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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A CRITIQUE OF THE URBAN MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF AN EMERGING POSTMODERN CONDITION

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Kleber de Oliveira Gonçalves

January 2005

UMI Number: 3164588

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Faculty Adviser,
Bruce C. Moyer
Professor of Mission

Bruce L. Bauer

Bruce L. Bauer
Associate Professor of World Mission

Nancy Vyhmeister

Nancy J. Vyhmeister
Professor of Mission, Emerita

Jon Paulien

Jon Paulien
Professor of New Testament Interpretation

Ruth A. Tucker

Ruth A. Tucker
Professor of Missiology
Calvin Theological Seminary

Roy E. Gane

Director, Ph.D./Th.D. Program
Roy E. Gane

John K. McVay

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
John K. McVay

January 28, 2005

Date approved

ABSTRACT

A CRITIQUE OF THE URBAN MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF AN EMERGING POSTMODERN CONDITION

by

Kleber de Oliveira Gonçalves

Adviser: Bruce Campbell Moyer

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A CRITIQUE OF THE URBAN MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF AN EMERGING POSTMODERN CONDITION

Name of researcher: Kleber de Oliveira Gonçalves

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Bruce Campbell Moyer, STD

Date completed: January 2005

The world is becoming an urban society. The urban expansion witnessed during the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first century is unprecedented in the history of the human civilization. Simultaneously, the Western world faces the paradigm shift from the modern era to a postmodern condition. Both movements have remarkable implications for the mission of the church in urbanized, postmodernizing societies. Shaped by the modern worldview, the church is now further ostracized by the postmodern condition.

While the literature of urban mission has grown in the past few years, very little consideration has been given to the particular issues and implications of urban mission in the context of postmodernity. Thus, this study addresses the relationship between the

urban mission of the church and the emergence of the postmodern condition.

This investigation of urban mission in the light of the postmodern ethos is based on the historical, philosophical, sociological, and cultural analyses of the modern and the postmodern eras provided in chapters 2 and 3, respectively. Chapter 4 explores the relationship between the urban mission of the church and the postmodern condition primarily by locating the emergence of postmodernism in the context of urbanization and globalization. Some urban missiological implications and suggested principles for reaching the postmodern mind in the urban context are drawn from the findings of this research and are presented in chapter 5.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the centralizing power of the city—added to the pervasive influence of a global market—makes the urban environment the locus of the postmodern condition. Consequently, the challenges and opportunities for urban mission have never been greater. In spite of the major threats postmodernism poses for mission, the current urban socio-cultural outlook offers opportunities that did not exist a few decades ago. Therefore, within the context of the combined forces of urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism, an extensive review of the strategies and methods of urban mission is vital for the development of postmodern-sensitive churches as the church seeks to fulfill its calling to participate in God's mission to urbanized, postmodernizing generations.

To my dear wife Nereida,
Whose unfailing love,
encouraging support,
and enduring patience,
helped me to turn a dream into a reality.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

In 1970 Donald McGavran wrote: "Discipling urban populations is perhaps the most urgent task confronting the Church. Bright hope gleams that now is precisely the time to learn how it may be done and to surge forward actually doing it."[1] Undoubtedly, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, McGavran's warning is no less opportune and relevant than it was more than three decades ago. On the contrary, his prediction indeed points out to one of the most challenging tasks for the mission of the contemporary Christian church.

The massive growth of the world's population during the last fifty years has spawned cities larger than have ever existed. In 1950 only two cities, New York and Tokyo, had 10 million inhabitants or more. As of 2003, twenty cities have reached that size. According to the latest report on world urbanization released by the United Nations,[2] it is projected that by 2007 the world's urban population will exceed 50 percent, thus marking the point when, for the first time in history, over half of the world's population will live in urban agglomerations. The proportion of the population that is urban is expected to rise to 61 percent by 2030. Figure 1 clearly shows this trend.

---

[1] Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 295.

[2] United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision*, 2004, http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2003/2003urban_agglo.htm (25 March 2004).

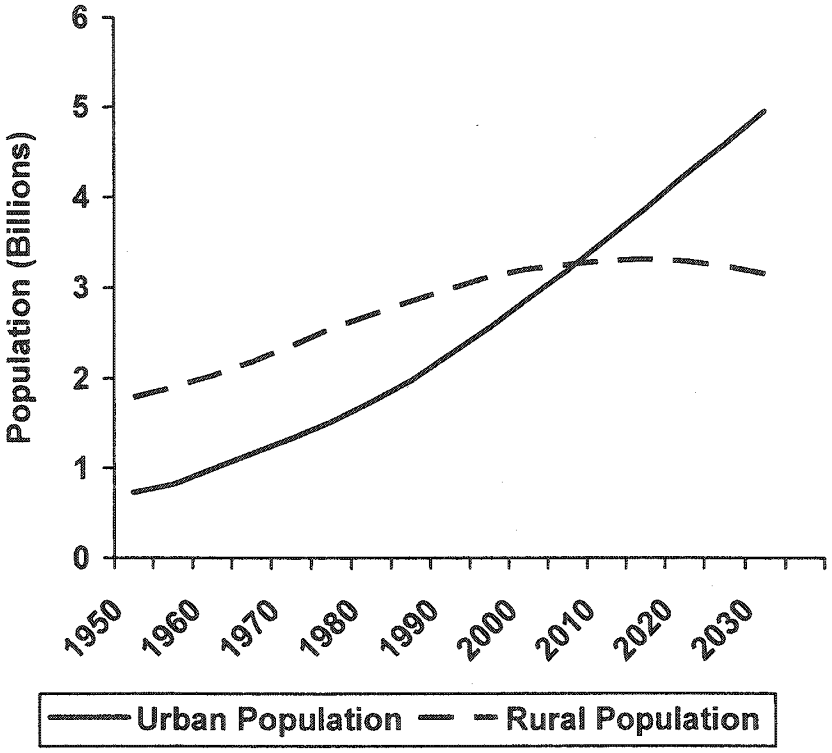

Fig. 1. Urban and rural population, 1950-2030. Adapted from United Nations, Economic and Social Affairs, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision* (New York, United Nations, 2004), 9.

The current stage of urbanization, particularly in the Western world, did not occur perchance. It could not have come into being without the rise of the modern era and its unquestionable influence on contemporary human history. The modern era, or modernity, is usually recognized in the literature as the period from the Enlightenment through the mid-twentieth century. Modern scientific and technological developments, the modern nation-state, the modern system of higher education, and naturally, the modern city and modern urban life are all examples of the direct consequences of modernity and the modern worldview on the history of Western societies.[1]

Furthermore, during the last half of the twentieth century, the process of urbanization received additional vitality through the structuring of a global economy and the rise of globalization.[2] Simultaneously, the embryonic form of a reactionary movement against some of the philosophical and ideological elements associated with the modern worldview—such as the pursuit of objective knowledge and inevitable progress—began to be heard in the Western world.

In spite of all the benefits and positive developments brought about by the modern period, the twentieth century was witness to global conflicts, inequality, extremism, hatred, and environmental destruction. A century that began filled with hopes for emancipation, progress, and freedom ended in confusion, anxiety, increasing poverty, and on the edge of a global financial collapse. The promises on which modernity was founded began to be challenged as inadequate, misleading, and incapable of explaining the problems of society.

The reactions and opposition towards the modern worldview come from the socio-cultural phenomenon that has been identified in the literature as *post*modernism. The postmodern period, or postmodernity, represents the contemporary period in which the Enlightenment-based modern worldview began, predominantly in the Western world, to lose its dominance as the prime worldview. Postmodernism, in turn, does not represent an organized worldview or culture;[1] rather, it is understood as "both a broad cultural and sociological phenomenon and an ideology, a set of ideas."[2]

---

[1] Craig M. Gay, *The Way of the (Modern) World: Or, Why It's Tempting to Live as if God Doesn't Exist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 10.

[2] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 403.

Missiologist David Bosch, for instance, discusses the postmodern phenomenon in *Transforming Mission*, in a chapter entitled: "The Emergence of a Postmodern Paradigm." In this chapter, Bosch describes some of the most pressing challenges to the Enlightenment-based modern worldview that point to the end of the modern era. This paradigm shift indicates the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society, from the modern era to a postmodern condition (or whatever it may eventually become, or be called, a few years from now). On such a transformation, Peter Drucker writes,

> Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation. Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself—its worldview; its basic values; its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world. And the people born then cannot even imagine the world in which their grandparents lived, and into which their own parents were born. We are currently living through just such a transformation.[3]

---

[1] Harry L. Poe, *Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 172.

[2] Millard J. Erickson, *The Postmodern World: Discerning the Times and the Spirit of Our Age* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 4.

[3] Peter F. Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1993), 1.

A period of a paradigm shift such as this—the decline of modernity and the rise of something else, that so far has been identified as postmodernity—is always a time of transformation and uncertainty. No matter how one chooses to explain what is taking place, "it is becoming increasingly clear that the worldview shaped by the Enlightenment is changing."[1] Consequently, this is an era marked by constant and sometimes dramatic changes in the way people understand themselves, the society, the world, and ultimately, God.

In terms of urban mission, a new generation emerges that does not see the world through the same glasses, does not have the same felt-needs, and does not view Christianity as the primary source to respond to their spiritual longings. Their perception of reality has drastically been changed by the continuous impact of an urban and postmodernizing society.

Within this context, the contemporary urban explosion, which primarily emerged within the parameters of the modern worldview, has increasingly been affected by the demands of globalization and the emergence of the postmodern condition. These developments not only pose a serious threat but also have profound implications for the mission of the urban church.

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[1] Craig Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," in *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 114.

Statement of the Problem

The world is becoming an urban society. At an amazing speed, masses of people are moving to the cities around the world. At the same time, the Western world faces a cultural paradigm shift from the modern era to a postmodern condition. This paradigm shift affects all areas of human life; the church is no exception. In the context of urban mission this socio-cultural shift is even more remarkable and significant. Because of the cities' power over the destiny of nations and their influence on the affairs of ordinary people, more than ever, missiological reflection is needed on the future of urban life, as the mission of tomorrow will be mostly urban and postmodern.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Western urban church struggles to engage the postmodern mind with the gospel message. Shaped during the modern era, contemporary urban churches have been isolated by modern culture and now are further defied by the postmodern condition. Postmodernism has been considered by the church much more as a threat than an opportunity to engage in God's mission to urban, postmodernizing generations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between the urban mission of the church and the emerging postmodern condition. Furthermore, this research aimed to provide a discussion of some of the most critical missiological implications brought about by the postmodern condition for urban mission, and suggest some principles which can help the urban church in its mission to postmodern generations.

In the analysis of the emergence of the postmodern condition, within the context of urbanization and globalization, the following issues have driven this study: What are some of the main elements of the modern worldview that have been challenged by the postmodern condition? How have postmodern conceptual aspects been absorbed by contemporary Western societies? What is the relationship between urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism?

The investigation of the mission of the church within the context of an urban, postmodernizing society was led by the following questions: How has the relationship between urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism impacted the mission of the urban church? What are some of the most pressing missiological implications of the postmodern condition for urban mission? Are there any postmodern concepts that could be used as bridges to reach the postmodern mind in the urban context?

To accomplish the purpose of the study this dissertation follows a multidisciplinary approach based on bibliographic research and the review of the literature related to urban mission in the context of postmodernism. To this end, the sources for data collection include the resources of the James White Library at Andrews University and of the Inter-Library Loan system. Computer research and online databases were used to identify and collect related data on a worldwide scale and associated with the topic of this research.

Justification of the Research

Although much has been written on the architectural, literary, sociological, cultural, philosophical, and theological implications of postmodernism, an analysis of the literature related to urban mission reveals a lack of consideration of the influence and direct consequences of the postmodern condition on urban mission. From my investigation, I have noted that the urban mission literature deals primarily with the historical, philosophical, theological, and methodological aspects of the modern era. While the literature on urban mission has been enlarged in the past few years, little has been said about the particular issues and implications related to the urban mission of the church to emerging postmodern generations, and the challenges and opportunities involved.

Andrew Davey asserts that while urbanologists have been shaping innovative disciplines of study and actions to deal with urbanization and globalization, urban mission has grown and developed in the last decade or so.[1] This study, however, questions the lack of consideration of the postmodern condition within the context of urban mission.[2]

---

[1] Andrew Davey, *Urban Christianity and Global Order: Theological Resources for an Urban Future* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), xi.

[2] Apparently, this is not the case in other religious disciplines. For instance, a great deal of work has been dedicated to the postmodern issues in theology in general. For an excellent analysis of postmodern thinking and its theological implications, see Thomas Guarino, "Postmodernity and Five Fundamental Theological Issues," *Theological Studies* 57 (December 1996): 654-689. For additional information, see David Ray Griffin, "Introduction: Varieties of Postmodern Theology," in *Varieties of*

A careful review of the literature of the best-known urban missiologists and related writings prepared in the last two decades shows that not much has been discussed about the serious implications of the postmodern condition in the context of urbanization. For instance, the index of the comprehensive international bibliography *Cities and Churches*, published by the American Theological Library Association in 1992, does not provide a specific entry for the term *postmodern*. It seems to consider modernity and postmodernity as different sides of the same coin.[1]

Another example of the lack of significant consideration of the impact of the

---

Postmodern Theology, ed. David Ray Griffin, William A. Beardslee, and Joe Holland (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1-7; Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey C. Murphy, and Mark Nation, eds., *Theology without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 75-139; and Rowan D. Williams, "Postmodern Theology and the Judgment of the World," in *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World*, ed. Frederic B. Burnham (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 92-112. Additionally, a great deal of study has been done by anthropologists and mission theorists in general, on the challenges of postmodernism to the church; however, these lack the necessary emphasis on the urban context. For example, see David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1995), 15-45; Jerome E. Burce, *Proclaiming the Scandal: Reflections on Postmodern Ministry*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000), 1-35; Douglas J. Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1996), 51-66; Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), 51-56; Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth and Authority in Modernity*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1996), 7-10, 64-83; and Charles C. West, *Power, Truth, and Community in Modern Culture*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), 24-44, 123-128.

[1] Loyde H. Hartley, *Cities and Churches: An International Bibliography*, 3 vols., ATLA Bibliography Series, no. 31 (Metuchen, NJ: American Theological Library Association, 1992), 3:2678.

postmodern condition on urban mission is illustrated by the absence of articles on the topic in *Urban Mission*, one of the most important journals dealing with urban mission issues. *Urban Mission* was published from September 1983 to June 1999 by the Westminster Theological Seminary, with Roger Greenway and later Harvie Conn as main editors. During its years in print, *Urban Mission* published only three articles dealing with modernism and its implications for urban mission, but none specifically on postmodernism.[1] Furthermore, a meticulous review of the main works on urban mission written from 1983 to 2003 has also demonstrated the lack of focus on the implications of the postmodern paradigm upon urban missiology. Although an impressive quantity of literature has been written by those who reflect on issues of urban mission, the emergence of the postmodern condition has been missed.[2]

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[1] See Tony Carnes, "Modern Moscow: Its Religions and Moral Values," *Urban Mission* 13 (March 1996): 29-41; Harvie M. Conn, "Blaming the Victim," *Urban Mission* 15 (June 1998): 3-6; and Linford Stutzman, "An Incarnational Approach to Mission in Modern, Affluent Societies," *Urban Mission* 8 (May 1991): 35-43.

[2] For example, see Raymond J. Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997); idem, *The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today's Urban World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987); Robert D. Carle and Louis A. DeCaro, eds., *Signs of Hope in the City: Ministries of Community Renewal* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1997); David Claerbaut, *Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983); Harvie M. Conn, *A Clarified Vision for Urban Mission: Dispelling the Urban Stereotypes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); John Fuder, *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community* (Chicago: Moody, 1999); Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); John E. Kyle, *Urban Mission: God's Concern for the City* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988); Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology for the Urban Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991); idem, *Signs of Hope in the City* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1995); Eleanor Scott Meyers, ed., *Envisioning the New City: A Reader on Urban Ministry* (Louisville, KY:

A comparable crisis was identified by Harvie Conn in the relationship between urban mission and the modern worldview, where the major issues were, and in most cases still are, only related to the dilemmas of poverty and social justice. Conn puts it this way:

> What lay behind this Christian mindset that found itself more comfortable with charity than with justice—that could reduce questions of social structures to individualist dimensions? *Part of the answer may lie in the failure of the church to understand well enough the challenge of modernity. . . . Modernity was a worldview in internal conflict* [emphasis mine]. Basic to that conflict was an inherent struggle between individual autonomy and a view of nature now isolated from God and dominated more and more by the machine. How would the Christian community respond to it? Repeatedly the church resorted to dualisms in the face-off, sometimes moving toward the individualist end of modernity pole, sometimes the social end. . . . Also placing its stamp on the future would be the growing Christian dualism that looked for individual converts in the city but turned against the city as a perversion of nature. A growing transatlantic antiurbanism divided the poor of the cities into worthy and unworthy and would eventually isolate evangelism from social

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Westminster/John Knox, 1992); Lyle E. Schaller, *Center City Churches: The New Urban Frontier* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993); Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994); Eldin Villafañe, ed., *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); and Eldin Villafañe and others, *Transforming the City: Reframing Education for Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

A few works, nevertheless, have been written on postmodernism as an urban mission challenge. For example, see Viv Grigg, *Urban Theology as Transformational Conversation: Hermeneutics for the Post-Modern Cities* (Auckland, New Zealand: Urban Leadership Foundation, 2000); Glenn B. Smith, "An Inquiry into Urban Theological Education," in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World*, ed. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 257-258; Greg Smith, "The Unsecular City: The Revival of Religion in East London," in *Urban Theology: A Reader*, ed. Michael S. Northcott (London: Cassell, 1998), 334-335; Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 207-229; and Craig Van Gelder, "Secularization and the City: Christian Witness in Secular Urban Cultures," in *Discipling the City: A Comprehensive Approach to Urban Mission*, ed. Roger S. Greenway, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 78-83.

> transformation. . . . Theological formulations began to reflect the antiurban dualism of individual and society. They revolved around attitudes to what was eventually called the Social Gospel. . . . Moving into the twentieth century, the Social Gospel movement swung toward the public, the political, the social, while the evangelical movement, in reaction, emphasized a private, individualized outlook.[1]

As a direct consequence, the focus of urban mission turned from the public to the private arena, in which the goal was to transform individuals who would eventually change the social context. The longtime interaction between social engagement and evangelism was headed to its end. This study seeks to avoid this unfortunate urban mission approach in an attempt to engage the emergent postmodern condition with the gospel.

Delimitations of the Study

Most academic projects on mission studies are characterized by their multidisciplinary uniqueness. This dissertation is no exception. For that reason, what follows are essential assumptions and delimitations of this research.

Initially, whenever one speaks of postmodernism, one runs the risk of faulty oversimplification, especially because of the pluralistic nature and all intermingling elements related with the postmodern condition. Since postmodernism does not represent an organized worldview or culture, this study discusses only what the postmodern condition looks like at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Accordingly, this research does not attempt to provide "the" definition of postmodernism or delineate “the” postmodern paradigm. This is impossible at this stage of the development of the postmodern condition.

---

[1] Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 57-58.

Second, this dissertation does not address the impact of the pervasiveness of postmodern ideologies in cultures of the non-Western world. Because of its Western roots, most of the literature associated with postmodernism has the Western world as the primary focal point.

Third, this study is not an attempt to provide an exhaustive survey of urban mission theory or theological reflection on the urban experience, but rather it offers a survey of some of the most pressing missiological implications in the interaction and relationship between the mission of the urban church and the emerging postmodern condition.

Fourth, I recognize that the mission of the church to urban societies is a complex and extremely intricate task. Many are the challenges that the urbanization of the world poses to the proclamation of the gospel message. The emergence of the postmodern condition is only a facet of the urban environment. Undeniably, there are other aspects in urban mission which deserve priority in the “assignment list” of most urban Christian communities; namely, the issues related to extreme urban poverty and social justice. Nonetheless, the purpose of this dissertation in no way indicates an excessive attention to the postmodern condition at the expense of these apparent more urgent issues. My contention is simply that the literature which is urban-missiological in nature lacks the necessary consideration to the postmodern condition within the context of urban mission, which I consider ought to be addressed more frequently by urban missiologists.

Fifth, I must admit that this research was prepared by a somehow postmodern mentality. As the journey of writing this dissertation moved forward, in one way or another, I realized how much a "postmodern" I was. Perhaps because of my age (I was born in 1968) and interaction with postmodern thoughts and attitudes, I can relate to the longings and concerns that postmoderns carry with them, as these are unfolded in this dissertation. Nonetheless, I also recognize the intrinsic threat the postmodern condition represents to the gospel, especially because of its relativistic and pluralistic views. On the other hand, I consider the postmodern condition a new and unprecedented opportunity for the proclamation of the Christian faith, particularly in the urban setting.

Definition of Terms

Because of its multi-disciplinary nature, this research employs specific nomenclature from different fields of study. Thus, it becomes essential to provide the definition of key terms utilized in this study to bring clarification in their usage.

Culture: Refers to a "more or less integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior . . . shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do."[1] In other words, according to anthropologist

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[1] Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 30.

Charles Kraft, "culture is that in terms of which our life is organized."[1]

Modernity and modernism: Modernity is the distinct period in the history of Western civilization identified in the literature as the modern era. Modernism, in turn, designates "the intellectual and cultural heritage"[2] of modernity, which is governed by the modern worldview.

Paradigm shift: Refers to the transition into a new thought pattern, a new model of interpretation, theoretical structure, or frame of reference.[3]

Postmodernity and postmodernism: This research refers to postmodernity as the period in the history of Western civilization that comes out of, or after, modernity. Postmodernism, in turn, is the intellectual, socio-cultural phenomenon that bears the conceptual aspects characteristic of postmodernity. This study, however, gives preference to the use of the term "postmodern condition," instead of postmodernity, especially because postmodernity does not represent a period with a distinct and clear worldview.

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[1] Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), 47.

[2] Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, "Introduction," in *Faith and Modernity*, ed. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum, 1994), 7. See also Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 119.

[3] Borrowing from Thomas Kuhn's theory of *paradigm shifts* (Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3d ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996]), Hans Küng describes a paradigm shift as a transitional period in the broader context of the society as a whole. Küng asserts that postmodernity represents a paradigm shift from modernity (Hans Küng, "The Reemergence of the Sacred: Transmitting Religious Traditions in a Post-Modern World," *Conservative Judaism* 40 [1988]: 17). For a summary of Hans Küng's approach to the paradigm shift theory and its relevance for theology and mission, see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 181-189.

Urban area: Countries differ in the way they classify population as "urban" or "rural." An urban area may be defined by the number of residents, the population density, or the percentage of people not dependent on agriculture.[1] Some countries define any place with a population of 2,000 or more as urban; others set a minimum of 20,000. There are no universal standards, and generally each country develops its own set of criteria for distinguishing urban areas. The United States defines urban as a city, town, or village with a minimum population of 2,500 people. A listing of country definitions is published annually in the *United Nations Demographic Yearbook*.[2]

Urban agglomeration: Areas of one million people or more. The concept of agglomeration defines the population contained within the contours of adjacent urban areas regardless of their administrative boundaries (e.g.: New York, NY/Newark, NJ).[3]

Urbanization and urbanism: Urbanization is the process through which urban settlements grow and develop out of rural areas.[4] Urbanism, in turn, "refers to the social patters and behaviors associated with living in cities."[1] In other words, urbanism is the cultural impact of the urban, the urban way of life.[2]

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[1] J. John Palen, *The Urban World*, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 94.

[2] United Nations, *United Nations Demographic Yearbook*, 2001, www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2001/2001_agglom.htm (15 March 2004).

[3] Palen, *The Urban World*, 284.

[4] Philip M. Hauser, "Urbanization: An Overview," in *The Study of Urbanization*, ed. Philip M. Hauser and Leo F. Schnore (New York: Wiley, 1966), 8.

Worldview: It defines how people read and understand the world. It is the way a culture conceptualizes reality. James Sire defines worldview as "a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions . . . which we hold . . . about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being."[3] Kraft, in turn, defines worldview as "the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the culture assent."[4] Worldview also refers to the foundation upon which one's life finds meaning and purpose. In spite of the fact that most people are unaware of their worldview, it underlies their actions and gives meaning to their lives.

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[1] Palen, *The Urban World*, 9.

[2] Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," in *Urban Life: Readings in the Anthropology of the City*, ed. George Gmelch and Walter P. Zenner (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 2002), 65.

[3] James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 17. See also Alan J. Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation: Strategies for Tomorrow's Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 30.

[4] Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 53. Hiebert points to a number of important functions our worldview bears: it "*provides us with cognitive foundations*," "*gives us emotional security*," "*validates our deepest cultural norms*," "*integrates our culture*," and finally, our worldview "*monitors culture change*" (Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 48, emphasis in original).

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in six chapters. The first provides a concise background of the topic of investigation, delineates the problem and purpose of the study, defines a short list of significant terms to this research, and gives an overview of the dissertation.

The second chapter presents a description of the rise and decline of the modern worldview. It describes and analyzes some of the most prominent conceptual aspects of the modern ethos and the transitional steps that began to call into question the core beliefs and values of modernity. Identifying these steps becomes crucial for the examination of the various streams of the emerging postmodern condition.

The third chapter of this study offers an overview of postmodernism by examining the rise and impact of the postmodern condition in the West. It provides a description and discussion of selected conceptual aspects related to the postmodern ethos and examines the pervasiveness of postmodern concepts through popular cultural expressions.

The fourth chapter provides a succinct historical description of the process of urbanization, aiming to clarify the establishment of the emergent postmodern condition within the context of urbanization and globalization. An analysis of the relationship between the urban mission of the church and the postmodern condition follows. This chapter also offers a discussion of some of the most pressing challenges and potential opportunities the postmodern condition presents to urban mission.

Based on the preceding chapters, the fifth chapter draws out some of the most pressing urban missiological implications in the light of an emergent postmodern condition. It also suggests selected principles of which postmodern-sensitive urban churches should be mindful in their attempt to reach the postmodern mind. The sixth and final chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research in urban missiology in the context of postmodernity.

CHAPTER II

THE RISE AND BREAKDOWN OF THE MODERN WORLDVIEW

Most historians identify the full birth of the modern era with the rise of the Enlightenment, which gradually became the dominant worldview in the following two hundred years. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the modern worldview began to confront increasing opposition that questioned some of its assumptions—both at the intellectual and institutional levels—in contrast with significant episodes in various areas of human life. In this chapter, I first present a brief historical background of the modern era and discuss selected conceptual aspects associated with its worldview. Second, I identify a number of key transitional developments that begin to call into question some of the core beliefs of the modern worldview which lead to its subsequent breakdown as the dominant worldview in the Western world.

The Development of the Modern Worldview

Modern societies that developed from the medieval—or premodern—world[1] went through a deep transformation in their worldview.[1] Gradually, a new paradigm shift in human history began to lay its foundations, as the premodern way of thinking was replaced by a new perspective that in some respects agreed with it, but in many

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[1] When discussing the paradigm shift from the modern into an emerging postmodern worldview, it is beneficial to recall the transition that took place as the condition known as modernity emerged out of the medieval worldview. Erickson suggests that "one cannot understand postmodernism without understanding the modern mentality out of which it grew, . . . similarly one cannot understand modernism without seeing the premodern mentality that preceded it" (Millard J. Erickson, *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism* [Downers Grove, IL:

InterVarsity, 2001], 32). In the premodern era—including the medieval and the ancient periods—certain common elements can be identified. Among them was the belief in purpose in the universe, in which human beings fit and were to be understood. A second idea was the notion that observable nature was not the whole of reality. Simply put, in premodern times, individuals and society as a whole believed in the supernatural, in the existence of God or gods. For additional information, see Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 15. In addition to the above information, Hunter points out that premodern societies are usually "characterized by a population which is diffused throughout numerous, small, and isolated pockets in rural or quasi-rural settings. There is little technological sophistication and little division of labor. Social relationships are personal, intimate, and essential, with the relations and institutions of kinship at the core of individual and social experience. Political hegemony is maintained by elites whose authority is based upon traditional sanctions. The culture of the community, *gemeinschaft*, is typically homogeneous. Consequently, social solidarity is based upon similarity of roles and worldviews. All spheres of human life are bound by deeply rooted traditional modes of thought and behavior that are almost without exception, religious or sacred in character" (James D. Hunter, "What Is Modernity? Historical Roots and Contemporary Features," in *Faith and Modernity*, ed. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden [Oxford: Regnum, 1994], 14-15).

For a summary of premodernism and the premodern worldview, see Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 263; Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 53-54; Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 32-52; Eugene A. Nida, *Religion across Cultures: A Study in the Communication of Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 48-57; and Gene E. Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, Turning Point: Christian Worldview Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 29-32.

[1] Craig Van Gelder, "A Great New Fact of Our Day," in *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 58.

significant ways was in opposition to its premises.[1] Following is a brief historical development of the modern era with an emphasis on the contribution of major representatives of this period.

The Rise of the Modern Era

The gestation period of the modern period is recognized by most scholars as a product of the historical, socio-cultural, and intellectual heritage brought by the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation,[2] which prepared the way for the full birth of the modern era[1] with the rise of the Enlightenment. Here, one might agree with Grenz, who suggests that modernity had its grandmother in the Renaissance, but its true mother was the Enlightenment.[2]

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[1] For instance, the belief in metaphysical realism, the referential theory of language, and the existence of a distinct pattern of history were all basic elements from the premodern worldview which were carried into the modern worldview. In the rationale behind these elements, however, the modern worldview diverges from premodern assumptions. For further details, see Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 15-16.

[2] Both the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation played major roles in preparing the way for what became modern Western nation-states to emerge from the medieval period into the modern world (Van Gelder, "Great New Fact," 59). On the one hand, the Renaissance brought new emphasis on intellectual achievements and artistic expressions. Divine concerns were replaced by human interests and the focus of life significantly shifted from the spiritual to the natural world. Consequently, Renaissance cosmology elevated humankind to the center of the universe. Later on, the Protestant Reformation gave form and discipline to these emphases with its focus on the ability and responsibility of individuals to shape their lives both at the personal and community levels (Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 116). On the other hand, historical events destroyed the unity and power the Western church had enjoyed until then. The church was gradually removed from its authoritative position, and ultimately, as Bosch points out, God was "eliminated from society's validation structure. People discovered, somewhat to their surprise at first, that they could ignore God and the church, yet be none the worse for it" (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 263).

One of the main intentions of the Enlightenment was the liberation of humankind from superstition—mainly religious—through rational analysis, empirical evidence and scientific discovery. During this period, new developments in geography, mathematics, physics, and astronomy—to mention but a few—reshaped human perspectives about the universe. Reason and observation were emphasized as tools for discovering truth, and the created world was seen as the arena within which such truth was to be discovered and understood.[1]

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[1] Hunter asserts that "as an 'epoch,' the defining elements of [modernism] can be seen as congealing, in incipient form, no earlier than the fourteenth century and no later than the sixteenth century in Western Europe. The hallmarks of this social and historical development were the spread of Western imperialism, the development of ascetic Protestantism and rational capitalism, and the widespread acceptance of scientific procedures" (Hunter, "What Is Modernity?" 16).

[2] Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 60. The generally accepted and usually non-controversial estimation of the Enlightenment as the hallmark of the modern era has recently been challenged by Louis Dupré who argues that the real originator of modernity is the nominalistic disintegration of the classical worldview. See Louis K. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 15-41, 79-90. However, scholars traditionally identify the rise of the Enlightenment as the starting point of modernity and, consequently, of its worldview. While it is difficult to secure any sort of scholarly consensus about specific dates of intellectual periods, many historians have connected the beginning of the Enlightenment with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, at the end of the Thirty Years' War, and its end with the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. For a short discussion of the Enlightenment period and its impact on Christian theology, see James M. Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1997), 27-52; Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 15-23; and Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 522-523, 540-542.

Main Representatives of the Modern Era

The scientific developments of the modern era brought about a totally different way of understanding the human condition. In this regard, a number of thinkers greatly influenced the growth of new thought patterns that led to the rise of the modern worldview. Six major shapers of the modern worldview were Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Isaac Newton, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Immanuel Kant.[2]

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Francis Bacon marked the inauguration of modern science[3] and the scientific method in the transition from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment.[1] Bacon developed what came to be known as scientific knowledge: the idea that a rational knowledge of life could be used as a tool for understanding and controlling the natural world. For Bacon, knowledge was an instrument of power over nature allowing humankind to use the world in any desirable way.[2] This illustrates his understanding that "knowledge and human power are synonymous."[3] This understanding led to the beginning of the modern instrumental rationality.[4] Bacon was also the first to formulate a clear theory of inductive procedure,[5] making experiments and drawing general conclusions from them;

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[1] Jack Lively, *The Enlightenment* (London: Longmans, 1966), 6, 14-15. This "enlightened" worldview paved the way for a set of doctrines affirming that the source of all human misery was ignorance, especially superstition (e.g., religion, authoritarian government, customs, traditions, myths). On the contrary, knowledge, reason, and science would be able to destroy the chains of ignorance and superstition in order to help improve the human condition. See Robert Hollinger, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, Contemporary Social Theory, no. 4 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1994), 21-23.

[2] Settling the precise representatives of any intellectual movement is as difficult as giving an exact definition of the movement. There is no universal agreement on who were the precursors and proponents of the modern era. Whereas authoritative interpreters provide different lists, most of them include the six individuals this study assumes to be the main representatives of the modern worldview.

[3] For a detailed and comprehensive review of the historiographical debate over the rise of modern science, see H. Floris Cohen, *The Scientific Revolution: A Historiographical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 24-45, 239-377.

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[1] In significant ways Bacon anticipated the Enlightenment worldview that would characterize modernity. In *The New Atlantis*—a posthumously published book—Bacon portrayed an idealistic society in which people would trust in science as the key to their happiness (Francis Bacon, *Essays, Advancement of Learning, New Atlantis and Other Pieces*, ed. Richard F. Jones [New York: Odyssey, 1937], 449-491). Grenz asserts that Bacon "was convinced that the scientific method would not only lead to individual discoveries but also show the interrelations of the sciences themselves, thereby bringing them into a unified whole" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 58).

[2] Cf. Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (New York: P. F. Collier, 1902), 11-23, 108-113. See Hollinger, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, 21.

[3] Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 11. In asserting that "knowledge is power," Bacon assumed that knowledge mediates power over circumstances, as it offers the ability to change circumstances according to human desires. Furthermore, Bacon believed that learning would bring actions and, consequently, actions would justify the need for knowledge. See Robert K. Faulkner, *Francis Bacon and the Project of Progress* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 3-26; and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 123-124.

[4] Hollinger, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, 22.

[5] Stuart Hampshire, *The Age of Reason: The Seventeenth Century Philosophers* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1956), 19, 20.

years later his system became known as the empirical method of science.[1]

René Descartes (1596-1650)

René Descartes is considered to have laid the philosophical foundation of modernity.[2] In the quest for discovering knowledge and truth, Descartes developed a different epistemological method in his attempt "to find a single truth which is certain and indubitable."[3] His method was based on the assumptions that human reason had a definite degree of autonomy, and the human approach to knowledge should be ruled by doubt.[4] Thus, as Van Gelder asserts, "knowing became a rational process, and knowledge became a rationally constructed view of reality."[1] This analytic, deductive method of reasoning was probably Descartes's greatest contribution to the modern worldview.

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[1] Capra, *Turning Point*, 55. Even though Bacon did not place mathematics at the center of natural knowledge as the Enlightenment thinkers who would come after him, because of his emphasis on experimentation he is recognized as one of the first modern scientists, especially because of his inductive, empirical method of science (Hampshire, *The Age of Reason*, 19-20). For further details on the influence of Bacon on modern worldview and philosophy, see Charles Whitney, *Francis Bacon and Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 1-19.

[2] Scholars often agree that Descartes is the father of modern philosophy. Among those who have voiced this opinion is Descartes's translator, Laurence J. Lafleur (René Descartes, *Discourse on Method, and Meditations* [New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960], vii, xvii). See also Hampshire, *Age of Reason*, 17; and Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3.

[3] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), 23. See also Hampshire, *The Age of Reason*, 61.

[4] Descartes, *Discourse on Method, and Meditations*, 13-14. For a further explanation of Descartes's method, see L. J. Beck, *The Method of Descartes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 14-25.

Isaac Newton (1643-1727)

What Descartes represented for the development of philosophy, Isaac Newton did for science in the Scientific Revolution.[2] One of Newton's most significant contributions to the modern period was his continuous effort in developing a method "to subject the phenomena of nature to the laws of mathematics"[3] in an attempt to describe the mechanical movement of solid bodies.[4] Newton was the first to introduce a blend in methodologies using both Descartes's rational/deductive and Bacon's empirical/inductive systems.[1] He introduced this fusion on the basis that "neither experiments without systematic interpretation nor deduction from first principles without experimental evidence will lead to a reliable theory."[2] Looking beyond Bacon's systematic experimentation and Descartes's mathematical analysis, Newton incorporated and developed the methodology upon which natural sciences have been built ever since.[3] Hence, the way was paved for the full establishment of the Age of Reason.[4]

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[1] Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 117. The belief in the certainty of scientific knowledge became the very basis of Cartesian philosophy and of the modern worldview (Capra, *Turning Point*, 57).

[2] The Scientific Revolution began with Nicolas Copernicus (1473-1543), who presented the hypothesis of heliocentrism, thus overthrowing the geocentric view of Ptolemy. Copernicus was followed by Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), who formulated empirical laws of planetary motion, which gave further support to the Copernican system. Then came Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), who established Copernicus's theory as a valid scientific theory through observation, combining scientific experimentation with the use of mathematical language to formulate the laws of nature. For this reason, Galilei is known as the father of modern science. See Capra, *Turning Point*, 54, 55.

[3] Isaac Newton, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), xvii.

[4] Ibid., xvii-xviii. As a direct result of his scientific work, Newton developed the method which is known today as differential calculus, to describe the mechanical motion of solid bodies (Capra, *Turning Point*, 64). His achievement was praised by Einstein as "perhaps the greatest advance in thought that a single individual was ever privileged to make" (Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* [New York: Crown, 1954], 268). For further details on the method of Newtonian science, see John H. Randall, *The Making of*

John Locke (1632-1704)

This new scientific mentality brought with it a change in the understanding of the

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the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age (Cambridge, MA: Riverside, 1954), 261-273.

[1] Capra, *Turning Point*, 64.

[2] Ibid.

[3] For further details on Newton's importance in the history of modern science, see James E. McClellan and Harold Dorn, *Science and Technology in World History: An Introduction* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 249-273.

[4] These revolutions in philosophy and science attempted to elevate reason over superstition and external authority. As a result, the epoch was appropriately designated the "Age of Reason," where reason replaced revelation as the arbiter of truth. The Age of Reason elevated the individual self to the center of the world, focusing on the autonomy of human reason, the notion of human rights, and the quest for an equal and just society. In general terms, many philosophers of this period began to question, not only certain practices of the church (e.g., papal authority, indulgences), but also Christianity itself and its source of authority (Hampshire, *Age of Reason*, 11-14; Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 67-68).

nature of religion. Through the work of the British empiricist John Locke,[1] a door was left wide open for the dominance of natural religion over revealed religion.[2] On the basis of Locke's contribution—established on the central role of reason in morality and religion[3]—Enlightenment thinkers came up with the theological alternative to orthodoxy known as deism,[4] which elevated human reason and natural religion over faith and special revelation.

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[1] One of the major points in Locke's argumentation was a rejection of the conception of innate ideas: the assertion that the human mind begins as a blank page (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1924], 16-36). In this alternative view, all human ideas come from either sensation or reflection, which together Locke called "experience" (see John W. Yolton, *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968], 26-71).

[2] A major contribution to the modern worldview was Locke's belief in the voluntary nature of religion and its implications to natural religion. Later Enlightenment thinkers—focusing on the God of nature—placed the deity so close to nature and human reason, that the natural replaced the supernatural. This thinking led to the total removal of God in late modernity. See Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1932), 64-66.

[3] In his own words, Locke asserts that "faith is nothing but a firm assent of the mind; which if it be regulated, as is our duty, cannot be afforded to anything but upon good reason, and so cannot be opposite to it" (Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 354).

[4] The exact relationship between Locke and Deism has been debated among modern scholars. However, in *The Relation of John Locke to English Deism*, Hefelbower suggests that while Locke clearly influenced and even made possible the rise of deism, he was unsympathetic with its more radical conclusions. Hefelbower demonstrates persuasively that "Locke and English Deism are related as co-ordinate parts of the larger progressive movement of the age" (S. G. Hefelbower, *The Relation of John Locke to English Deism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918], v). For an excellent exposition on Deism, see Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 518-532.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

In the social and behavioral disciplines, Thomas Hobbes emphasized the importance of the use of reason in maximizing one's self-interest, developing laws of human nature during the formative years of modernity.[1] With this new concept of the individual self, modern political individualism, social contract theory, and modern liberal political theory all had their beginnings with Hobbes.[2] He was also the founder of rational choice theory, ascribing "the causes of human behavior to pleasure and pain, believing that these stimuli must be tempered by reason. . . . Thus human behavior is predictable and controllable . . . by rational choice."[3] According to Van Gelder, the ideas of both Hobbes and Locke "were grounded in the assumption that a rational understanding of the world and human life reflected natural laws."[4]

Immanuel Kant (1724-1802)

In many ways, modern thinking found its fullest expression in the philosophical work of Immanuel Kant.[1] He stood—both chronologically and intellectually—at the end of the Age of Reason, yet his incisive reformulation of its ideals gave new strength to the Enlightenment views and shaped them into the molds that would characterize the modern worldview. In his writings Kant proceeded "to criticize the validity of knowledge itself, to examine its operations, and to determine its limits."[2] He wanted to find its syntheses, and in this search he placed the human mind in the center of the knowing process.[3] Through his emphasis on the centrality of reason, Kant laid the foundation on which modernism as a cultural phenomenon was to be built.[4] Thus the way was opened for Western society to seek the completion of Enlightenment goals, which later became known as "the modern project."[1]

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[1] See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9-110.

[2] Hollinger, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, 22.

[3] Ibid., 21-22.

[4] Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 117. For further information on Hobbes's work and influence, see A. P. Martinich, *Thomas Hobbes*, British History in Perspective (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 24-53; Richard Tuck, *Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 51-76, 103-109; and idem, "Hobbe's Moral Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, ed. Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 175-207.

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[1] Some scholars may argue that it was already possible to find some elements of postmodernism in Kant's thought (Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 65). For a more detailed explanation of Kant's work and his contribution to modern philosophy and worldview, see Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 201-228; Horatio W. Dresser, *A History of Modern Philosophy* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1928), 155-192; Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 65-73; and Frederick Mayer, *A History of Modern Philosophy* (New York: American Book, 1951), 289-330.

[2] Mayer, *A History of Modern Philosophy*, 294.

[3] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. F. Max Müller, 2d ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 31-37. In other words, human reason itself was to provide an analysis of the extension of its own power (Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 207).

[4] On one of the most significant legacies of Kant's work, Grenz remarks that his "elevation of the *active mind* as the definite agent both in the process of knowing and in the life of duty encouraged subsequent philosophers to focus their interest on the individual self. The centrality of the autonomous self, in turn, laid the foundation for the modern engagement in the Enlightenment project and in fact became the chief identifying characteristic of the emerging modern era. . . . His work marked the inauguration of modernity in its fullness, the era characterized by a focus on intense self-reflection. . . . The elevation of the autonomous self to the center of the philosophical agenda gave birth to the 'transcendental pretense' of modernity. Beginning with Kant's philosophy, the Western mindset has exalted and universalized the thinking self. . . .The

The Modern Ethos

Thus, modernity—built on the Enlightenment endorsement of reason as the only adequate epistemology—assumed an understanding of the world through reason and knowledge. Science, in turn, according to Anderson, "became the new metaphysical realism: the source of ultimate and objective truth."[2] In this rejection of traditional and

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exalted sense of the importance of the self arose from the subtle shift Kant introduced into Descartes's proposal. In the Kantian system, the Cartesian self became not just the focus of philosophical attention but the entire subject matter of philosophy. Rather than viewing the self as one of several entities in the world, Kant envisioned the thinking self in a sense 'creating' the world—that is, the world of its own knowledge. The focus of philosophical reflection ever since has been this world-creating self" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 79).

[1] The modern project, as Habermas observes, consisted of "a relentless development of objectivity sciences, the universalistic bases of morality and law, and autonomous art in accordance with their internal logic but at the same time a release of the cognitive potentials thus accumulated from their esoteric high forms and their utilisation in praxis; that is, in the rational organisation of living conditions and social relations. Proponents of the Enlightenment . . . still held the extravagant expectation that the arts and sciences would further not only the control of the forces of nature but also the understanding of self and world, moral progress, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness" (Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," in *The Post-Modern Reader*, ed. Charles Jencks [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992], 162). Consequently, as Lakeland points out, the "triumph of reason and the mastery of the human mind over the external world became the primary goal of modernity" (Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*, Guides to Theological Inquiry [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997], 13).

