

POSTMODERN TIMES

This book is subtitled, *A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. The author, Gene E. Veith, Jr. is Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University, Wisconsin. This volume is an absolute must for Christian leaders who want to understand what is happening in our contemporary culture and especially in the church. Veith reminds us that “the church has always had to confront its culture and to exist in tension with the world. To ignore the culture is to risk irrelevance; to accept the culture uncritically is to risk syncretism and unfaithfulness. Every age has had its eager-to-please liberal theologians who have tried to reinterpret Christianity according to the latest intellectual and cultural fashion” (p. xii). The author discusses Postmodern Thought, Postmodern Art, Postmodern Society and Postmodern Religion. The information and insights he supplies will provide preachers and elders the necessary tools to understand the enemy that surrounds us and enable us to be triumphant in the death struggle now convulsing the church.

Among the tenets of Postmodernism that threaten the church are:

- * Rejection of absolutes-whether in history, morals, ethics or religion.
- * Rejection of absolute truth and a source of absolute truth. “In the past people argued about what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. Today people dismiss the very concepts of morality and truth” (p. 226).
- * Rejection of the Christian world view. There was a time when most people in Western society acknowledged the Bible as God’s Word and recognized Christian standards, even if they did not confess Christ personally or live up to those standards. Such is no longer the case with Postmoderns.
- * Rejection of the notion that life has objective meaning. To them life has value only if it wanted by others, if it is in large measure whole and if it can be productive.

Part One of the book “Describes the new paradigm that characterizes Postmodern thinking” and the consequences of such thinking.

Part Two examines the arts through which Postmodernism expresses itself and which it uses as a powerful, evangelistic tool to win converts.

Part Three considers Postmodern society, noting how it is “splintering into various factions and subcultures in competition and conflict with each other.

Part Four “shows how postmodernism reduces all social relationships to questions of power, threatening freedom and democracy.”

Part Five “shows how the postmodern world view manifests itself not only in New Age religions, but—even within the evangelical church” (pp. 23-24).

Veith shows how Postmodernism has found its way into most religious bodies impacting their thinking about the principles of Christianity as well as their conduct in the practice of the faith. Leading voices of the Church Growth Movement are using Postmodern principles in the programs they are promoting. He right says, “True church growth -whether quantitative or qualitative- will come not through social science research and marketing techniques, but through revival and reformation” (p. 228). “The desire to be a ‘mega-church’ often leads to ‘mega shift’ theology. Changes in style tend, often inadvertently, to produce changes in content” (p. 228).

The change agents who are creating havoc throughout our brotherhood have embrace some aspects of Postmodernism. Their literature is full of references to it. They are seeking to mold the church into an acceptable form for Postmodern people. Without an understanding of the Postmodern philosophy that drives the promoters of change, church leaders can only react to the symptoms they see in their membership. To effectively overcome the infection we must understand the nature of the disease that causes the symptoms.

The author concludes with this valuable truth: “Throughout its history the church has always had two options-to go along with the times or to counter them. One could argue that the most vital theological movements in church history have been those which went against the trends of their time” (p. 230). It is a fact that in general our society has embraced the false world-view of Postmodernism. We Christians must never forget that though we live in the midst of this world with its defective thinking, we must not allow ourselves to be captivated by it (John 17:14,16). If we faithfully stand with Christ and his gospel we will of necessity stand against this and all other systems that challenge

his authority and deny his word. JHW

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