

Introduction to Emerging Church
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Our theme this month is postmodernism. It is important to note that postmodernism is not just in the culture but in the evangelical church. The emerging church contains a spectrum ranging from orthodox believers relating the Gospel to postmodern people to those who post-modernize the faith, and those in between. It is complex and not easy to reduce to simplistic categories. Some of the emerging leaders (but not all) adapt the message of the Gospel to postmodern assumptions. For some, like Brian McLaren, the problem with the evangelical church is modernism and the answer is postmodernism. Now it is one thing to be concerned to speak in the language of your hearer. If you speak to a Hispanic audience, you may choose to use Spanish. If you speak to post-modernized youth, you want your message to be contemporary (to their perspective) and intelligible (in their language). However, it is another thing to alter the eternal, timeless message of the Gospel by diluting it with postmodern philosophy. This is what some authors and leaders are consciously doing today. The central tendency of their work is to undermine the objective or absolute truth of the Gospel or the authority of Scripture. In fact, the words “objective” or “absolute” would be anathema to these writers.

For these thinkers, the Gospel is “true” in that it is our community narrative or perspective on life. We thus might invite others to see if their personal narrative (life story) might be illuminated by the biblical narrative. But it would be inappropriate, in their view, to say that other perspectives (narratives) are false and ours alone true. In fact,

it would be wrong to try to defend one's view by using reason or by appealing to historical evidences. Thus, apologetics is thrown out along with the objective truth. One popular form of this philosophy is called "post-liberalism," a theology developed by Yale theologians George Lindbeck and Hans Frei. Their legacy has affected Stanley Grenz, Stanley Hauerwas, Brian McLaren, and Lesslie Newbigin and others.

In many cases, the critiques of these writers of the established church are accurate or at least partially true. However, other of their critiques are overreactions and caricatures. It is important to note that their ability to point out the problems does not necessarily mean that their solutions will be correct. In fact, the solutions are often unbiblical and lead people into serious error. Again, let me emphasize that not every emerging church advocate is equally affected by this approach (if at all).

The attached article is a helpful introduction to some concerns about those in the emerging church who are "postmodernizing" the faith and is taken from from a book, *Why We're Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be*, by Kevin DeYoung, Ted Kluck, and David Wells.