[2] Walter T. Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and Other Wonders of the Postmodern World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 72.

religious sources of authority, together with an increasing emphasis on human emancipation and social progress, humanity witnessed the full birth of modernity and its worldview.[1]

Modernity is more an ideological attitude than a distinct period in human history.[2] It came to be conceived as the conceptual place in which the Enlightenment project was to be accomplished and the scientific understanding of human and physical worlds would govern Western society. Commenting on this, Hunter writes that

> modernity can be defined as *both* a mode of social life *and* moral understanding more or less characterized by the universal claims of reason and instrumental (or means/ends) rationality; the differentiation of spheres of life-experience into public and private; and the pluralization and competition of truth claims.[3]

By the beginning of the twentieth century, modernism or the process of modernity[4] was characterized as a movement looking forward to bringing rational management to life and improving the quality of human life through technological developments. The anticipation of human progress, the social organization of life, the human mind as supreme and most complete measure of truth, and the mental ability to discover mechanisms to solve life's problems were among some of the core presuppositions of the modern era and its worldview.[1]

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[1] Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, "Introduction," in *Faith and Modernity*, 7. Van Gelder affirms: "The critical contribution of this era was the fundamental shift away from the concept of truth coming to persons and society from the outside to the idea that truth could be discovered within the social order through reason and science. In this context, the role of God was dethroned as a valid claim to authority" (Van Gelder, "Great New Fact," 59).

[2] Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity . . . What? Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 44.

[3] Hunter, "What Is Modernity?" 16-17, emphasis in original.

[4] In the introduction of *Faith and Modernity*, Sampson, Samuel, and Sugden present an excellent short overview of the problem involved in the definition of these terms (Sampson, Samuel, and Sugden, eds., *Faith and Modernity*, 7-10).

In this context, selected conceptual aspects of the modern worldview are presented in the following segment.

Conceptual Aspects of the Modern Worldview

The difficulty in providing an accurate description of any socio-cultural paradigm is only increased by the difficulty of describing its own conceptual aspects. Any characterization will be open to charges of reducing the numerous conceptual aspects to only a few. Although this is a genuine risk, it is appropriate, for the purpose of this study, to briefly describe the dominant concepts, which in one way or another have characterized the modern period and deeply affected its worldview. Among the most significant aspects observed in the literature related to the modern project and its worldview are objective rationalism, subject/object dualism, non-teleological determinism, autonomous individualism, scientific and technological objectivism, and optimistic progressivism.

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[1] Craig Van Gelder, "Postmodernism as an Emerging Worldview," *Calvin Theological Journal* 26 (1991): 413. See also Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 16-17.

Objective Rationalism

The modern era, shaped by the philosophy of René Descartes, placed its emphasis on reason solidified by the perception that the human mind should be "viewed as the indubitable point of departure for all knowing."[1] This approach was based on the assumption that sense perception was not a reliable source of true knowledge. In the Cartesian method, true knowledge was to be gained only through the rational application of reason, the "rational constructs produced by the mind of the knower."[2] In order to achieve this goal, mathematics was to be used as the methodological tool.[3] Concerning Descartes's method, Richard Tarnas observes that

> it was the rigorous methodology characteristic of geometry and arithmetic that alone seemed to promise him [Descartes] the certainty he so fervently sought in philosophical matters. . . . By applying such precise and painstaking reasoning to all questions of philosophy, and by accepting as true only those ideas that presented themselves to his reason as clear, distinct, and free from internal contradiction, Descartes established his means for the attainment of absolute certainty. Disciplined critical rationality would overcome the untrustworthy information about the world given by the senses or the imagination. Using such a method, Descartes . . . found a new science that would usher man into a new era.[4]

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[1] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 264.

[2] Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 34.

[3] Descartes proposed the "systematic elimination of sensible qualities . . . in favor of the strictly quantifiable properties of mathematical reasoning" (John Cottingham, *Rationalism*, Key Texts: Classic Studies in the History of Ideas [Bristol, England: Thoemmes, 1997], 41).

[4] Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine, 1993), 276. See also Beck, *The Method of Descartes*, 14-18.

Descartes also postulated that the human approach must be led by doubt. He sought to doubt everything until he came to something indubitable: the existence of himself as the subject—an autonomous rational individual—who could understand reality by starting within himself instead of any external authority or tradition.[1] In other words, the human mind should refuse anything that, examined by pure reason, seemed to be dubious.

Because of this emphasis on reason, the understanding of the nature of human knowledge has been deeply rooted in the Enlightenment mentality. Descartes was also convinced of the need to establish the foundations of knowledge by appealing to the objective rationality of the "mind's own experience of certainty."[2] This epistemology has often been designated as foundationalism.[3] Grenz writes,

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[1] Descartes, *Meditations*, 24. This principle is a re-appropriation of Augustine's dictum *Cogito, ergo sum*: "I think, therefore I am," which Beck suggests could be summarized as *Dubito, ergo sum*: "I doubt, therefore I am" (L. J. Beck, *The Metaphysics of Descartes: A Study of the Meditations* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1965], 239). Thus, Descartes defined "human nature as a thinking substance and the human person as an autonomous rational subject" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 3). See also Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason, 1648-1789* (New York: Atheneum, 1961), 37-39; and Peter Markie, "The Cogito and Its Importance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, ed. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 140-148.

[2] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 31.

[3] The foundationalistic doctrine, another legacy of Descartes, assumes that it is the philosopher's task to justify the knowledge claims of other disciplines by finding irrefutable beliefs upon which they are based. In the attempt to justify a given belief, therefore, one must at some point reach a belief that needs no further justification. See Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds., *Faith and Rationality: Reason and*

> The Enlightenment principle of reason, therefore, presumed a human ability to gain cognition of the foundational order of the whole universe. It was their belief in the *objective rationality* of the universe that gave the intellectuals of the Age of Reason confidence that the laws of nature are intelligible and that the world is capable of being transformed and subdued by human activity.[1]

Knowledge, therefore, is only justified by "establishing an epistemological foundation for the construction of the human knowing project by determining, and perhaps even demonstrating, the foundational beliefs or principles"[2] upon which it is constructed. One of the hallmarks of foundationalism is to confirm that the logical ordering of one's cognitive perception begins with foundationally basic beliefs.[3] In this quest, at the intellectual foundation of the modern project, certain epistemological assumptions have had key importance. The modern mind assumes that knowledge is

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Belief in God (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 1-15. For Descartes, foundationalism was the belief that "some of human knowledge is directly given or intuited, thereby constituting for them self-evident truths upon which the remainder of their knowledge is founded" (Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985], 158).

In broader terms, according to Grenz and Franke, "foundationalism is merely the acknowledgment of the seemingly obvious observation that not all beliefs we hold (or assertions we formulate) are on the same level, but that some beliefs (or assertions) anchor others. Stated in the opposite manner, certain of our beliefs (or assertions) receive their support from other beliefs (or assertions) that are more 'basic' or 'foundational'" (Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 29). See also W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous*, Contours of Christian Philosophy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 77-104.

[1] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 68, emphasis added.

[2] Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 30.

[3] Wood, *Epistemology*, 83.

certain, objective, and good, and that such knowledge is, at least in theory, accessible.[1] Consequently, reason became the primary means of attaining knowledge, and succeeding generations were satisfied with the objective rationalism of the modern worldview.[2]

Subject-Object Dualism

The Enlightenment brought to the modern worldview the concept that the human subject could be apart and distinct from the object examined. It separated humans from their context and enabled them to observe the natural world as "outsiders" through the eyes of scientific objectivism. In this Enlightenment-type scheme, the cosmos was separated into two radically unlike domains: mind and matter.[3] Alan Roxburgh observes:

> Descartes divided reality into two parts. *Res extensa* comprised the material world, all matter extended in space and external to the mind. This was the object of sense perception and as such was unreliable and transitory. *Res cogitans* was the world of reliable and permanent knowledge gained through the rational categories of the mind. This Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, reason and sense perception,

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[1] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 77.

[2] This emphasis on objective rationalism left profound marks on Christianity. Commenting on this, Webber says that "for liberals, reason led to the denial of a supernatural Christianity and to the teaching of Christianity as a myth. For conservatives, this emphasis on reason led to a proof-oriented Christianity, to 'evidence that demands a verdict'" (Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999], 15).

[3] James B. Miller, "The Emerging Postmodern World," in *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World*, ed. Frederic B. Burnham (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 3.

became an important paradigm for knowing and shaped the emerging scientific methodology.[1]

On the one hand, the sciences focused on matter and physical objects by developing "rational mathematical and mechanical models to account for behavior of entities in the material domain."[2] On the other hand, the domain of the mind was essentially different from that of matter; in which "divine revelation and theological authority prevailed."[3] However, this "mind-matter" dichotomy brought within itself a series of other related but distinct dichotomies.[4] Daniel Liechty, for instance, affirms that the modern worldview paved the way for "a strong separation between the human sphere and the sphere of nature."[1] Consequently, by separating them, the subject-object scheme has in fact cut off the world of human experience from the world of natural phenomena.[2]

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[1] Roxburgh, *Reaching a* New *Generation*, 34. Of interest are David Bosch's observations in *Transforming Mission*. Bosch points out that "the *res cogitans* (humanity and the human mind) could research the *res extensa* (the entire non-human world). Nature ceased to be 'creation' and was no longer people's teacher, but the object of their analysis. The emphasis was no longer on the whole, but on the parts, which were assigned priority over the whole. Even human beings were no longer regarded as whole entities but could be looked at and studied from a variety of perspectives: as thinking beings (philosophy), as social beings (sociology), as religious beings (religious studies), as physical beings (biology, physiology, anatomy, and related sciences), as cultural beings (cultural anthropology), and so forth. In this way even the *res cogitans* could become the *res extensa* and as such the object of analysis. . . . In principle, then, the *res cogitans* was set no limits. The whole earth could be occupied and subdued with boldness. . . . The physical world could be manipulated and exploited" (264).

[2] Miller, "The Emerging Postmodern World," 3.

[3] Ibid.

[4] As a result of this dualism other dichotomies followed, such as: cause vs. effect, actions vs. phenomena, performance vs. happening, thought vs. object, voluntary vs. mechanical, active vs. passive, creative vs. repetitive, and public vs. private, to name but a few. See Stephen E. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 107-109. Another distinct element attached to this subject-object dualism was the development of the dichotomy between facts and values. Facts were recognized as verifiable and dependable knowledge, while values were banished to the personal and private domain. This type of reasoning, asserts

Non-Teleological Determinism

Linked with the dualism in the object-subject scheme is another element of modernity: non-teleological determinism. In the dichotomy between facts and values, teleology,[3] the idea of end and/or purpose, is removed from the equation. In the development of the modern worldview, assert Horkheimer and Adorno, "men renounce any claim to meaning. They substitute formula for concept, rule and probability for cause and motive."[4] As a direct result, the world was to be understood in terms of networks of causes and effects that could be determined, but the notion of purpose or

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Van Gelder, was established on at least two presuppositions: "(1) that the natural order of the physical world could be discovered and manipulated to our individual and corporate benefit, and (2) that human life had a natural social order and a universal moral structure that could be directed toward social progress" (Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 118).

[1] Daniel Liechty, *Theology in Postliberal Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity, 1990), 26.

[2] Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 107.

[3] For a brief introduction to teleology, see Andrew Woodfield, *Teleology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1-18.

[4] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 5.

final end was entirely removed.[1]

In a discussion on the legitimacy of teleological argumentation, Larry Wright remarks that antipathy to finding purposeful interpretations and concepts among modern philosophers, scientists, and historians rises more or less directly from three allegations concerning the nature of teleological explanations: (1) Teleological explanations reverse the orthodox order of cause and effect; (2) teleological explanations involve the illegitimate attribution of human mental characteristics to things other than human beings; and (3) accepting teleological explanations would obstruct scientific research, at least in some disciplines.[2]

In the modern worldview the elimination of purpose as a component of scientific analysis, together with the introduction of direct causality, is indispensable for the understanding of reality. The cause determines the effect, which in turn becomes explainable, if not predictable.[3] Newbigin, asserts that "all causes, therefore, are adequate to the effects they produce, and all things can be in principle adequately explained by the causes that produce them. To have discovered the cause of something is to have explained it."[1] Thus, all that was needed was to understand the governing laws of cause and effect of a given phenomenon in order to understand it.

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[1] Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 37.

[2] For a detailed explanation on these allegations see Larry Wright, *Teleological Explanations: An Etiological Analysis of Goals and Functions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 7-22.

[3] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 265.

The premodern emphasis on final causality,[2] therefore, was replaced by the quantifying view of the scientific process. Scientific research was then based on precise methods of measurement and became dependent on numerical logic. Working on the assumption of stable mathematical laws, the scientific method also tended to be absolutely deterministic.[3] As soon as these were determined, human beings could control whatever was desired. The human mind then, as Bosch remarks, becomes "the master and initiator which meticulously plans ahead for every eventuality and all processes can be fully comprehended and controlled."[4]

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[1] Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 24. See also Antony Flew, "Can an Effect Precede Its Cause?" in *Time and Causation*, ed. Michael Tooley (New York: Garland, 1999), 53-70; Newbigin, *Truth and Authority in Modernity*, 3-10; and D. F. Pears, "The Priority of Causes," in *Time and Causation*, ed. Michael Tooley (New York: Garland, 1999), 82-91.

[2] For a brief explanation on final causes in ancient and medieval thought, see Margaret J. Osler, "Teleology in Early Modern Natural Philosophy," in *Science in Theistic Contexts: Cognitive Dimensions*, ed. John H. Brooke, Margaret J. Osler, and Jitse M. van der Meer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 152-153. Osler asserts that finality played a central role in Greek thinking about nature. This notion of final causality in the premodern period was understood in two different ways: the immanent and the external. The former "could refer to an innate tendency for things to develop toward an end." The latter "could refer to the purposive behavior of intelligent agents." Osler notes that according to Aristotle, "knowledge consists of understanding the 'why' of a thing. A complete explanation involves understanding all four causes—the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final. . . . Depending on the nature of the thing to be explained, the end may be the actualization of a form, or it may be the deliberate goal of an intelligent agent, in which case it is imposed from outside" (152).

[3] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 25.

[4] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 265.

Thus, teleological reasoning became unnecessary.[1] Consequently, as Roxburgh notes, humankind may be perceived as "living in a world without purpose."[2]

Autonomous Individualism

Another hallmark of modernity is the elevation of the individual self. The Enlightenment's rational approach to reality gave rise to a distinct cultural perspective that focused on the autonomous individualism of human beings. In an essay written in 1985, Peter Berger went so far as to propose that the concept of the autonomous individual is a strategically central element of the modern Western culture, "both as an idea and as a reality of human experience."[3]

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[1] Emerson T. McMullen, "A Barren Virgin? Teleology in the Scientific Revolution" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1989), vii. In *Teleology*, Woodfield observes that modern science has been on the whole hostile to teleological explanations. They are seen as "obscurantist and unempirical." He adds that the "most common criticisms of teleological explanations . . . are either that they are animistic, i.e. they assume that the thing being explained has a mind, or that they tacitly invoke a supernatural being who directs the course of events" (3).

[2] Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 37.

[3] Peter L. Berger, "Western Individuality: Liberation and Loneliness," *Partisan Review* 52 (1985): 324. Berger offers six propositions to describe—from the vantage point of the individual—both the idea and the experience to which the term "autonomous individual" refers to: (1) "*I am unique, over and beyond any traits I have in common with others, even those others to whom I belong most fully. . . .* (2) *I have within myself the capacity to act in such a way that my actions are determined by myself and by myself alone. . . .* (3) *I am responsible for my own actions; I am not responsible for the actions of others; no one else is responsible for my actions. . . .* (4) *What I am to myself within myself is what is most real to me, and only on the basis of this reality can I reconstruct the reality of the world in my mind. . . .* (5) *Whatever rights I may have as a member of my community, I also have rights that pertain to myself as an unique individual; if necessary, these rights have to be asserted against my own community; and finally. . . .*

The rational "self" was thus understood to be the starting point for the interpretation and construction of reality.[1] This understanding of the autonomous individual led to the tendency to live freely as one pleases. David Bosch points out that

> the free and 'natural' human being was infinitely perfectible and should be allowed to evolve along the lines of his or her own choice. From the earliest beginnings of liberal thought, then, there was a tendency in the direction of indiscriminate freedom. The insatiable appetite for freedom to live as one pleases developed into a virtually inviolable right in the Western 'democracies.' The self-sufficiency of the individual over social responsibilities was exalted to a sacred creed.[2]

In a similar tone, Thomas Oden asserts that "autonomous individualism makes an idol of the detached individual as self-sufficient, sovereign self."[3] The hidden values in this self-autonomous individualism affirm that the individual person is autonomous in terms of destiny and accountability. Ultimate moral authority is self-originated and self-created.[4] In the end, humans are only accountable to themselves, having their choices

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(6) *I have the capacity to choose my life, my world and finally my own self, and I assert the right to realize this capacity*" (326-327, emphasis in original).

[1] Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 117.

[2] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 267.

[3] Thomas C. Oden, "The Death of Modernity and Postmodern Evangelical Spirituality," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2d ed., ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 28. See also idem, *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 33-34.

[4] James E. White, "Evangelism in a Postmodern World," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2d ed., ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 173. In *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, Middleton and Walsh wrote that "in the modern worldview, man becomes a law (*nomos*) unto himself (*autos*). . . . This is, quite literally, a self-centered ego. The ego finds its center, its point

determined exclusively by their personal pleasure, and not by any higher moral authority.

Kant's thought was also instrumental in providing the groundwork for a radical individualism. Grenz notes that

> his epistemological proposal is a more intricate and sophisticated version of the Enlightenment elevation of reason. Like his forebears, Kant was confident that through observation, experiment, and careful reflection, human beings could discover the truth of the world. That being the case, he believed that the burden of discovering truth is ultimately a private matter, that the knowing process is fundamentally a relationship between the *autonomous knowing self and the world waiting to be known* [emphasis added] through the creative power of the active mind.[1]

In a sense, Kant's world was only bi-dimensional. It simply consisted, Grenz contends, "of the individual and the universal. His philosophy sets forth the self coming to know—and to harness—the universal."[2] Commenting on one of the direct results of this assumption, Craig Gay points out:

> Just as modern individuals have tended to tear themselves loose from each other, so they have also torn themselves 'loose' from God, or at least from any conception of God implying limits to autonomous self-definition. Of course, this is obviously evident in the various expressions of explicit atheism that have become so

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of unity, cohesion and identity, precisely in itself. Or perhaps we could more accurately say that this is a self-centering ego—constantly in the process of constructing and reconstructing its own center, its own identity, its own place in the world" (J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995], 48). See also Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World*, 191.

[1] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 80.

[2] Ibid.

commonplace in modern culture.[1]

In other words, as Chuck Smith states, "The boast of the modern age was that the world no longer needed God."[2] However, the modern commitment to individuality goes far beyond the simple conviction that humans should be left free to reason for themselves and then to obey the commands of their own moral conscience. Within the modern worldview is also implied the strong belief that it is morally legitimate for individuals to pursue their own happiness and satisfaction, and that only in this pursuit, is the truly human reason for existence to be found.[3] Accordingly, Allan Bloom insightfully suggests that "the self is the modern substitute for the soul."[4]

Scientific and Technological Objectivism

Another conceptual aspect of modernity is its scientific and technological objectivism. Greatly influenced by the concepts developed by Descartes and Newton, objective science insists that the world should be understood from a strictly quantitative point of view through the use of systematic observation and the logical use of reason.[1]

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[1] Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World,* 194-195.

[2] Chuck Smith, Jr., *The End of the World, as We Know It: Clear Direction for Bold and Innovative Ministry in a Postmodern World* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2001), 35.

[3] Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World,* 191.

[4] Allan D. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 173.

Describing this development, Van Wyk observes:

> Descartes' reasoning, 'I think; therefore I am,' Newton's mechanistic worldview, the further developments during the Enlightenment, and the 'success' of scientific research resulted in an unqualified confidence in scientific inquiry and the deification of specifically technical rationality. 'Science' became a dogma instead of remaining just another discipline. . . . Modern thought very soon adopted a mechanistic, atomistic, and positivistic perspective. . . . Scientists were regarded as people who could produce exact and unambiguous knowledge.[2]

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[1] William E. Doll, *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*, Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993), 23. The basic religious approach to life in premodern times was replaced by a secular approach which characterized the modern era. This approach has assumed "that nature could be thoroughly understood and eventually brought under control by means of systematic development of scientific knowledge through observation, experiment, and rational thought" (David Bohm, "Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World," in *The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals*, ed. David Ray Griffin [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988], 57).

[2] A. Gerhard Van Wyk, "Beyond Modernism: Scholarship and 'Servanthood'," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 38 (Spring 2000): 81-82. Both Descartes and Newton were paramount in the validation of this concept. On the one hand, Descartes's emphasis on the rational search for truth was central to the philosophical development of the modern worldview. In his view, the truths of mathematics—coming from the nature of reason itself—were more certain than knowledge derived from empirical observation. This idea opened the door for the concept of rationality and objective knowledge (79-81). On the other hand, the mathematical and mechanistic views of Newton reduced reality to basic mechanical elements, in which everything was to be understood as particles of a whole, autonomous pieces working together in a machine-like way, not affecting, however, their inner nature even though they were touching each other. From this "atomistic" model emerged modern science (Bohm, "Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World," 60-62). Modernity, notes Grenz, "can appropriately be characterized as Descartes's autonomous, rational substance encountering Newton's mechanistic world" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 67). This mechanistic view became a crucial characteristic of the modern worldview and reached its heyday toward the end of the nineteenth century. See also Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 23-24.

Consequently, by rejecting the organic cosmology of the premodern era,[1] scientific objectivism led people to see the world from a quantitative rather than a qualitative perspective.[2] This was essential to the modern worldview's rejection of medievalism, in favor of human autonomy through rationalism.[3] To this end, the scientific method became the preferred method in the search for knowledge, whereas empiricism and observation were confirmed as the main tools for improving and emancipating human life. However, only what could be seen and analyzed—or theories that could be proved, observed, controlled, and repeated—were accepted as true.[4] After all, Craig Gay notes, the primal aspect of early modern scientific endeavors was "to gain

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[1] In the organic view of the premodern period, God was seen not only as the center of the universe, but also as the supreme source of knowledge. However, by the end of the 17th century this organic view—what seemed to many to be a repressive and outmoded medieval paradigm—was gradually replaced by the "new" objectivistic view of science (Gay, *Way of the [Modern] World*, 79-81; Van Wyk, "Beyond Modernism," 79). Newton's greatest contribution to this new cosmology was best argued in his *Principia*.

[2] The social historian Lewis Mumford observes that the scientific method is based upon three simple principles: (1) the elimination of qualities, reducing from the complex to the simple by paying attention only to those aspects of events which could be controlled, weighted, measured, or counted; (2) concentration on the outer world, eliminating the observer in relation to the data with which one works; and finally, (3) specialization of interest, limiting the field of study and giving a special status to the specialist (Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* [New York: Harcourt Brace, 1934], 46-47).

[3] John Thornhill, *Modernity: Christianity's Estranged Child Reconstructed* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 23.

[4] Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*, 219. See also Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 32-35.

positive knowledge of the world so as to be better able to manage the material conditions of life."[1] In a similar manner, Grenz writes that

> the goal of the human intellectual quest has been to unlock the secrets of the universe in order to master nature for human benefit and create a better world. . . . [This] quest, in turn, produced the modern technological society of the twentieth century. At the heart of this society is the desire to rationally manage life, on the assumption that scientific advancement and technology provide the means to improving the quality of human life.[2]

As a result, contemporary scientific and technological developments have had such a remarkable effect on humanity that science and technology have gained a kind of intellectual supremacy over the human understanding of the world.[3] Modern technology has gradually replaced human ends with technological means.[4] Ultimately, in the process of deification of science, asserts Neil Postman, the modern Western culture "seeks its authorization in technology, finds its satisfaction in technology, and takes its orders from technology."[5] Thus, from a scientific and technological perspective, God's existence became practically irrelevant.[1]

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[1] Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World*, 85-86, emphasis added.

[2] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 81.

[3] Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World*, 81.

[4] Ibid., 87. Gay comments that in a technological society, "scientific and technological means and procedures have an insidious way of becoming ends in and of themselves" (82). The French philosopher Jacques Ellul, argues that technology has become sacred and normative in modern Western society (Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Knopf, 1964), 415-427. See also David Kettle, "Gospel, Authority, and Globalization," in *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin*, ed. Thomas F. Foust (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 205.

[5] Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 71. Postman coined the term "technopoly" to denote technology as a

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system which has become an end in itself, "a totalitarian technocracy" (48). Craig Gay, in turn, notes that "in the process of using technology to enhance the quality of our lives, we have actually allowed it to empty our culture of substance and wisdom. Our fascination with modern technology, it seems, has invited us to substitute quantitative calculation for qualitative judgment, to replace genuinely human ends with technical means, and ultimately to evacuate our world of all but technical meanings." Gay further points out that the problem is "not simply that we have surrendered certain sectors of social life to the logic of technology, but that increasingly everything that passes for culture in our society is determined solely by technological logic" (Gay, *Way of the [Modern] World*, 87).

[1] Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World*, 81. The irrelevancy of God in a technological society and the inadequate understanding of human existence have increased in Western modern culture. As science and technology have become central realities of the Western world, the modern worldview has become dominated by a kind of philosophical materialism in which reality was explained only in terms of human rationality and empirical methodology. As a result, the rise of modern science and technology has largely been responsible for the establishment of the process of secularization in the Western culture. Sociologist Bernard Meland asserts that this process is developing because society considers that science holds "all the answers to men's problems. And in this role it becomes a new Messiah" (Bernard E. Meland, *The Secularization of Modern Cultures* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1966], 70). Accordingly, Robert Merton notes that the "combination of *rationalism and empiricism*," achieved through science, contributed to the development of the process of secularization (Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* [New York: Free Press, 1968], 633, emphasis in original). The effects of secularization are also well noted by Rodney Stark in his book *Acts of Faith*, in which he states that "of all aspects of modernization, it is science that has the most deadly implications for religion" (Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000], 61). Roxburgh in turn, observes that religion was replaced by methods of psychoanalysis and other scientific processes resulting from "a materialistic and almost mechanical view of human nature" (Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 36). For a more detailed explanation on the secularization process in the Western world, see Steve Bruce, *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Religion in the Modern World (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 1-44.

Optimistic Progressivism

Finally, another pillar of the modern worldview is found in its belief in progress. This belief arose from the Enlightenment's assumption that the correct analysis of the universe—through the use of proper methods—would uncover true knowledge. Thus, knowledge would offer the opportunity to discover and dominate nature's laws[1] in order to move humanity "out of a darker past characterized by ignorance, primitiveness, poverty, and oppression, . . . toward a brighter future characterized by intelligence, sophistication, prosperity, happiness, and freedom."[2] Behind the ideal of progress was the goal to conduct human life toward emancipation, and ultimately, to a perfect society.[3] Through the arts and sciences, humanity would not only control the forces of nature but also the understanding of the world in the pursuit for progress and justice.[4] Describing this development, Tarnas points out that

> as never before, a way of thinking produced spectacularly tangible results. Within such a potent framework, progress appeared inevitable. Mankind's happy destiny at last seemed assured, and patently, as a result of its own rational powers and concrete achievements. It was now evident that the quest for human fulfillment would be propelled by increasingly sophisticated analysis and manipulation of the natural world. . . . With the mind cleared of traditional prejudices and superstitions, man

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[1] As described by David Harvey, scientific control over nature "promised freedom from scarcity, want, and the arbitrariness of natural calamity" (David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* [Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989], 12).

[2] Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, 321.

[3] Hunter, "What Is Modernity?" 20-21.

[4] Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," 162-163.

> could grasp the self-evident truth and thus establish for himself a rational world *within which all could flourish.* The dream of human freedom and fulfillment in this world could now be realized.[1]

Assuming that the future was in their own hands, Westerners were confident of having the power and the necessary tools to master their own destiny. As Romano Guardini recounts, after discovering that "the universe extended farther than he had imagined in every direction, . . . Man began to feel that expansion itself was a liberation."[2] John Dewey, in his work *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, refers to the optimistic progressivism of that time, affirming that "the future rather than the past dominates the imagination. The Golden Age lies ahead of us not behind us." In fact, he continues, "man is capable, if he will but exercise the required courage, intelligence and effort, of shaping his own fate,"[3] thus liberating humanity from its past difficulties. In their quest for progress, therefore, Western nations introduced global domination through colonization.[1]

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[1] Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, 281, emphasis in original.

[2] Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, trans. Joseph Theman and Herbert Burke (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2001), 31-32.

[3] John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: New American Library, 1950), 14. With the same optimistic view, Emmanuel Mesthene asserts that "by massive physical changes deliberately induced, we can literally pry new alternatives from nature. The ancient tyranny of matter has been broken, and we know it. . . . We can change it [the physical world] and shape it to suit our purposes. . . . By creating new possibilities, we give ourselves more choices. With more choices, we have more opportunities. With more opportunities, we can have more freedom, and with more freedom we can be more human. That, I think, is what is new about our age. . . . We are recognizing that our technical prowess literally bursts with the promise of new freedom, enhanced human dignity, and unfettered aspiration" (Emmanuel G. Mesthene, "Technology and Religion," *Theology Today* 23 [1967]: 484).

As early as the eighteenth century, social dreamers such as Pierre Laplace and Auguste Comte anticipated a new age approaching: an industrial and technocratic period. In their minds, wealth could be obtained not necessarily through wars, conquests, and plunders, but by means of an industrial society.[2]

As a result, focusing on the application of scientific knowledge in the pursuit of progress, modern Western societies began to perceive the world in instrumental terms, exhibiting far more concerns in using its resources, then preserving them.[3] Through the control and exploration of natural resources, these societies acquired great wealth in spite of the consequences these practices have caused.[4] The goal was not to work in conformity with nature, but to control it, in an attempt to inaugurate an age of development and inevitable progress.[1]

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[1] Bosch notes that the idea of progress was preeminent in the "development programs" Western nations undertook in Third-World countries. He suggests that the motif behind such development programs "was that of the Western technological development model, which found its expression primarily in categories of material possession, consumerism, and economic advance. The model was based, in addition, on the ideal of *modernization*. The theories assumed that development was an inevitable, unlinear process that would operate naturally in every culture. A further premise was that the benefits of development, thus defined, would trickle down to the poorest of the poor, in the course of time giving each one a fair share in the wealth that had been generated. In this paradigm the opposite of modernism was backwardness, a condition 'undeveloped' peoples should overcome and leave behind" (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 265-266, emphasis in original).

[2] Doll, *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*, 21.

[3] Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World*, 86.

[4] Liechty, *Theology in Postliberal Perspective*, 26.

The Breakdown of the Modern Worldview

For many decades modernity's system of thinking and organization impacted the Western world: people lived longer, traveled faster, worked more productively, and produced food more efficiently. However, at the same time, a new set of factors showed another side of the modern era.[2] Historical circumstances, scientific developments, sociological analyses, and philosophical reflections led a number of renowned scholars to affirm that the pillars erected during the Enlightenment were collapsing and the modern worldview was being replaced by a new mind-set. Several works indicate the paradigm shift from a modern to a postmodern condition.[3] Stephen Toulmin, for instance, indicates, "We must reconcile ourselves to a paradoxical-sounding thought: . . . *we no longer live in the 'modern' world.* The 'modern' world is now a thing of the past." The postmodern world, Toulmin adds, "has not yet discovered how to define itself in terms of what it *is*, but only in terms of what it has *just-now ceased to be*."[1]

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[1] Doll, *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*, 22.

[2] Diogenes Allen observes that the breakdown of the modern worldview has been evident in at least four areas: (1) claims of living in a self-contained universe; (2) human failure to find a basis for morality and society; (3) belief in inevitable progress; and (4) the assumption that knowledge is inherently good (Diogenes Allen, "The End of the Modern World," *Christian Scholar's Review* 22 [1993]: 342-345).

[3] Allen concurs, affirming that the "foundations of the modern world are collapsing. . . . The principles forged during the Enlightenment . . . , which formed the foundations of the modern mentality, are crumbling" (Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989], 2). David Tracy confirms this trend indicating that "we are all, willingly or unwillingly, being forced to leave modernity" (David Tracy, "The Return of God in Contemporary Theology," in *Why Theology?* ed. Claude Geffré and Werner Jeanrond [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994], 37). Robert Webber, in turn, notes that "the twentieth-century cultural paradigm . . . has come to an end" (Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 15). Furthermore, Grenz and Olson assert that the twentieth century was "an age of transition from so-called modern culture, inaugurated by the Enlightenment,

The breakdown of the modern worldview is evident in at least five of the areas considered in the previous section. These are discussed in turn.

Defiance to the Supremacy of Reason

From its incipient form, modernity has intentionally fostered the supremacy of reason[2] on the epistemological assumption that the human mind is able to obtain certain and absolute knowledge. In addition to that, the modern worldview has assumed that knowledge is always good and that through its inherent goodness progress would become inevitable. Science and education would eventually free humanity from all of

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to postmodern culture. Scholars are far from agreeing on the meaning of *postmodern* as a cultural epoch, but almost no one sees the present or the future as simple extensions of those cultural forces set in motion by the Enlightenment. The twentieth century has *not* seen the full flowering and fruition of modernity but its erosion and decline. The acids of modernity have turned against modernity itself in such movements as existentialism, the new physics, feminism and deconstructionism" (Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 9-10, emphasis in original).

[1] Stephen E. Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theology of Nature* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 254, emphasis in original.

[2] Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*, 215.

its vulnerabilities.[1]

Nevertheless, during the twentieth century, the preeminence of human reason as the ultimate source for understanding and controlling the world has increasingly been challenged. The belief that an increased use of reason would naturally lead to increased freedom has been found inconsistent with reality. As Van Gelder points out, "in both the rationalized totalitarian states and . . . democratic states of the modern world, people had less freedom than their ancestors, not more." Contrary to the Enlightenment-based modern project, "increased rationality often led to diminished freedom."[2]

The rationalistic assumptions found in the modern worldview have not provided the meaning and direction required in contemporary life, since they have been exposed as both unsatisfactory and faulty.[3] As sociologist Bryan Turner insightfully suggests,

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[1] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 4.

[2] Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 125.

[3] Several fields of study have been deeply affected by the postmodern critique of modernity. Its critique of rationalism, however, has been particularly impacted by Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper, and Michael Polanyi's epistemological views, "questioning the most basic assumptions that sustain modernity's concept of rationality" (Charles Van Engen, "Mission Theology in the Light of Postmodern Critique," *International Review of Mission* 86 [1997]: 443). For additional information, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); idem, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions;* Michael Polanyi, *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); idem, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); idem, *The Study of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 3d ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1968); and idem, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). For discussions on

"Rationalism makes the world orderly and reliable, but it cannot make the world meaningful."[1] Rather, the rationalism that permeates the modern worldview has led to a reduced view of the human condition, leaving a gap between the mind and the heart,[2] where personal experience is left out of its framework. As Smith points out, "modernity no longer holds hope for certainty, and resignation to uncertainty has eroded the modern promise."[3] David Bosch adds,

> The narrow Enlightenment perception of rationality has, at long last, been found to be an inadequate cornerstone on which to build one's life. The objectivist framework imposed on rationality has had a crippling effect on human inquiry; it has led to disastrous reductionism and hence to stunted human growth.[4]

The postmodern outlook, asserts Hendrik Hart, "rightly draws attention to the lack of freedom and autonomy suffered by people outside of the rational consensus and

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philosophy of science, see Alan H. Cromer, *Connected Knowledge: Science, Philosophy, and Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); James H. Fetzer, *Foundations of Philosophy of Science: Recent Developments* (New York: Paragon, 1993); John Horgan, *The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996); Jennifer McErlean, *Philosophies of Science: From Foundations to Contemporary Issues* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000); and Mary Midgley, *Science as Salvation: A Modern Myth and Its Meaning* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[1] Bryan S. Turner, "Periodization and Politics in the Postmodern," in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (London: SAGE, 1990), 7.

[2] Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World*, 1.

[3] Smith, *The End of the World, as We Know It*, 35.

[4] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 352-353.

its power and control structures."[1] Furthermore, heavy criticism has also been directed toward the epistemological paradigm of the modern worldview, particularly because of "its naive rationalism, exclusivity, [and] feigned objectivity."[2] The attempt to discover universal truth through human reason alone has progressively been abandoned, considering the fact that nothing can be known with total certainty, since the pre-existing epistemological foundations of the modern worldview have been revealed to be unreliable.[3]

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[1] Hendrik Hart, "The Survival of Truth Beyond Liberal Rationality," *Perspectives* 11 (April 1996): 18.

[2] Thomas H. Groome, "Religious Knowing: Still Looking for That Tree," *Religious Education* 92 (1997): 208. Presenting some of the implications of modern epistemology, Richard Tarnas argues that "in the lieu of religious or metaphysical overviews, the two bases of modern epistemology, rationalism and empiricism, eventually produced their apparent metaphysical entailments: While modern rationalism suggested and eventually affirmed and based itself upon the conception of man as the higher or ultimate intelligence, modern empiricism did the same for the conception of the material world as the essential or only reality—i.e., secular humanism and scientific materialism, respectively" (Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, 286). Consequently, Thomas Oden points out that "modernity has made an idol out of empirical observation so as to ignore any other—intuitive, personal, charismatic, ecstatic, prophetic, and any revelation-grounded—mode of knowing. It imagines that the only reliable form of knowing is found in laboratory experimentation and quantitative analysis. Under the tutelage of this ideology, . . . persons [have been reduced] to bodies, psychology to stimuli, economics to planning mechanisms, and politics to machinery. These idolatries so generally characteristic of modernity are today everywhere in crisis" (Oden, "Death of Modernity," 29).

[3] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 46. This view is presented by Giddens as one of the "postmodern" marks, even though he does not agree with it (46-47). On the other hand, Grenz and Franke maintain that "the postmodern condition is characterized by the widespread rejection of the foundationalism that characterized the Enlightenment epistemology" (Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 28). Foust also concurs

Consequences of Subject/Object Dualism

In the Enlightenment-based modern worldview, the human subject could be apart from and distinct from the examined object. One of the direct consequences of the subject/object dichotomy is seen in the clear distinction between the human and nature spheres, which is leading to an imminent ecological catastrophe. Bosch writes,

> The dominance over and objectification of nature and the subjecting of the physical world to the human mind and will—as championed by the Enlightenment—had disastrous consequences. . . . We have degraded the earth by treating it as an insensitive object; now it is dying under our very hands. We have damaged the ozone layer, and may thereby have signed our own death warrant. We are the first generation which with the help of nuclear power can destroy itself. Enlightenment culture—science, philosophy, education, sociology, literature, technology—has misinterpreted both humanity and nature, not only in some respects, but fundamentally and totally.[1]

Another consequence of the subject/object dichotomy resulted in a world, as Schilling points out, that "was closed, essentially completed and unchanging, basically substantive, simple and shallow, and fundamentally unmysterious—a rigidly programmed machine."[2] Rather than bringing freedom to humanity, the subjecting of the physical world has eventually held human beings as slaves. The modern worldview,

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that the modern worldview is facing an epistemological challenge affirming that "one of the distinguishing marks at present is the persistent assault on foundationalism" (Thomas F. Foust, "Lesslie Newbigin's Epistemology: A Dual Discourse?" in *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin*, ed. Thomas F. Foust et al. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 153).

[1] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 355.

[2] Harold K. Schilling, *The New Consciousness in Science and Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: United Church Press, 1973), 44.

which senses all things invariably in instrumental terms, has used the machine to replace the human slave, with the result that humans became slaves of the machine.[1] Individual self-interest has made production the ultimate goal of Western society; and people began to be regarded as mere objects to be manipulated and exploited by others.

A further outcome of this dualistic view of subject and object has been, according to Lesslie Newbigin, the division of human life into the public and private worlds.[2] Paul Hiebert writes, "The public sector involves the world of work and public discourse, where reason, hard facts, and universal truth rule. The private sector involves the arts and religion, where feelings, values, personal beliefs, and diversity are in charge."[3] Newbigin describes this division into public and private worlds as the organizing "plausibility structure" of the modern worldview.[4]

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[1] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 355.

[2] Newbigin suggests that the modern public world—where reason, facts, and universal truths are in charge—involves the sciences, the world of work, and the public discourse of the society. The private world—where feelings, values, and personal beliefs predominate—involves the arts, the humanities, and the religious experience of the individual (Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 18).

[3] Paul G. Hiebert, "The Gospel in Our Culture," in *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America,* ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 146.

[4] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 18. Newbigin points out that the dichotomy between private and public worlds is fundamental to modern Western society. He contends that "the public world is the world of facts upon which every intelligent person is expected to agree—or to be capable of being persuaded. . . . In contrast to this is the private world [of values] where we are free to follow our own preference regarding personal conduct and lifestyle, provided it does not prevent others from having the same freedom" (18-19). In addition, writes Newbigin, "at the

Lastly, the dichotomy between subject and object ultimately resulted in the separation of reality into the supernatural and natural domains. The former is the realm of religion and deals with miracles, spirits, values, and feelings. The latter is the realm of science and deals with material realities which are seen only in mechanistic terms. The result was "the secularization of the natural domain by the demystification and desacralization of knowledge."[1] This dichotomy, therefore, is responsible for the current chasm between religion and science, which has had devastating consequences for Christianity in the Western world.[2] While science controls public truth and life in the modern worldview, Christianity has been privatized, confined only to personal piety and often thought to be based on "faith" alone. Within the context of Christian mission, the

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intellectual level, this fissure expresses itself in the search for 'value-free' facts, and for a science of human behavior that shall be 'objective' in the sense that no value judgments are allowed to have a place in its operations" (36). As a direct consequence, "the response of the Christian churches—or at least of the Protestant churches—to the challenge of the Enlightenment was to accept the dichotomy and withdraw into the private sector. Having lost the battle to control education, and having been badly battered in its encounter with modern science, Christianity in its Protestant form has largely accepted relegation to the private sector, where it can influence the choice of values by those who take this option. By doing so, it has secured for itself a continuing place, at the cost of surrendering the crucial field. As an option for the private field, as the protagonist for certain values, Christianity can enjoy considerable success. . . . And yet the . . . claim of Jesus Christ to be alone the Lord of all the world . . . is effectively silenced. It remains for our culture, just one of the varieties of religious experience" (19). See also Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

[1] Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World*, 16.

[2] Ibid., 22.

consequence of the subject/object dualism has been a separation between evangelism and social engagement.[1]

Opposition to Autonomous Individualism

In close connection with the adverse consequences of the subject-object scheme is the reaction against the autonomous individualistic aspect of the modern worldview, in which humans become a law unto themselves in exercising their freedom and constructing their own identity in the control of the world of objects. According to Robert Bellah and his associates, "The modern self's expressive freedom goes hand in hand with the modern's instrumental control."[2]

Such a view has been strongly challenged by the emergent postmodern condition. Thomas Oden writes,

> This individualism is in crisis today. Western societies are now having to learn to live with the consequences of the social destruction to which excessive individualism has led the 'me-first-now' generation. The curtain closes with the whimpering sighs of the me generation, whose progeny are being forced to become the 'us' generation.[3]

Foremost, when the autonomous individual and the culture of individualism are left to their own self-directed devices, violence is inevitably and invariably observed.

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[1] Hiebert, "The Gospel in Our Culture," 147.

[2] Robert N. Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 152-153.

[3] Oden, *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia*, 33-34.

This fact is primarily attested in the destruction of the natural environment[1] and in the exploitation of other human beings.[2]

The effects of modernity's autonomous individualism are noted by Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh. They point out that

> when left to their own self-directed devices, the heroic individual and the culture of heroic individualism inevitably and invariably do violence. . . . Not only have we seen the wide-ranging consequences of the despoliation of the natural environment, but we have also been confronted with the sad truth that the autonomous mastery of the heroic individual seems to always result in mastery over other human beings. Today the voices of subjugated people . . . , echoed by the pained voice of an ecologically devastated creation, are heard raising loud complaint against the arrogant mastery of this autonomous ego that has placed itself as the center of the world.[3]

Modern human beings, under the guise of "individuality," attempt the control of nature and other individuals. Thus, the world is at the mercy of the impulses of people who see themselves as free and self-sufficient to act as they please. This desire to gain total control over nature has become, for many, a prime reason for the need to reject the modern worldview.[1]

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[1] For an appraisal of the impact of modernity on the environment, see Joel J. Kassiola, "The 'Tragedy' of Modernity: How Environmental Limits and the Environmental Crisis Produce the Need for Postmodern Values and Institutions," in *Explorations in Environmental Political Theory: Thinking about What We Value*, ed. Joel J. Kassiola (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2003), 14-36; and John M. Meyer, *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 33-53.

[2] Douglas John Hall argues that "there can be no mastery of nature that does not finally disclose itself as the necessity of mastering human nature" (Douglas J. Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*, Library of Christian Stewardship [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 165).

[3] Middleton and Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, 49.

