage and brutal violation of women and should be especially abhorrent to feminists.

But there's a problem! Female circumcision is also a time-honored religious rite of passage in *another culture*, and an *oppressed, nonwestern, nonwhite* culture at that. It is, therefore, off-limits to postmodern judgment of any kind. In culturally postmodern groups, we will often find those who agree with the tour guide. They feel we cannot judge this situation because we have no context from which to view it other than our own cultural "reality." Meanwhile, this dilemma confuses other postmodern-influenced thinkers. Condoning female genital mutilation naturally makes the women in the group nervous.

But that's not all. Suppose we consider New Guinea, where for centuries tribes have hunted members of other tribes and taken their heads as fetishes. Today, under the influence of Western colonial culture, the government of New Guinea has outlawed head-hunting. Do those in our discussion group agree with this move or not? More confusion. The militant postmodernists stand their ground. "How can we judge a practice that's been going on for hundreds of years, and is a religious practice to boot?" "Who do we think we are to judge this culture, when we have x, y, and z evils in our own culture?"

Their point seems credible even though they are condoning murder. They are merely repeating a truth Francis Schaeffer observed two decades ago: "If there is no absolute by which to judge the state [or here, the culture] then the state [culture] is absolute."<sup>25</sup> We have to agree that for us to judge events in another culture isn't possible apart from the existence of a moral absolute that applies to all cultures, whether they know it or not. When we put such a point on it, the postmodernists' position either hardens or crumbles.<sup>26</sup>

When hard-line postmodern thinkers defend murder, others in the room often groan in discomfort. We might not win the most militant postmodernists, but remember that the majority of our culture follows postmodern ideals as they do clothing fashions. They are not deeply committed to the postmodern agenda, and if they find these assumptions

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271  
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

failing the test in situations like this one, they will reconsider.

### TIMING IN COMMUNICATION

We don't share the gospel itself at these discussions. The Conversation and Cuisine events are pre-evangelistic. If the guests from that discussion go home rethinking their positions, our pre-evangelistic task is complete and successful for the time being. We have moved them beyond the point where formulas like, "That's nice for you" have insulated them from engagement in real discussion.

Hopefully, we are in relationship with these people and can follow up on our first conversations with them. Once their minds are less bound, and, provided we also strengthen the message with subjective, relational witness, we should eventually succeed in sharing the gospel as objective truth.

### POSTMODERN OPPORTUNITIES

If we learn the rules in today's society, we may find new opportunities for successful witness that hadn't been present in earlier, modernist culture. After all, the New Testament church grew in a world similar to our postmodern view. Also, the most vigorous parts of the body of Christ today come from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Christianity is increasingly hard to characterize as "Western." Most important, the nihilism and loneliness of postmodern culture cry out for the love of God in millions of aching hearts. If we love others, rely on God's power, and stay faithful to the truth, we will see many come to know Him.

**Jim Leffel** is director of equipping for Xenos Christian Fellowship and director of the Crossroads Project, an apologetics ministry in Columbus, Ohio. **Dennis McCallum** is senior pastor at Xenos Christian Fellowship, also in Columbus, and author of several books. They are coauthors of a new book, *The Death of Truth* (Bethany House), which assesses the advance of the postmodern outlook in society today. For more information on postmodernism, visit their web site at <http://www.crossrds.org>.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Lynne V. Cheney, "Telling the Truth: A Report on the State of the Humanities in Higher Education" (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Humanities, September 1992).

<sup>2</sup>See our recent book, Jim Leffel and Dennis McCallum, *The Death of Truth* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), for an explanation of how postmodernism encroaches on every important aspect of contemporary culture.

<sup>3</sup>George Barna shows that postmodern thinking in secular culture is thriving in the evangelical church. See George Barna, *What Americans Believe: An Annual Survey of Values and Religious Views in the United States* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991).

<sup>4</sup>"Deciding whether to Discuss Religion Prompts Debate," in "Dear Abby," 19 September 1989.

<sup>5</sup>See a clear explanation of this view in Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xiii-10.

<sup>6</sup>Cheney, 7.

<sup>7</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Gay Science," in Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 93-102; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Essays in Existentialism* (Secaucus, NJ: The Citadel Press, 1965), 31-62.

<sup>8</sup>We are concerned that the growing number of evangelical scholars attracted to postmodernism have not dealt sufficiently with this point. An example is J. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 88-171.

<sup>9</sup>Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 228-29.

<sup>10</sup>Peter Berger, *Invitation to Sociology* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Co., 1963), 117. Berger would not call himself a postmodernist, but his ideas have been extremely influential in postmodern circles.

<sup>11</sup>A defining work detailing this position is Frederick Jameson, *The Prison House of Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

<sup>12</sup>Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*,

trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 278-93.

<sup>13</sup>For an excellent discussion of this point, see Roger Lundin, *Culture of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

<sup>14</sup>Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 132.

<sup>15</sup>Barna, 275.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 83-85.

<sup>17</sup>Gergen, 229.

<sup>18</sup>See, e.g., Paula S. Rothenber, *Racism and Sexism: An Integrated Study* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 6-7, 350.

<sup>19</sup>See, e.g., Ellen Somekawa and Elizabeth A. Smith, "Theorizing the Writing of History or, 'I Can't Think Why It Should Be So Dull, For a Great Deal of It Must Be Invention,'" *Journal of Social History*, Fall 1988, 154.

<sup>20</sup>See, e.g., Margaret A. Farley, "Feminist Consciousness and the Interpretation of Scripture," in Letty M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985).

<sup>21</sup>See, e.g., Christine E. Sleeter, ed., *Empowerment through Multicultural Education* (Albany: State of New York Press, 1991).

<sup>22</sup>Stanley Fish, "There's No Such Thing as Free Speech and It's a Good Thing Too," *Boston Review*, February 1992, 3.

<sup>23</sup>Alan M. Dershowitz, "Harvard Witch Hunt Burns the Incorrect at the Stake," *Los Angeles Times*, Washington ed., 22 April 1992, A11.

<sup>24</sup>For an excellent introduction to these comparisons, see Gene Edward Veith, *Modern Fascism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993).

<sup>25</sup>Francis Schaeffer, *How Shall We Then Live?* (film series), episode 10.

<sup>26</sup>See several other examples of Conversation and Cuisine discussions as well as other articles on postmodernism at the Crossroads Project website: <http://www.crossrds.org>.