A second reason for the disagreement with autonomous individualism is the problem of alienation and loneliness.[2] The Enlightenment, in its quest to elevate human life through a vision of freedom and responsibility, has developed a deep alienation in the modern individual.[3] Alienation, simply put, became the price to be paid for individual autonomy, since freedom from others leads to alienation from them.[4] J. H. Miller insightfully suggests that when people face isolation—separation from everything outside of themselves—modernity has indeed begun.[5]

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[1] Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, 38.

[2] Frederick Heinemann defines alienation in objective and subjective terms. Objectively, he describes alienation as the "different kinds of disassociation, break or rupture between human beings and their objects, whether the latter be other persons, or the natural world, or their own creations of art, science and society." Subjectively, Heinemann defines alienation as the "corresponding states of disequilibrium, disturbance, strangeness and anxiety" (Frederick H. Heinemann, *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament* [New York: Harper & Row, 1958], 1).

[3] Wilbert R. Shenk, "The Culture of Modernity as a Missionary Challenge," in *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 70.

[4] Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World*, 193. Van Gelder indicates that sociologists have developed "a view of society as being structured around the interactive, specialized functions of modern life." This new view has conceptualized society "as a complex, interrelated set of relationships that tended toward a functional balance in the midst of the dynamic character of life. This structural-functional view of society effectively deemphasized the modern self. *The autonomous individual who made rational choices out of enlightened self-interest was no longer the key variable in the social equation.* The whole came to be viewed as greater than the sum of the parts" (Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 121, emphasis added).

[5] J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 1-5. Miller takes

In recent years, however, many observers have come to realize that human life must reflect a more adequate balance between the individual and social aspects of human existence.[1] The issues related to this fact have subsequently emphasized the importance of community and indicate the need for a return to community values.[2]

Challenges to Scientific Objectivism

In the early part of the twentieth century, dramatic scientific discoveries made their contribution to the erosion of the mechanistic, modern worldview.[3] The assumption that the internal structure of the universe could be understood by the human mind began to be challenged. Strong evidence revealed that there is much about the universe that is "virtually indescribable and even unimaginable."[4]

One of the most powerful influences in the postmodern scientific turn was

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modern people's situation to be "essentially one of disconnection: disconnection between man and nature, between man and man, even between man and himself" (2).

[1] Daniel A. Helminiak, "Human Solidarity and Collective Union in Christ," *Anglican Theological Review* 70 (January 1988): 37.

[2] Gay, *Way of the (Modern) World*, 194.

[3] According to Webber, "the first and perhaps most fundamental challenge to modernity with its emphasis on reason and the empirical method comes from the twentieth-century revolution in science. The mechanistic worldview of the Enlightenment," he adds, "and the high estimate of human reason to understand the way the world works began to break down with the smashing of the atom" (Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 21).

[4] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 51.

Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm shift.[1] In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn suggested a description of how science progresses, pointing out that scientists periodically restructure the world to make room for new ideas and innovations.[2]

In many ways, Kuhn's work shattered the scientific image of an unshakable, objective progress, which permeated the modern worldview.[3] Science was no longer seen as a collection of universal truths, but rather an accumulation of research traditions, dependent on the scientific community of enquirers.[4] In agreement with this position, Walter Anderson notes that "one scientist says one thing, another one says something else. Science isn't what it used to be; it's no longer the final fountainhead of hard facts."[5]

The most devastating scientific challenge came from developments within the discipline that had provided the strongest foundation to the scientific modern worldview:

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[1] According to Grenz, "shifts in theory are not simply logical modifications or reinterpretations of past knowledge. Nor do scientists simply add one fact to another in a mechanistic, objective sort of way. Rather, science is a dynamic historical phenomenon. Shifts in theory come as radical transformations in the way scientists view the world. Scientists lurch ahead from time to time in sudden creative bursts [called] 'paradigm shifts'" (ibid., 54).

[2] Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 160-173.

[3] See Walter T. Anderson, *The Truth about the Truth: De-Confusing and Re-Constructing the Postmodern World* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1995), 179.

[4] Robert N. Bellah, "Christian Faithfulness in a Pluralist World," in *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World*, ed. Frederic B. Burnham (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 76.

[5] Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*, 159.

physics.[1] The birth of Quantum theory—marked by Max Planck's discovery that energy is not emitted continuously but in discrete units or quanta—is recognized as one of the most important discoveries which helped to undermine the Newtonian worldview that reigned for nearly three hundred years. However, Planck's work was not the only element in this scientific paradigm shift. Grenz writes,

> Paralleling the development of quantum theory was another important series of discoveries that we cumulatively refer to as 'relativity theory.' By means of his 'special theory of relativity,' Einstein undermined the seemingly commonsense notion that space and time are absolute. He disproved the centuries-old belief that length and time can be measured against absolute standards.[2]

These and other discoveries led to the understanding of the world as operating by "both law and chance, both order and chaos."[3] They have also shaken the confidence in absolutes and demonstrated that the modern ideal of objectivity was actually impossible. Consequently, as Pearcey and Thaxton assert, "classical physics assumed that there is an objective world which we can observe and measure without essentially changing it. But on the quantum level, it seems impossible to observe reality without changing it."[1] In the classical view, physics assumed that objective knowledge derived from a separated impersonal observation of the facts to be observed; quantum physics has pointed out that there can be a relative objectivity, in view of the fact that the "object observed" and the "observing subject" cannot be absolutely separated.[2] Thus, the development of modern science has ultimately helped to undermine the modern worldview and to pave the way to a postmodern era.

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[1] Physics divides the periods of scientific developments in classical science and modern sciences. Classical science, also known as "Newtonian science," refers to all science up to the beginning of the twentieth century (see Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World*, 6).

[2] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 51.

[3] Van Gelder, "Great New Fact," 60. The effects of such developments are noted by Howard Gardner, who points out that "no sooner was the theory of relativity born, however, than some of Einstein's colleagues raised even more unsettling questions about the possibility of knowing the real world. Kurt Gödel demonstrated that certain mathematical problems that had engaged Einstein's interest could, in principle, never be solved. The Danish physicist Neils Bohr challenged a part of Einstein's theory by demonstrating that the images of both waves and particles were needed to depict the behavior of electrons. Werner Heisenberg, a German colleague, wrought the most serious damage with his indeterminacy principle, which established that one cannot at the same time determine where a particle is and how it is moving; the more accurately we observe its location, the less we are able to observe its momentum. These demonstrations, and indeed the whole area of quantum mechanics, clouded Einstein's lifelong quest for a solution to the puzzle of nature: a unified theory of physical reality" (Howard Gardner, "Gifted Worldmakers," in *The Truth about the Truth: De-Confusing*

Modernity was fond of justifying its scientific objectivism, arguing that technology—one of the primary results of scientific developments—promoted the well-being of humanity. On one hand, it has indeed enhanced human life; on the other hand, however, the modern worldview has also "masked the harmful effects of a ruthless

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and De-Constructing the Postmodern World, ed. Walter T. Anderson [New York: Putnam's Sons, 1995], 183). For a recounting of the development of quantum physics, see Robert Matthews, *Unravelling the Mind of God: Mysteries at the Frontier of Science* (London: Virgin, 1992), 118-152.

[1] Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*, Turning Point Christian Worldview Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 193.

[2] For a more detailed explanation, see David Ray Griffin, "Introduction: The Reenchantment of Science," in *The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals*, ed. David Ray Griffin (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 1-46.

system."[1]

Dismissal of Optimistic Progressivism

Developments in modern science and technology led to a belief that progress was not only possible, but would eventually be inevitable.[2] However, this belief has gradually been reduced to ashes as the world has witnessed the other side of the modernity coin. Progress was a much more complex issue than was foreseen by those who had believed that a better society would certainly arise from a technological society.[3] Ecological disasters, disease, hunger, violence, social inequality—to name but a few—all have shown the fallacy of modernity's optimistic progressivism.[4] As Tabb indicates, optimism in the Enlightenment-based belief in progress "has given way to skepticism and cynicism."[1] The vision of human freedom and progress was backfiring.[2] Allen Diogenes has noted similarly:

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[1] Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 56. Guardini's sentiments were echoed by Thornhill: "The immense scientific and technological successes . . . sustained a mood of optimism in the ideology of modernity until early twentieth century. But it was inevitable that [its] limited scope would eventually give rise to tensions and frustrations within cultural tradition remarkable for its boundless aspirations and idealism" (Thornhill, *Modernity*, 23-24).

[2] Theorists of the progress model, according to Bosch, "assumed that development was an inevitable, unilinear process that would operate naturally in every culture. A further premise, was that the benefits of development, thus defined, would trickle down to the poorest of the poor, in the course of time giving each one a fair share in the wealth that had been generated" (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 265).

[3] George P. Grant, *Technology and Justice* (Toronto: Anansi, 1986), 15-16.

[4] See Kassiola, "The 'Tragedy' of Modernity: How Environmental Limits and the Environmental Crisis Produce the Need for Postmodern Values and Institutions," 19-20. Kassiola writes: "The status of a value can be eroded away when, in the wake of its substantial realization in a society, the value 'loses its savor' and comes to be downgraded by disenchantment and disillusionment. Some examples would be: 'efficiency' in an era of automation, 'progress' in the age of anxiety, 'economic security' in a welfare state, 'national independence' for an 'emerging' nation in socioeconomic

> We are now faced with our failure to eradicate such serious social and economic problems as crime, pollution, poverty, racism, and war, and we are becoming uneasy. . . . The optimism of inevitable progress has become tarnished. Part of the optimism of the modern period was founded on a belief in the power of education and science to free us from social bondage and from nature's bondage. But there is an increasing concern that education and social reform may not be enough and puzzlement about what else is needed.[3]

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chaos" (19). See also Christopher Lasch, "The Age of Limits," in *History and the Idea of Progress*, ed. Arthur M. Melzer, Jerry Weinberger, and M. Richard Zinman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 225-240.

[1] Mark Tabb, *Mission to Oz: Reaching Postmoderns without Losing Your Way* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2004), 27-28. Horkheimer and Adorno pointed out that science and technological advancements, as practiced by the Enlightenment paradigm, had questionable issues and seemed to be collapsing. For further details, see Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 120-131. Rosenau, in turn, writes, "Modernity entered history as a progressive force promising to liberate humankind from ignorance and irrationality, but one can readily wonder whether that promise has been sustained. . . . The 'modern' record—world wars, the rise of Nazism, concentration camps (in both East and West), genocide, worldwide depression, . . . makes any belief in the idea of progress or faith in the future seem questionable. . . . There is reason to distrust modernity's moral claims, . . . [it] is no longer a force for liberation; it is rather a source of subjugation, oppression, and repression" (Pauline M. Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992], 5-6).

[2] Joe Holland, "The Postmodern Paradigm and Contemporary Catholicism," in *Varieties of Postmodern Theology*, ed. David Ray Griffin, William A. Beardslee, and Joe Holland (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 11.

[3] Allen, "The End of the Modern World," 344-345. Echoing Allen, Vattimo asserts that "the ideal of progress is finally revealed to be a hollow one, since its ultimate value is to create conditions in which further progress is possible in a guise that is always new. By depriving progress of a final destination, secularization dissolves the

The optimistic view of inevitable progress has faced strong setbacks in the last century. The two devastating global wars witnessed during the twentieth century shattered the belief in inevitable progress toward peace and human prosperity. Everything that followed their aftermath contributed to the erosion of the utopia of the modern project.[1] Separated by less than forty years, these two global conflicts devastated several countries and killed millions of innocent people. As historian Kenneth Latourette observes, human history had never witnessed "mankind engaged simultaneously in war, war which might be called internecine because it was really a civil war within the totality of the human race."[2] "There is no denying," Edith Wyschogrod writes, that contemporary culture "is fine-tuned to the apocalyptic dimension of twentieth-century history."[3] The effects of those conflicts are noted by Radoslov Tsanoff:

> Two world wars of unprecedented destruction . . . have flouted modern man's confidence in assured ongoing progress. The very conditions of modern life on which men have relied for the avoidance of war and for peaceful social advance have

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very notion of progress itself, as happens in nineteenth- and twentieth-century culture" (Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, trans. Jon R. Snyder [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988], 8).

[1] See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 350; Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 5-6.

[2] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 1351.

[3] Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), xxi.

> become incitements to conflict. . . . Modern science and technology have constructed engines of destruction so terrible that common and uncommon judgment have regarded them as reliable deterrents to war. Twice already has the vanity of this hope been exposed.[1]

Both World Wars seemed to have brought into society's consciousness the fact that, in one way or another, some of the tools of "progress" could in fact destroy the whole world. Sociologist Barry Smart notes:

> This event [World War I] and its sequel, the "second act" which began in 1939 . . . brought into focus a series of problems associated with the rapidity of technological change and the persistence of political and economic inequalities which, in so far as they threatened prevailing forms of life, raised the spectre of mortality of Western civilization.[2]

The evidence of the destructive side of the modern era was clearly demonstrated in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[3] Any belief in inevitable progress seems questionable in light of the devastation of these cities and other events of the twentieth century.[4] As David Harvey observes,

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[1] Radoslav A. Tsanoff, *Civilization and Progress* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1971), 152.

[2] Barry Smart, "Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present," in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (London: SAGE, 1990), 21. Arnold Toynbee asserts, "The discovery of a 'know-how' for tapping the titanic force of atomic energy and applying this to the destruction of human lives . . . had now armed a perpetually reborn Original Sin with a weapon potent enough to enable a sinful Mankind to annihilate itself" (A. Joseph Toynbee, *A Study of History* [London: Oxford University Press, 1954], 9:467).

[3] Holland, "Postmodern Paradigm," 11.

[4] Even in the light of the destruction brought about by the two great World Wars of the twentieth century, some still believed that the dream of progress could become a reality. Jacques Ellul, addressing the effects of technology on progress, asserts that "what appeared so near has again been postponed. Yet two wars, two 'accidents,' have

> The twentieth century—with its death camps and death squads, its militarism and two world wars, its threat at nuclear annihilation and its experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—has certainly shattered this optimism. Worse still, suspicion lurks that the Enlightenment project was doomed to turn against itself and transform the quest for human emancipation into a system of universal oppression in the name of human liberation. . . . There are those—and this is . . . the core of postmodernist philosophical thought—who insist that we should, in the name of human emancipation, abandon the Enlightenment project entirely.[1]

The devastation and massacres caused by the development of scientific and technological weapons in the last one hundred years indicate that the modern world had in fact "begun to build a scientific death trap for humanity and nature."[2] But these were not the only events marked by destruction and violence.[3]

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in no way affected our glorious conception of progress [emphasis added]. Spiteful actions of fate, human errors—call them what they will—men refuse to see in them anything that essentially affects the marvelous progress that opens before them. In spite of accidents, they believe that the road is still free" (Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 191).

[1] Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 13-14.

[2] Holland, "Postmodern Paradigm," 11. Along this line, Carl Henry contends that "modern men and women soon found themselves entrapped in . . . a new, more powerful, and destructive technological fate with unparalleled potentiality for demolition of humanity and the planet. The twentieth century—the century of scientific progress—brought with it, among other debacles, World War I, World War II, Marxist totalitarianism, Auschwitz, the increasing poisoning of the planet, and bare escape from international nuclear destruction. Despite boundless expectations from science, modernity with its militarism and rape of nature is seen by postmodernity as a threat to planetary life and survival" (Carl F. H. Henry, "Postmodernism: The New Spectre?" in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001], 37).

[3] Many other events have tarnished humanity with destruction and violence. For instance, the Nazi genocide, the Holocaust, and the more recent genocides in the killing fields of Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Cambodia, and East Timor. For an excellent description of these events, see Eric Markusen and David Kopf, *The Holocaust and Strategic*

Unlike the two great World Wars—when the aggressors were clearly identified—in the last few decades the world has witnessed the growing anxiety caused by global terrorism, and the West-led war on terror. This is a war against an unseen enemy, whose headquarters and weapons, along with the nature, timing, and targets of their attacks, are unpredictable.[1] Almost sixty years after World War II, the events of "9/11" have once again tarnished human history, leaving the perception that life would never be the same after that day.[2]

On the morning of September 11, 2001,[3] the hijacking and tentative use of four

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Bombing: Genocide and Total War in the Twentieth Century (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995); and Nicolaus Mills and Kira Brunner, eds., *The New Killing Fields: Massacre and the Politics of Intervention* (New York: Basic, 2002). For a major psychopathological analysis of genocide and mass killing, see James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[1] See Maxine Singer, "The Challenge to Science: How to Mobilize American Ingenuity," in *The Age of Terror: America and the World after September 11*, ed. Strobe Talbott and Nayan Chanda (New York: Basic, 2001), 198.

[2] In *The Day That Changed the World*, Jon Paulien points out that "for those who experienced or witnessed the events of September 11, 2001, it was a day that changed the world. People had a sense that 20 or even 100 years from now, we would look back on this event as one that fundamentally altered the way we look at the world, an event of epic proportions such as Pearl Harbor, the Protestant Reformation, or the Russian Revolution. It has left us a world that is less predictable than its predecessor. We can never again feel as secure as we felt at the dawn of that day. The world is at war, but it's a war unlike any other in history" (Jon Paulien, *The Day That Changed the World: Seeking God after September 11* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002], 13). See also Phil Scraton, ed., *Beyond September 11: An Anthology of Dissent* (Sterling, VA: Pluto, 2002), x.

[3] For a comprehensive chronological exposition of the events related to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, see Stefan Aust and Cordt Schnibben, *Inside 9-*

U.S. commercial jetliners as weapons—of which three were successful—left a deadly wound on modernity's view of inevitable progress.[1] In the aftermath of those events Webber observes that

> the world will never be the same, that the ideals of prosperity and the hopes of a pre-September 11 world of peace will never happen. The rise of terror by militant fundamentalists is marking [the] world and creating an ideological battle of religions. Life will be marked by issues of peace and war, . . . a wave of conservative political philosophy, a new form of civil religion, a new economic tightening of resources, and a more disciplined life. This cultural setting is radically different than the cultural setting of the post-World War II generations, which was resolved to rebuild their world.[2]

However, in the post-September-11 era, attention is focused beyond the mere act of rebuilding. Much more than material things and human lives has been destroyed. The World Trade Center was probably one of the most functional buildings in the world. Its architecture made it one of the finest examples of a modern skyscraper. It may well be remembered as a symbol of the modern era and its worldview of optimistic progressivism. Nevertheless, even the reconstruction or the establishment of a memorial

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11: What Really Happened, trans. Paul De Angelis and Elisabeth Kaestner (New York: St. Martin's, 2002); and James F. Hoge and Gideon Rose, eds., *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001).

[1] Zakaria suggests that the debate on the expansion of the Western worldview over the past decade has "neglected to focus on the real and growing danger: the backlash against modernization itself. For Western intellectuals, modernization is seen as largely benign and, in any case, as inevitable. . . . But in large parts of the world, modernization is a grueling, alien process that threatens to denude cultures and disrupt settled ways of life" (Fareed Zakaria, "The Return of History: What September 11 Hath Wrought," in *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War*, ed. James F. Hoge and Gideon Rose [New York: PublicAffairs, 2001], 316).

[2] Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 47-48.

in its site will not take away the fear and anxiety generated by the waves of international terrorism around the globe.[1] Nicolaus Mills observes:

> In the aftermath of September 11, it has become the conventional wisdom to say that in the foreseeable future America and the West will care only about protecting themselves from terrorism. . . . [This] new vulnerability increases the need for greater moral and political imagination on the part of policy makers precisely *because conventional military superiority no longer guarantees safety in a world in which a terrorist can turn the openness and technical savvy of a nation into liabilities.*[2]

The effects of this unconscious "progress," however, have been much more pervasive and unpredictable than imagined. Bernard Lewis, in discussing some of these effects, says that "the standards that matter in the modern world"[3] are in many ways only focused on economic development and scientific achievements. Furthermore, modernization theory in the second half of the twentieth century took for granted that "modernization meant the progressive westernization and secularization of a society: politically, economically, legally, and educationally."[4]

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[1] For further discussion and analysis of the implications and consequences of the international terrorism observed at the beginning of the twenty-first century, see John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism* (Sterling, VA: Pluto, 2000); Alan M. Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works: Understanding the Threat, Responding to the Challenge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); and Joseph S. Tuman, *Communicating Terror: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2003).

[2] Mills and Brunner, eds., *The New Killing Fields*, ix-x, emphasis added.

[3] Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 152.

[4] John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 125.

It becomes clear, therefore, that inevitable progress has not been an attainable reality for humanity. Instead, among other problems, the world has witnessed increased waves of violence, environmental destruction, outbreaks of new diseases, and disparities between rich and poor, regardless of the scientific and technological advancements of the modern era.

Summary

The birth of the modern era is recognized by most scholars as having occurred at the rise of the Enlightenment. During this period, several new developments reshaped the views about human existence and the universe. As a direct result, a new worldview emerged in the Western world. The supremacy of reason as the only adequate epistemological instrument, the dualism between subject and object, the rejection of purpose and final end in favor of the laws of cause and effect, the autonomy of the individual "self" to live freely as one pleases, the dominance of science as the ultimate source of objective truth, and an increasing optimistic emphasis on inevitable progress were among some of the fundamental pillars upon which the modern worldview was built.

In spite of the positive achievements and developments of the modern era, historical events, scientific discoveries, sociological analyses, and philosophical reflections have led a number of noted scholars to categorically affirm that the modern worldview has come to the point of collapse. The following reasons are noted for this fact: The preeminence of reason has been found to be an inadequate foundation to build one's existence; the dualistic view between subject and object has brought severe consequences to Western society; human existence represents more than only the individual "self"; the objectivistic view of science has been strongly challenged; and the view of inevitable progress has been seen as faulty and misleading.

During the second half of the twentieth century, however, a different perspective began to appear in reaction to the modern worldview. Some of the historical, philosophical, sociological, and cultural elements associated with the emergence of the postmodern condition are addressed in chapter 3 of this study.

CHAPTER III

THE RISE AND IMPACT OF THE POSTMODERN CONDITION ON WESTERN CULTURE

In the preceding chapter of this study I sought to delineate some of the most prominent characteristics of the Enlightenment-based modern era, together with the reasons for its breakdown as the dominant worldview in the Western world. During the second half of the twentieth century, several scholars indicated the emergence of an alternate socio-cultural paradigm, which has been called *postmodern*. In this chapter, I address some of the major elements of the postmodern condition by presenting first the historical background of the postmodern mind-set. Following, I identify and discuss some of the basic conceptual aspects of the emergent postmodern condition by reviewing the contribution of a number of key authors to the rise and development of postmodernism as an intellectual and cultural phenomenon. Finally, I describe some of the most remarkable influences of the postmodern condition upon Western cultural expressions.

The Emergence of the Postmodern Condition

According to Lawrence Cahoone, the term "postmodern," understood as differentiating the contemporary condition from the modern, seems to have been used for the first time in 1917 by German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz to describe the "nihilism" of twentieth-century Western culture.[1] In 1934 the Spanish literary critic Federico de Onís coined the word *postmodernismo* in the context of arts, signaling a minor reaction to literary modernism.[2] The most significant early use of the term probably came from the historian Arnold Toynbee, who in 1939 suggested that the modern age had ended in 1914—in the aftermath of World War I—and the era which emerged out of its ashes inaugurated "our own 'Post-Modern' Age."[3] However, the present understanding of postmodernism as a cultural phenomenon was apparently first used in an essay by John Cobb in 1964.[4]

The Rise of the Postmodern Era

Postmodernism became a popular expression in the 1960s among young artists in New York, who referred to the emerging attitude as a movement beyond the modern artistic expressions at that time.[1] In the early 1970s, the postmodern outlook enjoyed further exposition because of its expanded relationship with architecture.[2] In the 1980s, it was used in philosophy, referring primarily to French poststructuralist philosophy and secondarily to a general reaction against modern rationalism, which had come to be known as "foundationalism."[3] In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, postmodernism became the vogue term to describe Western culture,[4] mainly in relation to the media, music, and lifestyle.

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[1] Lawrence E. Cahoone, ed., *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, 2d ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 2.

[2] See Federico de Onís, *Antología de la poesía española e hispanoamericana: 1882-1932* (Madrid: Hernando, 1934), xviii-xix. For an excellent historical discussion of the term and an outstanding bibliographical account of postmodernism in general, see Margaret A. Rose, *The Post-Modern and the Post-Industrial: A Critical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[3] A. Joseph Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 5:43. See also R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Integrity of the Evangelical Tradition and the Challenge of the Postmodern Paradigm," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 54.

[4] See Henry, "Postmodernism: The New Spectre?" 35.

Thomas Oden suggests that postmodernity[5] is "what comes next after modernity."[1] He identifies modernity's time span as going from 1789 to 1989, between the French Revolution and the breakdown of Communism.[2] Diogenes Allen indicates that the postmodern era began with modern science and Max Planck's developments in quantum physics.[3] The prominent architect Charles Jencks, in turn, points to the destruction of the Pruitt-Igoe housing development in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 15, 1972, as the historical event that symbolized the death of the modern period and the birth of the postmodern era.[4]

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[1] Van Gelder, "Postmodernism as an Emerging Worldview," 412. Most scholars link the postmodern shift with the counterculture of the 1960s. Many young people began questioning the direct results of modern civilization—technology, social order, and rational planning (Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 40). The following movements have been connected with this paradigm shift: "the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the women's movement, the sexual freedom movement, the hippie movement, the drug scene, rock music, and new religions" (Todd Gitlin, "The Postmodern Predicament," *Wilson Quarterly* 13 [1989]: 73).

[2] In the late 1970s, three books stimulated the rise of postmodernism as an intellectual and socio-cultural movement: Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy, 1977); Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979); and Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[3] Cahoone, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 3.

[4] Tabb, *Mission to Oz*, 23.

[5] The term *postmodernity* displays a diversity of meanings, particularly because it has been applied over several decades to various academic disciplines, from the arts and literature to cultural studies, architecture, and urbanism. It generally refers to a specific historical period in which the postmodern mentality influences society. *Postmodernism*,

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in turn, refers to an intellectual mood, a set of contemporary cultural expressions that challenge the main beliefs, values, and principles of the modern worldview.

[1] Oden, "Death of Modernity," 25.

[2] Ibid., 23. Oden asserts, "The duration of the epoch of modernity is now clearly identifiable as a precise two-hundred-year period between the 1789 and 1989. . . . Such dating of historical periods is always disputable, but this one cries out with clarity, since it was announced with such a dramatic beginning point (the storming of the Bastille), and closed with such a precise moment of collapse (the literal fall of a vast symbolic concrete wall in Berlin). The analogies between the revolutions of 1789 and 1989 will intrigue historians for centuries to come" (Oden, *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia*, 32).

[3] Allen contends that these scientific developments in quantum physics have "helped to undermine the modern mentality and to create the postmodern age" (Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World*, 6).

[4] Charles Jencks, ed., *The Post-Modern Reader* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 24-25. At 3:32 P.M. on July 15, 1972, the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex, a hallmark of modern architecture, was imploded. In spite of being "a prize-winning exemplar of high technology, modernistic aesthetics, and functional design," Veith notes, "the project was so impersonal and depressing, so crime-ridden and impossible to patrol, that it was uninhabitable" (Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 39).

The Postmodern Ethos

It is difficult—and perhaps impossible—to indicate with precision one event as the beginning of the postmodern era or even to present an overarching definition of postmodernism.[1] Scholars who investigate the rise of the postmodern condition,[2] affirms Guder, "have reached no clear consensus regarding either the scope of the change or the reasons for it."[3] This is true not only because of the great divergence in postmodern scholarship, including theology,[4] but also because the very idea of summarization is contrary to the postmodern ethos.[1]

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[1] Scholars differ not only about when the modern era ended and the postmodern began, but also whether there is an overlap between these two periods, and even whether the postmodern indicates a genuine break from modernity or is merely its logical continuation. Jürgen Habermas believes that the cultural crisis we are facing is actually the challenge of the Enlightenment's modern project, which was never completed (Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," 158-159). Anthony Giddens partially agrees with Habermas, affirming that "we have not moved beyond modernity but are living precisely through a phase of its radicalization" (Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 51). Matei Calinescu, however, asserts that postmodernity is a "new face of modernity" (Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987], 265).

[2] Mercer maintains that "Postmodernity . . . is a *condition* and not a philosophy" (Nick Mercer, "Postmodernity and Rationality: The Final Credits or Just a Commercial Break?" in *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*, ed. Antony Billington, Tony Lane, and Max Turner [Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1995], 319, emphasis added). Cf. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*; and Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, 398.

[3] Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 38.

[4] For instance, David Dockery, Millard Erickson, and David Ray Griffin present four approaches to postmodern theology: (1) *Deconstructive postmodernism* (or ultramodernism), which represents a radical denial of the objectivity involved in foundationalism; (2) *Liberationist postmodernism*, which focuses more on the social and political form of the contemporary worldview rather than the philosophical foundation;

Although there is a great deal of disagreement among scholars on what postmodernism is, there is agreement that the emergence of the postmodern outlook indicates the end of a single, universal, all-encompassing worldview. The postmodern condition rejects any attempts to set a unified and "totalizing understanding of reality."[2]

The term "postmodern," however, has increasingly been used in the past few decades to explain the changes that appear to be taking place in contemporary Western culture. It has been utilized in reference to a contemporary cultural and intellectual movement, as well as in many other areas of human life. J. Andrew Kirk observes:

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(3) *Constructive postmodernism*, which attempts to revise or reconstruct the modern worldview, through the use of process thought; and (4) *Conservative or restorationist postmodernism*, which suggests that there is much worth in retaining both premodern and modern perspectives. For a detailed exposition of these views, see David S. Dockery, "The Challenge of Postmodernism," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 14-16; Millard J. Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 99-103; and David Ray Griffin, William A. Beardslee, and Joe Holland, *Varieties of Postmodern Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1-7. For excellent overviews of postmodern theologians and their views, see Frederic B. Burnham, ed., *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989); Robert C. Greer, *Mapping Postmodernism: A Survey of Christian Options* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 97-158; Gavin Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Nihilist Textualism?* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001); John W. Riggs, *Postmodern Christianity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2003); and Graham Ward, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001).

[1] Cahoone, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 9-10.

[2] Guarino, "Postmodernity and Five Fundamental Theological Issues," 654.

> The cultural phenomenon generically referred to as postmodernity manifests itself in a variety of ways, through architecture, art, philosophy, cultural theory, lifestyles, the media and politics. The name suggests that it is a way of viewing the world which comes after modernity, with the inference that it is, at least, reinterpreting, if not seeking to replace the traditions which have followed from the Enlightenment.[1]

In broad terms, William A. Beardslee sees postmodernism as a movement beyond scientific modernism, a "process of breaking away from the determinism of the modern worldview."[2] Stewart and Blocker see postmodernism as a challenge to the "fundamental epistemological assumption of modern philosophy and science—the possibility of discovering the truth about anything."[3] Theologian Alister McGrath, in turn, defines postmodernism as "something of a cultural sensibility without absolutes, fixed certainties or foundation, which takes delight in pluralism and divergence."[4] Finally, Doll indicates that postmodernism is "too new to define itself and too varied and dichotomous for any one branch to be representative."[1]

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[1] J. Andrew Kirk, "Following Modernity and Postmodernity: A Missiological Investigation," *Mission Studies* 17 (2000): 225.

[2] William A. Beardslee, "Christ in the Modern Age: Reflections Inspired by Jean-François Lyotard," in *Varieties of Postmodern Theology*, ed. David Ray Griffin, William A. Beardslee, and Joe Holland (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 64.

[3] David Stewart and H. Gene Blocker, *Fundamentals of Philosophy*, 3d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 241. Nicholson, in turn, points out that "a certain vague consensus exists in the academic community that, whatever else it might be, postmodernism represents the end of Cartesian philosophy and epistemological foundationalism" (Michael W. Nicholson, *A Theological Analysis and Critique of the Postmodernism Debate: Mapping the Labyrinth* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1997], 107).

[4] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 112.

In this study, postmodern condition refers to an emerging, still unformed, reactionary transition *from* the philosophical thought patterns and socio-cultural expectations related to the Enlightenment-based modern worldview *to* something beyond the basic assumptions and conceptual aspects addressed in the previous chapter.[2] Thus, the term "postmodern" is used to designate a paradigm shift in contemporary Western culture, a transition between what was and what is yet to become.

The paradigm shift from a modern to a postmodern era is still taking place. Insightfully, mission theorist David Bosch contends that "new paradigms do not establish themselves overnight. They take decades, sometimes even centuries, to develop distinctive contours. The new [postmodern] paradigm is therefore still emerging and it is, as yet, not clear which shape it will eventually adopt."[3] In the meanwhile, the Western world organizes itself in terms of two intertwined paradigms: the Enlightenment-based modern worldview and the emergent postmodern condition.

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[1] Doll, *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*, 5. Grenz contends that postmodernity represents a movement against Enlightenment-based modernity "and the foundational assumptions upon which it was built" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 5). In agreement with Grenz, Kirk argues that postmodernity "can be best described as a complex cultural and social movement which is premised on a thoroughgoing critique of the normal assumptions associated with the Enlightenment" (Kirk, "Following Modernity and Postmodernity," 225). He also asserts that postmodernity "has arisen as a theory translated into practice that the modern period has run its course" (ibid., 217). Bryan Turner, however, regards postmodernity as a period beyond, rather than against, modernity and thus "ultimately compatible with the radical contents of modernity" (Turner, "Periodization and Politics in the Postmodern," 11).

[2] In agreement with Crouch, I do not assume that postmodernity is antimodernity. See Andy Crouch, "Life after Postmodernity," in *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives*, ed. Leonard Sweet (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 66.

[3] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 349.

Main Representatives of Postmodern Thinking

In its radical rejection of the Enlightenment-based, modern, technological ideal—along with the philosophical assumptions behind it—the postmodern outlook shares a variety of ideas which have been greatly influenced by a number of key intellectuals.[1] Among them, five major representatives of emergent postmodern thinking are: Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, Stanley Fish, and Jean-François Lyotard.[2]

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[1] In the process of growing out of the modern period, postmodernism did not simply emerge at a particular time in history. It had been constantly impacted and shaped by the work of intellectuals who pointed out the problems with the modern worldview as they saw it. In the nineteenth century, for example, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche are recognized as the predecessors of the postmodern movement since they were the first philosophical voices raised for what would develop into existentialism in the twentieth century. Existentialism would then provide the groundwork for the development of postmodern theories. For a discussion of the connection between Nietzsche and postmodern thinkers, see Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 43-102; and Cornel West, "Nietzsche Prefiguration of Postmodern American Philosophy," in *Why Nietzsche Now?* ed. Daniel T. O'Hara (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 241-269. In the twentieth century, the works of Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Thomas Kuhn, Max Scheler, and Karl Mannheim also significantly shaped the postmodern outlook because of their combination of elements of modernism with postmodernism. For an outstanding expository analysis of the influence of the above-mentioned thinkers and predecessors of the postmodern condition, see Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 76-109.

[2] These are all complex thinkers, and each can be understood from many different perspectives. Therefore, I will not attempt complete coverage of their thoughts, but will emphasize those aspects that bear most directly upon the purpose of this study, to look at how these intellectuals have ushered in postmodernism.

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)

Known as one of the most prominent postmodern thinkers, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida owes his philosophical formation mainly to the works of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger.[1] The focus of Derrida's criticism of the modern worldview can be found in the two main elements of one of his most important early works,[2] *Of Grammatology*: (1) the theory of writing,[3] and (2) the literary and philosophical method of inquiry known as deconstruction.[1] This method, notes McGrath, "declares that the identity and intentions of the author of a text are irrelevant to the interpretation of the text, prior to insisting that, in any case, no meaning can be

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[1] Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 109. See also Simon Critchley and Timothy Mooney, "Deconstruction and Derrida," in *Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: Routledge, 1994), 449-454.

[2] Christopher Johnson, *Derrida* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 3.

[3] In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida contests the tradition of the entire history of Western thought in which writing has consistently been subordinated to speech. He contends that it is the "*ethnocentrism* which, everywhere and always, has controlled the concept of writing . . . , always assigned the origin of truth in general to the logos: the history of truth, [it] has always been . . . the debasement of writing, and its repression outside 'full' speech" (Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri V. Spivak [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976], 3). Commenting on the distinctions between speech and writing, Johnson asserts that "whereas speech is habitually associated with reason and rationality (the Greek notion of logos) and the voice is perceived as being closer to the inner 'truth' of individual consciousness, writing is considered to be a secondary extension or supplement to the voice, an auxiliary technology employed by human reason but not essential to it. Speech is the guarantor of presence and of authenticity, whereas writing represents artifice and absence, the alienation and deferment of presence" (Johnson, *Derrida*, 4-5). It is, however, this preference for speaking over writing that Derrida criticizes so vehemently in his attack on what he calls *logocentrism*. It would later become an argument essential to his deconstructionist method (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 3). Spivak, the translator of *Of Grammatology*, says that logocentrism is "the belief that the first and the last things are the Logos, the Word, the Divine Mind, the infinite understanding of God, an infinitely creative subjectivity, and, closer to our time, the self-presence of full self-consciousness" (G. V. Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*,

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lxviii). Logocentrism also "refers to the philosophical method that looks to the *logos*, the word, or language . . . as the carrier of meaning" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 141). Moreover, logocentrism indicates the idea that the meaning of things, particularly written language, centers on a self-existent reality in the universe, whether it is understood to be derivative from God or some other fixed principle present in the universe. In other words, logocentrism assumes that at the foundation of our language there is a "presence" of being, or an essence that humans can come to know and understand. Thus, logocentrism is connected to what Derrida calls the "metaphysics of presence," in which the symbols of written language are "present" to the person who interacts with them. However, in writing, the author and the reader are separated from one another in time and in space. Western tradition, therefore, "considers this a disadvantage, and consequently has favored speaking over writing" (Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 117). See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 279-280.

[1] Deconstruction emerged in response to the literary theory called *structuralism*. The structuralistic view asserts that "people develop literary documents—texts—in an attempt to provide structures of meaning by means of which people can make sense out of the meaninglessness of their experience" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 5). Literature, as understood by structuralists, offers categories through which people can understand and make sense of reality in their experience (ibid., 6). Deconstructionism, however, rejects this assertion. Based on the deconstructionist method, Veith points out, "Postmodernist theories begin with the assumption that language cannot render truths about the world in an objective way. Language, by its very nature, shapes the way we think. Since language is a cultural creation, meaning is ultimately . . . a social construction" (Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 51). In other words, with the deconstructionist theory, Derrida attempted to "offer a mode of reading which is attentive to a text's multiple meanings. Rather than attempting to find a true meaning, a consistent point of view or unified message in a given work, a deconstructive reading carefully teases out . . . the warring forces of signification" (*The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought* [1998], s.v. "Deconstruction"). For further details on the deconstruction theory, see Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997).

found in it."[1] Deconstruction would later become one of the most powerful expressions of the postmodern intellectual outlook.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

Another renowned intellectual shaper of the postmodern outlook was Michel Foucault. Heavily influenced by the writings of Nietzsche and Heidegger, Foucault became one of the most severe critics of the Enlightenment and the modern worldview.

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[1] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 113. In rejecting the principles of structuralism, deconstructionists argue that the meaning is not inherent to a text, but emerges only in the dialogue between the reader and the text itself (cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d ed. [New York: Crossroad, 1989], 260-261). Consequently, the meaning of a text is relative to the one who interprets it. Thus, according to the deconstructionist theory, in a given text there are as many meanings as there are readers. Postmodern philosophers, according to Grenz, "applied the theories of the literary deconstructionists to the world as a whole. Just as a text will be read differently by each reader, so reality will be 'read' differently by each knowing self that encounters it. This means that there is no one meaning of the world, no transcendent center to reality as a whole" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 6). Meaning is therefore a transitory phenomenon that, according to Stuart Sim, "evaporates almost as soon as it occurs in spoken or written language (or keeps transforming itself into new meanings), rather than something fixed that holds over time for a series of different audiences." In Derrida's thought, therefore, "all Western philosophy is based on the premise that the full meaning of a word is 'present' in the speaker's mind. . . . This belief is what Derrida calls the 'metaphysics of presence,' and for him it is an illusion" (Stuart Sim, "Postmodernism and Philosophy," in *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, ed. Stuart Sim [Cambridge: Icon, 1998], 6). For further details on the impact of deconstruction theory on hermeneutics, see Guarino, "Postmodernity and Five Fundamental Theological Issues," 668-673; Ivana Noble, "Apophatic Elements in Derrida's Deconstruction," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Petr Pokorný and Jan Roskovec (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 83-100; and Joel Weinsheimer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 87-123.

He exemplified the postmodern scholar in his rejection of the modern self,[1] essentially because of his concerns about the limit of knowledge and its relationship with power.[2] Central to Foucault's argument was the fact that truth does not exist independently of the knower, but what one knows and believes to be true is a product of one's historical and cultural situation.[1] In his argumentation, truth depended upon who has decided when, how, and what is to be learned. Furthermore, his view of the relationship between knowledge and power suggests that in every interpretation of reality there is an assertion of power,[2] which—in contrast to Bacon, who sought knowledge in order to gain power over nature—will ultimately lead to violence.[3]

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[1] Foucault's criticism of modern worldview begins with his rejection of the modern concept of the "self," in which the autonomous knowing subject views the world as accessible to human knowledge, from an outside perspective. In his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault attacks the Cartesian view of the universe in an ironic repetition of Descartes's *Discourse on Method* (Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, 228-229). For more than three centuries, in Foucault's views, fundamental mistakes have been repeatedly made by most Western societies. According to Foucault's views, as Wolin points out, these societies "have firmly believed that such a privileged body of knowledge is in their actual possession and they have deliberately banked their social and political future on it. They have believed that this mode of knowledge is not class-biased in its nature, that its progress serves the interests of all humanity, and that it is, so to speak, objectively objective despite being highly theoretical" (Sheldon S. Wolin, "On the Theory and Practice of Power," in *After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges*, ed. Jonathan Arac [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988], 186).

[2] In Foucault's thought, knowledge and power are interconnected. Not only does knowledge generates power, but power also generates knowledge. He argues that "power and knowledge directly imply one another; . . . there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These 'power-knowledge relations' are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations." From this Foucault concluded that "it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge" (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* [New York: Pantheon, 1977], 27-28). From this argumentation, Foucault asserts that "truth" can be fictitious or created, "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements." Furthermore, he contends that truth systems are kept in reciprocal relationship with power systems from which they come and receive their support (Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon [New York: Pantheon, 1980], 133).

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[1] Erickson, *The Postmodern World*, 42.

[2] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 6. Foucault breaks with the notion that power is ultimately located within the State. He affirms that "relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the bases of other, already existing power relations. The State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth. True, these networks stand in a conditioning—conditioned relationship to a kind of 'meta-power' which is structured essentially round a certain number of great prohibition functions; but this meta-power with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power" (Foucault, "Truth and Power," 122).

[3] Foucault's thinking on the relationship between knowledge and power points to the end of the road that Francis Bacon inaugurated at the beginning of the Enlightenment. Human knowledge does not merely allow the use of power over nature, as Bacon had suggested; according to Foucault, the use of human knowledge itself is always an act of violence. He notes: "Knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; . . . rather, it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence" (Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977], 163). For further details on Michel Foucault's work and influence on postmodern thought, see Jonathan Arac, ed., *After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected*

Richard Rorty (1931-)

Richard Rorty, one of the most eminent philosophers in the United States, abandoned the classic conception of truth that has controlled philosophy since Enlightenment times: the concept that human ideas simply reflect the way reality is, that the mind is the "mirror of nature."[1] Rorty argues that one should simply give up the search for truth and be satisfied with interpretation. He proposes to replace classic "systemic philosophy" with "edifying philosophy," whose aim is "to keep the conversation going rather than to find objective truth," thus calling for a move from epistemology to hermeneutics.[2]

Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980); Gary Gutting, *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Jim Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Anchor, 1994).

[1] This is the central thesis of Rorty's major work, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Much of Rorty's early work, especially as observed in *The Mirror of Nature*, was concerned with rejecting and refuting the realist view, that one can know external reality as it is. His views, however, go beyond simple antirealism. He proposes what he calls *antirepresentationalism*, affirming that it is the "attempt to eschew discussion of realism by denying that the notion of 'representation,' or that of 'fact of the matter,' has any useful role in philosophy" (Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 2).

[2] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 377, 393. Rorty's view of philosophy represents a position against the traditional types of philosophy, which try to give a real explanation of the nature of things through knowledge. On the contrary, Rorty follows a pragmatistic view of truth, from the assumption that access to the world is mediated by language. As a result, truth is not primarily a metaphysical concept but a manner of human convention. See Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays, 1972-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xvi-xvii. Consequently, his version of pragmatism is "simply anti-essentialism applied to notions like 'truth,' 'knowledge,' 'language,' 'morality,' and similar objects of philosophical

Stanley Fish (1938-)

Another scholar whose thoughts have been especially influential on the contemporary postmodern condition is the American literary critic Stanley Fish. In what is probably his most renowned book, *Is There a Text in This Class?* Fish takes the position that literary texts do not have any literal or normative meaning objectively present in them.[1] Meaning is not something embedded in a text to be extracted "like a nut from its shell," notes Jane Tompkins in her analysis of Fish's work, but rather, "an experience one has in the course of reading, . . . that unfolds within the reader's mind."[2] Fish also advocates that all perception, including reading, is a product of mental categories; when people belong to the same interpretive community,[3] they read similar

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theorizing" (ibid., 162). Furthermore, in issuing the call to abandon the quest for a universal theory of knowledge in favor of engaging in an ongoing conversation, Rorty proves himself to be on the same track as Foucault and Derrida, completing the postmodern turn from knowledge to interpretation. For a detailed analysis of Rorty's influence on contemporary postmodern philosophy, see Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 150-166; Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 151-160; David L. Hall, *Richard Rorty: Prophet and Poet of the New Pragmatism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994); Michael Peters and Paulo Ghiraldelli Jr., *Richard Rorty: Education, Philosophy, and Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); and John Pettegrew, *A Pragmatist's Progress? Richard Rorty and American Intellectual History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

[1] Cf. Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 306, 310.

[2] Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xvi-xvii.

[3] The concept of interpretive communities is the cornerstone of Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text?* For further details and a critical analysis of Fish's interpretive community

meanings.[1] According to this concept, what one reads results from what one brings to the text rather than from the text itself.[2] Fish also argues that it is impossible to perceive anything apart from the shaping of the mind within the framework of a given community.[3] Consequently, the reader is not free to give an individual meaning to a text but is constrained by the community's interpretation.[4] In other words, the meaning of texts is only to be found in the context of a community.

Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998)

Finally, French professor of philosophy at the University of Paris, Jean-François Lyotard, has emerged as one of the most influential forces within the postmodern movement. In his most prominent work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*,[5] Lyotard sets the context of postmodernism within the cultural and ideological crisis of Western civilization, specifically describing the problem as a "crisis

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reading theory, see Russell B. Gill, "The Moral Implications of Interpretive Communities," *Christianity and Literature* 33 (1983): 49-63; Stephen D. Moore, "Negative Hermeneutics, Insubstantial Texts: Stanley Fish and the Biblical Interpreter," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 (1986): 707-719.

[1] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* 308-309.

[2] Ibid., 165.

[3] Ibid., 171-172.

[4] Ibid., 335.

[5] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Theory and History of Literature, no. 10 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

of narratives."[1] He contends that all metanarratives, including Christianity, are unsustainable and, therefore, dead. Lyotard's portrayal of the postmodern ethos is based upon a total "incredulity toward metanarratives,"[2] which essentially asserts that universal truth claims are impossible to be established in favor of local narratives which provide the means of legitimization at the community level.

Conceptual Aspects of the Postmodern Condition

This segment contains a description of selected conceptual elements related to the postmodern condition. Among the most significant aspects observed in the literature are epistemological non-foundationalism, relativistic pluralism, dismissal of metanarratives, historical discontinuism, rediscovery of teleological perspectives, and a renewed meaning of community. These conceptual aspects were selected on the basis of their significance to the development and purpose of this study.

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[1] Lyotard's argumentation is based on the notion that life needs to be understood in terms of local narratives, in opposition to the modern worldview which, he notes: "legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse, . . . making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectic of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth" (ibid., xxiii). For a concise description of Lyotard's work, see Andrew E. Benjamin, ed., *The Lyotard Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989); and Thomas Docherty, "Postmodernist Theory: Lyotard, Baudrillard and Others," in *Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney (New York: Routledge, 1994), 479-481.

[2] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, xiv. Lyotard challenges the assumption that the development of a metanarrative is possible, particularly one that is centered on reason alone. He indicates, according to Van Gelder, that "Enlightenment thinkers made a great mistake when they set one particular kind of knowledge—scientific knowledge—above all others and insisted that all experience should be interpreted in terms of it" (Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 128).

Epistemological Non-Foundationalism

One of the distinguishing marks of the emergent postmodern condition is its persistent attack on the philosophical foundationalism[1] of the modern worldview, in view of the fact that "all pre-existing 'foundations' of epistemology have been shown to be unreliable."[2] In their relativistic and pluralistic perceptions of reality, postmoderns argue that questions of validity, authority, truth, and fact cannot be answered with certainty.[3] In other words, the postmodern ethos proposes the abandonment of the notion of an objective universal worldview. Grenz notes:

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[1] Foust, "Lesslie Newbigin's Epistemology: A Dual Discourse?" 153. Foundationalism, according to Grenz and Franke, is in its broadest sense "merely the acknowledgement of the seemingly obvious observation that not all beliefs we hold (or assertions we formulate) are on the same level, but that some beliefs (or assertions) anchor others. Stated in the opposite manner, certain of our beliefs (or assertions) receive their support from other beliefs (or assertions) that are more 'basic' or 'foundational'" (Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 29). Plantinga, in turn, asserts that foundationalism is a prescription to determine "what constitutes a correct, acceptable, or rightly structured system of beliefs" (Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983], 48). See also John E. Thiel, *Nonfoundationalism*, Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 2-4; Wood, *Epistemology*, 78-79.

[2] Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 46. For a description of the most significant aspects of the critique of foundationalism, see Wood, *Epistemology*, 88-98.

[3] Stanley E. Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 344. Philosophically speaking, according to Van Huyssteen, non-foundationalism (or anti-foundationalism) is one of the most important roots or resources of postmodernism, since postmoderns "deny that we have any of those alleged strong foundations for our belief-systems and argue instead that all of our beliefs together form

> A denial of the reality of a unified world as the object of our perception is at the heart of postmodernism. Postmoderns reject the possibility of constructing a single correct worldview and are content simply to speak of many views, by extension, many worlds. . . . By replacing the modern worldview with a multiplicity of views and worlds, the postmodern era has in effect replaced knowledge with interpretation.[1]

In an attempt to develop its non-foundational epistemology, postmoderns also argue that reason is not the only way to access knowledge. Other ways include feelings, emotions, and intuition.[2] The postmodern mind-set, thus, asserts that to tolerate the supremacy of reason is to

> favor the head over the heart; the mechanical over the spiritual or the natural . . . , the inertly impersonal over the richly personal . . . ; the dead tradition over the living experiment; the positivist experiment over the living tradition; the static product over the dynamic process; the monotony of linear time over the timeless recurrence of myth; dull, sterile order over dynamic disorder; chaotic, entropic disorder over primordial order; the forces of death over the forces of life.[3]

In a sense, in the postmodern non-foundationalistic view, the universe is no

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part of a groundless web of interrelated beliefs" (Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 3).

[1] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 40. Van Engen argues that "in its rejection of any foundations upon which to build a worldview, [postmodernism] seems to be thrusting us into a world of almost idyllic subjectivism, where meaning is ascribed only by the knower, where ultimately there can be no judgment, no ethics, no values—only subjectivism and relativism that lead to atomization, and ultimately such meaninglessness that conversation no longer has a place" (Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*, 221).

[2] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 7.

[3] Gerald Graff, *Literature against Itself* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 25.

longer seen as a mechanic reality but, rather, is perceived in relational and personal terms. Accordingly, it is intrinsic to the postmodern outlook to affirm the "impossibility of establishing any fixed foundations for knowledge."[1]

In many ways, postmodern non-foundationalism is also a rebirth of Nietzsche's nihilistic emphasis on subjective epistemology.[2] For Nietzsche, all knowing was based on perspective, without factual information; knowledge thus became only interpretation from one's own point of view. Moreover, in the postmodern mind-set, claims of objective knowledge are seen as expressions of domination. Analyzing this perspective, Snyder asserts:

> The project of nihilism is to unmask all systems of reason as systems of persuasion, and to show that logic—the very basis of rational metaphysical thought—is in fact only a kind of rhetoric. All thought that pretends to discover truth is but an expression of the will of power—even domination—of those making the truth-claims over those who are being addressed by them.[3]

It is not yet clear what kind of epistemology will eventually replace

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[1] Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 169. See also Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 1-25, 118-121; and Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 16-23. The most influential postmodern attack on the Enlightenment commitment to reason and its foundationalist epistemology can be found on Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

[2] William E. Brown, "Theology in a Postmodern Culture: Implications of a Video-Dependent Society," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2d ed., ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 159-160.

[3] Jon R. Snyder, "Translator's Introduction," in *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, by Gianni Vattimo, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), xii.

Enlightenment foundationalism, but the postmodern movement is at least united in the conviction that foundationalism is inadequate as a theory of knowledge.[1] Some scholars point to pragmatism[2] as the only hopeful replacement to foundationalism, and no other intellectual has promulgated this type of pragmatism more aggressively than Richard Rorty.[3] He contends that one should not seek an objective, external foundation for human inquiry into truth, but should conform to the limitations that arise through conversations with fellow inquirers.[1] For Rorty, the only valid guidelines are those of the community in which one is involved, where conversation among differing interpretations happens.[2] In this perspective, the goal of philosophy is not to uncover objective truth but to maintain the discussion among competing interpretations.[3] As a result, postmodern epistemology is one of skepticism toward all statements which affirm that things have to be done in one particular way, and that way only, thus leading to an increasingly relativistic and pluralistic mind-set.

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[1] According to Lints, the postmodern argument says that "people do not ordinarily think only with rational foundations in mind and that in fact no human being is or can be purely objective or form hypotheses based solely on rational considerations. The process of forming theories involves far more than simply locating the proper foundations and building upward from there. Unspoken political and ideological assumptions exert a greater influence than reason itself on the construction of reigning paradigms of knowledge" (Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 219).

[2] In an attempt to present alternatives to Enlightenment-based foundationalism, two views have emerged almost simultaneously: coherentism and pragmatism. At the heart of coherentism is the suggestion that the justification for a belief lays in its "fit" with other held beliefs. In other words, sets of beliefs must be interconnected in some way. Rather than remaining a collection of loose "beliefs" that have nothing to do with one another, they must form an integrated whole; and this whole must carry "explanatory power" (Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 38-39). On the other hand, the pragmatist view suggests that truth in any belief must be "measured according to the belief's success in advancing 'factual inquiry': the activity aimed at the discovery of truth" (ibid., 40). In place of the assumption that beliefs are tools for dealing with reality, they are seen as aphorisms that prescribe the behavior of the one who holds them. See Rorty's introduction to John P. Murphy, *Pragmatism: From Peirce to Davidson* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), 1-6. Furthermore, the pragmatists' innovation, according to Arthur E. Murphy's judgment, was their "insistence that the meaning and worth of ideas is rightly judged, not by their conformity to a 'reality' set up in advance as the final standard of truth and reasonableness, but by the way they function in the context of responsible inquiry" (Arthur E. Murphy, *The Uses of Reason* [Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1972], 85-86).

[3] For Rorty's three-point summary of his brand of pragmatism, see Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, 160-166. For an additional analysis of pragmatism and the postmodern condition, see Bernd Magnus, "Postmodern Pragmatism: Nietzsche,

Relativistic Pluralism

A central cultural hallmark of the postmodern paradigm involves a radical type of relativism and pluralism.[4] Postmoderns tend to disagree with any concept of absolute

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Heidegger, Derrida, and Rorty," in *Pragmatism: From Progressivism to Postmodernism*, ed. Robert Hollinger and David J. Depew (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 256-283.

[1] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 165.

[2] Ibid., 166.

[3] Ibid., 165.

[4] Obviously, relativism and pluralism are not new phenomena. Nevertheless, they have a different contour than their previous forms. The relativistic pluralism of late modernity was highly individualistic, elevating personal choice as the goal to be achieved. The postmodern condition, in contrast, emphasizes the group. See Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 15.

truth or authority,[1] thus encouraging a pluralistic view of the world and tolerance to others' perspectives.

According to Alister McGrath, there are two kinds of pluralism: (1) *descriptive pluralism*, as a fact of life; and (2) *ideological pluralism*, as an ideology.[2] On the one hand, McGrath contends, the existence of rival religious, moral, and philosophical presuppositions and convictions calls for the descriptive type of pluralism. On the other hand, he suggests, the ideological type of pluralism promotes the worldview in which "normative claims to truth are to be censored as imperialist and divisive. . . . Claims by any one group or individual to have an exclusive hold on 'truth' are thus treated as the intellectual equivalent of fascism."[1] Jonathan Culler, in turn, contends that for postmoderns "truth is either meaningless or arbitrary."[2]

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[1] Such an understanding of absolute truth, according to Greer, "has characterized the West since early Hellenism. It is an understanding of truth that is absolute and universal and therefore not subject to plurality where opposing systems can be deemed equally true" (Greer, *Mapping Postmodernism*, 73).

[2] Alister E. McGrath, "The Challenge of Pluralism for the Contemporary Christian Church," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (September 1992): 361. McGrath draws his comments from Lesslie Newbigin's statement as he asserts that "it has become a commonplace to say that we live in a pluralistic society—not merely a society which is in fact plural in the variety of cultures, religions, and life-styles which it embraces, but pluralistic in the sense that this plurality is celebrated as things to be approved and cherished" (Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 1). D. A. Carson comes close to McGrath in describing three usages of the term "pluralism." He asserts that it may refer to: (1) the growing diversity of race, heritage, religion, and value systems within Western culture; (2) the value of toleration for this diversity; and (3) the philosophical posture which insists that tolerance must be granted to all views on the grounds that none can claim to be true. Here, the "only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism" (D. A. Carson, "Christian Witness in an Age of Pluralism," in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 32-33).

In their ongoing assault on Enlightenment-based rationalism, postmoderns argue that the modern worldview presupposes universalism, the view that the same set of laws is valid to everyone, everywhere. On the contrary, postmoderns contend that each circumstance has its own peculiarities and for this reason should receive a unique consideration. In the postmodern condition, however, universal reason no longer exerts dominance because all paradigms and worldviews are now relative to one's interpretation.[3] Consequently, relativism becomes one of the most perceptible results of this pluralistic view.[4] In this context, Tarnas notes:

> The other side of the postmodern mind's openness and indeterminacy is thus the lack of any firm ground for a worldview. Both inner and outer realities have become unfathomably ramified, multidimensional, malleable, and unbounded—bringing a

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[1] McGrath, "The Challenge of Pluralism," 361-362.

[2] Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 22. Postmoderns have also adopted a pluralistic view of knowledge, rejecting the notion of a single objective world and any other single basis on which to judge the validity of one's thoughts and knowledge. Anderson offers a typical postmodern conclusion: "Lacking absolutes, we will have to encounter one another as people with different information, different stories, different visions—and trust the outcome" (Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*, 183).

[3] Reason is also viewed as inconsistent with the postmodern reliance in "emotion, feeling, introspection and intuition, autonomy, creativity, imagination, fantasy, and contemplation" (Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*, 129). See also Huston Smith, "Postmodernism's Impact on the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (1990): 653-670.

[4] Hiebert, "The Gospel in Our Culture," 154.

> spur to courage and creativity, yet also a potentially debilitating anxiety in the face of unending relativism and existential finitude. The conflicts of subjective and objective testings, an acute awareness of the cultural parochialism and historical relativity of all knowledge, a pervasive sense of radical uncertainty and displacement, and a pluralism bordering on distressing incoherence all contribute to the postmodern condition.[1]

Furthermore, because all people are subject to the limitations of historical and cultural conditioning of their own context, postmodernism presupposes truth to be relative to one's personal experience. From this perspective, postmoderns argue that relativistic pluralism represents an alternative possibility for human experience and expression, apart from the Enlightenment-based, modern worldview.[2]

Rejection of Metanarratives

In a context permeated with this pluralistic spirit, any attempt to articulate an overarching explanation of reality is viewed with great disbelief. Hence, an additional tenet of the postmodern condition is found in the dismissal of modernity's all-inclusive interpretations, or metanarratives,[3] which previously gave Western culture its consistency and sense of purpose.[1] In fact, Lyotard defines postmodernity simply as "incredulity towards metanarratives."[2] According to him, the metanarratives of scientific progress that have legitimated modern society are in the process of losing their credibility and power. Lyotard further argues that history has constantly faced times when previous narratives were simply substituted by newer "myths."[3]

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[1] Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, 398.

[2] In her comments on David Hesselgrave's *Scripture and Strategy*, Martha Franks says that he "points to the breathtaking pluralism of our world and the postmodern ideas that seem to have flowed from that pluralism. He sees in them the possibility that the Western mind has reached the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Enlightenment" (Martha Franks, "Election, Pluralism, and the Missiology of Scripture in a Postmodern Age," *Missiology* 26 [1998]: 337).

[3] From earliest times, humankind has attempted to identify the fundamental character of reality. From these attempts came several comprehensive schemes of explanation, known as metanarratives (or grand narratives). This term is used for any all-encompassing theory which claims to provide universal interpretations and

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applicability. An example of metanarratives would be Marxism, which perceives human history and social human behavior through the theory of dialectical materialism. According to this theory, "all human history has been the history of class struggle, and it denies the validity of all other explanations, laying sole claim to the truth." Similarly, postmoderns argue, "most religions offer a similar all-embracing explanation of human history to fit their particular schemes." In the Christian metanarrative, there is an Almighty God who created everything, and who is in control of human existence. Nonetheless, Lyotard contends that such universal, all-encompassing schemes "are implicitly authoritarian and that by the late twentieth century they lost all claim to authority over individual behavior." In Lyotard's view, people have now seen through metanarratives long enough to realize "that their claims to authority are false and unsustainable" (*The Icon Dictionary of Postmodern Thought* [1998], s.v. "Grand Narrative"). For further details, see Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 113-118, 337-339; and Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*, 91.

[1] William J. Larkin, Jr., "The Recovery of Luke-Acts as 'Grand Narrative' for the Church's Evangelistic and Edification Tasks in a Postmodern Age," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000): 405.

[2] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, xiv.

[3] Ibid., 37. In his review of Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition*, Terry Eagleton writes, "Post-modernism signals the death of such 'meta-narratives' whose secretly terroristic function is to ground and legitimate the illusion of a 'universal' human history. We are now in the process of awakening from the nightmare of modernity, with its manipulative reason and fetish of the totality, into the laid-back pluralism of the post-modern, that heterogeneous range of life-styles and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalize and legitimate itself. . . . Science and philosophy must jettison their grandiose metaphysical claims and view themselves more modestly as

The postmodern condition, however, is not merely marked by the loss of a particular myth of modernity. Rather, Grenz points out,

> the postmodern ethos entails the end of the appeal to any central legitimating myth whatsoever. Not only have all the reigning metanarratives lost their credibility, . . . but the idea of a grand narrative is itself no longer credible. Consequently, the postmodern outlook demands an attack on any claim to universality.[1]

In favor of plurality, therefore, the postmodern condition has declared "war on totality."[2] According to postmoderns, Harvey writes, "universal and eternal truths, if they exist at all, cannot be specified,"[3] given that metanarratives in their understanding are condemned to total failure. Furthermore, the postmodern ethos assumes that "no single metanarrative is possible because none is large enough to encompass the experiences of all people, marginalized or not."[4] Paul Hiebert writes, "The Enlightenment sought to build one Grand Unified Theory which integrated all knowledge into one comprehensive system. Today we know that that is not possible.

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jus another set of narratives" (Terry Eagleton, "Awakening from Modernity," *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 February 1987, 194).

[1] Stanley J. Grenz, "The Universality of the Jesus-Story and the Incredulity toward Metanarratives," in *No Other Gods before Me? Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions*, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 94.

[2] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 82.

[3] David Harvey, "The Condition of Postmodernity," in *The Post-Modern Reader*, ed. Charles Jencks (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 305.

[4] Gary Phillips, "Religious Pluralism in a Postmodern World," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 133.

Our human minds are finite and cannot comprehend the full measure of truth."[1]

The postmodern rejection of metanarratives, therefore, implies that no longer is there a search for one set of beliefs that can unite human beings into one people or the earth in one world. Yet, postmoderns still place a great deal of emphasis on local narratives, where each individual experiences a world within the context of the communities he or she lives in.

Historical Discontinuism

The idea of history having an initial point, a normal sequence, and an end is rejected in the postmodern condition.[2] The centers of history, their perspectives and languages, are so varied, postmoderns insist, that a universal and linear history is not possible. "The dissolution of history," contends Vattimo, "means first and foremost the breaking down of its unity."[3] History, adds Vattimo, "tends to flatten out at the level of contemporaneity."[1] For this reason, postmoderns strive to emphasize the present by separating it from the past. In a review of Foucault's defense of the discontinuity of history, Sarup observes that "unlike the historian who traces a line of inevitability, Foucault breaks off the past from the present and, by demonstrating the foreignness of the past, relativizes and undercuts the legitimacy of the present."[2]

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[1] Paul G. Hiebert and Tite Tiénou, "Missions and the Doing of Theology," in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World*, ed. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 95.

[2] Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*, 62. Rosenau affirms that postmoderns generally challenge at least four elements in the conventional views of history: "(1) the idea that there is a real, knowable past, a record of evolutionary progress of human ideas, institutions, or actions, (2) the view that historians should be objective, (3) that reason enables historians to explain the past, and (4) that the role of history is to interpret and transmit human cultural and intellectual heritage from generation to generation" (ibid., 63).

[3] Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 8.

The postmodern historical discontinuism is ultimately linked to the impossibility of finding one all-inclusive interpretation of history which is authentic to the whole of reality. On the contrary, as Kirk notes, "the history of humankind is judged to be a discontinuous succession of fairly random events without any transcendent meaning or purpose. For postmodernity . . . there is no one story, only fragments of many stories."[3]

Postmodernity, however, is not an attempt to eradicate the past but selectively goes back to historical texts and recreates from them new contexts to produce new meanings. According to Harvey, history supplies postmoderns with a vast archive of images that may be put together in any way one desires—it has "as incredible ability to plunder history and absorb whatever it finds there as some aspect of the present."[1] Harvey writes, "Given the evaporation of any sense of historical continuity and memory, and the rejection of meta-narratives, the only role left for the historian, for example, is to become . . . [an] archaeologist of the past."[2]

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[1] Ibid., 10. In order to achieve this end, many postmodern writers, as Grenz points out, "confront their audience with a multiplicity of styles, a seemingly discordant polyphony of decontextualized voices. This technique—lifting elements of style from their original historical context—is what their critics denounce as the dislocation and flattening of history" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 21). For examples, see Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay, 1983), 116-117.

[2] Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, 2d ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 58.

[3] Kirk, "Following Modernity and Postmodernity," 225.

Furthermore, comparing this breaking from the past with the effects of technological developments, Brown suggests that "a technological society becomes 'non-historical.' Progress becomes so expected that it represents no progress at all. New developments become increasingly less 'new' and society becomes fixated (and bored) with technology."[3] As a result, the present is all that matters. Hence, the postmodern ethos presents "the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents and the loss or end of a sense of history."[4] Additionally, but with a more extreme argumentation, Anthony Giddens asserts that the postmodern ethos is closely related to the end of history.[5]

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[1] Harvey, "The Condition of Postmodernity," 311.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Brown, "Theology in a Postmodern Culture," 160.

[4] Mike Featherstone, *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995), 76.

[5] Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 50. Historians are suspicious of the concepts of "modernity" and "postmodernity," which have led to differing perspectives on history. For instance, Joe Holland proposes a postmodern perspective of history centered upon a "dialectical view of history as an ongoing creation." This dialectical view of history links "radical memory with creative imagination, marked by a dynamic inner tension, and it is represented in the figure of a holistic spiral." According to this

Rediscovery of Teleological Perspectives

Historically, the mechanical, non-teleological determinism of the universe and the negative approach to chance contributed to the modern scientific disillusionment. The removal of the teleological understanding of reality—and the continual "cause-and-effect" thinking of the modern paradigm—ultimately left the universe meaningless and human life useless. Scientist George G. Simpson, in the heyday of the modern era, confirmed this perspective, claiming that, in the name of science, "man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned."[1]

Contemporary science, however, with its most recent discoveries has refuted some of the scientific propositions of the modern era, re-evaluating the role of irreversibility and chance.[2] Gerald Pillay asserts that "the teleological dimension that the Enlightenment jettisoned is being rediscovered."[3] Humans, as David Bosch points out,

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view, "the new future emerges to challenge the present but it remains rooted in the past." The past, therefore, is not totally rejected but is refocused in order to deepen the creative energy of the historical whole (Holland, "Postmodern Paradigm," 19). See also Patrick Joyce, "The End of Social History?" in *The Postmodern History Reader*, ed. Keith Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1997), 341. For an in-depth analysis of postmodern history, see Keith Jenkins, ed., *The Postmodern History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[1] George G. Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1949), 344.

[2] Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 270.

[3] Gerald J. Pillay, "Text, Paradigms and Context: An Examination of David Bosch's Use of Paradigms in the Reading of Christian History," in *Mission in Creative*

cannot "continue living without meaning, purpose, and hope."[1] On the contrary, the postmodern mind-set looks for "some source of meaning and value that transcends" the previous worldview orientation.[2] Bosch observes that

> the category of contingency and unpredictability has been reintroduced [in the postmodern paradigm]. The notion of change—the belief that things can be different, that it is not necessary to live by old and established patterns, that everything does not operate according to unchanging laws of cause and effect—has again been recognized as both a theological and sociological category. . . . Revisiòn of earlier realities and positions, long submerged by the suffocating logic of rigid cause and effect thinking, has surfaced again.[3]

The advent of the relativity theory and quantum physics has led many postmodern scientists to an increasing awareness of the complexity of the universe. In fact, asserts Grenz, "the emerging consensus is that ours is a relative and participatory world."[4] Accordingly, postmoderns insist that humans are not spectators who approach the world but rather "*participants in that which is to be known.*"[5]

The postmodern condition, nevertheless, proposes a singular view on scientific knowledge. Bellah notes that it is "not a compilation of objective universal truths but a

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Tension: A Dialogue with David Bosch, ed. J. N. Kritzinger and W. A. Saayman (Pretoria, South Africa: Southern African Missiological Society, 1990), 113.

[1] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 355.

[2] Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity . . . What?* 60.

[3] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 356.

[4] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 55.

[5] Miller, "The Emerging Postmodern World," 10, emphasis in original.

collection of research traditions borne by particular communities of inquirers."[1] The postmodern ethos assumes that the world is not a given, an object "out there," to be found, examined, and understood, but something that must be experienced through participatory means. Miller describes:

> The world is understood to be relative, indeterminate, and participatory. Existence is fully relative; that is, nothing exists in and of itself. To be is to be related. In a Newtonian world it was possible to conceive of absolute contexts of space and time within which an object could be isolated. But with Einstein's development of relativity physics, common-sense notions of the absoluteness of space and time have been abandoned. . . . At its most fundamental level, the universe does not seem to be composed of stuff or things at all but rather of dynamic relations.[2]

The postmodern paradigm, therefore, seeks to incorporate human consciousness into the wider reality and to create a newly conceived sense of relationships with one another and with nature. Hence, the postmodern outlook places on community a remarkable emphasis, one that goes beyond the characteristic individualism found at the heart of the Western modern worldview.[3]

A Renewed Meaning of Community

Postmoderns do not embrace the Enlightenment-based individualism that was characteristic of the modern era. They have rejected the narcissistic Western culture with its emphasis on absolutes and individualism.[1] Community is exploited as a unifying factor of their argumentation,[2] and the concept of community is extolled in response to some of the criticism related to the postmodern ethos. This is noticeable in several postmodern concepts, where community is used as the central point and stabilizing instrument.[3] As Kvale asserts, "the emphasis upon the local surpasses the modern polarity of the universal and the individual, of the objective and the subjective. The local interaction, *the communal network, is the point of departure*."[4]

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[1] Bellah, "Christian Faithfulness in a Pluralist World," 76.

[2] Miller, "The Emerging Postmodern World," 9.

[3] Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart*, 142.

The postmodern condition turns around a community-based understanding of truth. Consequently, truth is relative to the community one is associated with. In a strong reaction against the modern worldview and generic notions of rationality, postmoderns highlight the epistemological importance of community, arguing that every community and context has its own rationality.[1] Grenz observes,

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[1] Oden, "Death of Modernity," 27.

[2] Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 51.

[3] However, it is important to emphasize that the postmodern individual, as Rosenau points out, "shying away from collective affiliation and communal responsibility in modern terms, considers them a hindrance to personal development and a threat to privacy. Modern community is said to be oppressive; it demands intimacy, giving, self-sacrifice, and mutual service. Inasmuch as it is 'reasonable,' it also is 'domineering and humiliating.' Post-modern community is possible, but it must be based in 'community without unity.' Only in this condition can it be considered acceptable to the post-modern individual" (Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*, 54).

[4] Steinar Kvale, "Themes of Postmodernity," in *The Truth about the Truth: De-Confusing and Re-Constructing the Postmodern World*, ed. Walter T. Anderson (New York: Putnam's, 1995), 20, emphasis added.

> Postmoderns believe that not only our specific beliefs but also our understanding of truth itself is rooted in the community in which we participate. They reject the Enlightenment quest for universal, supracultural, timeless truth in favor of searching out truth as the expression of a specific community. . . . And since there are many human communities, there are necessarily many different truths. Most postmoderns make the leap of believing that this plurality of truths can exist alongside one another.[2]

Thus, the postmodern ethos once again emphasizes relativism, affirming that whatever is accepted as truth, and even the way truth is envisioned is dependent on the communal context. Consequently, Grenz contends that further, and far more drastically, the postmodern condition "affirms that this relativity extends beyond our *perceptions* of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; rather, . . . truth consists in the ground rules that facilitate the well-being of the community in which one participates."[3] Truth, in this perspective, is understood as what is to be accepted by the community as good for "now." Bauman writes:

> Having privatized modern fears and the worry of coping with them, [postmodernity] had to become an age of imagined communities. For the philosophers and the ordinary folk alike, community is now expected to bring the succour previously sought in the pronouncements of universal reason. . . . But such a community, like its predecessor, universal reason, does not grow in the wilderness: it is a greenhouse plant, that needs sowing, feeding, trimming and protection from weeds and parasites.

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[1] Van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology*, 3.

[2] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 14.

[3] Ibid., 8, emphasis in original. See also Kath Donavan and Ruth Myors, "Reflections on Attrition in Career Missionaries: A Generational Perspective into the Future," in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1997), 51.

> Even then it leads but a precarious existence and can wither away overnight once the supply of loving care runs out. It is precisely because of its vulnerability that community provides the focus of postmodern concerns, that it attracts so much intellectual and practical attention, that it figures so prominently in the philosophical models and popular ideologies of postmodernity.[1]

Furthermore, to reject something as not true is not to say it does not correspond to the facts presented; it may simply mean that someone at some time in the future may come up with a different interpretation, one that might work better. Within this view, objectivity is not reached in focusing on more evidence for the "truth" in question. Rather, it involves the broadening of the scope of communal agreements to the greatest possible degree,[2] resulting in the relativistic pluralism already discussed. Therefore, in the postmodern mind, beliefs are accepted as true only within the context of communities that support them, and these beliefs can change as often as required by the communal context.

For instance, a prime use of the postmodern concept of community is found in the postmodern interaction and interpretation of literary texts. Postmoderns argue that there is no final, fixed meaning of texts, and that the interpretation of them depends on the context in which the interaction between reader and text takes place. Consequently, one may ask: How is it possible to reach an agreement on the meaning of written statements? Postmoderns answer that community solves the problem of relativity and subjectivism in the meaning of a given text. As Erickson observes, postmoderns argue that

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[1] Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, xviii-xix.

[2] Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 22-23.

> communication does not take place in a vacuum, but in the context of an institutional community. In such a context, one hears statements within an assumed set of purposes and intentions. Definite meaning does not derive from some fixed meaning embedded within a given text, but from the context of the *interpretative community*.[1]

Since a person is always in the context of a somehow ordered community, Stanley Fish contends, one's interpretative activities are not free but are controlled by the "understood practices and assumptions of the institution and not the rules and fixed meanings of a language system."[2] In other words, one's interpretation is not related primarily to the fixed meaning of the text, but conditioned by the contextual community-based environment.

The postmodern concept of community is also evident in the abandonment of historical continuity and its close relation to the postmodern rejection of metanarratives. Historical and structural principles, according to Holland, are "linked in a communal and creative ecology of time and space."[3] Since communal context is recognized as the foundation of every creative act, community has the power—and authority—to dismiss any unifying and universally valid explanation.

Consequently, all-encompassing stories are replaced by a respect for differences and a celebration of the local and particular at the expense of the universal. Ultimately, the universal objective rationalism of the Enlightenment-based modern worldview has been increasingly replaced by the concept of community and its integration with the various elements associated with the postmodern condition.

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[1] Erickson, *The Postmodern World*, 52, emphasis added.

[2] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* 306.

[3] Holland, "Postmodern Paradigm," 20.

Cultural Expressions in the Postmodern Condition

The rejection of a universal worldview, introduced by the postmodern ethos, has become one of the most significant characteristics of the present-day condition. It is most evident in the cultural characteristics of Western societies. However, most Westerners have not read the philosophical ideas of postmodern theory. Few have heard of scholars such as Derrida, Foucault, or Lyotard, but nearly all have been exposed to the influence of their thinking through cultural expressions of the postmodern condition.[1] This section describes some of the areas which have been most influenced by the postmodern mind-set. Among them are art, architecture, fiction, cinema, television, music, lifestyles, and religion.

Postmodernism and Art

Postmodern artists, in celebration of the relativistic pluralism associated with the postmodern condition, deliberately combine apparently opposing styles derived from various sources, employing the technique of *collage* or juxtaposing. This technique allows the artist to mix and blend apparently incompatible materials or concepts in their artistic work. The technique of collage also presents the postmodern critique of the myth of the uniform, single creating author.[1] However, as Grenz points out, there is a deeper intent in this artistic expression:

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[1] Until quite recently most of the postmodern thought and influence was confined to intellectual circles, especially in literature and architecture. Eventually, however, the postmodern ethos permeated the public in general through popular cultural expressions. See Tom W. Boyd, "Is Spirituality Possible without Religion? A Query for the Postmodern Era," in *Divine Representations: Postmodernism and Spirituality*, ed. Ann W. Astell (New York: Paulist, 1994), 83-86.

> The intent of postmodern works is not necessarily tastelessness. Rather, postmoderns often seek to undermine the concept of the powerful originating author. They attempt to destroy what they see as the modernist ideology of style, replacing it with a culture of multiple styles. To achieve this end, many postmodern artists confront their audience with a multiplicity of styles, a seemingly discordant polyphony of decontextualized voices.[2]

Furthermore, with the use of collage of images, postmodern artists leave open to the observer the various possibilities for interpretation of their work.[3] Since the interpretation is relative to those who will be exposed to the art work, the subjectivity involved most clearly captures the pluralism of the postmodern condition.[1]

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[1] For example, see Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum's Ruins," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay, 1983), 43-56; and Paolo Portoghesi, "What Is the Postmodern?" in *The Post-Modern Reader*, ed. Charles Jencks (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 208-209.

[2] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 21. See also Irit Rogoff, "The Aesthetics of Post-History," in *Vision and Textuality*, ed. Stephen W. Melville and Bill Readings (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 115-142.

[3] In this basic assumption, postmodern art, as discussed by Howard Fox in *Avant-Garde in the Eighties*, "is neither exclusionary nor reductive but syntactic, freely enlisting the full range of conditions, experiences, and knowledge beyond the object. Far from seeking a single and complete experience, the Post-Modern object strives toward an encyclopedic condition, allowing a myriad of access points, an infinitude of interpretative responses" (Howard N. Fox, *Avant-Garde in the Eighties* [Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1987], 29-30).

Postmodernism and Architecture

Postmodern scholars say the clearest starting point in the examination of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism is found in architecture.[2] Like the artistic *avant-garde* that preceded them, and absorbed by the objective absolutism of the modern worldview, modern architects pursued the remolding of society based on "their interpretation of the progressive technology of the Industrial Revolution."[3] To that end, they sought the development of a rational, tightly planned architecture, based on the principle of unity and pure "stereometric forms,"[4] which was led by the *International Style*, born in the 1920s.[5]

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[1] Charles Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?* 4th ed. (London: Academy Editions, 1996), 7.

[2] Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 75.

[3] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), 136. For further details, see Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 112; Heinrich Klotz, *The History of Postmodern Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 8; and Leland M. Roth, *Understanding Architecture: Its Elements, History, and Meaning* (New York: Icon, 1993), 505-513.

[4] Klotz, *The History of Postmodern Architecture*, 8-11. See also Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman, *Architecture, from Prehistory to Post-Modernism: The Western Tradition* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 487-488.

[5] Jane P. Clendinning, "Postmodern Architecture/Postmodern Music," in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, ed. Joseph Auner and Judy Lochhead (New York: Routledge, 2002), 120.

In critical response to the modern tendency towards univalence,[1] and its requirement that buildings should be designed to reflect absolute unity, postmodern architecture intentionally explores and displays incompatibilities of style, form, and texture.[2] As Connor notes:

> The principle of abstraction is countered by a renewed interest in the connotative or referential languages of architecture; . . . timelessness gives way to a critical engagement with history; univalence and identity are replaced by the principles of multivalence or plurality; and this brings about a corresponding shift from heroic individuality to collaborative authorship.[3]

Therefore, through architectural achievements, postmoderns seek to explore and solidify new ways that incorporate the postmodern concepts of diversity and pluralism in Western culture. It is significant, however, that postmodern architecture has rapidly become the most widespread style of contemporary urban architecture around the globe.[1]

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[1] Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, 78. Modern architecture is characterized by what Charles Jencks calls "univalence." By this he means the simple, but widely used pattern of glass-and-steel boxes. On the contrary, postmodern architecture is characterized by the various ways in which it rejects the univalence principle. See Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 4th ed. (New York: Rizzoli, 1984), 15.

[2] Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, 80. "Postmodern architecture involves," according to Best and Kellner, "a rejection of modernist conceptions of stylistic purity, aesthetic elitism, rationalism, and universally based humanist and utopian political programs to beget a new humankind through architectural design" (Best and Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn*, 138). For instance, Robert Venturi, a leading architectural theorist, describes the postmodern architectonical outlook saying: "I like elements which are hybrid rather than 'pure,' compromising rather then 'clean,' distorted rather then 'straightforward,' ambiguous rather than 'articulated,' perverse as well as impersonal, boring as well as interesting. . . . I'm for messy vitality over obvious unity" (Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 2d ed. [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002], 8).

[3] Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, 83.

Postmodernism and Fiction

Following the same path of other postmodern cultural expressions, postmodern fiction focuses on the subjective, denying the modern ideal of an absolute universal truth.[2] Joseph Conte observes that postmodern fiction is "engaged in the continual process of invention and disruption, . . . an ever-shifting interpenetration of figures of order and chaos."[3]

Some of the most obvious features of postmodern fiction are the dissolution of the sense of time, the loose connection of ideas, and a loss of distinction between reality and imagination.[4] John Aldridge writes that postmodern fiction

> may be considered fabulation not in the sense that it states an explicit moral or follows the pattern of allegory, but rather in the sense that it attempts to create an impression or hallucination of the fabulous nature of contemporary reality and, by implication, of the current blurring of distinction between reality and fiction.[5]

In accordance with the general postmodern style, postmodern fiction also utilizes the technique of juxtaposing. It might involve the juxtaposition of characters in the narrative and the metafiction[1] ability to create and hold together two or more worlds.[2] Some postmodern authors, for instance, are known for juxtaposing traditional and historical themes with irony and sarcasm.[3]

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[1] Klotz, *The History of Postmodern Architecture*, 2.

[2] Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, 118.

[3] Joseph M. Conte, *Design and Debris: A Chaotics of Postmodern American Fiction* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 9.

[4] Barry Lewis, "Postmodernism and Literature," in *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, ed. Stuart Sim (Cambridge: Icon, 1998), 123.

[5] John W. Aldridge, *The American Novel and the Way We Live Now* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 119.

Another strong characteristic of postmodern fiction is the obsession to display temporal disorder, thus creating a sense of historical fantasy.[4] This preoccupation intends to remove readers from their vantage position outside time. Postmodern authors, therefore, "seek to leave the reader naked and unaccommodated,"[5] in a world without the concept of eternal realities and impassive to the flow of time in historical events.

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[1] Connor defines metafiction as the category of "fictional writing that explores its own nature as fiction" (Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, 123).

[2] Postmodern fiction usually juxtaposes two or more worlds. When this technique is applied, "the characters of the play are often confused as to which world they belong to and uncertain about how they should act" (ibid., 129).

[3] Umberto Eco, "Postscript to the Name of the Rose: Postmodernism, Irony, the Enjoyable," in *The Post-Modern Reader*, ed. Charles Jencks (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 74. See also William Fleming, *Arts and Ideas*, 8th ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1991), 606.

[4] Postmodern fiction disorders the linear logic of narratives by breaking the logical sense of time. This can be accomplished by several means, such as the use of "apocryphal history" or "historical fantasy." The former involves the use of mock accounts of well-known or famous events; the latter, the blending of history and fantasy in the creation of the narrative (Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* [New York: Routledge, 1996], 90-96). Nevertheless, McHale affirms, "Postmodernist apocryphal history is often fantastic history at the same time" (ibid., 95). See also Lewis, "Postmodernism and Literature," 124-125.

[5] William V. Spanos, ed., *Martin Heidegger and the Question of Literature: Toward a Postmodern Literary Hermeneutics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 135.

Postmodernism and Cinema

One of the most significant dimensions of popular culture that is deeply shaped by the postmodern outlook is filmmaking. Technological developments, as Grenz observes, have facilitated the expansion of postmodern ideas within the cinematographic industry:

> Filmmaking technology fits the postmodern ethos in that its products—films—give the illusion of being what they are not. The film may appear to be a unified narrative presented by a specific group of performers, but in fact it is a technological artifact assembled by a variety of specialists from a range of materials and with a range of techniques that are seldom evident in the film itself. In this sense, the unity of a film is largely an illusion.[1]

Most postmodern filmmakers create this illusion by applying the interpolation of images. This technique eliminates spatial and temporal distinctions in an attempt to portray an "eternal present" and "the end of history."[2] The use of new technological tools makes possible even greater disjunctive fusions of the "real world" with other realities, creating the sensation of a unified whole. At the same time, the distinction between truth and fantasy is blurred.[1] Concerning the postmodern treatment of reality and illusion in filmmaking, Joseph Natoli writes: "A fabrication of reality which loses in the battle of fabrications is thereafter called an 'illusion.' It may, however, reappear at another time and place; it may be refabricated under different circumstances. It will then neither be called a 'fabrication' nor an 'illusion' but 'reality.'"[2]

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[1] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 31.

[2] Val Hill and Peter Every, "Postmodernism and the Cinema," in *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, ed. Stuart Sim (Cambridge: Icon, 1998), 105. For example, two of the most popular movies of the early 1990s, *Field of Dreams* and *Ghost*, are examples of a whole group of films in which a peculiar "'eternal present' is represented in the context of death itself" (ibid., 107).

Another characteristic of postmodern filmmaking is the collapse of the boundaries between "them" and "us." This is particularly evident in contemporary horror films. Unlike previous films of the same genre—which clearly demarcate "the enemy" to be feared—postmodern horror is distinguished by its tendency to blend such characteristics. Lianne McLarty observes:

> It is the difference between a monstrous threat that exists 'out there,' embodied in the Other, and the suggestion that the monster is located 'here,' in 'us.' Films that portray aliens imitating or replacing humans can provide rich soil for cultivating a horror of the commonplace in which the monstrous is systemic . . . in the collapse of the distinction between 'us' and 'them.' . . . The tendency in postmodern horror to situate the threat in the practices of this world troubles a categorical reading of alien invasion films as the ideological means through which social cohesion is constituted in acts of aggression both inspired, and suffered, by the Other. . . . These films provide an opportunity to explore ways in which alien Otherness, and the violence

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[1] For instance, postmodern movies blend the real with the fictitious in such a way that there is a constant shifting of "worlds," sometimes not easily identified by the viewer. Another example is the integration of historical facts with speculation in an attempt to create the idea of an accurate historical event (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 33). For further details on the influence of postmodernism on filmmaking, see McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 59-72; and Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 279-296.

[2] Joseph P. Natoli, *Postmodern Journeys: Film and Culture, 1996-1998* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 60-61.

> central to its constitution and extermination, is figured at a time when 'them' might be 'us.' The question, of course, is 'who are we?'[1]

This intentional attempt to mingle the realms of fiction and truth leads people to see the world in the same way they look at films. They are suspicious that what they see around them may in fact be an illusion.

An additional characteristic of postmodern movies is the frequent use of spiritual concerns in their productions. The current renovated search for spirituality has received strong support coming from Hollywood. The film industry, Drane points out, "is riding the crest of a wave, making more money than ever before, . . . especially because the films now being produced are addressing the major issues of life, death, and the survival of humanity."[2]

Postmodernism and Television

Television is arguably the postmodern medium *par excellence*, especially because of its efficiency in disseminating the postmodern outlook throughout society. Several well-known terms in the postmodern debate, such as simulation, fragmentation, pastiche, come from TV productions. Moreover, Marc O'Day affirms,

> The rapid evolution of television into a diverse, multicultural, and pluralistic industry epitomizes the socio-economic processes of postmodernization, while the fractured,

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[1] Lianne McLarty, "Alien/Nation: Invasions, Abductions, and the Politics of Identity," in *Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media*, ed. Christopher Sharrett (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 347-348.

[2] John W. Drane, *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith: Biblical and Missiological Essays for the New Century* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2000), 154.

conflicting ideologies of programs on burgeoning number of TV channels fluidly incarnate the experience of postmodernity.[1]

Television carries the same power of the film industry, with the flexibility to offer not only finished film productions, but also live broadcasting. This gives television the capability of showing events as they are happening throughout the world, thus creating what postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard calls "hyperreality": the "mediatization" of reality in contemporary society.[2] In the postmodern condition, it has become increasingly difficult to make a distinction between the sense of reality produced by mass media—particularly television—and the reality which exists outside media culture. The implication of this is that television has become the "real world" of postmodern culture.[3] Additionally, Grenz points out, television

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[1] Marc O'Day, "Postmodernism and Television," in *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, ed. Stuart Sim (Cambridge: Icon, 1998), 112. Although not everything shown on television is postmodern in nature, postmodern perspectives are constantly broadcast.

[2] See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext, 1983), 138-143. Baudrillard holds that with the massive increase in signs and images circulating in media society, the distinction between objects and their representations has disappeared. People, Baudrillard argues, now live in a world of "simulation," where media-generated images function independently of any reality external to them. Because of this, he affirms that "the unreal is no longer that of dream or of fantasy, of a beyond or a within, it is that of a *hallucinatory resemblance of the real with itself*. . . . The project is already there to empty out the real" (142, emphasis in original).

[3] This happens, observes Dominic Strinati, "because the defining sense of social reality that people have is increasingly provided by the popular culture produced and distributed by the mass media" (Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture* [New York: Routledge, 2000], 231).

> has the ability to juxtapose 'truth' (what the public perceives as actual event) with 'fiction' (what the public perceives as never having actually happened in the 'real' world) in ways that film cannot. And, indeed, contemporary television performs this feat incessantly. It happens, for example, every time a live telecast is interrupted for 'a word from our sponsor.'[1]

This juxtaposition of apparently incompatible images diminishes the dimensions of space and time in the mind of the viewer—merging past, present, and future in the perpetual present of the postmodern ethos.[2] This is even more evident in the emergence of multi-channel television,[3] which paves the way to postmodern pluralistic expressions and an increasing consideration to consumerism as central to human life.[4]

Distinctive characteristics of the postmodern condition are constantly expressed on television through Reality TV shows[1] and talk shows.[2] Particularly, they appear on its main advocate: the music channel, MTV.[3]

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[1] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 34. For example, Grenz adds, "a typical evening newscast . . . will bombard the viewer with a series of unrelated images in quick succession—a war in a remote country, a murder closer to home, a sound bite from a political speech, the latest on a sex scandal, a new scientific discovery, highlights from a sporting event. This collage is interspersed with advertisements for better batteries, better soap, better cereal, and better vacations. By giving all these varied images—news stories and commercials alike—roughly equal treatment, the broadcast leaves the impression that they are all of roughly equal importance" (ibid.).

[2] Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," 111-125.

[3] Strinati, *An Introduction to Popular Culture*, 243. With the introduction of hundreds of different channels, cable and satellite broadcasts make available an amazing variety of options—all at the same time—to television viewers, presenting "a multitude of images that are readily detached from their reference to reality, images that circulate and interact in a ceaseless, centerless flow" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 34).

[4] See Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, 1991), 99, 113.

Postmodernism and Music

Postmodernism began to have a strong impact upon music and in the early 1980s, particularly because of the advent of MTV. Several music styles have since been created and affected by postmodern ideas, but none of them has had the same impact as the most representative form of postmodern pop culture: rock music. At the same time that rock music enjoys a global audience, it keeps a local element, thus reflecting a plurality of styles as influenced by local and ethnic musical forms. Rock also influences other musical styles to follow the same pluralistic assimilation.[1] This characteristic, as Detweiler and Taylor point out, "reveals a trend in pop music, . . . the amalgamation and adaptation of various music forces," predominantly influenced by the forces of globalization.[2]

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[1] In a postmodern visual culture, Reality TV shows—such as *Cops*, *Judge Judy*, *Big Brother*, *Survivor*—allow viewers to see and experience firsthand the interaction between the real and the fictitious displaying real people's deep secrets, motivations, and strategies in dealing with ordinary and/or extraordinary life experiences. See Arild Fetveit, "Reality TV in the Digital Era: A Paradox in Visual Culture?" in *The Television Studies Reader*, ed. Robert Clyde Allen and Annette Hill (New York: Routledge, 2004), 543-556.

[2] Writing on the power of talk shows, Marcia Nelson comments on how Oprah incorporates the mission traditionally reserved for the church. Nelson observes that Oprah promotes the power of public confession because she can testify from her own life. She also offers help by presenting stories of child abuse because many in her audience have had similar experiences. She can talk about her diet in public, thus empowering many viewers who struggle with weight problems. She offers community, saying, "You are not alone in this." Oprah attempts, according to Nelson, "to transform community by promoting individual transformation" (Marcia Z. Nelson, "Oprah on a Mission: Dispensing a Gospel of Health and Happiness," *Christian Century*, October 8, 2002, 23).

[3] Ann Kaplan in *Rocking around the Clock* suggests that MTV is pragmatically postmodern in its function, structure, and content. Functionally, MTV symbolizes the emergence of specialist, genre-based channels with the prerogatives of postmodern consumer culture. Structurally, MTV represents the increasing fragmentation and specialization of postmodern culture. In terms of content, Kaplan observes that while the overall form of MTV is postmodern, there are five principal types of videos featured on it: romantic, socially conscious, nihilist, classical, and postmodern (E. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking around the Clock: Music, Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture* [New York: Routledge, 1988], 49-88).

Another characteristic of postmodern music is found in "its hybridity and cut-and-paste aesthetics,"[3] reassuring the technique of pastiche as a key principle of postmodern music.[1] This characteristic is significantly facilitated by the advancements of music technology.[2] That permits "sampling," which allows existing sounds to be recorded, combined, restructured, remixed, or manipulated at will by musicians or producers. Sampling has had, as Derek Scott points out, a "major impact on ideas of originality, creativity, and ownership,"[3] since it has swept away the boundaries and notions of authorship.

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[1] Some of the concepts and stylistic traits found in postmodern music, Taylor asserts, are "intertextuality, inter-referentiality, pastiche, bricolage, fragmentation, depthlessness, and the fragmentation of the subject" (Timothy D. Taylor, "Music and Musical Practices in Postmodernity," in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, ed. Joseph H. Auner and Judith I. Lochhead [New York: Routledge, 2002], 94). For additional information, see Andrew Goodwin, "Popular Music and Postmodern Theory," in *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Nigel Wheale (New York: Routledge, 1995), 80-97; Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 201-239; and Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 139-169.

[2] Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*, Engaging Culture (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 147. They write, "From Latin-based singer such as Jennifer Lopez or Shakira to the more exotic sound of Algerian Rai singer Cheb Mami. . . . From Ry Cooder in Cuba giving us 'The Buena Vista Social Club' to Paul Simon promoting the Sounds of Soweto on 'Graceland,' the results of musical blending have been utterly sublime. Globalization gives musicians all over the world new ways of making hybrid sounds and selves" (ibid.). For a detailed study on the influence of globalization on popular music, see Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-37.

[3] Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*, 202.

Moreover, technology has also blurred the distinction between original performances and their reproduction. Technology has transformed the intimacy of a "live performance" into a mass gathering of fans who watch "live" videos on big screens, while at the same time they are submerged in a sea of sound and special effects.[4] It is a distant and personal experience at the same time. This collage of sounds and images creates the sensorial—rather than cognitive—musical, postmodern experience.

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[1] Veit Erlmann, "The Aesthetics of the Global Imagination: Reflections on World Music in the 1990s," *Public Culture* 8 (Spring 1996): 482.

[2] For an excellent list of characteristics of postmodern music, see Jonathan D. Kramer, "The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism," in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, ed. Joseph H. Auner and Judith I. Lochhead (New York: Routledge, 2002), 16.

[3] Derek Scott, "Postmodernism and Music," in *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, ed. Stuart Sim (Cambridge: Icon, 1998), 144.

[4] Erickson asserts that "some contemporary music . . . seems to deemphasize the intellectual or cognitive dimension. Volume is so loud as almost to overwhelm the individual's consciousness, and sometimes includes an actual physical vibration. The content is often minimal, is of the most concrete or basic form, and often is repeated numerous times, in some cases in almost mantra-like fashion. This is sometimes accompanied by a shift of key. The effect is to bypass the reflective or critical dimension of experience. One simply feels, rather than thinks about, what is happening" (Erickson, *The Postmodern World*, 32).

Postmodernism and Lifestyle

Several areas of Western lifestyle have been bombarded by the postmodern ethos. One of them is fashion. Postmodern clothing styles reveal the same tendencies found in other popular expressions. For example, there is a great demand for clothes that notably display brand names and product labels, creating a blend between fashion and marketing.[1] Another way fashion portrays the postmodern ethos is through the intentional juxtaposition of contemporary and past elements.[2]

An additional characteristic of the postmodern lifestyle is its emphasis on style and appearance rather than on content.[3] Through the consumption of a myriad of services and products, postmodern lifestyle has little to do with the value of the goods and much to do with the image they represent.[4] Image is at center stage in the postmodern context; in most cases, contends Escobar, this attitude "has led to a glorification of the body."[1]

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[1] Detweiler and Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings*, 72-73.

[2] Postmodern fashion design is also distinguished by the feature known as "retro," which is the use of styles from the past in today's context. This trend has become part of many people's lives, with telephones, radios, furniture, and cars "all drawing upon the desire to recreate the mood of an imagined past" (Nigel Watson, "Postmodernism and Lifestyles (Or: You Are What You Buy)," in *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, ed. Stuart Sim [Cambridge: Icon, 1998], 53).

[3] Detweiler and Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings*, 71.

[4] The ideology of consumerism—passion for buying and using—is behind the attitude that turns consumption into a main interest in the postmodern condition; this is greatly influenced by the media. For instance, commenting on the influence of the

A further characteristic of postmodern lifestyle is a profound commitment to personal freedom and tolerance of differences.[2] To do "one's own thing" is one of the expressions that characterize this extraordinary shift in attitude.[3]

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media—especially television—on consumption, Detweiler and Taylor contend that "while we've been arguing about sex and violence, television has quietly been teaching our kids that their central purpose in life is to shop" (ibid., 195). For further details on the relationship of postmodernism, consumerism, and television, see Strinati, *An Introduction to Popular Culture*, 234-236.

[1] Samuel E. Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 75. Postmodern culture depicts the body in all forms and offers thousands of products to improve and perfect it. Watson notes, "A massive, worldwide industry has developed, devoted to assisting us in our responsibilities to maintain our bodies. The healthiness of the body has become associated with its appearance. . . . Although we are surrounded by health-promoting messages which encourage us to exercise and to eat 'right' foods, the drive for us to achieve fitness is related as much to the desire for surface attractiveness as it is to the protective dimensions of health promotion. . . . Eating low fat foods and the other acceptable commodities comprising a healthy diet gives an assurance of risk reduction and adequate body maintenance even if they are consumed in addition to, rather than instead of, proscribed foodstuffs. . . . Postmodern fragmentation extends into dietary habits in which contradictory messages can be believed and simultaneously followed" (Watson, "Postmodernism and Lifestyles," 56, 57).

[2] William S. W. Lim, *Alternatives in Transition: The Postmodern, Glocality and Justice* (Singapore: Select, 2001), xv.

[3] Tex Sample, *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches: A Key to Reaching People in the 90's* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 26. Sample also points out that "this personal freedom became increasingly visible to the wider culture not only in personal dress and hairstyles but in new patterns of sexuality, nonfamily household arrangements, the women's movement, pro-choice abortion, and gay and lesbian lifestyles. Hence, the personal freedom was accompanied by a high tolerance for diverse behaviors and pluralistic opinions. This tolerance meant that other persons were free to

Postmodernism and Religion

Postmoderns clearly demonstrate an orientation toward their own individual needs, but with a distinct twist from the modern concept of individualism. The postmodern individual, according to sociologist Pauline Rosenau,

> is relaxed and flexible, oriented toward feeling and emotions, interiorization, and holding a 'be-yourself' attitude. S/he is an active human being constituting his/her own social reality, pursuing a personal quest for meaning but making no truth claims for what results. S/he looks to fantasy, humor, the culture of desire, and immediate gratification. Preferring the temporary over the permanent, s/he is content with a 'live and let live' (in the present) attitude. More comfortable with the spontaneous than the planned, the post-modern individual is also fascinated with tradition, the antiquated (the past in general), the exotic, the sacred, the unusual, and the place of the local rather than the general or the universal.[1]

Having their concerns focused on personal satisfaction, however, postmoderns are much "less concerned with old loyalties and modern affiliations such as marriage, family, church."[2] Given that, Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow observes that emerging postmodern generations feel comfortable searching for religious meaning—or "seeking the light" as Wuthnow puts—outside ecclesiastical activities and institutions.[3] Furthermore, they see themselves as spiritual persons, even though many of them

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pursue their individual wishes as long as these did not infringe on one's own freedom. Personal freedom and tolerance of this kind would draw angry responses from others in the society, who excoriated what they saw as relativism, amoral and immoral proclivities, and a corruption of family values" (26-27).

[1] Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*, 53, 54.

[2] Ibid., 54.

[3] Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 2-3.

express aversion to organized religion.[1] Their own individual insights and views are more important than those supported by ecclesiastical institutions as normative to human life.[2]

Hence, with their inner direction, Sample contends that postmoderns do not respond to "shoulds, oughts, obligations, or appeals for long term commitments."[3] Therefore, because of its rejection of absolute truths, in addition to its tolerance for diversity, the postmodern condition openly endorses religious pluralism.

Summary

The literature unmistakably points out that the Western world is witnessing a paradigm shift from the modern worldview to something else. Within this new paradigm, several new concepts have emerged. The philosophical foundationalism of the modern worldview has been shown to be unreliable. The refusal of absolutes has led to a relativistic and pluralistic attitude toward the universe. All-encompassing narratives of human reality have been rejected in favor of local stories. Temporal and spatial distinctions no longer influence historical facts. New scientific discoveries have provided a new view of the universe and its complexity. In the context of the celebration of human diversity, community has received fresher meaning and new functions.

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[1] Boyd, "Is Spirituality Possible without Religion?" 83.

[2] Cf. Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart*, 220-223, 235.

[3] Sample, *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches*, 32.

Beyond any doubt, a new paradigm has emerged. It has been named postmodernism.

Within popular cultural expressions, reflections from the *centerless* influence of the postmodern condition can be observed everywhere. It is evident in what people contemplate in the arts, observe around themselves in architecture, read in fiction, watch on movies and TV shows, hear in music, follow in contemporary lifestyles, and experience through new approaches to religious practices.

During this paradigm shift, a parallel phenomenon has occurred: an incomparable urbanization of the world. This ongoing process, together with the emergent postmodern condition, especially challenges the church in its mission to present the gospel to the urban centers of the world. The relationship between urbanization and the postmodern condition is addressed in chapter 4. The influence of postmodernism on urban mission is also discussed, together with some of the challenges and opportunities the postmodern condition poses for the church's mission in the urban context.

CHAPTER IV

URBAN MISSION AND THE EMERGENT POSTMODERN CONDITION

While the contemporary Western world faces one of the greatest paradigm shifts in its history—the cultural shift from modern to postmodern condition—it continues its move towards the city. This inevitable trend calls for a radical re-evaluation on the task of the Christian church, particularly associated with the issues involved in urban mission. In this context, the church must recognize its role and responsibility in facing the threats and opportunities presented by the emergence of a postmodernizing urban society. This chapter is divided in three parts: in the first, I situate the postmodern condition within the context of urbanization and examine the relationship between these two developing movements. In the second, I identify and discuss selected issues related to mission and the urban church. In the third, I present some of the most pressing challenges and opportunities the postmodern condition creates for urban mission.

Urbanization and the Postmodern Condition

Because of its intrinsic association with the modern era, which in turn is fundamentally connected with the process of urbanization, it is appropriate to locate the emergence of the postmodern condition within the urban context. This section provides a brief historical description of the process of urbanization and locates the postmodern condition in its context.

Urbanization: A Five-Period History

From earliest times, the rise of cities has to a great extent defined what is understood as human civilization.[1] Numerous factors account for their development, including the human needs of defense and protection and the development of commerce, administration, and culture. Cities, however, should not be seen just as places with certain structure and organization. The Spanish urban sociologist Manuel Castells notes that cities should be understood as "living systems, made, transformed, and experienced"[1] by humankind. "To understand the city is to understand the future," asserts David Claerbaut, for the urbanization of the world "is an irreversible trend."[2] In fact, 48 percent (approximately 3 billion) of the world's population lived in urban areas in 2003. Urban population is projected to exceed the 50 percent mark by 2007, thus marking the first time in history that the world will have more urban than rural residents.[3]

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[1] Amos Hawley provides a brief definition of city as a "permanent, relatively densely settled and administratively defined unit of territory, the residents of which gain their living primarily by specializing in a variety of non-agricultural activities" (Amos H. Hawley, *Urban Society* [New York: Wiley, 1981], 7). In fact, no single definition of a city fits its complexity. With some generalizing, however, it could be said that there are two dominant approaches to the definition of cities and urbanization: the *demographic* and the *functional* definitions. The former focuses on the spatial distribution and social complexity of the city. The latter focuses on the role a city plays in the larger society. Some of the most important urban functions that cities perform are political, economic, religious, and cultural (Michael E. Smith, "The Earliest Cities," in *Urban Life: Readings in the Anthropology of the City*, 4th ed., ed. George Gmelch and Walter P. Zenner [Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 2002], 2). Past sociological definitions of the city focused on three other approaches: the ecological (similar to the demographic definition), the sociocultural (similar to the functional definition), and the neo-orthodox (focused on the evolution of communities). For additional explanation, see Mark Abrahamson, *Urban Sociology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), 2-8; and William A. Schwab, *The Sociology of Cities* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), 3-13.

The brief historical description of the history of urbanization presented in this study is meant to provide a framework to situate the postmodern condition in the context of urbanization and to set the stage for further discussion of the urban church. It is possible to note at least five urban periods in world history.[4] These are: city-states, the

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[1] Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), xv.

[2] Claerbaut, *Urban Ministry*, 16, 15.

[3] These figures were released on March 24, 2004, by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (United Nations, *Report on World Urban Population*, 2004, http://www.un.org/esa/population/wup2003/2003WUP.htm [25 March 2004]). From 2000 to 2030, the world's urban population is projected to grow at an average rate of 1.8 percent, nearly double the rate expected for the total population of the world (almost 1 percent per year). At this rate of growth, the world's urban population will double in 38 years. The full report containing a detailed analysis of the results will be issued by the United Nations in late 2004. The process of urbanization is even more accentuated in developed regions, where 74 percent of the population lived in cities in 2003. The proportion of the population living in urban areas in developed regions is expected to increase to 82 percent by 2030.

[4] Undeniably, one of the best ways to understand the urban reality is to explore the historical roots of the city. See Rudolf J. Siebert, "Urbanization as a World Trend: A Challenge to the Churches," *Missiology* 13 (1985): 430.

Greco-roman city, the commercial city, the industrial city, and the global city.[1]

Early Beginnings: The City-State

The world's first stage of urban history arose in the development of city-states as economic, religious, and political centers in Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley, the Indus Valley, and the Hoang-ho Valley.[2] In the city-state system there was no national capital. The city and its monarchy formed the state.[3]

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[1] The division of urban history into periods is supported by many historians and urbanologists. The number of periods varies, depending on the author's methodological approach to urbanization history. For example, see Edgar F. Borgatta and Jeffrey K. Hadden, "The Classification of Cities," in *Neighborhood, City, and Metropolis: An Integrated Reader in Urban Sociology*, ed. Robert Gutman and David Popenoe (New York: Random, 1970), 254-262; and Clinton E. Stockwell, "The Church and the City: A Five-Stage History," *Urban Mission* 11 (1993): 29-36.

[2] William H. Frey and Zachary Zimmer, "Defining the City," in *Handbook of Urban Studies*, ed. Ronan Paddison (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2001), 14. Much of the scholarly discussion related to the appearance of the first cities turns on evolutionary assumptions of social and cultural developments. For example, Berger asserts that developments in irrigation, breeding of farm animals, and organized fishing made the rise of these cities possible (Alan S. Berger, *The City: Urban Communities and Their Problems* [Dubuque, IA: Brown, 1978], 60-61). See also Aharon Kempinski, "Early Bronze Age Urbanization of Palestine: Some Topics in a Debate," *Israel Exploration Journal* 33 (1983): 235-241; Charles Redman, "Archaeological Survey and the Study of Mesopotamian Urban Systems," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 9 (1982): 375-382; and Arlene M. Rosen, "The Agricultural Base of Urbanism," in *Urbanism in Antiquity: From Mesopotamia to Crete*, ed. Walter E. Aufrecht, Neil A. Mirau, and Steven W. Gauley (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 94-97. The biblical record describes the appearance of the city in Gen 4:17, 22; 11:1-9.

[3] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1961), 29-35. See also Giorgio Buccellati, *Cities and Nations of Ancient Syria* (Rome: Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente, Università di Roma, 1967), 13-14.

Each city-state dominated its surroundings in military, administrative, and cultural matters. Nevertheless, religion and temple worship were at the center of their existence and power.[1] Every feature of the city in its incipient form, Mumford contends, "revealed the belief that man was created for no other purpose than to magnify and serve his gods. That was the city's ultimate reason for existence."[2] Conn and Ortiz observe:

> Whether small or large the city-state was the anvil of civilization, the center of power, a physical metaphor of human society itself. In the city converged piety and trade, security and politics. Its walls marked it as protector, its shrines and temples its place as the center of the world. . . . At the heart of power's expression in the city-state was its religious role.[3]

As a result of interrelated economic and religious developments, these cities evolved into temple communities, where the king was seen as the representative of the city's gods.[4] The worship of these gods was the foundation of community and provided the much needed political order at that period.[1]

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[1] V. Gordon Childe, "Origins and Evolution of Urban Communities and Urbanization," in *Neighborhood, City, and Metropolis: An Integrated Reader in Urban Sociology*, ed. Robert Gutman and David Popenoe (New York: Random, 1970), 111.

[2] Mumford, *The City in History*, 74-75.

[3] Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry*, 35.

[4] The placement of temples and palaces was an integral element in the archetype of city-states. In ancient Egypt, Routledge observes, city-states were built "to present a concrete physical representation of the conceptual relationship between society, king and divinity" (Carolyn Routledge, "Temple as the Center in Ancient Egyptian Urbanism," in *Urbanism in Antiquity: From Mesopotamia to Crete*, ed. Walter E. Aufrecht, Neil A. Mirau, and Steven W. Gauley [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 232).

By the beginning of the third millennium B.C., city-states had grown in size, and their inhabitants were numbered in tens of thousands. For example, Abraham's Ur covered an area of approximately 220 acres and had an estimated population of 24,000.[2] Most of these cities were surrounded by either a wall or a moat, which, asserts Benevolo, "provided a defensive barrier from the outside environment to the artificially-enclosed urban area."[3] The city-state organization was later spread to Palestine, and was dissolved and re-designed as a system by the ancient Greeks.[4]

By 1400 B.C., however, urbanization was fading. The cities in the very regions where urban life first appeared went into eclipse. They would not flourish again until the birth of a new trend in urban development—the expansion of the city beyond local limits through territorial invasions.[1] Born were the imperial city and the urban empire.

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[1] Ira Lapidus, "Cities and Societies: A Comparative Study of the Emergence of Urban Civilization in Mesopotamia and Greece," *Journal of Urban History* 12 (1986): 264-266. Lapidus asserts that "the formation of a cult of gods who stood outside of nature and had to be worshipped, propitiated, seduced, and coerced provided the religious rationale for the integration of a communal economy and for the provision of political order and justice" (267).

[2] Schwab, *The Sociology of Cities*, 113. See also Kingsley Davis, "The Origin and Growth of Urbanization in the World," in *Neighborhood, City, and Metropolis: An Integrated Reader in Urban Sociology*, ed. Robert Gutman and David Popenoe (New York: Random, 1970), 122.

[3] Leonardo Benevolo, *The History of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980), 21.

[4] Palen, *The Urban World*, 31-32.

Greco-Roman Period: The Imperial City

The second phase of urbanization arose through the development of the Greco-Roman city. Alexander the Great, in 331 B.C., established an empire that dissolved the old city-state system and was used as a tool for the colonization of the conquered world. At the same time, urbanization paved the way for the expansion of the Greek empire and its culture.[2]

In the process of hellenization, the Greeks shifted urban organization from the top-down Mesopotamian theocracy, to a bottom-up local authority. The result was one of the greatest achievement of the Greeks: the social organization of urban areas through the establishment of citizenship and the *polis* (city) concept, with an elected political body, the *boule*.[3] However, the Greeks never devised a system for extending citizenship to political units larger than the city-state. This was achieved only in the Roman Empire, which became “a commonwealth of self-governing cities”[1] (a Hellenistic legacy), divided in administrative district-provinces (a Roman legacy) subjected to the centralized rule of the Roman Emperor.[2]

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[1] Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry*, 36.

[2] Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 11.

[3] Ibid. Commenting on the importance of the citizenship concept to the Greeks, Palen points out that "being a citizen of the city was of supreme importance to the Greeks. . . . To [them], being ostracized, or forbidden to enter into the city, was a severe punishment. To be placed beyond the city walls was to be cast out of civilized life" (Palen, *The Urban World*, 32).

As the Roman Empire expanded its territory, its pluralistic nature could only be united by a common culture and language. The use of the Greek language provided the unifying power to consolidate the empire. The writings from the first two hundred years of Christianity were in Greek,[3] the urban language of the marketplace.

During the period between Alexander and Constantine, the Greco-Roman world saw cities established and re-established. It was into this highly political, cultural, and centralized civilization that Christianity was born as an urban movement.[4] Furthermore, through Rome's military conquests, the urban model was carried further into the empire's territory, resulting in the establishment of an urban imperialism.[1]

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[1] Michael I. Rostovzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), 49.

[2] See Annamaria Liberati and Fabio Bourbon, *Ancient Rome: History of a Civilization That Ruled the World* (New York: Stewart Tabori & Chang, 1996), 194-203. For an excellent historical account of the transition process from the Hellenistic to the Roman Empire, see Erich S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[3] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 15.

[4] Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 147. Recent scholarship in New Testament and social studies has demonstrated the urban presence of the first Christians and their impact on urban developments. For additional information on the social issues of the period, see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 29-59; and Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982), 27-40. In the relationship between Christianity and the urban context of the first century, for instance, Theissen observes: “A movement which was formerly connected with the country became a group based [in] the cities. . . . Developing cities with their new increase in population were

The rise and fall of empires recorded in ancient history, Hauser points out, "may be read in large measure as a chronicle of developments in social organization by means of which the ancient cities acquired a hinterland."[2] The same function, centuries later, was performed by the emergence of the market mechanism, with the inclusion of money as an instrument of exchange, especially with the rise and development of commercial cities in the medieval and feudal periods of Western history.

Feudal and Commercial Period:
The Medieval City

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D., the cities of the Western world entered into a period of urban decline until the Renaissance.[3] During this

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more open to the new message than the country, with its traditionalistic attitudes" (Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978], 117). Max Weber, in turn, asserts that "it is highly improbable" that Christianity "could have developed as it did outside of an urban . . . communal life" (Max Weber, "Religion and Social Status," in *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory*, ed. Talcott Parsons et al. [New York: Free Press, 1965], 1140).

[1] Palen, *The Urban World*, 33-34.

[2] Hauser, "Urbanization," 2.

[3] The reasons for the urban decline in the West are many and much debated. Henri Pirenne, for instance, attributed the decline of Roman urban civilization neither to the triumph of Christianity nor to the impact of barbarian invasions, but to the gradual throttling of Mediterranean trade resulting from the advance of Islam in the seventh century. See Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, trans. Frank D. Halsey (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939), 3-25.

period, the Western world became a rural mosaic of feudal manors, with its cities reduced to villages and small towns[1] where hereditary rights provided one's position in society. This feudal system made political, social, and economic change very complex.[2] During this period, Muendel points out, "urban planning was organic, . . . [for] it did not begin with an assumed goal, but advanced irregularly, adapting itself to immediate needs."[3]

Although feudal cities were larger than earlier cities, their central problem was the same: to keep a sustainable and constant food supply. Each city still depended on its surroundings to produce what was necessary for life. With the preindustrial revolution, the city became a marketplace and trade center where goods and services were exchanged.[1]

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[1] Italy, Gaul, Iberia, North Africa, Greece, and Egypt especially suffered urban decline during this period. It has been estimated, for example, that Rome had about 350,000 inhabitants at the time of Augustus, 241,000 around 200 A.D.; 172,600 about 350 A.D.; 36,000-48,000 about 500 A.D.; and only 30,000 in the tenth century (Robert C. Cook, "The World's Great Cities: Evolution or Devolution?" in *Urbanism, Urbanization, and Change: Comparative Perspectives*, 2d ed., ed. Paul H. Meadows and Ephraim H. Mizruchi [Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1976], 32).

[2] The feudal city that emerged during the Middle Ages had a fairly intricate social system that offered a variety of occupational roles maintained through a complex hereditary system. The rigidity of the social system of the city at that time was reflected in its physical structure: the higher one's social position, the larger and more imposing one's home and business. As a result, a few individuals got richer and more powerful, while most of the city inhabitants became mere objects at their disposal. See Berger, *The City: Urban Communities and Their Problems*, 66-68.

[3] John Muendel, "Medieval Urban Renewal: The Communal Mills of the City of Florence, 1351-1382," *Journal of Urban History* 17 (August 1991): 363.

The expansion of the city as a marketplace, however, was not the only instrument for urban revitalization. The role of the church made a strong contribution to the urban development of medieval cities. Geographer Paul Claval observes that "the organization of medieval towns and the urban centers [was] strongly marked by the dominance of the church. . . . Commercial life was intimately tied to it and the market took place in open space in front of it or immediately next to it."[2]

During the medieval period, extraordinary cathedrals were built in Western Europe, especially in France and Germany.[3] These cathedrals dominated their cities and the bishops dominated the government and social life of these urban settlements.[4]

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[1] Sociologist Max Weber observes that before this period, urban development had heavily relied on religious or military-political conquests to ensure the importation of vital goods. See Max Weber, "The Nature of the City," in *Neighborhood, City, and Metropolis: An Integrated Reader in Urban Sociology*, ed. Robert Gutman and David Popenoe (New York: Random, 1970), 150-167.

[2] Paul Claval, "Cultural Geography of the European City," in *The City in Cultural Context*, ed. John A. Agnew, John Mercer, and David Edward Sopher (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 35.

[3] These cathedrals, asserts Siebert, "were erected in order to enclose the whole urban community. Architecture is always the first art in the city to constitute the inorganic element of God—the house of God. Only later, other forms of art . . . try to represent God himself, His objective reality to the urban community" (Siebert, "Urbanization as a World Trend," 430-431).

[4] See C. N. L. Brooke, "The Missionary at Home: The Church in the Towns, 1000-1250," in *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith.*, ed. G. J. Cuming (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 59-83; and Mumford, *The City in History*, 265-269.

Describing the influence of the church on the urban developments of this period, Mumford notes:

> In a culture marked by bewildering diversities of dialect, law, cuisine, weights and measures, coinage, the Church offered a common home, indeed a universal haven: the same credo, the same offices, the same masses, performed with the same gestures, in the same order, for the same purpose, from one end of Europe to another. . . . In a very definite sense, despite its manifold origins and its ambivalent results, the medieval city in Europe may be described as a collective structure whose main purpose was the living of a Christian life.[1]

Within this context of urban revival came the sixteenth-century Reformation which, according to historian A. G. Dickens, was a uniquely "urban event."[2] Furthermore, the attractiveness of Luther's Reformation was found in its proposals for the religious transformation of cities and towns.[3] Instead of the universal empire of medieval Catholicism, Protestant individualism and self-determination became the desired values of the city during the period of the Reformation.[4]

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[1] Mumford, *The City in History*, 266, 267.

[2] A. G. Dickens, *The German Nation and Martin Luther* (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), 182. In agreement with Dickens, German historian Heinz Schilling contends that it is essential "to understand the Reformation in the cities as part of a general process of development in urban civic society" (Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture, and the Emergence of Early Modern Society: Essays in German and Dutch History*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, no. 5 [New York: Brill, 1992], 63). See also Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), 5-14.

[3] Harvie M. Conn, "The Kingdom of God and the City of Man," in *Discipling the City: A Comprehensive Approach to Urban Mission*, 2d ed., ed. Roger S. Greenway (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 256.

[4] Stockwell, "The Church and the City," 32.

In spite of the urban decline from the fifth to the eleventh century and the devastating bubonic plague of the fourteenth century, when one-fourth of Europe's population died, the urbanization of the Western world once again began its unsteady but gradual climb from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.[1] However, this restored urban growth witnessed not only the end of the rural-based feudal system, but also the appearance of a new worldview led by the Enlightenment of the seventeenth century. The protection and security represented by the medieval city had come to an end. A revolution was on its way.

Industrial Period: The Rise of the Modern City

The beginning of the greatest urbanization of the world came in the mid-eighteenth century. The Industrial Revolution began to change the course of human history, initially in England, and then in the rest of the world.[2]

Various factors contributed to the urban explosion in the Industrial Revolution period.[1] Conn observes that "anchored in the emerging Enlightenment exaltation of humanity, pressured by an accelerating population growth, encouraged by eighteenth century inventions like a usable steam engine, the Western city, already infatuated with capitalism, embraced the machine."[2]

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[1] By 1500, Europe had 154 cities with at least 10,000 people each and a total population of approximately 3.5 million inhabitants. By 1800, 12.2 million people lived in 364 cities of 10,000 or more inhabitants, a 3.5-fold increase over 1500. During the same period, De Vries points out, "in every single fifty-year interval the urban percentage rose, reaching 10 percent by 1800" (Jan De Vries, *European Urbanization, 1500-1800*, Harvard Studies in Urban History [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984], 38).

[2] Demographer Kingsley Davis has estimated that as late as 1850 only 2 percent of the world's population lived in cities of more than 100,000 people. See Davis, "Origins and Evolution of Urban Communities," 125.

On the technological side, the most important developments included techniques that greatly increased productivity in agriculture, as well as non-agricultural products.[3] Meanwhile, the factory system began to emerge, based on specialization and mechanization. As a result, new forms of occupational structure and more complex work systems began to develop, attracting an unprecedented number of people to the cities.[1]

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[1] Mumford suggests that several changes in Western societies originating in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were fundamental to rise of the Industrial Revolution. Among them were the destruction of the feudal order and the rise of nationalism and the modern nation state; the erosion of class barriers and the emergence of an urban-based middle class as a potent force in society; changes in values and outlook; centralized political and economic control; uniformity in taxes, currency, law, and rule; and the rapid expansion of urban population. See Mumford, *The City in History*, 414-426.

[2] Conn, "The Kingdom of God and the City of Man," 260.

[3] Hauser, "Urbanization," 2. For instance, the technological breakthroughs in agriculture, energy, and manufacturing made possible the transfer of all types of cottage industries to factories in urban settings. By 1825, the output of one textile worker in a spinning mill was equal to that of two to three hundred workers in late 1700s. Other technological breakthroughs in Great Britain during the Industrial Revolution were the production of cast iron using coal instead of charcoal (c. 1750), the invention of the steam engine (1769), and the development of the locomotive (1804). For further details on the technological developments of the Industrial Revolution in England, see Paul Mantoux, *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century: An Outline of the Beginnings of the Modern Factory System in England* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1927), 193-224; and Richard Price, *British Society, 1680-1880: Dynamism, Containment, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 17-51.

In the social arena, the rapid growth of cities during the industrial era transformed the existing urban nuclei, which became the *downtown* of the new towns and cities, and also brought about serious social problems.[2] Wilbert Shenk writes:

> By the nineteenth century the industrial revolution was well along. The scale and pace of industrialization forced rapid restructuring of Western societies as workers were drawn from the rural areas into factory towns. Urbanization brought new pressures to bear on civic and family life, raising new questions about the meaning of human existence as the worker was perceived to be only a cog in the industrial machine.[3]

Traditional patterns that divided the rich from the poor were reinforced: The industrial wealth in the hands of the few was in most cases accumulated at the expense of the many.[4] Furthermore, searching for greater wealth and new markets, Western civilization used the advancements of the industrial revolution to force even further its colonial expansion on non-Western areas of the world.[1]

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[1] Palen, *The Urban World*, 46.

[2] During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, urbanization resulted from and contributed to industrialization. New job opportunities in the cities "spurred the mass movement of surplus population away from the countryside. At the same time, migrants provided cheap, plentiful labor for emerging factories. . . . While the growth of cities increased through migration, high death rates in the cities slowed urban growth. Cities were unhealthy places because of crowded living conditions, the prevalence of contagious diseases, and the lack of sanitation. Until the mid-1800s, the number of deaths exceeded births in many large European cities. Migration accounted for as much as 90 percent of city growth during this period" (Davis, "Origins and Evolution of Urban Communities," 124-126).

[3] Shenk, "The Culture of Modernity as a Missionary Challenge," 70.

[4] Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry*, 52. The effects of these transitional changes were dramatic. For example, Engels wrote a classical description of the results of industrialization in Britain, published in 1845: "The concentration of the population in great cities has, in itself, an extremely deleterious influence. . . . There is ample proof that the dwellings of the workers who live in the slums, combined with other adverse

The new urban context at the end of the nineteenth century provided the necessary structure for the rise of the modern city and modern urban life. A previously dominant rural society was increasingly invaded by a newer and even more powerful urban culture.[2] Urban dwellers were motivated and energized by the vision of the apparent unlimited growth of scientific and technological progress.[3] The city, as Miller points out, became "the literal representation of the progressive humanization of the world."[4] Concomitantly, urban historians point to the developments that occurred during the second half of the twentieth century as the greatest urban explosion ever experienced in human history: the rise of the global/postmodern city.

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factors, give rise to many illnesses. . . . If one goes into the streets of London, when people are on their way to work, it is astonishing to note how many of them appear to be suffering to a greater or lesser degree of consumption. Even in Manchester one does not see these pale, emaciated, narrow-chested and hollow-eyed ghosts who are to be met with in such large numbers every minute in London (Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, trans. W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968], 109, 111).

[1] David K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 10-11.

[2] Samuel P. Hays, "From the History of the City to the History of the Urbanized Society," *Journal of Urban History* 19 (August 1993): 13.

[3] Siebert, "Urbanization as a World Trend," 442.

[4] Miller, *Disappearance of God*, 5.

Post-Industrial Period: The Rise of the Postmodern City

In the twentieth century, the phenomenon of urbanization became truly global in scope and significance. While there was tremendous urban growth in Europe and North America in the first half of the twentieth century, after 1950 these areas began to slow their growth rate. The urban explosion shifted to the Third World, where the most dramatic urban growth has taken place over the last few decades.[1] Urban historian Samuel Hays puts it this way, "By the late twentieth century, it has become obvious that we live in an urbanized society, not just in individual cities; in our society, almost every feature of modern life flows from the way in which an agglomeration of cities, coming together from earlier more separate origins, constitutes a new comprehensive social order."[2]

Megacities such as Tokyo, São Paulo, Mexico City, Shanghai, Bombay, and

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[1] In 1950, there were only two cities in developing countries with populations of over 5 million. In 1992, there were twenty-six. In 2001, forty-six cities of over 5 million were found in less-developed nations. For further information of the actual situation of world urbanization, see United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, *The State of the World's Cities, 2001* (Nairobi, Kenya: UNCHS Habitat, 2001).

The new global economic order, according to urban geographer David Clark, is the main force behind the current urban explosion around the world. He points out that "urban development became a worldwide phenomenon over the last 30 years because of fundamental changes in the organization and location of production and services as transnational corporate capitalism succeeded monopoly capitalism. A new economic order has emerged, characterized by global manufacture, and managed and controlled from the core economies by transnational corporations" (David Clark, *Urban World/Global City*, 2d ed. [New York, NY: Routledge, 2003], 91).

[2] Hays, "From the History of the City," 22.

Buenos Aires are rapidly becoming the world's largest cities, and the centers of new networks of global economic and technological significance.[1] According to urban sociologist Manuel Castells, their massive numerical size, while remarkable, does not represent their true importance. Rather, Castells observes,

> their power lies in the fact that they signify the nodes of the global economy, concentrating the directional, productive, and managerial functions all over the planet; the control of the media, the real politics of power, and the symbolic capacity to create and diffuse meanings. . . . Megacities cannot only be seen in terms of their size, but as a function of their gravitational power towards major regions of the world.[2]

Several factors are responsible for the rapid urban explosion and the emergence of the post-industrial urban period: the unmatched population growth rate of the period,[3] rural-urban migratory patterns around the globe,[4] the phenomenon of globalization

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[1] Megacities are urban agglomerations with a population of 10 or more million residents. In 1950, only one city had more than 10 million inhabitants. By 2015, 23 cities are projected to hold over 10 million people; all but four will be in less developed countries. See United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision*, 2004, http://www.un.org.esa/population/publications/wup2003/2003urban_agglo.htm (25 March 2004).

[2] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 403-404.

[3] Since World War II, a stable birth rate and a declining death rate have characterized the more developed countries. At the same time, between 1950 and 1970, while the world population grew from 2.5 billion to 3.6 billion, the population in the less developed countries grew four times as much. See Palen, *The Urban World*, 285-286.

[4] According to social scholars, rural-urban migration decisions are affected by what they call "push" and "pull" factors. The former refer to those factors which force individuals to move from rural to urban areas. These include hardships of rural life such as shortages, limited access to rural land, droughts, government policies favoring urban areas, and civil wars, among others. The latter refer to those factors that attract individuals from rural areas to urban areas. They may include better job opportunities,

(particularly in the less developed countries),[1] and the leading edge of the information revolution.[2]

From the above periods of urban expansion, especially in the Western context, come two questions: How and where does the postmodern condition fit in this picture? The next section seeks to locate the postmodern condition within the context of urbanization, prior to discovering the implications of these findings for the urban

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better education and health facilities, better infrastructure and services, and better entertainment opportunities. See Hal Kane and Jane A. Peterson, *The Hour of Departure: Forces That Create Refugees and Migrants* (Washington, DC: Worldwatch, 1995), 5-17, 40-49.

[1] In its capitalistic search for maximizing profits, globalization has led to a massive redistribution of work around the globe. While globalization has connected most urban centers to the world economy, it has in many cases disconnected the same cities from their local reality. In spite of the economical advantages provided by globalization, sociologist Mike Featherstone notes that the trend "has been helping to undermine the alleged integrity and unity of nation-state societies" (Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*, 2). Sassen agrees with Featherstone, affirming that inside global cities there is "a new geography of centrality and marginality. The downtowns of cities and key nodes in metropolitan areas receive massive investments in real estate and telecommunications, whereas low-income city areas and the older suburbs are starved for resources. The incomes of highly educated workers rise to unusually high levels, and those of low- or medium-skilled workers sink. Financial services produce super-profits, whereas industrial services barely survive. These trends are evident at different levels of intensity in a growing number of major cities in the developed world and more and more in some of the developing countries that have been integrated into the global financial markets" (Saskia Sassen, "Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims," in *The Urban Moment: Cosmopolitan Essays on the Late-20th-Century City*, ed. Robert A. Beauregard and Sophie Body-Gendrot [Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1999], 106-107).

[2] Van Gelder points out that "the process of urbanization in the globalizing world has become a matter of information networks rather than geographic location" (Van Gelder, "Secularization and the City," 83). See also Peter F. Drucker, "Beyond the Information Revolution," *The Atlantic Monthly* 284 (October 1999): 47-57.

mission of the church.

Postmodernism and Urbanization

As already discussed in chapter 2 of this study, the modern period, and consequently the modern worldview, had its foundations in the Enlightenment assumption that the structures of the natural and social worlds could be discovered and controlled by reason and science. Through the discovery and development of technologically useful knowledge, it was thought that nature could finally be dominated, leading to social improvements and inevitable progress. New applications of science-based technologies paved the way for the Industrial Revolution and the introduction of processes of mass production and consumption, which led to an unprecedented urban growth.[1] Consequently, along with these scientific and technological developments, Featherstone points out that "the expansion of industrial capitalism, state administration, and the development of citizenship rights were seen as convincing evidence of the fundamental superiority and universal applicability of the project of modernity."[2]

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[1] Frey and Zimmer cite three factors as essential for urban growth during the industrial revolution: (1) mechanization in rural areas, which increased agricultural production, thus creating the surplus needed to sustain large populations; (2) the development of mass production in manufacturing; and (3) the sophistication of transportation and communication systems, caused in part by the creation of the steam engine and the railway system (Frey and Zimmer, "Defining the City," 15).

[2] Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*, 72.

Modernity and Urbanization

The logic of the modern era was undoubtedly complex and diverse; nevertheless, in the nineteenth century the world experienced profound changes that had begun approximately three hundred years earlier.[1] The immense and varied changes brought about by modernity seemed to focus inexorably on the city, resulting in a parallel expansion of massive urban agglomerations and the complex forms of modern urban life associated with them.[2] "Modern city life," asserts the sociologist David Clarke, "must have seemed nothing less than a fundamental and unnatural mutation of the human species."[3]

In accordance with the modern worldview, however, early modern urban planners held utopian attitudes and a belief in a future in which social problems could be controlled and humanity liberated from the constraint of scarcity and greed.[4] Modern architects, for their part, sought to design urban centers that would promote industrial efficiency as well as standardized housing capable of being mass produced.[1] Modern urban planning and development focused, therefore, on the functionally efficient architectonic "international style."[2]

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[1] See Peter J. Taylor, "What's Modern about the Modern World-System? Introducing Ordinary Modernity through World Hegemony," *Review of International Political Economy* 3 (Summer 1996): 260-263.

[2] Contemporary writings on the nineteenth-century city frequently expressed astonishment, perplexity, and often a pronounced concern over the developing conditions of modern urban life. For example, see Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 30-87.

[3] David B. Clarke, "Consumption and the City, Modern and Postmodern," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21 (1997): 222.

[4] See Robert A. Beauregard, "Between Modernity and Postmodernity: The Ambiguous Position of US Planning," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 7 (1989): 381-385.

Regarding the complex and restless association of modernity with the experience of unparalleled urban growth and its implications, David Harvey affirms that "the pressing need to confront the psychological, sociological, technical, organizational, and political problems of massive urbanization was one of the seed-beds in which modernist movements flourished."[3] Undeniably, modernism was very much an urban phenomenon and vice versa.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the growth of urbanization and the solidification of the modern worldview developed as parallel movements. At the same time, however, the incipient forms of the postmodern outlook had already flourished among intellectuals who began to challenge the faith in optimism, progress, and the pursuit of objective knowledge and science, characteristic of the modern worldview, as discussed in chapter 3 of this study.

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[1] Barry Goodchild, "Planning and the Modern/Post-Modern Debate," *Town Planning Review* 61 (1990): 122.

[2] The practice of city planning reflected both the best and the worst of the modern project. Its highest ideals were the belief in emancipation and progress through rational planning. But these same ideals could be used to justify the destruction of communities in order to develop urban landscapes. See Charles Jencks, "The Post-Modern Agenda," in *The Post-Modern Reader*, ed. Charles Jencks (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 31-37.

[3] Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 25. Harvey points out the following reasons for rapid urban growth: migration from rural to urban areas, industrialization and mechanization of labor, massive re-ordering of environment structures, and politically founded urban movements (25-26).

It seems that the modern paradigm, under which cities developed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has gone as far as it could go. Modernity is, under current conditions, unable to effectively deal with urban growth and its demands[1] as the level of city systems has increased and become interconnected into worldwide systems.[2] It is this dark side of modernity to which postmodernism reacts.

In this context, the urbanization of the Western world maintained its strength throughout the last five decades, with two added crucial characteristics: (1) the global integration of urban centers of the post-industrial period, and (2) the rise of postmodernism.

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[1] The most visible implications of unexpected urban growth are extreme pressure of urban sectors (i.e., infrastructure, economy, education, and public health) and unbalanced urban growth. As a direct result of unbalanced urban growth, the phenomenon of *primate-cities* may occur. The term *primate-city* was coined by Mark Jefferson in reference to demographic, economic, social, and political dominance of a city over all others in a given country. The *primate-city* phenomenon is typical of less developed countries but also exists in more developed parts of the world (e.g., Austria, Ireland, and Portugal). For further details, see Mark Jefferson, "The Law of the Primate City," *Geographical Review* 29 (April 1939): 226-232. See also Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2000), 34-41.

[2] Kevin Robins comments that "the old paradigms, now stretched to their limits, are unable to contain the *complexity* of urban systems. . . . As the scale of urban systems has exploded, and as they have become increasingly networked into global systems, . . . there has been a kind of imaginative collapse: what was once driven by vision and energy is now drained of affect. The utopia has collapsed into the *banal*. . . . Complexity and banality are significant consequences of urban modernization that now impede its further development or its supersession" (Kevin Robins, "Prisoners of the City: Whatever Could a Postmodern City Be?" in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, ed. Erica Carter, James Donald, and Judith Squires [London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993], 316, emphasis in original).

Urbanization, Globalization, and Postmodernism

In the pursuit to attract international capital in order to compete with other urban centers, the processes of urbanization and globalization have become evident facts of contemporary life.[1] Although scholars still seek a clearer understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of the process of making a city truly "global,"[2] it is impossible to conceive of globalization without urbanization. Furthermore, parallel with (and to a large extent interacting with) these developments is the rise and establishment of the postmodern condition and its intrinsic association with the Western urban socio-cultural context. Iain Chambers wrote:

> Postmodernism, whatever form its intellectualizing might take, has been fundamentally anticipated in the [Western] metropolitan cultures of the last twenty years: among the electronic signifiers of cinema, television and video, in recording studios and record players, in fashion and youth styles, in all those sounds, images and diverse histories that are daily mixed, recycled and 'scratched' together on that

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[1] According to the United Nations, the competition between urban centers is characterized by their offer of attractive financial incentives in addition to essential practical ones, such as well-functioning infrastructure and urban services, communication systems, efficient transport, sufficient housing, and access to educational and recreational facilities. However, in this process the riches are passed from one wealthy hand to another, and poverty is left behind. This is essentially the reality in the less developed countries in the world. See United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, *The State of the World's Cities, 2001*, 18.

[2] For instance, see Saskia Sassen, "The Global City: Strategic Site/New Frontier," in *Democracy, Citizenship, and the Global City*, ed. Engin F. Isin (New York: Routledge, 2000), 48-61; and Raymond Torres, *Towards a Socially Sustainable World Economy: An Analysis of the Social Pillars of Globalization*, Studies on the Social Dimensions of Globalization (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2001), 17-48.

giant screen which is the contemporary city.[1]

Nonetheless, most scholars who address the issues of urbanization, particularly globalization, agree that even though the postmodern paradigm had its origin as an essentially Western phenomenon, postmodernity is actually becoming a global trend. This has occurred especially because of the strong support postmodern thought receives from academic circles, and the long history of Western educational and structural systems being rapidly assimilated throughout the world. It is likely that the cultural turmoil taking place in the West will echo around the globe within two or three decades.[2] Consequently, the forces of urbanization, globalization, and postmodernization complement each other in their conceptual aspects in what has been labeled the postmodern city.[3]

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[1] Iain Chambers, “Maps for the Metropolis: A Possible Guide to the Present,” *Cultural Studies* 1 (1987): 5-7.

[2] See Featherstone’s analysis on the relationship of globalization and postmodernism in the chapter: “Globalizing the Postmodern,” in *Undoing Culture*, 72-85.

[3] For instance, Christine Boyer labels the postmodern city the “city of spectacle” (M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998], 46-59); Sharon Zukin identifies it as the city of “visual consumption” (Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991], 221); and Charles Rutheiser calls it a “non-place urban realm” (Charles Rutheiser, “Making Place in the Nonplace Urban Realm,” *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 26 [Spring 1997]: 9). See also Setha M. Low, ed., *Theorizing the City: The New Urban Anthropology Reader* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 317-376.

Rather than regarding urbanization as a mere outcome of modernity,[1] it may be equally reasonable to see postmodernity as an outcome of urbanization, and globalization as one of the channels through which postmodern elements are conveyed around the world.[2] The centralizing power of urbanization makes the urban context the locus of the postmodern condition.[3] As Erwin McManus insightfully points out, "if postmodernism were an artist, her canvas would be the city."[4]

In this context, the connection between the establishment of the contemporary postmodern condition and urban development becomes noticeable.[5] Jencks, for example, argues that postmodern architecture has its roots in two significant shifts: (1) the collapse of the usual space and time boundaries; and (2) the influence of globalization in the diversity within cities, based on place, function, and social concern.[1]

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[1] See Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 65-78.

[2] Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: SAGE, 1992), 138-145.

[3] Paul Hiebert points out the centralizing power of the cities as a primary characteristic of urban societies, affirming that cities "attract power, wealth, knowledge, and expertise . . . [they are] the centers of government, banking, business, industry, marketing, learning, art, transportation, and religion" (Paul G. Hiebert and Eloise Hiebert Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal, Peasant, and Urban Societies* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 265-267). See also Michael J. Dear, *The Postmodern Urban Condition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 317-318.

[4] Erwin McManus, *Engaging the Third Millennium*, 1999, http://www.hmconline.org/shout/53millenium.html (9 February 2004).

[5] Edward Soja identifies six intertwined urbanization processes in an attempt to demonstrate how each of them departs from the previous modern urbanization trends and, therefore, deserve to be labeled *postmodern urbanization processes*: (1) deindustrialization and reindustrialization; (2) globalizing the local and localizing the global; (3) restructuring of urban form; (4) development of new patterns of social fragmentation, segregation, and polarization; (5) development of the "carceral city"; and finally (6) the rise of an urban hyperreality, "a hypersimulation that confounds and reorders the traditional ways to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined"

The postmodern outlook, therefore, intentionally displays a diversity of meanings. However, its main characteristics are clear: relativism, pluralism, tolerance of differences, and a strong emphasis on community.

Summary

Throughout human history, the rise and establishment of cities has been a remarkable aspect of human culture. In each of the phases of its development, the city has been symbolized in distinctive ways. It started as a shrine and was later transformed into a military and colonial center. Then, it developed a new identity as a permanent place for trade and commerce, under the protection of its walls and the church. Later on, it experienced unprecedented growth through the progress achieved by the Industrial Revolution. Throughout the twentieth century it faced an unparalleled explosion, especially driven by modern technological advancements and more recently through the power of globalization.

From a rural beginning, the world has become an urban environment. At the dawn of the modern period of world history, cities came to play a major role in the

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(Edward W. Soja, "Postmodern Urbanization," in *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, ed. Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson [Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995], 129-135).

[1] Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 5.

profound cultural, social, economic, and political transformations that brought into being today's industrialized and urbanized societies. Concomitantly, the postmodern condition found in the urbanized and globalized context of the contemporary Western world a safe haven to emerge and expand.

From the Christian mission perspective, what do these new urban realities bring to the gospel proclamation in an emergent postmodern condition? What is the role of the Christian church in an urban, postmodernizing society? The next section of this chapter attempts to address selected issues in the relationship between the Christian church, urban mission, and the postmodern condition.

Urban Mission and the Postmodern Condition

As the world is moved by waves of urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism, it becomes imperative to discern the reality of contemporary urban life in discussing the implications of these forces for the advance of the church's mission in the urban centers of the world. In this context, the church must understand its role and responsibility in facing the challenges, and at the same time, take advantage of the opportunities posed by an increasingly urbanized and postmodernizing world.

Urban Mission and the Church

Before the issues and missiological implications associated with urban mission and postmodernism are discussed, it becomes essential to reflect on the role of the church in the urban context. It is beyond the scope of this study to develop the biblical concept of the church and/or to engage in a contemporary ecclesiological analysis. This section, therefore, focuses on the place and role of the church in urban mission.

Church and Mission

The relationship between church and mission has, for a long time, been one of the most critical missiological issues.[1] Several significant shifts in missionary thinking have impacted the way the church engages and perceives its mission. During the twentieth century, the world missionary conferences were fundamental to ecclesiological reflections on mission. At the 1910 Edinburgh conference, the main focus was the lack of missionary engagement by the West, while the relationship between church and mission was hardly addressed. Eighteen years later, at the Jerusalem meeting of the IMC (1928), for the first time, the relationship between church and mission was recognized as intrinsically present and in need of further analysis. Nevertheless, only at the Willingen conference of 1952 was there a perceptible but subtle move from a church-centered mission to a mission-centered church, with God's initiative as the foundation of mission.[2] Bosch writes,

> Willingen began to flesh out a new model. It recognized that the church could be neither the starting point nor the goal of mission; . . . both [mission and church] should, rather, be taken up into the *missio Dei*, which now became the overarching

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[1] See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 368.

[2] See Norman Goodall, ed., *Missions under the Cross* (London: Edinburgh House, 1953), 188-191. David Burnett asserts that "mission lies . . . within the very character and action of God himself" (David Burnett, *The Healing of the Nations: The Biblical Basis of the Mission of God* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996], 12).

> concept. The *missio Dei* institutes the *missiones ecclesiae*. The church changes from being the sender to being the one sent.[1]

As a direct result of this missiological shift, mission is now seen as belonging to the Triune God;[2] and the church—the apostolic community—is understood to be not the *goal* of mission, but the primary *instrument* in the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).[3] Darrel Guder asserts, "Mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purpose to restore and heal creation."[4] Hunsberger, in turn, rightly declares, "The church's birthright, possessed by all the people of God, is that it is a divinely called and sent community."[5]

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[1] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 370.

[2] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 30-31. See also Philip D. Kenneson, "Trinitarian Missiology: Mission as Face-to-Face Encounter," in *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin*, ed. Thomas F. Foust (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 76-83. David Bosch affirms, "Mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It [is] thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the *mission Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit [is] expanded to include yet another 'movement:' Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world" (Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390).

[3] See John A. Mackay, "The Great Commission and the Church Today," in *Missions under the Cross*, ed. Norman Goodall (London: Edinburgh House, 1953), 129-141. Van Gelder, in turn, points out that "the basic image of the church as apostolic conveys that the church is sent into the world authoritatively by God to participate fully in his redemptive work" (Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 51).

[4] Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

[5] George R. Hunsberger, "The Church in the Postmodern Transition," in *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin*, ed. Thomas F. Foust (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 98.

In this emerging ecclesiology, the nature and vocation of the church are seen as essentially missional.[1] In other words, the church was called into existence for mission, in which the church is the means, not the end, of God's purpose. Therefore, because the church and mission are intrinsically related, a church without mission is as contradictory as a mission without the church.[2] Emil Brunner concurs: "The Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith."[3] Consequently, the missiological understanding of the church—together with the ecclesiastical understanding of mission—carries profound consequences for the urban mission of the church.

The Urban Church as Urban Mission

Urbanization is the new way of life and the new frontier for missions. The process of urbanization has increasingly disturbed the church, which in many ways has been slow in reacting to its challenges. Harvie Conn asks: "How can we recruit personnel for reaching our urban generations when the rural and suburban areas have nurtured their visions of the church?"[1] Nevertheless, on the shoulders of the urban church is the responsibility to carry God's salvific mission to the cities of the world.

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[1] Cf. Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 104-136. See also Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 50-51; and Guder, *Missional Church*, 4-5, 11-12.

[2] Carl E. Braaten, *The Flaming Center: A Theology of the Christian Mission* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1977), 55.

[3] Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (Lexington, KY: American Theological Library Association, 1965), 108.

Contextual urban mission

The local church is sent within the context of a culture and should always be contextual.[2] As the body of Christ, the church is called to engage in discipling the nations which requires an understandable communication of the gospel in every context (1 Cor 12:12-27, Matt 24:14; 28:19). Jim Kitchens asserts:

> It has been always the task of the church to translate the gospel into thought forms and patterns of speech that can be understood by ordinary people and that will draw them to God. The church needs to face squarely its renewed call to translate Christian speaking and living skillfully, not only preserving the core of the good news but also presenting that good news in . . . intelligible [ways].[3]

For instance, the early church followed this calling to engage people where they were. Intentional or not, the early church was contextual. Snyder asserts, "When we look at the earliest Christian communities, we do not see a group of people alienated from their cultural context, but rather a group rooted in a specific culture."[1] According to this model, the church ought to develop a contextual identification with the culture to which it is sent to serve. And in the context of urban mission, "urban churches are a significant part of the body of Christ."[2]

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[1] Conn, *Clarified Vision*, 17.

[2] Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 119.

[3] Jim Kitchens, *The Postmodern Parish: New Ministry for a New Era* (Bethesda, MD: Alban, 2003), 30. Hiebert and Tiénou affirm that missiologists "assume that all people live in different historical and sociocultural settings, and that the gospel must be known to them in the particularity of these contexts. The task of the mission theologian is to translate and communicate the gospel in the language and culture of real people in the particularity of their lives, so that it may transform them and their cultures into what God intends for them to be" (Hiebert and Tiénou, "Missions and the Doing of Theology," 93).

Incarnational urban mission

The church engaged in mission is also an incarnational church. Following the example of Christ who was sent, and in obedience came into the world (John 1:1-14), the church must accept the call to fulfill its particular mission in all cultural circumstances. Van Gelder points out that "just as the Word became flesh, so also the church is enfleshed in human cultures as the body of Christ."[3] Describing the incarnational experience of Christ, John Perkins adds: "Jesus is our model. . . . He didn't commute to earth one day a week and shoot back up to heaven. He left His throne and became one of us so that we might see the life of God revealed in Him."[4]

In a fellowship of believers, "where two or three come together" in Christ's name (Matt 18:20), the incarnational characteristic of the church takes form in the unity with the person and purposes of Jesus Christ for His church. A key element of incarnational mission, therefore, is "this identification, of being present with people,"[1] as Christ exemplified in His relationship with human beings.

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[1] Howard A. Snyder, *Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church and Kingdom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983), 117.

[2] Nile Harper, *Urban Churches, Vital Signs: Beyond Charity toward Justice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1.

[3] Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 119.

[4] John Perkins, *With Justice for All* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1982), 88.

What kind of church should a church in the city be? Robert Linthicum addresses this question suggesting three possibilities for the urban church: the church in, to, or with the city. In the first, the church perceives itself *in* the city, but does not particularly identify with its community. In the second, the church sees itself as a church *to* the city, but it this case the church decides what is best for its community. The third approach is the church *with* the city, meaning a church that incarnates itself in that particular community.[2] Within this perspective, the church represents the physical presence of Christ and, being enfleshed within a cultural condition, is incarnational in every particular setting to witness and make disciples for God's kingdom. Therefore, urban churches have the prime responsibility of presenting the practical aspects of the incarnational example of Christ, rooted in His unconditional love for city dwellers.

Primary agent of urban mission

Because the church is contextual and incarnational, it has the clear responsibility to engage in every contextual and cultural circumstance, which intrinsically includes the urban centers of the world. Furthermore, as Linthicum points out, "Scripture stresses that the city is central to God's plan of transformation and redemption of humanity and is therefore the locus of God's salvation of humanity."[1]

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[1] Jude Tiersma, "What Does It Mean to Be Incarnational When We Are Not the Messiah?" in *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission*, ed. Charles E. Engen and Jude Tiersma (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994), 9.

[2] Robert C. Linthicum, "The Urban Church: In, to, or with the City," *Theology, News and Notes* 38 (October 1991): 8-9.

Undoubtedly, God is interested in the cities of the world, as was distinctly displayed in Paul's theology and strategy, which was developed in the context of urban mission to some of the greatest cities of the Greco-Roman world.[2] "From the hour of his conversion . . . until the last we hear about Paul . . . , a consistent picture is given of a missionary focusing his main efforts on cities."[3] Following Paul's example, the book of Acts records that the Pauline missionaries would go first to the urban Jewish synagogues and then, if necessary, would expand their efforts to the homes of individuals such as Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:12-14), Jason in Thessalonica (17:1-5), and Priscilla and Aquilla in Corinth (18:1-4).[4]

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[1] Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology for the Urban Church*, 80. The basic assumption of Linthicum's urban mission theology is that "the city is the primary battleground between God and Satan, between the Lord of Light and the Prince of Darkness" (138). I agree with Linthicum's presupposition. See Kleber O. Gonçalves, "The Archetypal Cities of Babylon and Jerusalem: The Great Controversy Portrayed in Rev 14:8 and Its Urban Mission Implications" (Term Paper, Andrews University, May 1999), 13-27.

[2] Manuel Ortiz, "The Church and the City," in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World*, ed. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 46.

[3] Greenway and Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*, 38.

[4] See Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 26. Del Birkey, in turn, points out that "it is reasonable to assume that when Paul began missionary work in a city, his primary objective was to win a household first. This then became the nucleus as well as the

No other mission agent is more apt to take up the challenge of the urban context than the urban church.[1] The urban church is called—contextually and incarnationally—to evangelize and to be a witness to all city dwellers. The primary agency of urban mission, therefore, is the local urban church.[2] Within this missiological perspective, the urban church has the responsibility to make disciples in the different urban socio-cultural contexts, which certainly include those nurtured by the postmodern condition.

In his first letter to the church of Corinth, Paul wrote: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Cor 9:22-23). In following Paul's example for reaching the unreached, and in view of the problems related to the conceptual aspects of the postmodern condition, how can the urban church be relevant to

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center for the advancement of the gospel in that area" (Del Birkey, *The House Church: A Model for Renewing the Church* [Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1988], 60).

[1] See Wayne L. Gordon, "A Philosophy of Urban Ministry: The Principles of Christian Community Development," in *A Heart for the City: Effective Ministries to the Urban Community*, ed. John Fuder (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 80-81.

[2] Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 378. See also Jong-Yun Lee, "Primacy of the Local Church in World Evangelization," in *Proclaim Christ until He Comes: Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide, 1990), 69-72; and Eduardo M. Maling, "The Importance of the Local Church to World Evangelization," in *Proclaim Christ until He Comes: Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide, 1990), 73-77. In theory, much has been said about the local church as the primary agent of mission. But in practical terms, as Tim Chester points out, "the mission agency and the missionary are still viewed as the primary agents of mission" (Tim Chester, "Christ's Little Flock: Towards an Ecclesiology of the Cross," *Evangel* 19 [2001]: 18).

the postmodern mind and at the same time maintain its biblical faithfulness? The next section discusses the impact of the modern-postmodern paradigm shift on urban mission, and in particular the issue of the contextualization of postmodern urban mission.

Urban Mission in the Midst of a Paradigm Shift

Communicating the unchanging gospel to a rapidly changing world has always been a difficult task for the church. This difficulty is even more prominent in an urbanized, postmodernizing Western world where the church has lost its long-enjoyed social position of authority and power.[1] Leonard Sweet indicates that "Western Christianity went to sleep in a modern world governed by the gods of reason and observation."[2] But in the past few decades it has increasingly been awakened by "a postmodern world open to revelation and hungry for experience."[3]

It is valid to emphasize, however, that the emergence of the postmodern condition does not mean the annihilation of the modern worldview. Ruth Tucker asserts that "modernity is not dead and postmodernism has not taken its place."[4] Bosch, in turn, wisely puts forward: "For the most part we are, at the moment, thinking and working in terms of *two* paradigms."[1] Nevertheless, in most cases, urban churches still think of mission in a way still largely rooted in the modern paradigm and have been unable to effectively relate with the postmodern condition.[2] As a result, ineffectiveness will most certainly characterize urban mission if the church fails to understand, in the existence of these overlapping paradigms, how modernity has shaped and postmodernity defied the mission of the urban church.

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[1] See Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation, Leadership and Liminality*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997), 2.

[2] Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 29.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ruth A. Tucker, *Walking Away from Faith: Unraveling the Mystery of Belief and Unbelief* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 16.

Urban Mission: Shaped by the Modern Era

Since most Christian denominations developed within Enlightenment assumptions and those that existed before the Enlightenment have also been deeply affected by these assumptions,[3] many urban churches are now struggling to survive in the face of the postmodern challenges. The status of urban mission is now confronted by an emerging culture that identifies the Christian church as a worthless institution, profit-making business, or a group of extremists who do not accept differences, utterly intolerant of any thought that does not follow the church's own traditions.

The impact of modernity on the church has had inevitable consequences. The church in many ways has simply followed the course and pace of the modern era. As the world became modern, so did the church. Peter Berger says, "The Christian church contributed to the rise of the modern world; the modern world, in turn, has undermined the Christian church."[1] Enlightenment values, such as individualism, dualisms, and scientific empiricism, have for some time been clearly identified in the church.[2] Nineteenth-century optimism and belief in progress have further stimulated the growth of these modern values in the Western church.[3]

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[1] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 349, emphasis in original.

[2] See Kitchens, *The Postmodern Parish*, 27.

[3] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 89-93.

As a result, the church increasingly lost its uniqueness as a sent missionary community. In modern times, mission became only one of the many facets of the church, not the reason for its existence. Guder asserts: "Neither the structures nor the theology of our established Western traditional churches is missional."[4] They have been largely shaped by the legacy of modernity. Thus, modernity paved the way for the individualization of the church and its mission. Ortiz writes:

> In the nineteenth century, mission was understood primarily as the calling of individuals who were motivated by God to participate in 'foreign' missions. Individuals, rather than the church as a whole, awakened to the call of the mission

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[1] Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973), 132.

[2] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 49.

[3] Because of the urban mission emphasis of this dissertation, I do not intend to deal with all the implications of the modern worldview upon the church. For further details on this issue, see Shenk, "The Culture of Modernity as a Missionary Challenge," 69-78; idem, *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1995), 38-48; and David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 17-31, 205-213.

[4] Guder, *Missional Church*, 5.

> frontier. The individual was called and sent, and that led to a mission focus on saving individual souls.[1]

As a direct result of this approach, asserts Murphy, "the individualism of modernity has led to a view of evangelism that focuses almost exclusively on the individual and a view of Christian morality that concentrates on 'personal' sins rather than structural evil."[2] Thus, the questions of social structures were reduced to individualistic dimensions, and the church found itself more comfortable with welfare rather than social justice.[3]

The impact of modernity upon urban mission was further felt in the growing Christian dualism that would look for individual conversions in the city, but completely turned its back on urban agglomerations. Consequently, this antiurban attitude would eventually isolate evangelism from social transformation.[4] Furthermore, this antiurbanism led to a revival of the back-to-nature movement, in which "virtue was to be sought in the wilderness, nature unsullied by urban traces."[5]

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[1] Ortiz, "The Church and the City," 47.

[2] Nancey Murphy, "Missiology in the Postmodern West: A Radical Reformation Perspective," in *To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge*, ed. J. Andrew Kirk and Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 101.

[3] Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry*, 57.

[4] Claerbaut, *Urban Ministry*, 16-17.

[5] Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry*, 58.

Urban Mission: Defied by the Postmodern Condition

Shaped by the modern worldview, the church is now further ostracized by the postmodern condition. One of the central reasons postmodernism has defied the mission of the urban church is that the postmodern ethos exposes and repudiates the modern values that have shaped the church.[1]

On the other hand, the urban church needs the necessary awareness and sensitivity to neither buy uncritically into the postmodern ethos nor continue to be captured in the modern trap. To accept uncritically postmodern concepts is to open the door to syncretism. To disregard the postmodern condition as a real socio-cultural trend is to close the door to emerging postmodern generations. Robert Warren suggests that the church needs to be "bi-lingual, able to relate to those who belong to the [modern worldview], as well as to those who live in the new [postmodern condition]."[2] To ignore cultural changes that involve lucid and decisive thinking about its methods and role in an increasingly urban society is risky for the church.[3] In his comments about challenges the church faces, Walbert Bühlmann writes:

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[1] For an outstanding ecclesiological analysis of the impact of modernity upon the Western church, see Jonathan S. Campbell, "The Translatability of Christian Community: An Ecclesiology for Postmodern Cultures and Beyond" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 20-51.

[2] Robert Warren, *Building Missionary Congregations: Towards a Post-Modern Way of Being Church* (London: Church House, 1995), 7.

[3] Dave Tomlinson contends that "Christians must engage contemporary culture if they wish to know how to make the good news of Jesus relevant to people in that culture. By engaging critically, Christians will also identify those elements in

> Each culture is challenged and stimulated by facing new situations and is kept alive by this continual process. Harsh climate, overpopulation, class struggle and religious divisions demand a response. But each challenge presents us with the Sphinx's demand: 'Answer or be devoured.' *Those who neither answer nor react appropriately will perish.* Thus there are cultures which disappear and others which survive, stagnant churches and self-renewing churches. *The Church is not exempt from this historical law* [emphasis mine].[1]

It is not an easy task for urban ministries to identify and react effectively to postmodernism. The postmodern condition forces the urban church to re-examine its priorities and mission. As Jill Hudson prudently points out, the postmodern condition "strikes to the very core of our being and requires that, once again, we open ourselves to God's transformation. If we are not willing to do so, we risk becoming isolated from the culture in which we live, inviting stagnation and further decline."[2]

How will the urban church react in face of the postmodern condition? Will it be stagnant or vibrant? Will it be intentionally contextual and incarnational, or will it only minister from the outside? Will it become, like the apostolic church, a sent community, or will it remain inwardly focused? How can the church be contextual to the postmodern condition without being contaminated by it?

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postmodern culture that run counter to the claims of Christ" (Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003], 19).

[1] Walbert Bühlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church: An Analysis of the Present and Future of the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978), 96.

[2] Jill M. Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough: Evaluation Tools for the 21st-Century Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2004), 16-17.

Postmodern urban mission contextualization

One of the most critical issues in urban mission to a relativistic, postmodernizing society is contextualization. Kraft describes the essence of contextualization as "the implementation of biblical Christianity in culturally appropriate ways."[1] But in a cultural condition that refuses any objective, all-encompassing truth, some questions arise. First, How does one maintain cultural relevance and at the same time biblical faithfulness in contextualizing the gospel to the postmodern mind?

Genuine contextualization is only feasible if the foundations of its relevance are established upon an unchanging and everlasting truth. But perceptions of relevance greatly differ from one generation to another. What might have been considered very relevant to the modern worldview can be looked at in quite a different way by the postmodern mind. In an attempt to offer a solution to mission contextualization for different generations in the same cultural circumstance, Kraft advocates what he calls "continuous contextualization" as a practical way to deal with the issue. His approach seems to be particularly significant for postmodern urban mission contextualization. Kraft writes that "continuous contextualization"

> would involve continuous, generation-by-generation reevaluation of church customs and experimenting in one generation with approaches that might well be abandoned in another. This is necessary because the issues are different for each generation,

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[1] Charles H. Kraft, "Generational Appropriateness in Contextualization," in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World*, ed. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 134.

especially in view of the rapid pace of culture change.[1]

A second question is: By what standards should urban mission to a postmodern condition be contextualized? Contextualization without a firm foundation and accountability to objective truth will eventually lead to relativism and syncretism. Here, the process of postmodern urban mission contextualization must be established upon "God's Word and be guided by the call of Christ to evangelize and build believers into strong communities of faith."[2] However, it is the responsibility of the urban church to "translate," and not "transform," the gospel to the postmodern mind. James E. White states:

> Every generation must 'translate' the Gospel into its unique cultural context. This is very different than 'transforming' the message of the Gospel, however, into something that was never intended by the biblical witness. Transformation of the message must be avoided at all costs. Translation, however, is necessary for a winsome and compelling presentation of the Gospel of Christ.[3]

The urban church, then, must be able to discern between the elements of the Christian faith, which are biblical and timeless, and those which are culturally bound and subject to adjustment. For Christian mission, Jesus Christ as revealed through the Scriptures is the prime authority for faith and practice. Dowsett clarifies, "It is the Scripture, pondered together by the believing community, through which we must evaluate every part of culture."[1]

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[1] Ibid., 135.

[2] Dean S. Gilliland, *Pauline Theology and Mission Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 15-16.

[3] White, "Evangelism in a Postmodern World," 177.

In an emergent postmodern condition, forms and methods must be adapted so that the urban church will not lose its potential for reaching the postmodern generations. While the message is timeless, the method is not, and contextualization should be used as the tool to transform and renew, not the Gospel, but any given cultural worldview,[2] including the postmodern mind-set.

Postmodernism, therefore, calls the urban church to embrace the paradoxical tension of being authoritative and contextualized—to continually evaluate mission strategies and practices for their cultural relevance and biblical integrity. In this context it becomes important to distinguish between postmodern churches and postmodern-sensitive churches.

Postmodern vs. postmodern-sensitive churches

It is crucial for the urban church that seeks to reach postmoderns to become sensitive to the postmodern condition, but at the same time to remain faithful to the biblical essence of the Christian faith. By postmodern-sensitive churches I mean churches that are conscious of the issues and willing to communicate the gospel in ways that are relevant to the postmodern condition, without losing their biblical foundations. On the other hand, postmodern churches—even though they are also sensitive to the postmodern culture—fail to critically distinguish the aspects of postmodernism that are contrary to the biblical perspective. In other words, to become a postmodern-sensitive church does not necessarily mean becoming postmodern.[1] Insightfully, Sweet asserts, "Christians must say yes to the moment God has given them. . . . But saying yes to the moment does not mean one lets the moment define the yes."[2]

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[1] Rose Dowsett, "Dry Bones in the West," in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, ed. William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 456. Van Gelder concurs: "The challenge before the church is to maintain a firm commitment to God's revelation within Scripture as being authoritative for all of life, while also recognizing the mediated and perspectival character of this revelation within culture and through culture" (Craig Van Gelder, "Postmodernism and Evangelicals: A Unique Missiological Challenge at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century," *Missiology* 30 [October 2002]: 501).

[2] See Elizabeth Tebbe, "Postmodernism, the Western Church, and Missions," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (1999): 426-429.

As a Christian community, the urban church can embrace some, but not all, of the elements of the postmodern condition. For instance, postmodernism asserts that we cannot fully comprehend truth, because of our limitations as human beings. This is an element that can be accepted. On the other hand, some postmoderns go to the extreme of affirming that there is no absolute truth, denying the existence of God's Story, the Christian metanarrative. In this regard, as Christians we cannot agree, since we believe there is absolute truth in Jesus Christ, and God is actively present in history. Another example is found in the postmodern desire for community and tolerance towards diversity. This fits well with the biblical concept of a local church. But postmodernism comes up short when it asserts that all points of view are of equal value. Thus, when the postmodern condition and the Christian worldview come in conflict, the postmodern-sensitive church should clearly and openly communicate what it believes and the reasons for these beliefs.

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[1] Ross P. Rohde, *Practical Considerations for Postmodern Sensitive Churches*, 2000, http://www.postmission.com/articles/rohde2.pdf (4 April 2004).

[2] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 46.

In an urbanizing, postmodernizing world, the urban church must rethink its missionary and outreach strategies. Like Charles Dickens, who wrote of a day that "it was the best of times, . . . [and] the worst of times,"[1] a parallel observation could be shared regarding the postmodern condition. Dockery affirms, "Postmodernism presents Christians with new challenges as well as rich opportunities for evangelistic witness."[2] Never before has the urban church confronted such a challenge; and at the same time, never has it faced such an opportunity for making disciples in a confused and divided society. The final section of this chapter addresses some of the most pressing challenges and genuine opportunities for urban mission in an emergent postmodern condition.

Postmodernism: A Dangerous Opportunity for Urban Mission

In *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch calls attention to the etymology of the Japanese word for "crisis." In the Japanese language, "crisis" is formed by the combination of the characters for "danger" and "opportunity." Thus, Bosch stresses, "crisis is . . . not the end of opportunity but in reality only its beginning, the point where danger and opportunity meet."[1] In a similar way, the postmodern condition is, in fact, a time of crisis that holds "dangerous opportunities" for the urban mission of the church. Denying this socio-cultural and missiological crisis is a dangerous attitude for the church. Engaging the current postmodern condition with the gospel is a unique opportunity for the expansion of God's kingdom.

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[1] Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1.

[2] Dockery, "The Challenge of Postmodernism," 12.

In view of the difficulties the church has demonstrated in adapting to cultural shifts, Dutch missiologist Hendrik Kraemer asserts that "the Church is always in a state of crisis and its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it."[2] Kraemer goes on to assert that, "according to the testimony of history, . . . [the church] has always needed apparent failure and suffering in order to become fully alive to its nature and mission."[3]

The current cultural crisis the Western church faces in urban centers may well suggest the need to acknowledge the existence of barriers of understanding and, at the same time, bridges of affinity for presenting the gospel to the postmodern mind. "The future would not seem to be a closed book for the Church, but to be open to possibilities and opportunities as well as dangers."[4] Günter, in turn, affirms, "Like the spirit of every age, postmodernism contains opportunities and dangers that should be taken into account in mission."[1] Van Gelder concurs,

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[1] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 3.

[2] Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (New York: Harper, 1938), 24.

[3] Ibid., 26.

[4] Jeremy Morris, "Modernity, History and Urban Theology," *Theology* 100 (May-June 1997): 202.

> While not without its challenges, postmodernism presents the church . . . with a tremendous missional opportunity. The biggest challenge facing the church today lies within its own ranks, not in its attempt to relate to the postmodern context. The lingering vestiges of modernity continue to seduce the church into thinking that it can have domain or maintain control.[2]

In fact, postmodernism has divided evangelical scholars into two groups regarding the postmodern condition and the mission of the church. On the one hand, some affirm that postmodernism is an immense threat to the Christian faith because of its rejection of the possibility of knowing absolute truth. On the other hand, another group contends that postmodernism is a tremendous opportunity because of the potential it offers for the investigation of spiritual realities.[3] Ursula King asserts, "The rise of postmodernism . . . provides new opportunities to elucidate the relationship between praxis and action and thereby creates new openings for theological and religious reflection."[1]

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[1] Wolfgang Günther, "Postmodernism," *International Review of Mission* 86 (1997): 428.

[2] Craig Van Gelder, "From the Modern to the Postmodern in the West: Viewing the Twentieth Century in Perspective," *Word & World* 20 (2000): 39-40.

[3] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 13. For example, among evangelical scholars who contend that postmodernism is incompatible with genuine Christian faith, and therefore must be rejected, are Davis Wells, Thomas Oden, and Douglas Groothuis. Among evangelical thinkers who believe that the church must critically engage postmodern culture in order to effectively minister to postmoderns are Stanley Grenz, J. Richard Middleton, Brian J. Walsh, and Alan Roxburgh. For further details on their views, see Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 161-174; Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 3-54; Douglas R. Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 111-160, 239-262; Middleton and Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, 172-195; Oden, *After Modernity . . . What?* 25-47, 110-126; idem, *Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 24, 116-118; Roxburgh, *Reaching a New*

In a prophetic tone Walter Lowe declares, "Postmodernity has arrived, or almost arrived. It is arriving even now. It has arrived for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear."[2] What are some of the most crucial challenges posed by the postmodern condition to the mission of the urban church?

Postmodern Challenges to Urban Mission

The postmodern condition presents tremendous challenges to the advance of Christian missions in urban centers, especially because of the pervasive influence of globalization.[3] In broad terms, several elements of postmodernism could be viewed and analyzed as current threats to the Christian faith. For example, Van Gelder identifies

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Generation, 63-130; and David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 68-84, 95-136.

[1] Ursula King, "Spirituality in a Postmodern Age: Faith and Praxis in New Contexts," in *Faith and Praxis in a Postmodern Age*, ed. Ursula King (New York: Cassell, 1998), 95.

[2] Walter Lowe, "Is There a Postmodern Gospel?" in *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Graham Ward (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 491.

[3] Argentine theologian René Padilla has called the phenomenon of globalization "the greatest challenge that the Christian mission faces" at the beginning of the twenty-first century (C. René Padilla, "Mission at the Turn of the Century/Millennium," *Evangel* 19 [Spring 2001]: 6). For a more positive assessment of globalization from a Christian perspective, see Bob Goudzwaard, *Globalization and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 19-27.

three emphases of the postmodern condition as challenges to the gospel presentation: (1) the "now" as the only important reality, (2) the value of surface and image over substance, and (3) the fragmentation and plurality of Western society.[1]

Considering the purpose of this study, and primarily because of its emphasis on urban mission and context, this dissertation considers two elements as major concerns to the advancement of the gospel in the urban centers of the Western world: epistemological relativism and spiritual pluralism.

The Death of Truth: Epistemological Relativism

For postmoderns, the very idea of absolute truth is no longer accepted and must be abandoned, together with the modern worldview. Postmodernism rejects the view of a single and universal truth with no spatial and/or temporary limitations. This perspective is endorsed by academia, especially in the great urban intellectual centers. The primary reason for the presentation of this element of postmodern thought as an urban mission challenge is based on the strong relationship between academia and the urban context. Most universities around the world are located in urban centers and the influence of their postmodern considerations is generally absorbed by the community in which these centers of intellectualism are located.[2] Paul Hiebert asserts that urban

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[1] Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 136-137.

[2] Andrew Ross clearly feels that intellectuals have a role to play today in respect to spreading postmodern thought into popular culture. See Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1989), 6-7, 229-231.

"universities and research centers generate new knowledge that constantly reshapes the city itself."[1]

Urban context and intellectual postmodernism

From the thought revolution in academic circles comes the cornerstone of postmodernism: the rejection of absolute truth. Allan Bloom writes, "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative."[2]

Nowadays, educators argue that every time people claim to be in possession of *the* truth, particularly religious truth, they end up repressing those who do not agree.[3] They indicate that "it is heresy to suggest the superiority of some value, fantasy to believe in moral argument, slavery to submit to a judgment sounder than your own."[4] Higher education openly promotes cynicism about truth and reason and increasingly regards any claims to a universal and absolute truth as intolerant and uninformed.[5]

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[1] Hiebert and Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry*, 311.

[2] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 25.

[3] Jim Leffel and Dennis McCallum, "The Postmodern Challenge: Facing the Spirit of the Age," *Christian Research Journal* 19 (1996): 36.

[4] Kelly Monroe, *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Christian Thinkers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 17.

[5] See Lynne V. Cheney, *Telling the Truth: Why Our Culture and Our Country Have Stopped Making Sense, and What We Can Do about It* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 16-19.

Groothuis adds,

> The very idea of absolute, objective and universal truth is considered implausible, held in open contempt or not even seriously considered. The reasons for truth decay are both philosophical and sociological, *rooted in the intellectual world of ideas as well as the cultural world of everyday experience* [emphasis mine].[1]

In this context, the university campus has become the center from which postmodern ideas and moods spread to the rest of society. As Tomlinson affirms, "Those who assert that postmodernism is a figment of the academic imagination, merely a passing intellectual fad, could not be more wrong. Postmodernism flows directly from the musty corridors of academia into the world of popular culture."[2] "The freedom of our day," protested a student in a graduate commencement address at Harvard, "is the freedom to devote ourselves to any values we please, on the mere condition that we do not believe them to be true."[3]

Postmodern "truth" vs. Christian Truth

As a direct consequence of the dismissal of absolute truth, the contemporary situation in an urban, globalized, and media-saturated environment makes the establishment of a cohesive worldview invalid. Anderson notes that

> postmodernity challenges the view that the truth is . . . one and undivided, the same for all men everywhere at all times. The newer view regards any truth as socially constructed, contingent, inseparable from the peculiar needs and preferences of

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[1] Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, 22.

[2] Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical*, 81.

[3] Monroe, *Finding God at Harvard*, 17.

> certain people in a certain time and place. This notion has many implications—it leaves no value, custom, belief, or eternal verity totally untouched.[1]

Moreover, the notion of finding objective truth in the midst of an information age, according to postmoderns, is a "utopian illusion" that should be avoided at all costs.[2] For the postmodern mind, no appeal is made to an external "reality" beyond the individual and/or culture which ground a proposition as "true." For postmodern thinkers, who now dominate the arts, humanities, and social sciences of many universities, everything is a social construct.[3] Thus, truth is ultimately established only on individual and/or socio-cultural grounds. In the place of objective truth, local narratives that work for a particular community are accepted as truth. Thus, truth is now viewed only as a matter of interpretation and not what is real or true.[4] Consequently, ethical values are the product of unique cultural traditions. This view leads to the point in which there are no moral absolutes.[5]

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[1] Walter T. Anderson, *The Future of the Self: Inventing the Postmodern Person* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1997), 27.

[2] Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, 27.

[3] See Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self* (New York: Basic, 1991), 228-229.

[4] For an excellent discussion on this issue, see Roger Lundin, *The Culture of Interpretation: Christian Faith and the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 31-52.

[5] For further discussion on ethical and moral relativisms, see John Finnis, *Moral Absolutes: Tradition, Revision, and Truth* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 31-83; Robert H. Knight, *The Age of Consent: The Rise of Relativism and the Corruption of Popular Culture* (Dallas: Spence, 1998), 10-19; and

In religious terms, truth is perceived as only a special kind of "truth" and not an "eternal and perfect representation of cosmic reality."[1] As a result, it becomes particularly complex to present a single absolute truth to the postmodern mind, since truth is defined not by what any external authority may advocate, but by what one judges to be true. Moreover, since truth is rooted in the practical matters of personal taste and experience, the tendency is to adopt and abandon beliefs according to the demands of the moment. Thus, for the postmodern mind, a given religious faith is "true," depending on how one perceives life and reality.[2]

In this context, Christianity is not viewed as an option by a growing majority, not because it has been contested by scientific facts or historical investigation, but simply because it claims to be universally and objectively true. Put simply, the gospel message violates postmoderns' carefully cultivated incredulity toward any absolute worldview.

For this reason, the church has been accused of religious arrogance, basically because Christ is proclaimed as the only Savior and Lord. But, speaking the truth, affirms Hiebert, "is not arrogance. . . . To affirm the unique decisiveness of God's action in Jesus Christ is no arrogance; it is the enduring bulwark against the arrogance of every

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Peter Kreeft, *A Refutation of Moral Relativism: Interviews with an Absolutist* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), 135-150, 164-175.

[1] Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*, 8.

[2] Erickson, *The Postmodern World*, 69.

culture to be itself the criterion by which others are judged."[1] The notion that truth is arrogance is both unbiblical and dangerous. In Jesus' view, truth matters, for He declares, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free," and "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 8:32; 14:6). Therefore, according to the biblical perspective, truth is not a mere philosophical abstraction.

Because of this disbelief in absolute truth, postmoderns argue that all religious beliefs should be regarded as equally valid, in detriment of the "dominant" Christian version of reality. This is one of the main reasons why the gospel presentation has become obsolete in academic circles. As a result, openness without any spiritual restriction and tolerance without any moral accountability are the pluralistic mandates of the postmodern condition.

The Spiritual Supermarket: Religious Pluralism

In the mid-sixties, Harvey Cox predicted in *The Secular City* that the increasing effects of urbanization would make the world look "less and less to religious rules and rituals for its morality or its meaning."[2] Three decades later, in *Fire from Heaven*, Cox explicitly declares that his predictions regarding the future of religion in urban centers had been erroneous. "Today," he admits, "it is secularity, not spirituality, that may be headed for extinction."[1]

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[1] Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 73.

[2] Harvey G. Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 3.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, as Padilla states, "the order of the day is not irreligiousness but religious pluralism."[2] Religious pluralism is gradually becoming a major challenge posed by the postmodern condition to urban mission.

Urban context and religious pluralism

Urban life is characterized by a great variety of peoples, cultures, and religions. Such diversity can improve human life, but at the same time can produce hostility and divergence. Postmoderns celebrate this diversity and value respect and tolerance for others' views and religious beliefs. And there is no better place to experience such diversity than the city. Roger Greenway agrees:

> Pluralism is unquestionably an urban phenomenon. There are more Muslims in some cities of Europe than Protestants. Buddhist and Hindu centers are located in every metropolitan area of the world, including Latin America, where until recently the old 'Christendom' still survived. Religious pluralism affects politics, public education, the financial world, and the military.[3]

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[1] Harvey G. Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), xv. See also Harvey G. Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 222-239.

[2] Padilla, "Mission at the Turn of the Century/Millennium," 8.

[3] Roger S. Greenway, "Confronting Urban Contexts with the Gospel," in *Discipling the City: A Comprehensive Approach to Urban Mission*, 2d ed., ed. Roger S. Greenway (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 39.

In urban cultural contexts, in which spirituality is accepted as a private matter,[1] postmoderns see themselves as "possessors of beliefs, rather than believers."[2] They try to fulfill their spiritual needs through any kind of religion. For example, Robert Bellah and his partners describe a young woman named Sheila, who describes her religion as *Sheilaism*. She contends: "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. . . . My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice."[3] This personal and individualistic approach to religion has proven to solidify religious pluralism in Western societies.[4] This attitude may ultimately lead to what Conrad Ostwalt labels the "postmodern secularization of religion."[5] Following this trend, Veith asserts, "unlike any other time in history, many people are *unwilling* to believe (as if belief were a function of the will) what they do not *enjoy*.[1] In the postmodern condition, it is no longer so simple to affirm, "God loves you," because the response might be: "By the way, which God are you talking about?"[2]

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[1] Sociologists have long claimed that one feature of highly complex societies—in great part caused by urbanization and industrialization—is privatization. Under the influence of drastic changes in the media, the world has been brought into the private home. Lippy argues that "individuals are free to pick and choose what they see and hear and where they seek out meaning, without having to be part of a social institution such as a religious congregation. Consequently, people create intensely personal (and hence private) belief and value systems, their own religious worlds to which they turn for direction in life. That individualism represents yet other face of pluralism" (Charles H. Lippy, "Pluralism and American Religious Life in the Later Twentieth Century," in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, ed. Peter W. Williams [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999], 50).

[2] Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*, 9.

[3] Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart*, 221.

[4] Ibid., 225.

[5] Ostwalt argues that "the compartmentalization of culture matters less than legitimation of value for a group, either formally or informally, conceived within a common cultural context. So postmodernism brings not the end of religion, not even the end of religious institutions. But it can lead to a secularization of religion wherein the sacred and secular exist in dialogical, reciprocal, and cooperative relationships" (Conrad

The postmodern demand to uncritically accept all religious beliefs as true, at least for the person who believes them, is deeply problematic and poses a serious threat to urban mission. Such beliefs, formed in the postmodern climate of openness and tolerance, create an obstacle for genuine and substantive dialogue about spiritual and moral truth. A further difficulty, and not an unusual circumstance, asserts Marsha Haney, comes from "the inability of Christians to engage in effective mission and witness"[3] with a religious pluralistic society.

The contemporary search for spiritual and transcendent issues is a trend all over the Western world. This quest for spirituality in many ways is a reaction against

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E. Ostwalt, *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2003], 203). Ostwalt, however, does not explain how his approach avoids the problems related to religious pluralism and syncretism which have been a great concern within missiological circles in the last few decades. See also Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 4-35, 170-174.

[1] Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 194, emphasis in original.

[2] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 33.

[3] Marsha Haney, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: The Implications of Religious Pluralism in the City," in *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission*, ed. Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994), 58.

Christianity and the modern forms of religion. Leffel and McCallum assert that "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 worldviews, true only for those who accept it as such."[1]

Besides that, any assertion that one group has an exclusive claim to truth is viewed at best as a unique perspective and at worst as an arrogant and imperialistic attitude.[2] As a result, the emergent postmodern condition has a great appeal to popular culture, and pluralism is one of its essential ingredients.

New age: A postmodern religion

Throughout much of history, most human beings have lived in a uniform cultural context. However, under the impact of urbanization and globalization,[3] the religious arena is now open to all kinds of religious options, to the extent that the urban context has become a supermarket of religious options,[4] with New Age spirituality as its most sought merchandise.[1]

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[1] Leffel and McCallum, "The Postmodern Challenge," 37.

[2] Smith, "An Inquiry into Urban Theological Education," 271.

[3] Ursula King asserts that "the increasing process of globalization affects the interchange of spiritual ideals as much as anything else and makes [society] conscious that humanity possesses a religious and spiritual heritage whose riches are indispensable for the creation of a . . . global religious consciousness" (King, "Spirituality in a Postmodern Age," 130).

[4] As Peter Berger points out, religious pluralism creates a "market situation" in which "the religious tradition, which previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be *marketed*" (Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*, 142). John Drane, in turn, declares, "Today's culture has rightly been described as a spiritual supermarket, with

The personal search for spiritual things, specifically with respect to the breach between spirituality and institutionalized religion, together with the popular expressions of postmodern spirituality found in the New Age movement, is responsible for the remarkable occurrence of the terms "spiritual" and "spirituality" in contemporary Western societies.[2]

Unlike anything before, postmodernity has paved the way for an eclectic spiritual experience that incorporates both East and West. As diverse as these movements are, underlying their beliefs is an affinity with teachings rooted in Eastern mysticism that

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'product' taken from all and every culture, apparently implying that non-Western traditions can chart a new way forward. But what then happens to the spiritual goodies once they have been extrapolated from their original context shows that what is taking place is actually the exact opposite of that. Far from being an affirmation of the value of other cultures and their spiritualities, this process is actually the end of all cultures and spiritualities, insidiously sacrificed on the altar of globalization, which is of course Westernization" (Drane, *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith*, 171). See also Wade C. Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 77-110.

[1] For a general introduction and description of the cultural shape of New Age thinking, see Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1980). See also Michael F. Brown, "The New Age and Related Forms of Contemporary Spirituality," in *Religion and Culture: An Anthropological Focus*, ed. Raymond Scupin (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 421-432; and Ruth A. Tucker, *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 319-355.

[2] Boyd, "Is Spirituality Possible without Religion?" 83. See also King, "Spirituality in a Postmodern Age," 94.

offer the personal and practical religious experience postmoderns seek.[1] Varying degrees of Neo-Hindu religions, deep-ecology, neo-paganism, New Age politics, and New Age versions of Christianity, to mention only a few, are examples of the pluralism and diversity widely accepted in the postmodern condition.

Nevertheless, as urban mission faces challenges posed by the postmodern culture, there are bridges of opportunity. These should be recognized by the urban church as it fulfills its task of proclaiming the gospel to the city.

Postmodern Opportunities for Urban Mission

In the process of understanding the trends of contemporary society, the urban church may find new opportunities for successful witness that were not present in the earlier modern era. Some of the most significant opportunities for reaching postmoderns in the urban context are found in their openness to spiritual realities and their longing for a community experience.[2]

Openness for Spiritual Experience

In recent years the world has seen the emergence of an age in which spirituality has suddenly returned into fashion. Postmodernism, asserts Tucker, "has provided an environment that is more accepting of supernatural belief."[1] The failure of the progress myth and the realization that there is much more to human satisfaction than economic success, or even social well-being, has stimulated a new interest in the spiritual. At a time of many shifts in the world, there remains an intrinsic search for a spiritual experience.[2] In the past decade, for instance, two *Newsweek* articles pointed out this trend. In the first one, Kantrowitz and King noted that people are buying more books on meditation, prayer, and spirituality than on sex and self-help.[3] In the second article, Leland pointed out that young people seem to be openly passionate for a spiritual experience but they want to find it on their own terms.[4]

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[1] King, "Spirituality in a Postmodern Age," 96.

[2] Jill Hudson suggests "the burning desire for authenticity in leaders in all relationships and the recognition of truth in paradox, images, and story" as further opportunities for reaching postmoderns (Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 17).

This renewed attraction for supernatural and spiritual things is more subjective than objective. Postmoderns believe there is something beyond what is normally experienced in human life, and this is to be experienced in the spiritual sphere.[5] This quest, however, is more about one's inner world rather than traditional standards of right or wrong.[1]

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[1] Tucker, *Walking Away from Faith*, 16.

[2] Dockery, "The Challenge of Postmodernism," 13. See also Alister E. McGrath, *The Unknown God: Searching for Spiritual Fulfillment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 7-17, 116-123.

[3] Barbara Kantrowitz and Patricia King, "In Search of the Sacred," *Newsweek*, 28 November 1994, 52-56.

[4] John Leland, "Searching for a Holy Spirit," *Newsweek*, 8 May 2000, 60-64.

[5] Boyd, "Is Spirituality Possible without Religion?" 84-86.

Furthermore, postmoderns have a tendency to be spiritual seekers, even though they view institutionalized religion with disdain.[2] In fact, declares Leonard Sweet, "one of the last places postmoderns expect to be 'spiritual' is the church."[3] William Dyrness affirms that "an openness to religion (even if treated negatively) and spirituality in general is a striking characteristic" of the postmodern condition.[4] Nevertheless, the postmodern quest for spirituality looks for something experiential and practical in nature.

Experiential spirituality

One of the major opportunities urban Christians have in dealing with postmoderns is provided by belief in a God who is real and who is active in everyday life. Graham Cray contends that postmoderns "are more likely to come to faith in Christ through spiritual experience which leads to understanding of doctrine than through prior intellectual assent."[5] Many postmoderns are looking for a real and personal encounter with spiritual forces, but not necessarily with the God of the Christian faith. Yet, through a genuine spirituality, urban Christians can demonstrate to postmoderns how to be in touch with God in a tangible, experiential way, which will make sense out of their life experiences.

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[1] Erickson, *The Postmodern World*, 15-17.

[2] Chester, "Christ's Little Flock: Towards an Ecclesiology of the Cross," 16.

[3] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 29.

[4] William A. Dyrness, *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue*, Engaging Culture (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 119.

[5] Graham Cray, *From Here to Where? The Culture of the Nineties* (London: Board of Mission, 1992), 18.

The importance of experiential spirituality, however, does not imply the rejection of the rational aspects of the gospel presentation. Richardson notes: "Today we need a personal, experiential approach to answering questions and defending our faith that is informed by good philosophy, and good evidence. But we must start with personal experience."[1] In the postmodern condition, Christian apologetics has its value and importance,[2] but it should shift its focus from attempting to convince, to encouraging the postmodern seeker to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in an experiential and personal way.

Practical spirituality

What seems to be a disadvantage to the advancement of urban mission in the postmodern condition may in fact be an opportunity. Postmoderns who are spiritually minded are looking for a personal interaction with spiritual forces in their quest to find answers to the real problems they face in their daily lives. However, great importance is placed upon the practicability and authenticity of what is presented to them. Eddie Gibbs notes:

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[1] Rick Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 47.

[2] See Dennis Hollinger, "The Church as Apologetic: A Sociology of Knowledge Perspective," in *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*, ed. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 183-193.

> Does our *orthodoxy* translate into *orthopraxis*? Do we practice what we preach? Are we seeking to live by an unconditional and radical commitment to our beliefs, whatever the personal cost? The postmodernist is prepared to live adventurously as an individual, constructing his or her own 'reality,'. . . discovering fulfillment independent of the restraints of precedent and of community.[1]

Unfortunately, there seems to be a great deal of discontinuity between what some churches and urban ministries believe and teach and how these beliefs actually work out in practice. Postmoderns are not necessarily looking for religion, but they are open to an authentic spirituality. Practical spirituality may be the bridge over which doctrinal truth can be carried to the postmodern mind.

Search for Community Experience

Another bridge to the postmodern mind may be community, on which postmoderns place great importance. The individualism of the modern worldview has led to a depreciation of the community and the natural environment as defining factors in human life. In his assessment of individualism, Donald Mitchell contends that "individual persons are viewed as just individuals living in aggregate societies built on exploited landscapes."[2] Postmodernism, on the contrary, Mitchell notes, emphasizes

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[1] Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 28.

[2] Donald W. Mitchell, "Buddhist and Christian Postmodern Spiritualities," in *Divine Representations: Postmodernism and Spirituality*, ed. Ann W. Astell (New York: Paulist, 1994), 134.

"the communal nature of human existence and its connection to nature. It seeks . . . to re-create various forms of community on the local level and a greater sense of positiveness between communities."[1] Thus, to create a sense of community is an important tenet of the postmodern ethos, for it can give identity to local cultures that were abandoned by the modern worldview.[2] Furthermore, a community-centered environment, argue postmoderns, would foster a greater sense of global community, to which humankind belongs.[3]

The issue of community is even more acute in the urban context. Davey contends that "the city is not to be understood primarily as a geographical space or as a historical and cultural event but more as a nexus of complex human and structural relationships."[4] In the city, the problem of loneliness and alienation is most striking. The collapse of the relationship between the social and physical space shaped by the forces of urbanization turns urban life, as Bauman observes, into a "socially distant yet physically close"[5] reality. "Community is in short supply in contemporary life," Hudson notes, especially because "more and more people are finding our world a frightening place in which to live and are looking for a safe haven."[1]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Robins, "Prisoners of the City," 307.

[3] Mitchell, "Buddhist and Christian Postmodern Spiritualities," 135.

[4] Davey, *Urban Christianity and Global Order*, ix.

[5] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 153.

Although urbanization tends in the long term to destabilize traditional community and, thus, to undermine the basis on which religion can most enthusiastically prosper, in the short term, notes Steve Bruce, the urban phenomenon "can be associated with an increase in attachment to religious bodies."[2] In other words, the postmodern condition can create a new role for religion in times of rapid socio-cultural change. This will depend on the church's willingness and expertise to engage in its mission responsibility to reach postmoderns through authentic communities in the urban context.

Summary

The rise of the city has represented a revolutionary change in the way human beings relate to each other and to the world. In each of the phases of urban development, city living has been viewed and experienced in different ways. From the temple city to the urban empire, from the commercial city to the global city, the city has deeply affected human culture and worldviews. The Industrial Revolution, however, inaugurated a new era that profoundly affected the course of humankind. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the rapid growth of urban populations has transformed the world from its rural past to an urban future. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, for the first time in human history, half of the world's population is urban. This trend does not seem to be reversible.

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[1] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 17.

[2] Bruce, *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West*, 35-36.

The late part of the twentieth century experienced the rise and establishment of the postmodern condition, which by its nature and pervasiveness might be reasonably viewed as an outcome of the urbanization process, and which was further pushed around the globe through the channels of globalization. Essentially because of its centralizing power, the strong support from urban intellectual centers, and its diverse and pluralistic nature, the city may well be viewed as the locus of the postmodern condition.

As a direct result of the missiological shift from a church-centered mission to a mission-centered church, and taking into consideration the context of urbanization, the local urban church is called to be not the goal, but the primary agency in the *missio Dei*. As an apostolic community, the local urban church ought to fulfill the Great Commission—contextually and incarnationally—to an increasingly urbanized and postmodernizing Western society.

Among some of the most pressing challenges postmodernism poses for the expansion of the gospel in the urban context are epistemological relativism and religious pluralism. At the same time, the postmodern openness to spiritual realities and the concern for community should be viewed as potential bridges of access to the postmodern mentality. Chapter 5 of this study identifies and discusses crucial implications and selected principles for the mission of the urban church to an emergent postmodern condition.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS AND SELECTED PRINCIPLES FOR URBAN MISSION TO AN EMERGENT POSTMODERN CONDITION

> *How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard?* (Rom 10:14)

The cultural shift from the familiar territory of modernity to the unknown land of postmodernity has serious missiological implications for the urban church. Strategy and methods which have been effective in reaching individuals with the gospel under the modern worldview may not be as effective in reaching individuals oriented by the postmodern condition. The questions of today are: How do we communicate the truth of the gospel to individuals who reject the concept of absolute truth? How do we dialogue with spiritual people who are anti-organized religion? What are some of the basic postmodern concepts that could be used as bridges in reaching the postmodern mind in the urban context? To date, urban missiology has barely addressed such questions.

The aim of this chapter is not to lay out a model, but rather to provide a discussion of some of the most critical implications of postmodernity for urban mission and to suggest selected principles that might be applicable to the mission of the urban church in reaching postmoderns.

Postmodern Implications for Urban Mission

The postmodern condition indeed has critical implications for missiology,[1] particularly in the urban context. The urban church now faces the challenge of how to accept the benefits of the decline of the modern worldview without falling into the pitfalls of the postmodern condition. Among some of the most pressing implications the urban church faces in the postmodern condition are the epistemological shift to experience, the economic shift to consumerism, the temporal shift to the present, the communication shift to cyberspace, and the spatial shift to the *glocal.*

Epistemological Shift to Experience

The current postmodern condition presents an added missiological implication to urban mission as postmoderns show interest in the realm beyond knowledge and observation. Postmoderns, Donavan and Myors contend, "are experiential rather than cognitive."[2]

As noted earlier in this study, in rejecting Enlightenment epistemology, postmoderns believe that human reason does not hold all the solutions to life's problems. Some aspects of truth lie beyond rational understanding and cannot be completely understood by reason, affirm postmoderns. As a result, a profound skepticism about the capacity of the human being to know anything with certainty has led to the acceptance of ways of knowing other than human reason. These involve elements such as instinct, emotion, feeling, and intuition.[1] In other words, postmoderns are not guided by reason alone as previously assumed by the modern worldview, but "they also want to know how an event or object is *experienced* [emphasis in original]."[2] Van Gelder confirms:

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[1] See Tebbe, "Postmodernism, the Western Church, and Missions," 426-429.

[2] Donavan and Myors, "Reflections on Attrition in Career Missionaries," 51.

> The generation that is being shaped by the postmodern trusts its feelings as much or more than it does its thoughts. In fact, the chaotic and competing character of numerous truth claims causes many to turn to their feelings, instincts, and intuition as a surer and more reliable source of knowledge. . . . Postmodern persons want to experience life as much as, or more than, they want to understand life.[3]

In a postmodern society, personal involvement is as important as material wealth was for previous generations.[4] Experience has become the new currency in the postmodern economy. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this epistemological shift does not indicate that postmodernism is irrational. Leonard Sweet asserts, "Postmoderns don't want their information straight. They want it laced with experience."[5] Knowledge and logic, nonetheless, still have their place but are not the predominant theme anymore. In the past, knowledge was validated by empirical experimentation. Today, personal experience is validated by knowledge.[1] The postmodern culture, as Terry Bowland points out, "has elevated experience to the highest level of importance."[2] Consequently, decisions postmoderns take, especially among younger generations, have more to do with what they feel than with what they know.[3]

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[1] Smith, *The End of the World, as We Know It*, 47-48. See also Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 124.

[2] Smith, *The End of the World, as We Know It*, 48.

[3] Van Gelder, "Postmodernism and Evangelicals," 499.

[4] Tabb, *Mission to Oz*, 19.

[5] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 33.

Furthermore, participation and interactive experiences have become crucial aspects in the life of emerging postmodern generations.[4] This fact has profound implications for the way postmoderns learn, communicate, and interact with the world around them. A clear example is the way home audiences are eager to participate in television game shows, news programs, and Reality TV shows by calling or logging on to the Internet to cast their vote or to give their opinion on the outcome of the show.[5] Another example of this interactive experience comes from the business world. In the past, to give information about a product was enough to sell it. In *The Experience Economy*, however, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore endorse the importance of selling "an experience" of a product prior to selling it. They contend, "When you customize an experience to make it just right for an individual—providing exactly what he or she needs right now—you automatically turn it into a *transformation*."[1] It is the experience of a product, therefore, that will produce a lasting impression that ultimately creates a transformation in an individual.[2]

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[1] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 186.

[2] Terry A. Bowland, *Make Disciples! Reaching the Postmodern World for Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1999), 126.

[3] Smith, *The End of the World, as We Know It*, 48.

[4] Jimmy Long's book *Generating Hope* indicates the interaction between the literature on postmodernism and that on the so-called Generation X. By bringing the two analyses together, Long forms the basis for his practical proposals on how to reach postmoderns. For further details, see Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 17-79.

[5] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 155-156. See also Bevan Herangi, "So, Like, What's with These Xers, Man? How Do Generation Xers Understand Themselves?" in *PostMission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation*, ed. Richard Tiplady (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2002), 5-6.

In the context of urban mission, the epistemological shift to experience has profound implications. Urban life is crammed with offers for different experiences and possibilities, which in most cases simply tend to lead individuals further away from God. Consequently, as the urban church seeks to effectively communicate with the postmodern mind, in order to gain their attention it has to learn how to go beyond the intellectual level. It must seriously take into consideration the dynamic relationship between the intellectual and experiential dimensions of human life. As Bowland prudently points out, the church has "to take into account that people in today's postmodern world want to experience what [it has] to offer. If they cannot experience it, chances are they will never accept it."[3]

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[1] B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 165.

[2] Ibid., 172.

[3] Bowland, *Make Disciples*, 126.

On the other hand, the urban church must not forget that part of the breakdown of the modern worldview involved the dualism between thought and emotion. Both are vital in mission, "but neither by itself tells the whole story."[1] They must be seen as complimentary to each other and essential in proclaiming the gospel to the postmodern mind.

The postmodern quest for experience has to some extent fuelled another issue that carries missiological implications for the urban church: consumerism.

Economic Shift to Consumerism

Another remarkable dimension in the shift from modernity to postmodernity is the move from a culture based on production to a culture based on consumption.[2] In the postmodern condition, asserts Nick Mercer, "productivity has collapsed into the black hole of consumption."[3] Although consumption can be found in all human cultures, only in the postmodern condition does it appear as a fundamental characteristic of society.[4] Jean Baudrillard argues that consumerism is a postmodern phenomenon.[5] Michael

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[1] Poe, *Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*, 62.

[2] Graham Cray, *Postmodern Culture and Youth Discipleship: Commitment or Looking Cool?* (Cambridge: Grove, 1998), 4.

[3] Mercer, "Postmodernity or Rationality," 325.

[4] Peter Corrigan, *The Sociology of Consumption* (London: SAGE, 1998), 1.

[5] Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998), 85-86.

Jessup, in turn, concurs that "postmodernism shapes, forms, and characterizes consumerism."[1] The postmodern equivalent to the Enlightenment's motto *Cogito, ergo sum* could well be expressed as, *Tesco, ergo sum*: "I shop, therefore I am."[2]

Postmodern consumerism is marked by the constant expansion of marketing and advertising tools in the effort to establish and control markets, and is also an active process to create pleasure and meaning as a new source in finding one's personal identity.[3] Sampson writes, "Goods are valued for what they mean as much as for their use, and people find meaning in the very act of consumption. Advertising and product image become goods consumed for their own sake, rather than as representative of real products."[4] With indignation, Mercer adds,

> Why do I need 83 different breakfast cereals to choose from? Why must I be

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[1] Michael Jessup, "Truth: The First Casualty of Postmodern Consumerism," *Christian Scholar's Review* 30 (Spring 2001): 289. Alan Storkey, in turn, asserts, "*Postmodernism is consumption.* The deconstruction and fragmentation which is often identified with changes in approaches to text and philosophy is actually buying, advertisements, TV culture, in-your-face entertainment, shopping, pressure, thing-filled living—in a word, consumption. This is where the fragmentation is located and initiated, and much of the culture merely reflects these pressures. Further, culture is in principle fragmented because consumerism will use any cultural idiom available to generate sales" (Alan Storkey, "Postmodernism Is Consumption," in *Christ and Consumerism: Critical Reflections on the Spirit of Our Age*, ed. Thorsten Moritz and Craig G. Bartholomew [Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2000], 115, emphasis added).

[2] Mercer, "Postmodernity or Rationality," 325.

[3] See Hugh Mackey, ed., *Consumption and Every Day Life* (London: SAGE, 1997), 1-12.

[4] Philip Sampson, "The Rise of Postmodernity," in *Faith and Modernity*, ed. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum, 1994), 31.

> wearing this season's fashions? Why do so many millions in the West worship in the mirrored Temples of Shopping Malls every Saturday and Sunday? Because it is in choosing and in buying that I find identity and acceptance. . . .This is the illusion of freedom which late capitalism offers us. It builds on the premise that 'the love of money' is the only dynamism by which the world economy can function. So if I cannot choose and buy, because I am 'under-privileged' then I must look for identity and acceptance elsewhere, or else despair. The 'elsewhere' can be religion, or drugs, sex and rock'n roll, or violence, or any mixture of these.[1]

Consequently, especially among the young, the way they consume is a fundamental part of the kind of persons they are, and the kind of persons they represent to others.[2] Gunter and Furnham assert, "Young consumers want products and services that are going to do something for them, make them look or feel better, have more fun and be better accepted within their peer group."[3] Shopping malls, then, may well symbolize a new form of urban community where ultimately people interact with each other only in order to satisfy their addiction to buy. Cray confirms, "Consumerism has a built-in addictive quality. . . . The desire for the 'latest' is continually stimulated. Consumer-economics only work by the creation of a culture of dissatisfaction rather than contentment."[4]

In this context, the fundamental value of a postmodern consumer society becomes personal choice. "Choice [is] at the center of consumerism, both as emblem and core value."[1] The basic assumption is that all people can accomplish anything they set their mind on; it is just a matter of personal choice. In the postmodern condition, personal choice has replaced modernity's "progress" as the core value and belief.[2] Thus, a new shape of individualism arises, one that leads to isolation; which in turn, goes back to consumerism as a way to suppress the negative effects of loneliness. It eventually becomes a vicious cycle.[3]

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[1] Mercer, "Postmodernity or Rationality," 329-330.

[2] Johanna Wyn and Rob White, *Rethinking Youth* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1997), 86.

[3] Barrie Gunter and Adrian Furnham, *Children as Consumers: A Psychological Analysis of the Young People's Market*, International Series in Social Psychology (New York: Routledge, 1998), 170.

[4] Cray, *Postmodern Culture*, 5.

Consumerism also has a spiritual—or rather an anti-spiritual—dimension. A sociological study pointed out that

> pleasure lies at the heart of consumerism. It finds in consumerism a unique champion *which promises to liberate it both from its bondage of sin, duty and morality as well as its ties to faith, spirituality and redemption.* Consumerism proclaims pleasure not merely as the right of every individual but also as every individual's obligation to him or herself. . . . The pursuit of pleasure, untarnished by guilt or shame, becomes the new image of the good life.[4]

Urban churches and mission organizations must be careful not to fall in the societal pattern of postmodern consumerism, where "the customer reigns supreme and products must be shaped to suit their wishes."[1] Numerous Christians living in urban centers, unfortunately, have followed this path. Concerned with their behavior, Jimmy Long writes, "Instead of becoming part of one Christian community, they attend two or more churches in a quest to have personal needs met. Thus they remain spectators or consumers in each church."[2] Consequently, as urban mission aligns itself with the consumer mentality, its methods and strategy may become increasingly based on personal motivation.

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[1] Yiannis Gabriel and Tim Lang, *The Unmanageable Consumer: Contemporary Consumption and Its Fragmentations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995), 27.

[2] Cray, *Postmodern Culture*, 6.

[3] See Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 177-179. Frazee suggests, "The more we are obsessed about applying consumerism as a solution to our loneliness, the more it feeds the individualism mindset" (179).

[4] Gabriel and Lang, *The Unmanageable Consumer*, 100, emphasis added.

Temporal Shift to the Present

In contrast with the pre-modern and modern worldviews—the former established on a shared sense of belief in the authority of the past, and the latter on an ideological confidence in the future—the postmodern condition is marked by disillusionment about what went before and uncertainty about what lies ahead. Postmoderns, writes Mark C. Taylor, "appear to be unsure of where they have come from and where they are going."[3] Graham Cray asserts, "Postmodernity has lost the certainty of its hope for the future and has failed to rediscover any coherent sense of rootedness in the past."[4]

Since the postmodern condition tends to emphasize the present-day as the most important dimension of human life, "now" becomes all that exists and all that matters. Van Gelder concurs: "The perspectival character of the postmodern perspective tends to focus attention on the 'now' of life as the only important reality. . . . This results in a loss of historical perspective and awareness of the contingent character of all human existence."[1] As a direct result, people think less in terms of the consequences associated with their decisions and actions, thus, the concepts of morality and accountability are deeply affected.[2] Moreover, an unbalanced emphasis on the present dimension may lead to critical issues about one's personal and communal identity.[3] Mercer writes:

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[1] Dowsett, "Dry Bones in the West," 459.

[2] Long, *Generating Hope*, 97.

[3] Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

[4] Cray, *Postmodern Culture*, 7.

> Postmodernity espouses a new consciousness of time and space, a new way of relating to how things were and of the spaces in which we live and interact. Everything is in effect viewed through the timeless 'here and now.' There is no history and no future. This is not the existentialist 'now' of self-authentication through decision. This is an acknowledgement that all history is a history of the present.[4]

One of the most critical consequences for mission arising from the excessive emphasis on the present dimension of the human existence is that, in their search for personal and communal identity, postmoderns will attempt to define themselves through the means of popular culture.[5] Additionally, the focus on the "present" leads many postmoderns to experience a loss of future direction and a diminished sense of hope and purpose, thus creating a negativistic view of human life.

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[1] Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 136-137. See also Brown, "Theology in a Postmodern Culture," 160.

[2] Guder, *Missional Church*, 45.

[3] Cray, *Postmodern Culture*, 7-8.

[4] Mercer, "Postmodernity or Rationality," 333.

[5] Smith, *The End of the World, as We Know It*, 162.

In the context of urban mission, a further implication of a culture of the present lies in the increasing use of cyberspace as a "powerful technological bridge between the ephemeral and the eternal."[1] This appears to be an attempt to fill the vacuum caused by an excessive emphasis on the "now" as the only vital dimension of human existence.

Communication Shift to Cyberspace

In attempting to relevantly address the postmodern condition with the gospel, the urban church must engage in effective communication, especially because communication has always influenced the way the church proclaims its message.[2] The Western world, however, is undergoing one of the most significant revolutions in human history: a communications revolution.[3] Technological developments in communications have advanced with amazing speed during the last few decades with the increasing integration of computer systems to communications media. According to Frances Cairncross, this communications revolution "will be among the most important forces shaping . . . society in the next fifty years or so."[1]

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[1] Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 46.

[2] For an excellent exposition of the importance of communication in the proclamation of the gospel, see Pierre Babin and Mercedes Iannone, *The New Era in Religious Communication* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 70-109.

[3] Frances Cairncross, *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Is Changing Our Lives*, completely new ed. (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001), 2.

In the modern world, communication occurred primarily through cognitive knowledge. Words, both in oral and written forms, were the dominant medium of communication. In the postmodern condition, communication has shifted to a more interactive form that generates knowledge through personal participation.[2] Unquestionably, this shift carries overwhelming implications for urban mission in an emergent postmodern condition. Drummond asserts, "Despite the complexity of the issue, the obstacle that communication presents to mission can be described quite simply as the need of the church to get on the communicative wavelength of this new segment of society."[3] In this context, cyberspace[4] is becoming the postmodern communication mechanism *per excellence*, especially because of its strong influence on postmoderns.[1]

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[1] Ibid. For instance, the impact and speed of the communications revolution is clearly noticeable in the difference in the subtitles of a previous edition of *The Death of Distance*, published just four years earlier: Frances Cairncross, *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution Will Change Our Lives* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997).

[2] Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 24.

[3] Lewis A. Drummond, *Reaching Generation Next: Effective Evangelism in Today's Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 120.

[4] For the purpose of this study, cyberspace refers to the Internet and the World Wide Web. Although both the Internet and the World Wide Web arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s, these new communication media can be seen as a continuation of two older technological advancements: the personal computer and the video game. The first generation of postmoderns grew up interacting with these machines, and their fast adaptation to cyberspace is directly linked to this technological experience. See Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, 42-45.

As a paramount component of the current communications revolution, the development of cyberspace has increasingly been recognized as "one of the greatest inventions in the history of civilization."[2] Never before has any new invention come from "obscurity to global fame"[3] so rapidly. Cyberspace, Cairncross affirms, offers "a world in which transmitting information costs almost nothing, in which distance is irrelevant, and in which any amount of content is instantly accessible."[4] Furthermore, cyberspace is seen as a powerful tool for social change among postmoderns.[5] Rob Weber asserts:

> The amount of information we receive and the different opportunities for experience increase dramatically every day. It is amazing how much information is presented to us on a regular basis. . . . Access to almost all cultures, philosophies, religious systems, and special interest groups are just a few clicks away. The Internet is not simply a passive source of information (waiting for us to go to it); it is coming to us through the push of 'spam' e-mail and info tracing and pop-up ads. We are awash in a storm of stories, images and information.[6]

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[1] Ibid., 56-58.

[2] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 115.

[3] Cairncross, *Death of Distance*, completely new ed., 75.

[4] Ibid., 76.

[5] See Leonard Sweet, Brian D. McLaren, and Jerry Haselmayer, *A Is for Abductive: The Language of the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 155-156.

[6] Rob Weber, *Visual Leadership: The Church Leader as ImageSmith* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 27.

Cyberspace embodies the postmodern ethos in at least two ways. First, it creates a virtual reality, where the postmodern spirit of fiction blurred with reality is easily achieved. In virtual reality, there are no temporal or spatial barriers; and anyone can be anywhere at any time.[1] Second, it answers one of the main desires of individuals who search for a virtual reality experience: speed. The quest for a "perfect" speed in the cyberspace environment, asserts Beaudoin, "would guarantee the most 'real' simulation possible and would therefore enable full presence in a realm that lies beyond the limits of reality."[2]

Therefore, in an urbanized and postmodernizing society, the urban church must be open to cyberspace as a new delivery system of information. But at the same time, the urban church must be aware that the more connected people become electronically, the more disconnected they become personally.[3] In the postmodern quest for an online experience to satisfy the loneliness of an offline existence, it is the responsibility of the urban church to provide options and direction for social relationships in cyberspace, which, according to Sweet, "moderns cannot even begin to comprehend."[4] Additionally, as bits of cyberspace proliferate throughout the globe, the spatial dimensions of the local and the global merge even closer into one another.[1]

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[1] See Mercer, "Postmodernity or Rationality," 323.

[2] Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, 86-87.

[3] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 115.

[4] Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer, *A Is for Abductive*, 156.

Spatial Shift to the *Glocal*

Another significant implication to urban mission in a postmodern society comes with the widespread impact of globalization:[2] the concept of *glocality*. Glocality designates the interaction between global influences and the emphasis on the local. William Lim writes,

> The concept of glocality embraces and defines both the local and global. It requires continuous interactions of both local and global and their frequent merging of boundaries. . . . Glocality covers a wide range of concerns from poverty, the environment and quality of life, to problems relating to subalternization, as well as new directions in urbanism, architecture and the arts. The driving force is creative rebelliousness with strong commitments to social justice. The solution is pluralistic and its main characteristic is tolerance of differences.[3]

While the general impact of glocality is still to be fully felt, its emergence cannot be denied. Robert Jeffery notes,

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[1] Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, 57.

[2] Describing the impact of globalization on Western culture, Samuel Escobar writes, "Because of the expansion of Western culture during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, through media and education for instance, any university graduate in any part of the world today has assimilated core elements from that Western culture. The technology that is part of our globalized world has Westernized habits, ways of relating, ways of moving around and communicating worldwide. Consequently, the cultural characteristics that embody the trends we call postmodern . . . are spreading all over the world, and in many places different cultures coexist and interact in a process of transition" (Escobar, *The New Global Mission*, 71). See also Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Anchor, 2000), 236-239.

[3] Lim, *Alternatives in Transition*, xv.

> As the world gets smaller there is a strong attempt to reassert the local, the tribal, and the distinctive culture, albeit in a different form. . . . Globalization thus does not undermine distinctive cultures; rather it gives them a new significance. There is more pressure to assert the local and the distinctive.[1]

Postmoderns recognize that in a global community, the local identity cannot be neglected.[2] This fact is noticeable in trends such as fashion, entertainment, and music, where there are strong links between the local and the global, thus reinforcing the idea of glocality. Emerging postmodern generations are locally sensitive as well as globally aware. "No longer do they perceive things only according to their local context,"[3] asserts Kimball.

The implications of glocality in the context of urban mission to a postmodern condition are significant. The urban church needs to learn how to communicate with the postmodern mind with a local awareness and global consciousness at the same time. Andrew Davey concurs: "The strengths of the church must lie in its ability to hold the local and global in its own dynamic tension, as it seeks the practice of human freedom in the presence of God in whatever human arrangements it encounters at local, national, regional, and global levels."[1]

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[1] Robert M. C. Jeffery, "Globalization, Gospel, and Cultural Relativism," in *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin*, ed. Thomas F. Foust (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 195.

[2] Tim Chester points out that "the forces created by globalization are a new reality with which the church must contend. In an integrated, liberalized global economy decisions about a factory in Mexico City may be made in Geneva. Market shifts in London can affect rural economies in India. The speed of the new information and communication technologies amplify this process of global cause and affect while at the same time accelerating its pervasiveness. With this economy globalization comes a cultural globalization, especially so in the fast-growing urban centers of our world. We are heading for a situation in which urban dwellers the world over will have more in common with each other than they do with rural dwellers in their own countries" (Chester, "Christ's Little Flock: Towards an Ecclesiology of the Cross," 17-18).

[3] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 75-76.

The urban church needs, therefore, to understand and realize its responsibility and potential as it connects and affirms the communities and individuals in the local and global elements of the postmodern condition. A determined effort on the part of the church will allow it to become a community of people who demonstrate interest with the glocal concerns of postmoderns. Here, the urban church has the opportunity and responsibility of expressing its global nature in the context of a local community. This is also a powerful way to connect with the postmodern mind.[2]

In the second part of this chapter, suggested principles for a postmodern-sensitive urban mission are addressed.

Suggested Principles for a Postmodern-Sensitive Urban Mission

As the gap between cross-cultural missionaries and the culture intended to be reached can only be bridged by careful use of communication, if the urban church is to be successful in communicating the gospel to postmoderns, it is essential to understand the postmodern outlook and some of the principles that may be used to bring about a dialogue.[1] This last section recommends selected principles that should be taken into consideration in a postmodern-sensitive urban mission. Among them are the communal, experiential, ancient-future, integrational, and storytelling principles.

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[1] Davey, *Urban Christianity and Global Order*, 39.

[2] Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 133.

Communal Principle

Nearly fifteen years ago, reflecting on the 1989 conference of the WCC's Commission for World Mission and Evangelism in San Antonio, Texas, missiologist David Bosch observed the emergence of the theme of community declaring that "the search for community will turn out to be a major missiological theme" in the years to come.[2] With the emergence of the postmodern condition in mind, Bosch reinforced his argument in *Transforming Mission,* asserting that "it is the *community* that is the primary bearer of mission."[3] In addition to that, at the end of his posthumously published book on missiology for Western culture, Bosch wrote:

> The question about the feasibility of a missionary enterprise to Western people hinges on the question of the nature and life of our local *worshipping communities* and the extent to which they facilitate a discourse in which the engagement of people

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[1] Van Gelder affirms, "Possible bridges are available to those who would be missionaries to persons living within the worldview of postmodernism. Looking for such bridges is a sound missiological principle, and the history of missions is filled with examples of how this has worked over the centuries" (Van Gelder, "From the Modern to the Postmodern in the West," 37).

[2] David J. Bosch, "Your Will Be Done? Critical Reflections on San Antonio," *Missionalia* 17 (August 1989): 137.

[3] Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 472, emphasis in original.

with their culture is encouraged.[1]

On the other hand, the recognition of the failure of the modern cult of the individual has also given rise to the awareness of the importance of community. Scholars have come to realize the need to better understand the relationship between the individual and social aspects of the human existence.[2] In what seems a contradiction, postmoderns want to have individualistic freedom, but in the context of community. Leonard Sweet points out this paradox, asserting that "the pursuit of individualism has led us to this place of hunger for community."[3] Van Gelder adds,

> Persons shaped by the postmodern perspective tend to be on a journey that is seeking community. The promise of the Enlightenment to produce an emancipated freedom for the self-authenticated, rational individual has become the iron cage of individualism in the postmodern world. Any sense of personal identity or meaning has collapsed. The result for many has been a renewed desire to discover, locate, and belong to community. A natural bridge exists for the gospel to be proclaimed by an inviting Christian community that knows how to accept people where they are.[4]

In other words, the postmodern generation is more open to relationships than ever before, moving away from the individualism of the Enlightenment-shaped modern worldview into a postmodern communal attitude. In this context, and viewed from an urban mission perspective, the postmodern quest for relationships is one of fundamental importance. As urbanization and globalization have their effect on the society, most city dwellers live in multiple cultural worlds, with multiple identities, and participate in multiple communities. Even so, in most cases, their participation in such communities might be superficial and/or meaningless.

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[1] Bosch, *Believing in the Future*, 60, emphasis added.

[2] Stanley J. Grenz, "The Community of God: A Vision of the Church in the Postmodern Age," *Crux* 28 (June 1992): 20.

[3] Leonard Sweet, "The Quest for Community," *Leadership Journal* 20 (Fall 1999): 34.

[4] Van Gelder, "From the Modern to the Postmodern in the West," 38.

The Search to Belong

The postmodern condition has been marked by the effects of dysfunctional family circumstances,[1] which have largely led younger postmodern generations to search for alternative places to belong.[2] In most cases, this is a search for roots, a search for family and friends.[1]

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[1] Celek and Zander point out the fact that the dissolution of family values has led the emerging postmodern generation to feel alone, abandoned, and alienated. See Tim Celek and Dieter Zander, *Inside the Soul of a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 25-26. See also Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen, *GenXers after God: Helping a Generation Pursue Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 15-21; idem, *Reckless Hope: Understanding and Reaching Baby Busters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 35-43.

[2] According to Myers, belonging happens when individuals "identify [themselves] with another entity—a person or organization, or perhaps a species, culture, or ethnic group" (Joseph R. Myers, *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003], 25). For instance, the popularity of the sitcom *Friends*, as one of the five most-watched TV shows of all time, clearly demonstrates how the search to belong is an important issue in the postmodern condition. Commenting on the success of this TV program, Grenz asserts: "Through thick and thin, good times and bad, these friends laugh with each other, hurt for each other and support one another. But above all the friendship they share gives meaning to their lives. The central message of the series is captured in the program's theme song, 'I'll Be There for You,' which expresses candidly the [postmodern] experience, namely, that the reality of life is a far cry from our anticipations. . . . The chorus, however, expresses the antidote for the aloneness, suffering and brokenness of life. Each member of the little circle of friends promises to be 'there' for the other, because—to cite the last line of the song—you're there for me, too.'" (Stanley J. Grenz, "Belonging to God: The

Ultimately, postmoderns hope to find what can satisfy their deepest yearning: a place where they can belong and be accepted. Furthermore, it seems that the collapse of the modern worldview has actually created a longing not just for community, but for intimacy,[2] a context where people can be accepted and valued as they are. On the other hand, postmoderns often enter into relationships that assure them a sense of belonging, but in the end only increase their feeling of despair and alienation. For instance, it is not surprising that younger people are obsessed with sex since it provides the chance for physical intimacy and excitement without the risks of emotional hurt that come from commitment and vulnerability.[3]

The intimacy postmoderns are looking for has a horizontal dimension toward human relationships and a vertical dimension toward the sacred or the spiritual.[4] From

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Quest for a Communal Spirituality in the Postmodern World," *Asbury Theological Journal* 54 [Fall 1999]: 48).

[1] Kennon L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership: Building on the Twelve Keys* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 102.

[2] See Long, *Generating Hope*, 137.

[3] In *Prozac Nation*, an autobiography, Elizabeth Wurtzel recounts her teenage sexual promiscuity as a way of escaping from loneliness and rejection. For instance, in a revealing paragraph she admits she thanked God for the amazing gift of being able to give and receive sexual pleasure. See Elizabeth Wurtzel, *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America* (New York: Riverhead, 1995), 59.

[4] Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 51.

the perspective of Christian mission, therefore, the postmodern quest for spirituality is ultimately the search for a relationship with God, which in turn, can be satisfied by the experience of belonging to the community of God's followers—the church.[1]

The Urban Church as a Community of Belonging

The urban church is the Christian community appointed by God to carry out His mission to the urban centers of the world. As such, it plays a crucial role in the fulfillment of the postmodern quest to belong. Hunsberger writes: "The recovery of being community is fundamental for the church at the present time. The new arising generation certainly will not tolerate anything less."[2] Grenz, in turn, argues that "the transition to a postmodern age demands that we rethink the nature of the church—that we seek a renewal of our vision of who we are as the community of God."[3] For that, it is essential that the church come to understand not only its intrinsic missionary nature,[4] but also its communal identity.

However, especially because of the growing indifference with institutionalized religion, postmoderns are looking for a community to belong to before they find a message to believe in. Richard Rice declares: "Belonging is the most important element in the Christian life. It takes priority over believing and behaving. Beliefs and practices are essential to Christian experience, of course, but its central feature, the most important and comprehensive element, is sharing in the life of the community."[1]

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[1] Grenz, "Belonging to God," 46.

[2] Hunsberger, "The Church in the Postmodern Transition," 97.

[3] Grenz, "The Community of God," 20.

[4] See Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission*, 119-126.

In community, therefore, postmoderns may experience beliefs to which they are exposed. Then, they may decide to affirm those beliefs publicly and to follow Christ intentionally. In the meantime, they are looking for an accepting, secure place to expand their own identity in the context of community.[2] With the concept of Christian community in mind, the mission of the church to postmodern urban individuals must have a different methodology and focus. The urban church needs to employ a much more relational approach, an approach that, according to Kimball, "will rebuild trust and point to Jesus as the only one who can always be trusted."[3] Commenting on the importance of a proper approach in developing a real Christian community, Rice contends,

> If belonging is primary to our understanding of Christianity, however, then the basic purpose of evangelism is not to persuade people to change their ideas or their actions. Its goal is to incorporate them into the Christian community, to share with them the rich blessings of Christian fellowship. Once we are clear that belonging is our primary goal, we may show that it includes believing and behaving, but we will not make change in belief and behavior an end in itself.[4]

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[1] Richard Rice, *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church* (Roseville, CA: Association of Adventist Forums, 2002), 204.

[2] Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box*, 99-100.

[3] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 81.

[4] Rice, *Believing, Behaving, Belonging*, 121.

Therefore, if taken seriously, the development of an authentic Christian community, through the local church, will be the basic relational foundation for urban mission and the basic framework for ministry in a postmodern environment.

Experiential Principle

As already mentioned in chapter 4 of this study, the quest for experiential spirituality is one of the characteristic trends in the Western world at the beginning of the twenty-first century.[1] Postmoderns, asserts Sweet, "are hungry for [spiritual] experiences."[2] However, this apparent interest in spiritual issues tends to have more to do with one's personal feeling rather than interest in spiritual truths. Postmoderns may be very interested in exploring the things that trouble them in their hearts, but they may not be so interested in developing beliefs for their mind.

The urban church, therefore, ought to take into consideration the development of spiritual experiences that are tangible and real. Sharing our own experience of God may be more effective than trying to convince people they must believe in Jesus or in the Bible. Thus, as Richardson vehemently points out, for the postmodern mind "*experience comes before explanation*."[3] However, it is important to emphasize that experience does not suppress explanation. It merely comes before. A postmodern-sensitive approach to urban mission should not become anti-intellectual and totally renounce what has been achieved by the Enlightenment-based modern worldview. Grenz asserts,

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[1] See Sweet, "The Quest for Community," 33.

[2] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 49.

[3] Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box*, 51, emphasis in original.

> No experience occurs in a vacuum; no transformation comes to us apart from an interpretation facilitated by the concept—the 'web of belief'—we bring to it. To the contrary, experience and interpretative concepts are reciprocally related. Our concepts facilitate our understanding of the experiences we have in life, and our experiences shapes the interpretative concepts we employ to speak about our lives.[1]

In this new context for mission, the local urban church ought to provide the environment in which sharing one's personal experience of God may be discerned in a tangible way. To this end, in an increasingly image-driven Western society, a multisensorial experience of God can be of profound relevance to the postmodern mind.

The Search for Visual Experience

The rise of visual, symbolic, and interactive forms of communication is of great significance to the mission of the church in the emerging postmodern condition.[2] While in the modern world the main processes of communication were word-based, in the postmodern condition they are image-driven.[3] As business guru Peter Drucker points out, "Three hundred year ago, Descartes said: 'I think therefore I am.' We will now have to say also: 'I see therefore I am.' Since Descartes, the accent has been on the conceptual. Increasingly we will balance the conceptual and the perceptual."[1]

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[1] Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 169. Van Gelder concurs that this "experiential encounter needs to be balanced with an intelligible understanding of the faith" (Van Gelder, "Postmodernism and Evangelicals," 499).

[2] See Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 133.

[3] See Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 86.

Thus, in a postmodern urban context, aesthetics has become the new "language of power."[2] Postmoderns, contends Rodney Clapp, "increasingly turn away from the printed word and books, and turn to the power of the photographed, televised and digitalized image."[3] Mitchell Stephens, in turn, affirms that image "has the potential to take us to new mental vistas, to take us to new philosophic places, as writing once did, as printing once did."[4] Writing about the power of video imaging, Stephens adds:

> In the sixteenth century the French writer Rabelais exclaimed, 'Printing . . . is now in use, so elegant and so correct, that better cannot be imagined.' Almost half a millennium has passed. My contention, simply stated, is that we are finally ready to imagine better, that once again we have come upon a form of communication powerful enough to help us fashion new understandings, stronger understandings.[5]

Jim Wilson points out that in this new cultural context postmoderns who search for a spiritual experience are not "'word' people who are looking for reasons to believe or principles to follow—they are 'image' people who long to synchronize their soul with

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[1] Peter F. Drucker, *The New Realities: In Government and Politics, in Economics and Business, in Society and Worldview* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 264.

[2] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 93. See also Mark Miller, *Experiential Storytelling: (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 55.

[3] Rodney Clapp, *Border Crossings: Christian Trespasses on Popular Culture and Public Affairs* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2000), 102.

[4] Mitchell Stephens, *The Rise of the Image, the Fall of the Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), xii.

[5] Ibid.

God's will through beauty, rhythm and intuition. They prefer the 'picture' to the 'thousand words.'"[1]

In the emerging postmodern culture, therefore, the use of metaphors and the search for visual concepts are primary elements in the process of communication, in the same way principles and cognitive propositions were to the modern era. Sweet concurs, "Propositions are lost on postmodern ears; but metaphors they will hear, images they will see and understand."[2]

In the present image-driven environment, however, the church by and large has not begun to address this communication trend adequately.[3] Unfortunately, the mission of the church to postmodern cultures has faced serious setbacks for its inability to adapt its methods to this new trend. In most cases, urban churches are still addressing postmoderns in the traditional manner, by insisting on the use of words alone. Leonard Sweet and Brian McLaren admit:

> The church has an image problem. In an image-is-everything culture where images have supplanted words as the cultural vernacular, the church is heavily 'logocentric' (i.e., word-based), nervous around images, and alienated from its own image-rich pedigree. This contrasts with the fact that even children today are extraordinarily learned within a visual tradition.[4]

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[1] Jim L. Wilson, *Future Church: Ministry in a Post-Seeker Age* (Littleton, CO: Serendipity, 2002), 24.

[2] Sweet, "The Quest for Community," 34. See also Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer, *A Is for Abductive*, 155.

[3] See Dowsett, "Dry Bones in the West," 458.

[4] Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer, *A Is for Abductive*, 154-155.

Since the emerging postmodern condition produces a generation who learn visually via television, films, and the internet, the church must become three-dimensional in its teaching methods, incorporating visual elements not as a substitute for words but in support to words.[1] These new ways of communicating, asserts Stephens, "must be claimed as a distinct visual method for sharing the Gospel."[2]

The lesson for the church is straightforward: images create emotions, and postmodern generations will respond to the experience they generate.[3] Anderson points out, "The old paradigm taught that if you have the right teaching, you will experience God. The new paradigm says that if you experience God, you will have the right teaching."[4] In the postmodern condition, therefore, truth is also expressed in images.[5]

Nevertheless, sight is only one of the elements postmodern-sensitive churches should take advantage of in providing an experiential encounter with God. Increasingly, some urban churches have employed what has been called a "total" or "multisensorial" experience in their worship gatherings in order to attract postmoderns to the gospel message.

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[1] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 188.

[2] Stephens, *The Rise of the Image, the Fall of the Word*, xii.

[3] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 86.

[4] Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1992), 21.

[5] Guder, *Missional Church*, 37. That is probably one of the main purposes behind the output of MTV and the movie industry in their attempt to experientially provide "answers" to the questions postmoderns are now asking. See Drane, *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith*, 154; and Sweet, "The Quest for Community," 34.

The Urban Church as a Multisensorial Experience

Human beings were created by God with the ability to experience the world around us through our five senses. In the context of worship and adoration, Kimball contends, "God created us as multisensory creatures and chose to reveal himself to us through all of our senses. Therefore, it's only natural that we worship him using all of our senses."[1] This fact is even more significant in the postmodern condition.

Postmoderns are looking for a spiritual involvement that goes beyond mere entertainment;[2] they are seeking for a spiritual experience that engages all the senses.[3] For this reason, multisensorial worship experiences are extremely attractive to the postmodern mind. Postmodern generations, affirms Kitchens, "are not interested in a 'from the neck up' . . . worship that may once have appealed to the modern Christians."[4] Simply put, they want to experience and feel God's presence in worship. Hudson asserts, "Worship in the modern era often focused on learning about God. In the postmodern era worship focuses on experiencing God. Postmoderns see worship as a matter of the heart, not the head."[1]

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[1] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 128.

[2] Celek and Zander, *Inside the Soul of a New Generation*, 67.

[3] See Kitchens, *The Postmodern Parish*, 51.

[4] Ibid., 50-51.

Throughout Scripture, God used multisensorial events to enhance verbal teaching.[2] The biblical worship experience—as represented both in the Old Testament sanctuary and in the temple in Jerusalem—was much more than just listening to the words of a message being delivered. These worship experiences portrayed graphic representations of color, taste, smell, space, and action in worship (i.e., Exod 25-28; Num 16; Luke 1:9-10). In Rev 4, for instance, "the language used invokes emotion and mood by its aesthetic description of God's throne in heaven."[3]

In practical terms, multisensorial worship includes seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and experiencing. In the quest to provide an environment in which an experiential/multisensorial experience of God is achievable, emerging postmodern-sensitive churches should involve reflection, silence, singing, preaching, and the use of the arts in their worship celebrations.[4]

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[1] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 66.

[2] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 188.

[3] Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Worship: Creating Worship Gatherings for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 81.

[4] For additional information on the practical aspects of planning and creating a multisensorial worship experience, see Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 155-178; Kimball, *The Emerging Worship*, 99-113; Kim Miller, *Handbook for Multi-Sensory Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 13-34; Michael Slaughter, *Out on the Edge: A Wake-up Call for Church Leaders on the Edge of the Media Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 13-29; and Len Wilson, *The Wired Church: Making Media Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 18-36.

Ancient-Future Principle

Another significant trend that has emerged among postmodern-sensitive churches is a re-incorporation of ancient Christian thought and practices in contemporary religious expressions. In England, this approach is called "radical orthodoxy." In New Zealand and Australia it is described as "alternative worship." In North America it is identified as "ancient-future faith."[1] According to Robert Webber—one of the main advocates of the ancient-future principle—the primary presupposition behind this new trend lies in the fact that "the road to the future runs through the past."[2] In other words, it is an attempt to re-introduce classical Christianity in the context of the emerging postmodern condition.

The initiative to draw from early Christianity in order to revive the church's presence in contemporary cultures is not a new development. The same happened during the Protestant reformation of the sixteenth century.[3] Nevertheless, the Reformation witnessed a massive reaction against the sumptuous symbolism of the

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[1] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 46.

[2] Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 7. Doug Pagitt concurs with Webber asserting that "our current and future vision for the church cannot be formed without a sense of the visions of the past. It is through our historical community that we are reminded, guided, taught, and led in the ways of God. We are compelled to enter into the context of those who have served, loved, and believed before us. Therefore we must always ground ourselves in the history and traditions of the Christian community that have come before us" (Doug Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation: A Week in the Life of an Experimental Church* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003], 28).

[3] Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 25.

Catholic Church, and as a direct consequence, "the baby was thrown out with the bath water and symbolism and full sensory worship was totally rejected instead of being re-invented."[1] Stetzer points out that, "in many ways, the postmodern desire is to mimic the action of the Reformation but not its essence. A recovery of the experiential faith of the past with its sacred symbols and shared doxology unite individuals in a way that is unfamiliar to an individualistic society."[2]

The pursuit for the meaning and significance of life, in the midst of the fragmentation and isolation characteristic of Western urban societies, has opened the door to a re-discovery of classical Christianity. As a result, Webber asserts that "the kind of Christianity that attracts the new generation of Christians and will speak effectively to a postmodern world is one that emphasizes primary truths and authentic embodiment,"[3] as experienced in the ancient traditions of the early church.

The Search for Meaning

In an increasingly pluralistic and dynamic urban society, a sense of rootlessness and anxiety has contributed to the search for a sense of meaning, especially among younger postmodern generations.[4] As a direct result, this pursuit for meaning has attracted postmoderns to ancient liturgical practices of spirituality; a return to tradition, not traditionalism.[1] The postmodern rejection of institutionalized religion plainly opposes the dry formality and incomprehensible language of the church's traditionalism; however, at the same time, postmoderns seek to rediscover the spiritual elements of the ancient Christian tradition. Gibbs points out, "This attraction is highlighted by the desire of young people to establish deeper roots to compensate for the transience and fragmentation of the world in which they grew up."[2]

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[1] Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, 147.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 27.

[4] Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 163.

The association with the stabilizing value and richness of Christian tradition—especially when reinforced in multisensorial experiences—brings postmoderns to the point in which they may engage in the journey to know Christ and experience the claims of Christianity, as they search for meaning and truth for their own lives.[3] The attraction that ancient spiritual disciplines and symbols have on the postmodern mind may be an effective element in communicating relevance in the gospel message, especially among younger generations.[4]

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[1] Ibid. Contrasting "tradition" with "traditionalism," historian Jaroslav Pelikan points out that "tradition is the living faith of the dead, [and] traditionalism is the dead faith of the living" (Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984], 65).

[2] Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 161.

[3] Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, 147.

[4] See Tony Jones, *Soul Shaper: Exploring Spirituality and Contemplative Practices in Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 4-7.

The Urban Church as an Ancient-Future Community

In many similar ways with the contemporary postmodern condition, classical Christianity was shaped in a pluralistic, pagan, and relativistic society. Within the present-day urban Western context, the modern church has failed to respond to many questions postmoderns have. The contemporary interest in tradition and symbolism, however, is one of the marks of the postmodern turn to spirituality, and to a more traditional perspective of the church.[1] Kimball writes:

> The postmodern world is a rich cultural context for the recovery of a classical view of the church. . . . The philosophical shift from reason to mystery provides an opening to the discussion of a supernatural view of the church connected with the work of Christ. The shift from individualism to community is a cultural change that permits us to speak once again of the significance of the church as a reflection of the eternal community God expressed in the Trinity; the emphasis in communication theory and a language of images and metaphors allow us to recover the biblical images and historic marks of the church.[2]

For emerging postmodern generations, symbols are new and meaningful,[3] and because of their visual emphasis, symbolic forms of communication have become an essential aspect to the postmodern way of thinking.[4] Webber adds:

The role of symbolism in a postmodern world is not to re-create the ceremonial

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[1] See Jonny Baker, Doug Gay, and Jenny Brown, *Alternative Worship: Resources from and for the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 27-28; and Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 26.

[2] Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 91.

[3] Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 129.

[4] Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, 35.

> symbolism of the medieval era, but to understand and apply the symbolism of atmosphere such as the sense of awe and reverence, to recover the beauty of space and the symbolic actions of worship, and to restore the sounds of music and the sights of the arts. For in these symbolic ways God's presence and truth are mediated to us. In these symbolic actions we take the known and lift into the unknown so that it is returned to us as the mystery of the transcendent.[1]

To this end, postmodern-sensitive urban churches may employ the practice of relevant ancient forms of worship, such as the revival of the understanding and teachings about Jewish roots of the Christian faith. For instance, some of these churches have included a Passover Seder as part of their worship calendar year, taking advantage of this opportunity to teach some aspects of Old Testament practices to emerging postmodern generations.[2]

Integrational Principle

The modern era divided every aspect of human life into specialized areas, resulting in a fragmented and disconnected society. This division is even more visible in an urbanized, postmodernizing society. Urban dwellers lost the sense of the whole—how everything relates to everything else. On the other hand, human beings were created as whole persons, with physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. For this reason, postmoderns place a great deal of importance on approaching human life as a whole, as they seek to involve every dimension of human life in their personal experience. Poe contends, "Postmodernity has rejected the segmentation of knowledge

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[1] Ibid., 107.

[2] Kimball, *The Emerging Worship*, 93.

and the segmentation of experience. Integration and holistic thinking have become hallmarks of the emerging postmodern mind."[1] Postmoderns long for this kind of integration. Truth as a mere philosophical and conceptual notion, detached from feeling and action, is meaningless to them.[2]

As a direct result—especially because of the intrinsic connection between the dimensions of human life—not addressing the integration of all of the human dimensions carries serious consequences to urban mission endeavors in the postmodern condition. Claerbaut asserts:

> Deprivation in any of these dimensions has a deadening effect on the other, since all parts are interrelated and interactive. Suffering physically makes it difficult to function well psychologically. Severe emotional disabilities are sometimes translated into physical disabilities. A spiritually sterile life is often revealed in depression and a low energy level. Just as theologically we cannot divide people into component parts, so also in ministry we must not dissect but rather serve whole persons. The soul without the body is a ghost; the body without the soul is a corpse. In fact, only a holistic approach to ministry can satisfy biblical directives and the needs of the city.[3]

Therefore, an integrational approach to mission becomes a primordial element in addressing the longings of urban dwellers who have increasingly been affected by postmodern concepts. This approach, however, cannot be disassociated from the genuine presence of the urban church in community concern. Only when the church is real and present, a basic characteristic that postmoderns are looking for, will authenticity be revealed.

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[1] Poe, *Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*, 28. Grenz agrees with Poe: "The quest for a cooperative model and an appreciation of non-rational dimensions of truth lend a holistic dimension to the postmodern consciousness. . . . Postmoderns do not seek to be wholly self-directed individuals but rather 'whole' persons" (Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 14).

[2] Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box*, 46.

[3] Claerbaut, *Urban Ministry*, 17.

The Search for Authenticity

Authenticity is indispensable for emerging postmoderns and it only becomes a reality when the church is real and present. This "presence" is what missiologists refer to as incarnational ministry, which means that the church must become part of the community it seeks to reach.[1] The church must be sensitive to postmoderns, willing to meet them on their own territory and ready to communicate the gospel in a way they can understand.[2] Stetzer writes, "We must go to postmoderns in order to reach them. We must live in their neighborhoods, eat at their restaurants, and shop at their stores. Living in Christ must become a daily reality."[3] In the context of the postmodern condition, however, real presence is hardly achieved without a relationship of trust within the urban church.

Because of their skepticism towards authority and authority structures, postmoderns must see the claims of Christianity through individuals who may gradually earn their trust and respect.[1] Bevan Herangi, a young man modeled after a postmodern culture, contends, "Even if it means a painful experience, we must know the truth. Unlike other generations that swept a lot of misdemeanors under the rug, we want to face the facts. We don't just believe what people say, we wait and see what they live."[2] In a similar vein, Smith asserts that postmoderns "simply want to see a real, honest-to-goodness Christian, someone who truly follows the merciful, compassionate, healing example of Jesus Christ."[3] They are in quest of individuals and communities who are genuine and authentic. Tabb confirms,

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[1] For a brief review on the incarnational element of urban mission, see the section entitled "Incarnational Urban Mission" in chapter 4 of this study. See also Hiebert and Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry*, 325-362; Ron Powell, "The Ministry of Presence: An Ancient Strategy to Reach a Post Modern Generation," *Eastern Journal of Practical Theology* 11 (Fall 1997): 7-18.

[2] Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 8.

[3] Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 141.

> The primary method by which we can fulfill our mission and make Christ known to a postmodern world is by becoming painfully authentic. We have to be real before our words will mean a thing. Even then the message of our life must be much louder than the words coming out of our mouths.[4]

Engaging postmoderns begins with taking their questions and reservations seriously.[5] The main question in their mind is no longer "Is it true?" but rather, "Is it real?"[6] As Jim Wilson contends, postmoderns strive for "authentic community and encourage people to be real with themselves, with God, and with others."[1] For them, the church does not need to be perfect; it only needs to be authentic.

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[1] Gibbs, *ChurchNext*, 69.

[2] Herangi, "So, Like, What's with These Xers, Man?" 7.

[3] Smith, *The End of the World, as We Know It*, 196.

[4] Tabb, *Mission to Oz*, 110.

[5] See David W. Henderson, *Culture Shift: Communicating God's Truth to Our Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 209.

[6] Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, 140.

The urban church, therefore, should concentrate far more on presence and relationships that produce trust, rather than aggressive outreach that seeks immediate decisions. The message communicated by the life and presence of the urban church becomes more important to postmoderns than the message it simply delivers in words. To this end, an opportunity to serve their community and their world is a powerful instrument in attracting postmoderns to Christ.

The Urban Church in Service to Others

Emerging postmodern generations are looking for opportunities to be useful to their community and their world. Andrew Black contends that "this generation [is] . . . looking for new ways to serve others. . . . There is growing eagerness to work together to address problems on a more manageable level."[2] Postmoderns, Kitchens points out, are "interested in finding a place to commit their lives and to make a difference in the world."[3] Even through non-religious language, postmoderns express their religious needs, "such as the need for meaning and purpose in life, the need for significance, the need to make a contribution, [and] the need to be needed."[1] Thus, one of the key elements in engaging the postmodern mind is service.[2]

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[1] Wilson, *Future Church*, 113-114.

[2] Andrew Black, cited in Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 49.

[3] Kitchens, *The Postmodern Parish*, 71.

As emerging postmodern generations begin to interact and engage with the mission of the church, they seem to be particularly concerned with the circumstances of the poor in urban centers.[3] Kitchens affirms,

> For them, it is not enough to send money to support the mission of the denomination or to help finance the local soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Postmoderns want to send *themselves*, not just their dollars, into mission. They are looking for ways to become directly involved in working for justice, providing acts of hospitality and service, and offering healing to those in need.[4]

Short-term missions are also a powerful way to engage postmoderns in service. Postmoderns enjoy traveling; consequently, to go into another cultural environment and to see God using them is a remarkable experience for the postmodern mind. Furthermore, when postmoderns place their hands to a project, their mind and heart are undividedly attached to their service. Thus, the personal experience that short-term missions provide are not quickly or easily forgotten in the postmodern mind.[5]

As postmoderns see that authentic faith produces genuine service, the validity of the Christian faith is confirmed, and the particular experience of serving others may lead them further in their journey with Christ. The urban church, therefore, must provide opportunities to challenge postmoderns to engage in service to their local and global communities.

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[1] George G. Hunter, *How to Reach Secular People* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 69.

[2] Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, 141.

[3] Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 49.

[4] Kitchens, *The Postmodern Parish*, 72.

[5] Celek and Zander, *Inside the Soul of a New Generation*, 140.

Storytelling Principle

In ancient societies, the use of narrative was one of the vital elements in organizing life.[1] Similarly, for several hundred years Western culture was based on biblical tradition and guided by the all-encompassing narrative of God's actions in human history. During the development of the Enlightenment-based modern worldview, however, the secularization of historical narratives drastically reduced the importance of stories in bringing meaning to peoples' lives.[2] Hahn and Verhaagen expand on this: "Who needs story or myth to make sense of the world when we have the hard sciences? *Story* and *myth* became nearly pejorative terms to describe tales that may have been helpful to premodern, technological unsophisticated audiences, but not to modern people."[3]

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[1] The mythical stories are clear evidence that ancient societies used narratives to record the accounts of their origins and the affairs of their gods. At first, these mythical stories had a cyclical interpretation of time, as is noticeable in the religious stories, for instance, of Egypt and Greece, as well as in the sacred narratives of other ancient Near Eastern societies. For further details, see Grenz, "The Universality of the Jesus-Story," 87.

[2] Ibid., 90-91.

[3] Hahn and Verhaagen, *GenXers after God*, 24, emphasis in original.

In a pioneering article, Robert Jenson argues that the postmodern world is one "that has lost its story."[1] For the postmodern mind, there is no overarching story that explains every aspect of human life. On the contrary, "there is now a plethora of contradictory stories, none more valid than any other."[2] Van Gelder concurs:

> Persons shaped by the postmodern culture have grown skeptical of principles, rules, and laws that are abstracted into truths that must be obeyed or followed. . . . Postmodernism's sense of the embeddedness of human knowledge and the perspectival character of all knowing means that understanding is rooted within a narrative, a story. . . . The challenge is the fact that we are adrift in a postmodern sea of competing stories, all of which are perceived as being socially constructed and relative.[3]

Ultimately, the dilemma for mission centers on the Christian claim concerning the universality of God's story, which is perceived as invalid by the postmodern ethos. Narratives are still valid in the postmodern conception, but they are seen only as local rather than universal; they are no longer metanarratives. Hence, postmoderns have been affected by the impoverishment and loss of the sense of identity in living without a connection with a larger, all-embracing story. Furthermore, this potential crisis of identity created in the postmodern condition may lead to the point in which the human experience loses its purpose.[4] In the search for identity, the urban church can be a master storyteller.

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[1] Robert W. Jenson, "How the World Lost Its Story," *First Things* 39 (October 1993): 19.

[2] Hahn and Verhaagen, *Reckless Hope*, 103.

[3] Van Gelder, "From the Modern to the Postmodern in the West," 38.

[4] Van Gelder asserts, "It is critical for the presentation of the gospel in the postmodern context to reassert the teleological element inherent in the human condition.

The Search for Identity

Because human beings were created with curiosity, complexity, and a profound need for meaning, the postmodern longing to understand the bigger questions of life has paved the way to the use of storytelling as an effective instrument in reaching postmoderns. Because life for them is itself a drama or narrative, one of the major concerns in the postmodern mind-set turns around the development of stories that can define personal identity and give purpose and shape to social existence within a given community.[1]

Writing about the importance and power of stories in finding one's identity, Annette Simmons asserts, "Everyone has a heart. Everyone, deep down, wants to be proud of their lives and feel like they are important—this is the vein of power and influence [of] storytelling."[2] Graham Johnston, in turn, affirms that "stories put us in

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God is a God of human history, which means that there is a purpose to human existence beyond the now, a purpose rooted in our past and defining our future" (Van Gelder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," 137).

[1] Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*, 107-108.

[2] Annette Simmons, *The Story Factor: Secrets of Influence from the Art of Storytelling* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2002), xvii. Arguing about the influence of stories in the human search for identity, Richard Stone writes, "When we recognize that our deepest aspirations cannot be satisfied by a culture that has reduced life's meaning to a smorgasbord of the senses and material possessions, we must search for new sources of meaning, struggling with the same questions that challenged our ancestors. . . . Their stories can lead us to a deeper understanding of our origins and where we are going. . . . Without a past, we have no place to stand, no promontory from which to see, no clear

touch with people on a level of shared humanity. Storytelling can grab the listener's imagination and help people identify with an idea in a way that triggers significance and meaning."[1] Storytelling also has the power to touch the human heart at its most personal level, as Miller points out:

> While facts are viewed from the lens of a microscope, stories are viewed from the lens of the soul. Stories address us on every level. They speak to the mind, the body, the emotions, the spirit, and the will. In a story a person can identify with situations he or she has never been in. The individual's imagination is unlocked to dream what was previously unimaginable.[2]

Furthermore, human cognition is based on storytelling, recognized as one of the fundamental instruments of human thought.[3] In their groundbreaking study about the influence of storytelling, Anderson and Foley affirm that stories have the power to engage our minds especially because our existence itself is organized in narrative form. They write,

> Human experience is structured in time and narrative. We comprehend our lives not as disconnected actions or isolated events but in terms of a narrative. We conceive of our lives as a web of stories—a historical novel or a miniseries in the making. We think in stories in order to weave together into a coherent whole the unending succession of people, dates, and facts that fill our lives. The narrative mode, more than any other form of self-reporting, serves to foster the sense of movement and process individual and communal life. In that sense, the narrative framework is a

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direction for our future actions" (Richard Stone, *The Healing Art of Storytelling: A Sacred Journey of Personal Discovery* [New York: Hyperion, 1996], 3).

[1] Graham M. Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First-Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 155.

[2] Miller, *Experiential Storytelling*, 33.

[3] Sweet, *Postmoderns Pilgrims*, 124.

> human necessity. Stories hold us together and keep us apart. We tell stories in order to live.[1]

Additionally, storytelling is a significant instrument to establish meaning and integrate one's past and future with what is observed to be happening in the present. In other words, storytelling is a primary way of human expression of who we are, where we came from, and what we anticipate in our lives.[2] Therefore, the human search for identity unmistakably requires, in greater or lesser degree, the unfolding of our origins. This is one of the basic reasons for the importance in knowing the stories related to our birth. Anderson and Foley contend,

> The stories of our birth are mighty. Even though each individual is an agent in his or her narrative from the beginning, and even though it is possible to reframe the story of our beginnings later in life, stories about our birth shape expectations of ourselves and our world.[3]

However, the ultimate human search for identity can only be found in God, the original source of human life (Ps 139:13-14). Henderson affirms, "Identity is woven into our fabric as created beings. The question is not one of making our identity but discovering it. In the same way an artist values a work of art, God delights in and values us. *Identity cannot be found outside of the one who made us.*"[1] In this context, a natural bridge exists for the proclamation of the gospel to the postmodern mind as a narrative story. In God's Story about life and its meaning, postmoderns can ultimately come to understand themselves and the world around them in their pursuit for personal and corporate identity.[2]

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[1] Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 4.

[2] Dan P. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (New York: Guilford, 1997), 27. See also Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 5.

[3] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 59.

The Urban Church as a Master Storyteller

In order to communicate effectively to the postmodern condition, the urban church must have the ability to think creatively and adapt wisely. To this end, an increasing reliance on storytelling can be an effective way to encourage decisions for Christ among postmoderns.

In spite of their rejection of metanarratives, postmoderns place a high value on the power of story, especially real stories.[3] The postmodern mind, affirms Sweet, acknowledges that personal identity "is experienced in the story of life, unfolding moment by moment, crossing the lives of others, with shifting images and shifting beliefs."[4] Storytelling creates experiences, and these experiences will more effectively address the concerns of human life, inviting those who share these experiences to a real and active involvement in the story told. Thus, experience and storytelling go hand-in-hand in developing confidence in postmoderns, which in most cases will not be simply accomplished through more traditional approaches of communication. Simmons reflects,

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[1] Henderson, *Culture Shift*, 215, emphasis added.

[2] See Van Gelder, "From the Modern to the Postmodern in the West," 38.

[3] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 3-19.

[4] Mercer, "Postmodernity or Rationality," 336.

> People don't want more information. They are up to their eyeballs in information. They want *faith*. . . . Story is your path to creating faith. Telling a meaningful story means inspiring your listeners to reach the same conclusions you have reached and decide *for themselves* to believe what you say and do what you want them to do. People value their own conclusions more highly than yours. They will only have faith in a story that has become real for them personally. Once people make your story, *their* story, you have tapped into the powerful force of faith.[1]

Postmodern-sensitive urban churches, therefore, should provide opportunities in which individual stories can be compared and transformed by God's Story, the narrative of the Scriptures. This may happen when the church helps postmoderns understand the bigger picture of God's actions in history and how it interconnects with their own story.[2] Hahn and Verhaagen confirm this:

> A disciple is one whose trajectory shows that he is being caught up in a Story larger than his own, as his character is being shaped and transformed to reflect the character of the Storyteller. . . . And a disciple is convinced in her heart that her life is not a series of random, unconnected events, but that she is a player in the greatest drama of all time, the drama of a lovesick God spurned by his beloved. This is a God who enters into space and time on a cosmic rescue mission to capture hearts and lives and who will one day make all things new.[3]

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[1] Simmons, *Story Factor*, 3, emphasis in original.

[2] Hahn and Verhaagen, *GenXers after God*, 31. See also Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 50.

[3] Hahn and Verhaagen, *GenXers after God*, 28.

When God's Story begins to challenge the personal and local stories of postmoderns, their minds will be touched in a place where previously rejected cognitive information and facts might now be received and transformation can eventually take place. At this point, when the postmoderns identify the great Storyteller (cf. Matt 13:34) and align their own story with His purposes, only then, should the church challenge the postmodern assumption that metanarratives are invalid. Smith argues, "The church must discourage people, within and without, from treating God's Story as any other story. God's Story, according to Christian belief, is the grand narrative in a time when no story is considered superior and no grand narrative is supposed to exist, and this is how it must be presented."[1] Beyond that, as Charles Taber insightfully observes,

> the gospel of the kingdom of God is the only valid universal meta-narrative, the only one which is not ruthlessly homogenizing and totalitarian, because it is the only one based on self-sacrificing love instead of worldly power, the only one offered by a king on a cross, the only one offered by a conquering lion who turns out to be a slaughtered lamb. This is the guarantee that it is not totalitarian. Pentecost, if correctly understood, is the guarantee it is not homogenizing.[2]

Finally, in telling God's Story, the urban church will enable postmoderns to experience "its ultimacy and truth, finding in it the Story that transcends and locates all other stories."[3] Nevertheless, the urban church will find little success if it challenges the postmodern rejection of metanarratives prior to the experience God's Story can create in the postmodern mind. It is more appropriate to let God's Story gain credibility for itself, as the Holy Spirit works to bring the postmodern heart to the point of serious reflection about the Christian faith. Miller asks, "Do we trust our people [postmodern seekers] and the Holy Spirit enough to allow them to think for themselves? Can we leave something open-ended, knowing the conclusion might not come until later that day, week, month, or year?"[1] These are serious questions that urban churches must be able to answer if the focus of their mission is indeed to reach the postmodern mind for Christ.

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[1] Smith, *The End of the World, as We Know It*, 189.

[2] Charles R. Taber, "The Gospel as Authentic Meta-Narrative," in *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin*, ed. Thomas F. Foust (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 189.

[3] Smith, *The End of the World, as We Know It*, 190.

Summary

The paradigm shift from a modern to a postmodern world brings a moment of uncertainty and is, at the same time, replete with challenges and opportunities for urban mission. Because of the driving forces of urbanization and globalization, the postmodern condition especially calls for a reassessment of the strategy and methods of urban mission, which were previously developed to reach individuals oriented by the modern worldview.

The transition from a modern to postmodern world reveals a shift from a culture based on reason to a cultural based on experience; from a culture based on production to a culture based on consumption; from a culture based on the confidence in the future to a culture based on pessimism towards the present (and ignorance of the past!); from a culture based on words to a culture based on bytes; and, from a culture based on the local *or* the global to a culture based on the *glocal*. Certainly, all of the above shifts have profound implications for the mission of the urban church.

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[1] Miller, *Experiential Storytelling*, 41.

On the other hand, urban mission to the postmodern condition can be based on certain principles, applicable in Western urban societies. In the postmodern search for belonging, the urban church ought to be the community of belonging. In the postmodern search for images, the urban church ought to be a place of multisensorial experiences. In the postmodern search for meaning, the urban church ought to be a place in which the roots of the Christian faith are presented and understood. In the postmodern search for authenticity, the urban church ought to be a place of real service to others. In the postmodern search for identity, the urban church ought to provide the grand Story that will ultimately transform the postmodern mind.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Summary

This dissertation aimed to explore the relationship between the urban mission of the church and an emerging aspect of the contemporary Western culture: the postmodern condition. In the first chapter, a concise background of this research was provided, the problem and purpose were delineated, the methodology was explained, and significant terms to this study were defined.

The second chapter presented a brief historical background of the modern era, the influence of some of its main thinkers and shapers, and a description of selected conceptual thought patterns associated with the modern worldview. It also listed and evaluated some of the main reasons for the decline of the modern worldview in the Western world.

The third chapter provided an introduction to the postmodern era by presenting a historical background of the postmodern movement, including the influence of some of its main representative intellectuals, followed by a description and discussion of selected conceptual elements associated with the postmodern condition. This chapter also presented the pervasiveness of the postmodern condition by offering a description of some of the most influential cultural expressions of the postmodern ethos.

The fourth chapter explored the relationship between urban mission and the emerging postmodern condition. To this end, the interconnection between urbanization and postmodernism was addressed by providing a succinct historical context and development of the process of urbanization and by locating the postmodern condition within this context. Furthermore, this chapter examined selected issues related to mission and the urban church in the postmodern context. It also offered a discussion of some of the most pressing challenges and potential opportunities created by the postmodern condition for urban mission.

The fifth chapter complemented the investigation of the previous chapters by identifying and analyzing some of the most critical implications to the advancement of urban mission in the context of the postmodern condition. It also provided a general discussion of suggestive principles for urban mission to postmodern generations.

Even in midst of disagreements, it is still widely recognized that the Western world faces a significant period: a time of transition and adjustments caused by the paradigm shift from modern to postmodern era. Views about the nature and importance of this transition vary. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that new generations are being raised with a perception of reality different from the worldview of their predecessors. Regardless of how one chooses to describe or identify this paradigm shift, it is unequivocal that the Enlightenment-based modern worldview has gradually been challenged and changed.

Many distinguished scholars have indicated the collapse of the pillars that sustained the edifice of the modern worldview. Its dominance—basically established on the grounds of the supremacy and objectivity of human reason, and on the assumption that scientific and technological advancements would provide the means for human emancipation and inevitable progress—has been under serious attack in the last few decades. Despite all of the positive accomplishments of the modern era, the historical record of the twentieth century clearly indicated that the promises and expectations intrinsic to the modern worldview proved insufficient and unable to solve all the problems related with the complexity of human existence.

An alternative perspective, identified as postmodernism, became evident during the second half of the twentieth century. The postmodern quest for a source of meaning and value beyond the assumptions of the modern worldview began to challenge a number of the core philosophical and ideological elements intrinsic to the modern era. In this process, several new ideas emerged. Reason is no longer the dominant position as the only way to access knowledge and understand reality. Universal absolutes are repudiated, resulting in a pluralistic and relativistic approach to truth. All-encompassing and universal narratives are rejected in favor of local interpretations. Historical facts have lost their temporal and spatial dimensions. Community received a revised meaning as a stabilizing factor and epistemological tool. These concepts, among others, are deeply rooted in the postmodern ethos.

In spite of the highly philosophical and complex issues raised by postmodern intellectuals, the pervasiveness of postmodern concepts is also noticeable in popular culture. In the fields of art, architecture, literature, cinema, television, music, fashion, and religion, some of the most patent traces of the postmodern outlook become evident. Through popular channels, postmodern concepts have promptly, and in most cases unconsciously, been absorbed by contemporary Western (and non-Western) societies.

In the meantime, as the paradigm shift from modern to postmodern takes place, two other movements influence this shift: urbanization and globalization. Undeniably, the modern emphasis on scientific and technological advancements was one of the most important elements in the unparalleled urban growth observed in the last one hundred years, primarily grounded on the modern optimistic confidence in inevitable progress. It seems, however, that the modern project has been taken as far as it can go. Under current circumstances, the modern paradigm has been unable to deal with urban demands. Inequality, exclusion, social injustice, and environmental degradation are among some of the most apparent results. This dark side of the modern era has been seriously attacked by the postmodern outlook.

Conclusions

This research, therefore, concludes that parallel with, and to a large extent interacting with the processes of urbanization and globalization, the emergence of the postmodern condition is intrinsically associated with the urban socio-cultural context of the Western world. However, rather than regarding contemporary urbanization as a mere product of modernity, this dissertation suggests that it may be equally logical to see postmodernism as an outcome of urbanization, and globalization as one of the main channels through which the postmodern outlook has been conveyed around the world. Thus, the centralizing power of urbanization, added to the pervasive impact of globalization, makes the urban context the locus of the postmodern condition.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the combined forces of urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism pose serious challenges to urban mission. These are most evident in the contemporary epistemological relativism and religious pluralism that permeate the urban context. At the same time, the current socio-cultural situation offers opportunities that did not exist for urban mission a few decades ago.

Many voices have predicted that reason would ultimately triumph over faith—that the modern worldview would bring an end to religion. On the contrary, the postmodern condition is paving the way for a new quest for spirituality and the search for the meaning of life, especially through the means of community. While postmoderns are admittedly not in favor of organized religion, they are not necessarily in opposition to God. Hence, the challenges and opportunities for urban mission have never been greater. Yet, within the context of urbanization and globalization, postmodernism requires an extensive re-evaluation of the urban mission of the church.

The socio-cultural shift to an urbanized and postmodernizing society most definitely brings profound implications to urban mission. In the attempt to engage the postmodern mind, the urban church needs to learn to go beyond the cognitive level in communicating the gospel by recognizing the importance of experience and feelings to postmoderns. At the same time, the mission of the urban church cannot be aligned with the consumer mentality in which the Christian community becomes a mere spectator or consumer of "products" the church may offer. Moreover, in a society that is losing the temporal dimensions of human existence by placing an extreme emphasis on the "now," it is the church's responsibility to provide means through which postmoderns will have higher parameters to define themselves rather than popular culture. Additionally, in an increasingly urbanized and postmodernizing society, the church must recognize the potential that cyberspace represents as a new delivery system of information. And finally, the urban church must be aware of the significance that postmoderns place on both local and global concerns.

To this end, in order to attract emerging postmodern generations to a real encounter with God, the urban church must engage postmoderns by developing communities in which they can feel accepted and belong to, prior to their cognitive decisions. They must also create multisensorial worship experiences in which postmoderns can be exposed to Jesus Christ and His transforming power. They must offer opportunities through which relevant traditional aspects of the Christian faith are understood and experienced. In addition, the church should offer opportunities in which postmoderns can see authenticity in the Christian community, particularly through service to others. Finally, a postmodern-sensitive church will constantly provide circumstances in which individual stories will be contrasted and transformed by God's Story.

In the final analysis, the urban church must recognize that to be faithful to God's calling in fulfilling His mission to urbanized and postmodernizing societies, it must put aside the false security of modernity and at the same time avoid the pitfalls of postmodernity. Therefore, in order to reach the postmodern condition with the gospel, the local urban church must recover its uniqueness and identity as an apostolic community, recognizing that it is its responsibility to communicate effectively with postmodern generations. But this will be possible only after the urban church intentionally considers the postmodern condition as an emergent urban mission field.

At a time of uncertainty and loneliness, there are still signs of an unprecedented opportunity for mission to the urban, postmodern soul. In the midst of a massive paradigm shift from modern to postmodern era, to hear the anguished cry of a postmodern heart seems an appropriate way to conclude this dissertation:

> Now—here is my secret: I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall never ever achieve again. . . . My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.[1]

At a time in which many others make these words their own, the church must rise once again, with its roots grounded in God's Word and in His unchanging love for lost people. More than ever before the church must remember that although cultures and people change, God never does. Neither does His mission to save His creation. It is our responsibility and privilege to see the current cultural waves of change as one of the greatest opportunities the urban church has had to reach emerging postmodern generations for Christ.

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[1] Douglas Coupland, *Life after God* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 359.

Recommendations for Further Study

This dissertation explores the relationship between the postmodern condition and the urban mission of the church. However, the analysis of the church's mission to urbanized and postmodernizing societies is far from finished.

The result of this exploratory study reveals distinct areas of concern that should be addressed. For instance, further research and critical evaluation are particularly necessary and recommended on the pragmatic application of the suggested principles of attracting and engaging postmoderns to the Christian faith.

This dissertation focused on an exposition of postmodernism in general Western terms. An examination of the development of postmodern concepts taking into consideration specific Western urban contexts could help to bring a clearer understanding of the impact of postmodernism on urban mission from different cultural perspectives.

Another aspect of urban mission and postmodernism that is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but in need of additional consideration, is the analysis of the development of urban mission agencies by postmodern generations. Further investigation of issues such as theological education and specific urban mission training would prove invaluable in developing a new generation of postmodern-sensitive missionaries to an increasingly urban society.

Finally, an additional area that drastically needs further research is the pervasiveness and consequences of postmodern elements in non-Western cultures, and how these have impacted the advancement of urban and cross-cultural mission. This seems to be of paramount importance, especially because non-Western societies have been flooded by Western popular cultural practices through the channels of globalization.

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